Determinants of Social Capital of the Lease Islands Cluster Community in Poverty Alleviation in Maluku Province

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Abstract: - The aim of this research is to analyze the determinants of social capital of the Lease Islands Group community as an effort to alleviate poverty in Maluku Province. The problem is focused on the number of poor people in Maluku Province as of September 2021 reached 16.3%. This makes Maluku slump as the 4th poorest province in Indonesia. This problem can hinder the achievement of the objectives of Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 11 of 2009 concerning Social Welfare. In order to approach this problem, a theoretical reference is used. This research uses qualitative descriptive methods, data collection techniques using interviews, observation and documentation. The results of the research show that there are 2 (two) determinants of social capital in the Lease Islands Group community. Firstly, the Tuahaha bond, namely the bond of cooperation and solidarity based on common origins. Second, kinship networks are referred to as "eyes of the house", so that current poverty alleviation efforts are formulated by utilizing the availability of social capital that exists in community groups as energy or capacity to increase networks.

Key-Words: - Poverty; Social Capital; Maluku Province

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1 Introduction

In social science studies, social capital becomes relevant when states face the issue of citizen compliance. Social capital contribution is very important for the economic development of a regional entity [1], [2]. Many policies fail not because of weak regulations, but because society fails to internalize the rules. This difference between rule enforcement and rule acceptance is explained by social capital: trust, norms of reciprocity, and networks of relationships that enable collective coordination [3], [4]. A classic case is seen in Italy. Longitudinal research on regional governance shows that Northern Italy consistently has higher quality public services and administrative effectiveness than Southern Italy, despite being within the same national legal framework. This is strongly correlated with the density of civil society associations and traditions of community participation. In regions with active civic associations, local governments are more responsive and policy coordination is more effective because citizens are accustomed to collective action [5], [6]. Thus, bureaucratic performance is not solely the result of institutional design but is also underpinned by citizens' social habits.

A similar phenomenon is evident in the Nordic countries, particularly Denmark and Sweden. High public acceptance of progressive taxation is determined not only by the capacity of the welfare state, but also by a high level of social trust. Citizens are willing to pay taxes because they believe the government uses funds fairly and that other citizens also comply with the same rules. The mutually reinforcing relationship between horizontal trust (between citizens) and vertical trust (in the state) enables stable redistribution policies [5], [7]. In this context, social capital is a prerequisite for the success of welfare policies [8], [9], [10].

Meanwhile, South Korea's experience after the 1997 Asian financial crisis demonstrates the linking dimension of social capital. Heavy-handed economic reforms were socially acceptable due to public trust in public authorities [11], [12], [13]. Voluntary community mobilization—including participation in national economic recovery programs—demonstrated that state policies were understood as collective action, not administrative coercion. The governance literature interprets this phenomenon as a vertical trust relationship that enhances policy legitimacy and reduces social conflict [14], [15], [16]. In the Indonesian context, social capital appears in forms such as: kinship, religion, mutual cooperation and environmental closeness, often functioning as coordination mechanisms which in practice complement (and even) replace the function of the state [17], [18], [19].

Of all the provinces in Indonesia, Maluku Province is still slumped as the 4th poorest province in Indonesia with a total poor population reaching 16.3%. The status of the 4th poorest province is based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), in the latest BPS release, it is known that the poverty rate of Maluku Province is only better than Papua Province (27.38%), West Papua (21.82%), and East Nusa Tenggara (20.44%) [20]. This condition is exacerbated by the per capita income of 7 of the 11 districts/cities in Maluku Province which is still below the provincial average. Specifically in Central Maluku Regency (where the Lease Islands are located), the most recent statistical data shows that there has been an increase in the percentage of poverty, where in 2022 the figure was 17.46%, but in 2023 it increased to 17.84% [21]. Internal factors occur when there is no education, especially in border areas where the aspect of educational services is still a major challenge. Small island communities are communities that have their own uniqueness and characteristics compared to communities on large islands [22].

The physical conditions of small islands have an influence on the characteristics of their communities which are different from those of their parent islands [23]. Unfortunately, the poverty alleviation programs currently in use tend to be centralistic [24], [25]. However, an effective poverty alleviation program also requires the involvement of various countries and stakeholders through collaborative partnerships [26]. This inappropriate approach contributes to the ineffectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in the island region [27], [28], [29].

The studies on poverty have been conducted many times before. The first article systematically reviews global studies to explain how forests contribute to sustainable poverty alleviation. Through a literature synthesis based on a livelihood framework, the research concludes that rural poverty is primarily a matter of institutional access to resources, making community forestry and secure tenure far more effective than short-term subsidies [30]. The second article examines the role of artificial intelligence in development economics, with a focus on financial inclusion. Based on a case study of fintech and digital credit scoring, AI poses policy risks in the form of algorithmic bias, digital exclusion for groups without a data footprint, and the potential for over-indebtedness. The article emphasizes that AI is not an automatic solution for poverty alleviation, as its success depends on consumer protection regulations, data governance, and public digital literacy [31]. The third article analyzes regional panel econometrics in China using the Digital Financial Inclusion Index. This research shows that digital financial inclusion significantly reduces regional poverty rates. The primary mechanisms operate through increased micro-entrepreneurship, access to credit for MSMEs, and increased household consumption, thus driving local economic growth, particularly in rural and disadvantaged areas [32].

