

The Strategy of the Gemaharjo Village Government in Maintaining the Existence of Independent Villages from 2020 to 2025 in Pacitan Regency

Larasati Kansa Widya Putri¹, Ekapti Wahjuni Djuwitaningsih²

^{1&2} Department of Government, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Muhammadiyah Ponorogo

* Corresponding author:

Email: larasatikansawidyap@gmail.com

Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the strategy of the Gemaharjo Village government in maintaining the existence of an independent village from 2020 to 2025 in Pacitan Regency. The study discusses the transformation of Gemaharjo Village into an independent village, the flagship programs of the independent village, the implantation of government strategies in sustaining village independence, and the government's efforts to maintain the existence of the independent village. This research employs a qualitative approach to explore and gain an in-depth understanding of data from a group of individuals. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, data analysis, and documentation. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, selecting informants in this study consisted of the Head of Gemaharjo Village, the Village Secretary, and the Head of Village Planning Affairs. The result indicates that Gemaharjo Village has successfully achieved and maintained its status as an independent village through the fulfillment of the Developing Village Index (Indeks Desa Membangun/IDM) indicators, supported by adequate village facilities and the strengthening of economic, educational, health, agricultural, and livestock sectors. This independence is further reinforced by the development of leading sectors based on local potential, particularly dairy cattle farming through collaboration with Nestlé as well as the innovation of local products such as Raja Subali, which serves as the village's distinctive identity. The success of Gemaharjo Village is also supported by integrated village government strategies, policy consistency, accountable governance, and active community participation, enabling the sustainability of development and the long-term maintenance of village independence.*

Keywords: *independent village, developing village index (indeks desa membangun/IDM), village facilities, strategy*

I. INTRODUCTION

A village is an area inhabited by a community as a legal entity with the lowest level of government organization under the sub-district head, which has the right to manage its own affairs within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. As the foundation of national development, villages play an important role in enhancing their potential and role, especially with the enactment of Village Law No.6 of 2014, which grants autonomy in the implementation of development. However, the disparity in development between villages and cities remains a challenge, with villages often lagging behind in infrastructure, access to basic services, and economic opportunities, leading to significant social and economic disparities [1].

The Indonesian government recognises the importance of villages in the national economy by establishing the category of independent villages in the Village Development Index (IDM). Independent villages are villages with the highest development status that are capable of managing resources independently and implementing development for the welfare of the community. These villages do not

rely solely on government assistance, but also have the ability to develop the potential and resources available in their area. Thus, independent villages are an ideal model in efforts to improve the quality of life of rural communities [2].

To address the issue of underdeveloped villages, the government developed the IDM, which includes the Social Competence Index (IKS), Economic Resilience Index (IKE), and Environmental Resilience Index (IKL). These three indices reflect the need for sustainable development, covering social, economic and environmental dimensions. Assessments based on these indicators result in a classification of the progress and independence status of villages, consisting of the categories Independent, Advanced, Developing, Underdeveloped, and Very Underdeveloped. This classification is important for confirming the independence status of villages and determining the interventions needed to promote more equitable development.

In determining the focus of its efforts to eradicate underdeveloped villages, the government developed the Village Development Index (IDM), which serves as a roadmap for village development. The IDM consists of the Social Competence Index (IKS); the Economic Resilience Index (IKE); and the Environmental Resilience Index (IKL), which are translations of the development needs outlined in Article 74 paragraph (2) of the Village Law. These three indices are in line with the concept of sustainable development, which encompasses social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Based on the assessment of field conditions according to the indicators of each index, the status of village progress and independence is determined, consisting of Independent, Advanced Village, Developing Village, Underdeveloped Village, and Very Underdeveloped Village. This classification confirms the status of village independence and the interventions that need to be provided [3].

Gemaharjo Village, located in the Tegalombo District, Pacitan Regency, East Java Province, borders Ponorogo Regency and is an inspiring example of a village that has achieved independent status. Since 2020, Gemaharjo Village has held the title of independent village, making it the first village in Pacitan Regency to hold this title.

In 2025, Gemaharjo Village will still be an independent village. This success deserves to be explored further to understand the key factors that contributed to this achievement. This is inseparable from the important role of a leader, namely the head of Gemaharjo Village at that time, as