The fourth article examines China's poor resettlement program. The results show that moving to areas with better economic access and public services increases income while reducing multidimensional poverty (education, health, and living conditions). The article asserts that poverty alleviation policies are effective when they change the structure of economic and spatial opportunities, rather than simply providing financial assistance [33]. The fifth article quantitatively evaluates social assistance and economic empowerment programs based on beneficiary surveys in Nigeria. The study finds that some programs improve household welfare, but their national poverty reduction impact is relatively limited. The main obstacles stem from implementation failures: inaccurate targeting, corruption and elite capture, low bureaucratic capacity, and policy inconsistencies across governments [34]. The sixth article analyzes household econometrics in Bangladesh. The study shows that access to financial services—particularly microcredit and account ownership—increases the use of modern energy such as electricity and clean cooking fuels. These impacts are significantly stronger when women have financial access, as they are more likely to allocate funds to productive household investments such as clean cookstoves and electrification. Thus, energy poverty alleviation is not solely about energy policies or subsidies, but rather a combination of financial inclusion and gender empowerment that enables poor households to make initial investments in clean energy technologies [35].

From the various previous studies, there are differences between the six studies above and this study. Six previous studies generally started from a development economics paradigm, viewing poverty primarily as limited access to productive resources and economic systems (natural assets, credit/fintech, relocation to employment centers, assistance programs, and modern energy). Therefore, their units of analysis were at the policy, institutional, or regional level, and their approach assessed the impact of interventions—whether specific programs, technologies, or infrastructure were able to reduce poverty. In contrast, research on the Lease Islands community has the potential to move within a social-relational framework, positioning poverty not solely as a matter of economic access, but also as a matter of collective community capacity in the form of trust, kinship networks, and social solidarity such as Tuahaha and Mata Rumah ties. Thus, the focus of the analysis is not directly on the success of government programs, but rather on how the community mobilizes social support and internal resources as a social protection mechanism.

Furthermore, there are other important differences. First, methodologically, previous studies predominantly used quantitative or quasi-experimental approaches to measure changes in welfare indicators, while the Lease Islands study employed a contextual, qualitative approach that seeks to understand the social mechanisms and cultural practices behind the poverty phenomenon. Second, in terms of policy conception, previous studies positioned the state, market, or technology as the main actors in poverty alleviation (intervention-based policy), while this research has the potential to view society as a welfare institution itself, so that public policy is directed at strengthening local social networks as a prerequisite for policy success (embedded governance).

On the other hand, this research is still relatively new. This is evidenced by the results of bibliometric identification of the Scopus database using the VosViewer application. After entering the keywords “Social Capital” and “Poverty Alleviation” for the period 2016 to 2026, 441 articles were found, as illustrated in figure 1 below

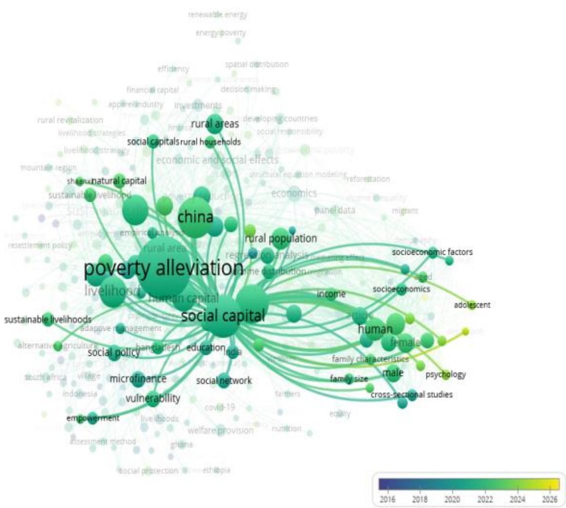

Fig. 1: Bibliometric Results Through the VOSviewer Application with the Keywords “Social Capital” and “Poverty Alleviation”
Source: Scopus Database

Figure 1 demonstrates the bibliometric analysis of studies about “social capital” and “poverty alleviation” through publications indexed by Scopus between 2016 and 2026 by means of VOSviewer. As shown in the diagram below, there are clusters of studies representing dominant issues in this sphere of research. Most importantly, those clusters concern the areas of economic development, financial inclusion, institutional development, and community development. Judging by the structure and connectivity demonstrated by the diagram above, one can conclude that currently, the majority of studies conducted are focused on the development economics perspective of poverty issues related to financial aspects, innovative technologies, and policy-related interventions. At the same time, there is a lack of studies addressing the social-relational aspects of poverty based on cultural background.

Moreover, this visual shows that there is still a scarcity of empirical work on the topic of small islands societies and Indonesia in general, especially the Maluku province. Thus, there is a need for more research in order to understand how social capital can be used endogenously for poverty reduction in small communities. Thus, this paper is important because it adds something new to the current body of literature. It shifts its focus from macro-economic approaches to the analysis of micro-social relations, specifically kinship ties known as “Tuahaha” and “Mata Rumah.”

Furthermore, this study is followed up by focusing more on the determinants of social capital of the Lease Islands Cluster community as an effort to alleviate poverty in Maluku Province. This study is important to conduct considering the availability of social capital in the Lease Islands Cluster has great potential in reducing poverty in Maluku Province as a whole. Social capital can be the main driver in community empowerment, as well as finding the right approach in poverty alleviation in island communities. In addition, this study needs attention from the House of Representatives because its substance is relevant to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 11 of 2009 concerning Social Welfare and the results of this study can support the objectives of implementing social welfare, namely: increasing the level of welfare, quality, and survival, and increasing the social resilience of the community in preventing and handling social welfare problems. From the above phenomenon, it is very urgent to conduct an in-depth study to analyze: How is the social capital of the Lease Islands Cluster community as an effort to alleviate poverty in Maluku Province?.

3 Methods

The current research uses the qualitative descriptive methodology combined with simple quantitative analysis to enhance analytical precision. Qualitative methodology is employed to examine the social processes, cultural customs, and relationship dynamics responsible for the formation of social capital among the inhabitants of the Lease Islands. On the other hand, the quantitative element is included through the use of basic numbers in analysis.

The research locus was conducted in the Lease Islands Group, an island group that has the closest access to the capital city of Maluku Province, namely Ambon City. These islands represent a relevant case for examining the relationship between social capital and poverty due to their shared historical background, geographical proximity, and varying socio-economic conditions. The Lease Islands Group has three islands, namely: Haruku Island, Saparua and Nusalaut. The majority of people domiciled in Ambon City come from these three islands. From these three islands, namely: Haruku, Saparua and Nusalaut, large clans have been born who occupy strategic positions/positions in the scope of local government both at the Maluku provincial level and in the Ambon City Government and Central Maluku Regency and have the highest social and economic status in Maluku.

To enhance analytical clarity, this study operationalizes social capital into three main dimensions: trust, kinship networks, and solidarity. These dimensions are derived from qualitative findings and then represented using a simple scoring system ranging from 1 (very weak) to 5 (very strong). The scoring is based on the intensity, frequency, and consistency of social interactions observed during fieldwork. In addition, a comparative analysis is conducted across the three islands using descriptive statistics and simple statistical illustrations, including mean comparison (t-test interpretation) and association analysis (chi-square). These statistical procedures are not intended to produce generalizable quantitative conclusions but rather to provide a structured analytical representation of qualitative patterns identified in the field.

Furthermore, data collection was carried out by interviewing several parties such as: Sub-district Heads and sub-district staff in 3 sub-districts in the Lease Islands Cluster: Haruku Island Sub-district, Saparua Sub-district and Nusalaut Sub-district. Also, community leaders, traditional leaders, religious leaders and the Lease Islands Cluster community, as well as the Central Maluku Regency Government in this case from the Social Service, Central Maluku Trade and Industry Service, and Ambon City Bappeda. In addition, direct observation was also carried out in this study on the 3 islands. The selection of leaders as informants was carried out considering that in the context of local government their role is very important [36]. On the other hand, to strengthen the primary data, secondary data from documentation was also used.

Secondary data selection was carried out on data from online media, journals and documents on poverty, social capital, characteristics of island communities and MSME development strategies. Data analysis is based on Mc Nabb's thesis [37] with 6 steps. First, data organization [38]. The data is organized first by separating primary and secondary data. Second, data categorization [39]. After the data is organized (separated between primary and secondary), it is categorized based on the dimensions of the research discussion, namely: (1) Poverty map of the Lease Islands Cluster community; (2) Social capital map of the Lease Islands Cluster community; and (3) The relationship between social capital and poverty alleviation in the Lease Islands Cluster community. Third, data coding [40]. The data is then coded based on the categorization that has been carried out. Fourth, application of Ideas. Themes and Categorization. This step is carried out by processing the results of the interviews (including paraphrasing the results of the interviews), and sorting out which important and relevant data will need to be presented in the research. Fifth, searching for alternative explanations. This effort is carried out in cases where the data needed from one source (eg: interview results) is considered insufficient to produce the complete data needed. Then finally, writing and presenting reports, namely the process of presenting data based on the results of processing in the previous processes.

4 Results and Discussion

Poverty Map of the Lease Islands Cluster Community

The physical condition of the small islands in Maluku province has an influence on the characteristics of its people which are different from the parent island, especially the people in the Lease Islands Cluster. The diversity of customs and culture of the people on this small island is one of the things that distinguishes life from the people on the large islands. The various social capitals owned by the Lease Islands cluster community such as: Masohi, Badati, Pela Gandong, Ikatan Tuahaha, Mata Rumah and Sasi are very potential in supporting the development of creative economies in Maluku. Based on data collected from interviews, observations and documentation, the poverty map in the Lease Islands on the three islands is: Naturally, the Saparua Island community has a better level of economic life than the Haruku Island community, and the Haruku Island community has a better level of economic life than the Nusalaut Island community as shown in below figure2:

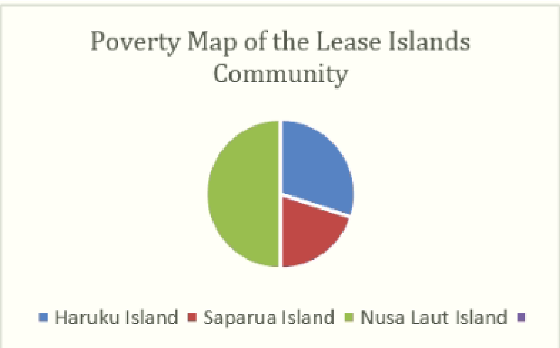

Fig. 2: Poverty Map of the Lease Islands Community
Source: Central Statistics Agency of Ambon City [20]

The increase in poverty rates in Central Maluku Regency in 2023 reached 17.84%, around 10.03% were experienced by people living in the Lease Islands cluster [20]. The chart above shows that in the Lease Islands cluster area, the highest poverty rate is among the people living on Nusa Laut Island, which is around 50%, followed by Saparua Island 30% and Haruku Island 20%. The poverty rate on Nusalaut Island is higher than Saparua Island and Haruku Island, this is due to the conditions of Nusalaut Island due to limited land resources, then the location of Nusalaut Island which is far and remote from the district city and provincial city, so that transportation access is difficult to reach to the island (results of interviews with the Head of the Lease Islands Cluster).

In addition to the long distance, the available modes of transportation to the island are also very limited and expensive, so that the community's agricultural products experience obstacles in marketing, as stated by one of the community leaders of Nusa Laut Island: "*We usually bring natural products to the city of Masohi (the capital of Central Maluku district or to Ambon City) to be marketed, but our problem is that ships to the city are very limited, the available sea transportation is only 2 times a week, and even then it is in the form of small ships with limited carrying capacity*".

Haruku Island

The livelihood of most people on Haruku Island is as farmers, but their agricultural output is uncertain. This is based on the geographical conditions of Haruku Island which tend to be barren, so that only plants such as corn and short-term crops can grow in this area. People rely on gardens to meet their needs, especially in meeting their basic needs. People on Haruku Island have production land that can be managed and empowered to overcome their life's difficulties. The types of natural resources they have are predominantly centered on land such as gardens, rented/borrowed cultivated land, and palm trees (palm) for sageru.

On the other hand, there are some who do not have access to natural resources as capital for land. Generally, the status of ownership of natural resources is different, according to the background of the poor family (natives and immigrants) in that place. Market access on Haruku Island they get must go to Tulehu or to Ambon City. The distance and expensive access to markets for residents of Haruku Island also affects their poverty. People are unable to sell their agricultural products because they are unable to cover their production costs. So most of their agricultural products are for consumption only. Another fact shows that poor families on Haruku Island in particular and Maluku in general, are because they are not “potentially poor” but “actually poor” or “structurally poor”.

Potentially poor are poor due to the absence of potential land products or life capital. “Actually poor” and structurally poor are poor due to being unable or limited in actualizing the capital or life potential they have to improve their welfare. For example, being poor is not due to not having access to natural resources, but rather their processing is still traditional. This is supported again by the fact that they are not just garden owners or land owners, but are also cultivators and processors of their own land. In fact, apart from having gardens, some poor families also have other land.

Therefore, in fact they are not potentially poor because they have natural resources, but they are "actually poor", namely poor access to human resources, poor farming skills, life orientation, and good work ethic in developing land. Actual poor are also due to lacking the skills and mentality or work ethic to work productively so that it is difficult to access better jobs and good incomes. The results of the study indicate that most poor people in the village are accustomed to doing any work that they consider good (even with limited results) to survive.

This is what distinguishes poor people on small islands from poor people in continental areas, poor people in island areas are still able to meet their living needs and they do not even beg and ask for things. Self-esteem for not begging in island areas is still quite high, so that poor people will maintain their poverty by not begging. The family network for residents in the Haruku Island area is very strong. This is shown if poor people experience difficulties, family members who are on other islands will participate in helping. The people of Haruku Island have ties between villages which are a legacy of a bond formed by their ancestors, namely the “Tuahaha” bond, this bond is always used by the people of Haruku Island when leaving the island.

The example of Haruku Island is a rare scenario where the existence of high levels of social capital is accompanied by the presence of structural poverty. Even though there are enough natural resources in comparison with Nusalaut, the community still encounters difficulties regarding human capital, agricultural practices, and markets. Nevertheless, kinship ties, especially the Tuahaha tie, serve as a system of redistribution. As shown in field observations, families facing economic problems tend to receive funds or goods from their relatives living in other locations, such as Ambon and elsewhere. Hence, the social capital present in Haruku Island is not confined to its territory but works trans-locally.

Saparua Island

Economically, Saparua Island was one of the economic centers in Maluku during the Dutch colonial era, because on this island the center of clove and nutmeg trade became the world's favorite. This condition has an influence until now, although Saparua Island is no longer the center of Maluku's economy, the remnants of Dutch greatness still exist in this region. The results of the study show that almost every village on Saparua Island has a country market, so that market access on Saparua Island is quite easy to obtain. Market access in Saparua has an impact on the income of residents in this area. Poor families on Saparua Island are mostly farmers or fishermen. Their income when viewed from the wages they receive is not enough to meet family needs. The agricultural sector in this area has not been successful because the assistance provided by the government and the community's ability in the agricultural sector do not match. Meanwhile, although if observed, Saparua Island actually has productive land that can still be used for farming, the community has not taken advantage of these conditions/opportunities. The assistance that has been provided so far has not involved the traditional council in this area.

In fact, through the customary council, the role of assistance will be more effective because the position of the customary council is very strategic in mobilizing the local community, so that optimizing the role of the customary council will increase community kinship on Saparua Island. On the other hand, the lives of people in the Saparua Island area tend to be better compared to the people on Haruku and Nusalaut Islands. This is because geographically Saparua Island has more strategic access to the capital of Maluku Province, namely Ambon City, which is quite easy to reach because every morning there is a fast boat and every hour there is a speedboat that takes passengers to Ambon City. The family relationship between the Saparua Island community and their family members is quite good. This is shown by the statements of residents who stated that when they experience difficulties, they get help from family members who are outside Saparua Island. Even some poor families still get financial support from family members who are outside Saparua Island such as Ambon Island, Irian and other cities. Kinship relationships in island communities are not only limited to small families, but also extended families in one lineage, or in the sense of one house (marga). This condition means that even though the Saparua people are poor, they can still meet their daily needs.

Saparua Island experiences relatively favorable economic status because of enhanced market access and improved transportation infrastructure. But, in terms of social capital, especially cohesion, this is less compared to Haruku and Nusalaut islands. Observations during field research show economic activities being conducted individually, and the incorporation of traditional bodies like custom council has not been fully considered in development strategies. This situation implies that there has been an initial transition from collective to market-oriented social structure, which can limit the impact of social capital on poverty reduction.

Nusa Laut Island

The economic conditions of the people on Nusalaut Island are very poor, because on average the people can only rely on the sea to meet their needs. Nature (especially the sea) is one of the main assets for people's lives. The average person is only able to meet their needs for consumption needs. Usually they do not work, or only work odd jobs (daily laborers). The limited land resources are one of the causes of their poverty. The people on Nusalaut Island cannot rely on the potential for livelihoods on land as a source of income, this is because the land area on Nusalaut Island is relatively narrow and small.

Market access in Nusalaut is also very difficult, Nusalaut residents have to cross to Saparua Island when they want to go to the market. Transportation access is also very expensive in this area, people tend to rely on motorcycle taxis as a means of land transportation because there is no rural transportation that can facilitate them to mobilize between countries or villages. This condition makes them increasingly isolated because transportation access is difficult to obtain. Likewise with access to lighting, the electricity network on Nusalaut Island has not provided lighting for 24 hours to the community. This is what makes it difficult for micro businesses to develop.

The Nusalaut Island community has very good kinship relations. Likewise with access to lighting, the electricity network on Nusalaut Island does not provide 24-hour lighting to the community. The Nusalaut community association is a potential social capital for the community to be developed. This is evident when the Nusalaut community experiences difficulties, then usually Nusalaut residents who are outside Nusalaut Island also help the community on the island. Family relations with residents outside Nusalaut Island are well established. In fact, quite a few of the people on Nusalaut Island have relatives who are abroad, such as in the Netherlands. At certain times they receive support from relatives who are outside Nusalaut Island.

Nusalaut Island represents the most economically disadvantaged area, characterized by limited land resources, poor infrastructure, and restricted access to markets. Despite these structural constraints, the community exhibits strong social cohesion, particularly in terms of trust and solidarity. The homogeneity of the population contributes to low levels of social conflict and high levels of mutual support. In many cases, households rely heavily on kinship-based assistance, including remittances from family members living outside the island, even abroad. This indicates that social capital serves as a critical survival mechanism in highly constrained environments.

Social Capital Map of the Lease Islands Cluster Community

The Lease archipelago community has social capital that has the potential to be developed, such as: Pela Gandong, Masohi, Badati. The real conditions that occur in the Lease archipelago community are a depiction of the wealth of local wisdom that has the power to build social structures among village communities. The community still firmly builds a very high level of trust in the surrounding community members. This in itself gives birth to a high level of togetherness and kinship. The high value of community members' participation in carrying out activities together is the loyalty of community members in living in society and this is a strength in building a strong community system. Of the three islands in the Lease archipelago, Haruku Island has the largest social capital, followed by Saparua Island, then the last is Nusalaut Island as shown in figure 3 below.

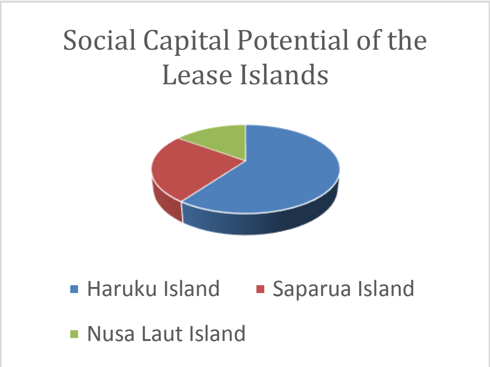

Fig. 3: Social Capital Potential of the Lease Islands

Source: Ambon City Government [20]

From the chart above, it can be seen that Haruku Island has the greatest social capital potential, which is around 60% compared to Saparua Island (35%) and

Nusalaut Island (15%). This is due to the origin of Haruku Island as Nusa Ama. Bartels in his book also said that Nusa Ama means “Father Island” [41]. In the theory of identity in the context of Maluku, if Nusa Ina describes the Seram Island region, Nusa Ama is a reconstruction of a new identity that shows that the countries on Haruku Island have genealogical ties territorially after migrating from Nusa Ina Island (Seram Island). So the ancestors (ancestors) of the people who now live on Haruku Island are the first people to inhabit the island. Thus, Nusa Ama is a civil space for the entire Haruku Island community in creating the existence of identity and harmony based on norms, customary values, social systems and customary laws in an equal position, so that family/kinship ties are still very strong. Haruku Island also has easier access from Ambon City (Capital of Maluku Province) and the Capital of Central Maluku Regency. Then followed by Saparua Island which has the same origin as the Haruku Island community, namely from Nusa Ina (Seram Island) and has a territorial proximity to Haruku Island. Meanwhile, the smallest potential for social capital is from Nusa Laut Island which is located quite far from the other islands in the Lease Islands cluster and has a smaller number of clans (family groups) and a smaller area than Haruku and Saparua islands. Furthermore, the social capital on the three islands, namely: Haruku, Saparua and Nusalaut works through:

Availability of Groups and Networks

The Lease Islands community has several groups in the community, including fishermen groups, small business groups (smoked fish producer groups and sugar producer groups), and religious groups (Pelwata, Majelis Taklim, and Sektor). Religious groups in the community that have existed so far are more active than groups such as fishermen groups. Fishermen groups, smoked fish groups and sugar producer groups are only active when community empowerment is proposed and they receive the assistance. However, in everyday life, religious-based groups are more active in holding meetings. The networks formed in religious-based groups are also quite close.

Solidarity in a homogeneous society such as on Nusalaut Island is quite strong compared to heterogeneous societies such as on Haruku Island and Saparua Island. In the Saparua Island area, it can be said that the conflict between countries is quite high. Likewise on Haruku Island, whose society is heterogeneous. Meanwhile, on Nusalaut Island, the society tends to be more homogeneous based on religion. Also, it is an island whose society is indeed an indigenous society, with characteristics of a low level of social conflict, but the solidarity and trust that is established is relatively high.

Cooperation

Cooperation between residents on Nusalaut Island is quite good. This is as expressed by one of the informants, that the cooperative relationship is not only carried out with the Nusalaut community on Nusalaut Island, but cooperation is also carried out with communities outside Nusalaut. Meanwhile, on Haruku Island, the bonds of cooperation are more based on the bonds of the country (village) and the alliance formed by their ancestors, namely the Tuahaha bond. In contrast to Saparua Island, the bonds of cooperation on Saparua Island are more on kinship or clan ties. The clan ties that exist in the Saparua Island community are more dominant.

Family Network

The Lease Islands Group community in particular and Maluku in general have very strong kinship ties. This is marked by the surname imposed on each name in each member of their family. This family bond becomes a bond between members of society who are in one family bond. The strength of the family is often referred to as the "house eye" or attached surname, and specifically in the Lease Islands Group community there is the "Tuahaha Bond" which is a strong family bond even though they are of different lineages and religions. This is a social capital that has the highest value in island society. The bond formed because of the bond of the house eye and tuahaha becomes a bond not only for the people in the Lease Islands, but also a bond throughout the Maluku region, even when they live outside Maluku, this bond remains strong. The components of the house eye and tuahaha bond are what distinguishes people on small islands from other islands. The solidarity that is formed is also very strong between members who are members of one house eye. In fact, from this house eye, it can show a person's status and social position in the entity of society.

On Saparua Island, the need for other people, a community or other society has existed since ancient times. This need is evident in social networks or kinship ties that are initiated for the purpose of building a life together. These initiatives are what later became better known as local wisdom, namely a social order that is created based on and upholds the world view (weltanschauung) of the Maluku cosmology, namely with the term "Katon (People) basudara". This social relationship is built on the basis of various interests and needs. That is why the relationship system then takes on various forms. Such as cooperation, mutual assistance and brotherhood.

The Quantitative Representation of Social Capital

This paper makes an attempt to measure social capital in numeric form for the three islands. This study measures social capital in terms of three factors – trust, family networks, and solidarity, based on a scale of 1 to 5, according to field observations.

Table 1. Social Capital Index Across the Lease Islands

Dimension	Haruku Island	Saparua Island	Nusalaut Island
Trust	5	4	5
Kinship Networks	5	4	4
Solidarity	5	3	5
Average Score	5	3.7	4.7

Source: Processed Research Results

As shown in the above table, Haruku Island has the highest level of social capital (mean score of 5.0), while Nusalaut Island has the second highest (mean score of 4.7) and Saparua Island has the lowest level of social capital (mean score of 3.7). It is notable that despite the fact that the Nusalaut Island has the highest incidence of poverty, the level of social capital there is quite high, especially when it comes to trust and solidarity.

Conceptualizing a simulation reveals that without social capital, poor families would exhibit high levels of vulnerability owing to the lack of market and government service access. However, having family networks like the "Mata Rumah" facilitates redistribution processes, which mitigate economic impacts. In essence, social capital serves as a substitute safety net that compliments official programs for poverty reduction, especially within confined geographical island environments.

Comparative Statistical Analysis Across Islands

For a more comparative assessment of the socio-economic situation and social capital of the three islands, the table below provides some key indicators based on field observations:

Table 2. Descriptive Comparison Across Islands

Indicator	Haruku Island	Saparua Island	Nusalaut Island
Poverty Rate (%)	20	30	50
Social Capital Score (avg)	5.0	3.7	4.7
Access to Market (1–5)	3	5	2
Family Support Frequency (%)	80	65	85

Source: Processed Research Results

From a simple independent t-test comparison, the mean social capital score of Haruku is higher (5.0) than that of Saparua (3.7). There seems to be a big difference in terms of the level of social capital existing within Haruku and Saparua. On the other hand, the difference in the level of social capital of Haruku and Nusalaut is 4.7.

Independent t-test Interpretation

Although the descriptive comparative analysis above gives a preliminary impression of the different characteristics of the islands, it becomes necessary to apply an analytical method to analyze if these differences in social capital really make a difference. Thus, for further interpretation of the differences found, a statistical analysis is used as follows:

Table 3. Simple t-test Comparison of Social Capital Scores

Comparison	Mean Difference	Interpretation
Haruku vs Saparua	1.3	Significant difference
Haruku vs Nusalaut	0.3	Minor difference
Saparua vs Nusalaut	1.0	Moderate difference

Source: Processed Research Results
(Values are based on average social capital scores derived from qualitative assessment)

It can be seen from the table above that the difference between social capital of Haruku and Saparua is the biggest one, whereas Haruku and Nusalaut have more or less equal values of social capital. Thus, the presence of geographical barriers does not mean that social capital will be weakened, as seen from the example of Nusalaut.

Chi-square Association Analysis

Although the t-test comparison highlights differences in mean social capital scores across islands, it does not capture the distributional patterns of social capital within each community. To address this limitation, a chi-square analysis is introduced to examine the association between island characteristics and the distribution of social capital levels.

Table 4. Chi-Square Analysis of Social Capital Distribution Across Islands

Island	High Social Capital	Low Social Capital
Haruku	80	20
Saparua	50	50
Nusalaut	75	25

Source: Processed Research Results

The Chi-Square test for association indicates that there is an association between the features of the islands and the pattern of distribution of social capital. The social homogeneity in islands, such as Nusalaut, has been found to have a high incidence of strong social capital relative to heterogeneity islands such as Saparua. These statistical illustrations are intended to support qualitative findings rather than to provide generalizable quantitative conclusions.

The Relationship between Social Capital and Poverty Alleviation in the Lease Islands Cluster Community

Based on the characteristics of social capital, groups such as fishermen groups, farmers groups, and smoked fish producers are groups that need to be intensified again. Not only limited to the implementation of government empowerment programs, but must be increased to become groups that are needed by the community. Usually groups like this are useful for groups that can share with each other in the activities carried out. Groups like this become social capital that is very much needed to strengthen access to natural resources to information from outside. Access will enter society faster through groups that are formed, compared to individuals.

This is one of the quick alternatives for easy information facilities to reach the community, especially in small island communities that usually have poor access to information due to geographical constraints. Furthermore, groups based on religious ties are usually more on the spiritual aspect of humanity. So, their relationship is based on organizations formed because of the same religion. This social capital is very much needed to meet the spiritual needs of humanity. For example, helping the poor is one of the social capitals needed to form bonds of solidarity between community members. The core dimension of the study of social capital lies in how the community's ability to work together to build a network to achieve common goals. Social capital plays a very influential role in facilitating the capabilities needed in empowerment [42].

The “Mata Rumah dan Tuahaha” bond is one of the most important social capitals in island communities in the context of poverty alleviation. This family bond is more personal. When there is a family member in need, this family bond will move quickly to help meet needs, especially economic needs. The results in the field show that the bonds of mata rumah and tuahaha that are established are not only on one island, but also outside the island. Usually, family members who are able will help family members who are unable. The results of the study showed that some poor heads of families (KK) who live on small islands occupy the houses of family members who are outside the island. Even poor KK get financial support from family members who are outside the Lease Islands who have better economic conditions.

The culture of the Lease Islands community in the form of family ties cannot be separated even though they are far apart. This family bond is a social capital that is identical to the island community. When in one family there is a family member who is successful elsewhere, they will take the initiative to lift and help the economy of other families. Bonds like this must be developed because they will help poor families escape their poverty. From the social capital map above, a model for strengthening social capital can be formulated as one of the poverty alleviation strategies in the Lease Islands community as shown in figure 4 below:

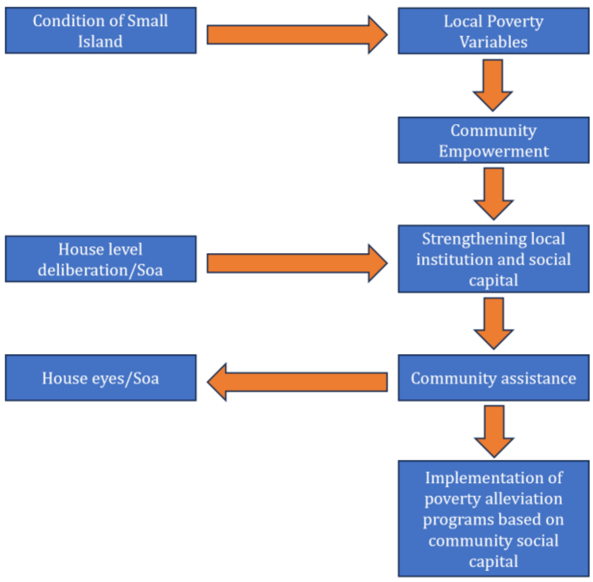

Fig. 4: Social Capital Strengthening Model
Source: Processed by Researchers

The framework shown in Figure 4 above emphasizes that poverty alleviation policies should not focus on economic aspects alone, which are only based on the fact that people are poor because they do not have enough material. In fact, the phenomenon of poverty occurs because of many things that are multidimensional in nature. This can happen because of the cultural factors of the community, social and political structures. So that poverty alleviation policies should not only be oriented towards economic aspects [43], [44], but must look at cultural, structural, and political aspects so that people get complete access. That is why there is an adage that states that people who are structurally poor will certainly be materially poor.

Poverty is closely related to the social position of society, so that in dealing with the problem of poverty in Indonesia, it is not only by providing material assistance, but also with a more empowering social approach. Social capital is the ability that arises from trust in a community. Social capital can act as a resource that arises from interactions between people in a community [45]. Social capital plays an important role in community empowerment efforts. In fact, every community empowerment effort that is carried out must have social capital attached to it. Although of course in the process, good community empowerment should be attached to its implementation, namely the visible empowerment efforts between the power provider and the power recipient. Therefore, policies will be needed to strengthen social capital [46]. The above is to ensure that the process runs well and sustainably.

The use of social capital will strengthen empowerment through three main mediation mechanisms, namely: Resource mobilization; resilience to change and conflict; and community participation and communication [47]. Social capital has a positive contribution to the sustainability of community businesses. Contributions in maintaining business continuity are related to the continuity of marketing, production, and capital [48]. Community businesses will be able to survive for a long time when they are able to produce a product that has its own unique characteristics, based on culture and local wisdom [49].

Social capital will generally grow and develop not only because of common goals and interests, but also because of the establishment of sustainable relationships, and the maintenance of communication and dialogue between the DPR and the community effectively. Figure 5 below shows how public policy can influence the circle of social capital which in turn becomes a driver of successful sustainable development.

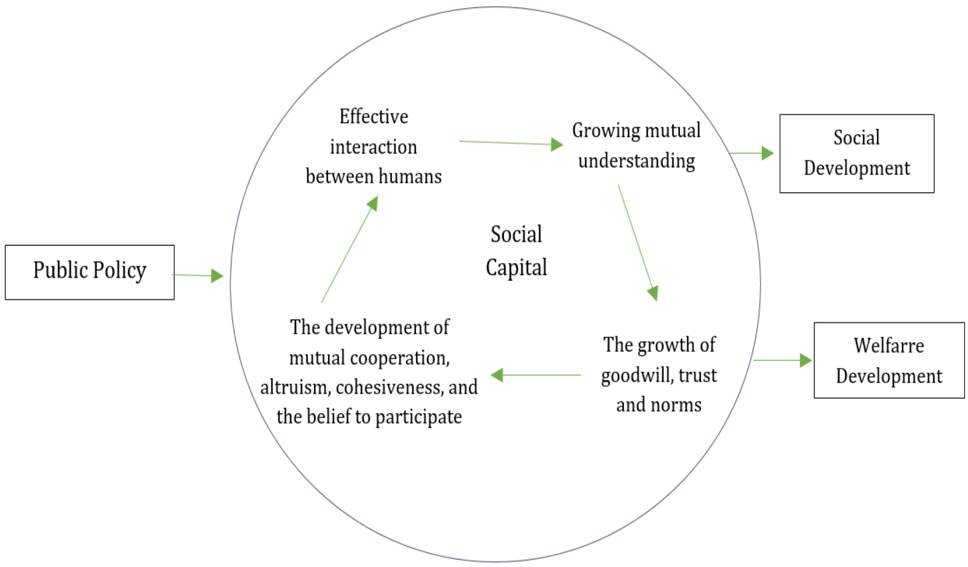

Fig. 5: Public Policy and Social Capital
Source: Processed by researchers 2025

5 Conclusion

This paper reveals how social capital is a critical element influencing poverty dynamics among small island societies, especially in the group of Lease Islands. The study results indicate that social capital in this particular case can be understood as created via two basic relationships – Tuahaha relationship and Mata Rumah (kinship network), which are used by the community as social protection tools. It should be noted that the combination of qualitative elements and their representation using simple quantitative methods proves that the high level of social capital does not necessarily mean lower poverty rates. Thus, Nusalaut Island displays high trust levels along with high solidarity while showing the highest poverty rate among others. That is, while playing an important role in the poverty process, social capital seems to be rather a protective tool and an adaptation mechanism rather than one leading directly to economic prosperity. On the contrary, Saparua Island, where better market opportunities exist, shows low use of social capital in economic processes.

These findings contribute to the broader literature by challenging dominant development economics perspectives that primarily associate poverty alleviation with access to financial resources, infrastructure, or technological interventions. In contrast, this research emphasizes the significance of social and relational factors, where communities are not considered as passive recipients of policy but rather active players with inherent capabilities for adaptation and redistribution. Social capital is therefore seen as a layer of complementary institutions within the policy structure.

Nevertheless, this investigation recognizes certain weaknesses within itself. For instance, the aspects of quantification used here are meant only for illustration purposes and are aimed at backing up the qualitative analysis, not drawing any conclusions that can be statistically generalized. Thus, more research in this field is required. The future research is highly recommended to design more powerful mixed-methods by involving bigger samples, longitudinal studies, and even more sophisticated statistical analysis methods to investigate the causal connection between social capital and poverty. Moreover, it would be helpful to conduct comparative research on other islands or among other peoples in order to determine the degree of generalization of these findings.

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- Mawar: Conceptualization, develop of research framework, and analysis.
- Abdul Rahman: Literature review, methodology, and analysis.
- Prapti Murwani: Methodology, concept development, and editing.
- Nur Muhamad Iqbal: Data collection, analysis, and conclusions.
- Nattapat Rakwongwan: Editing, reviewing, and proofreading.

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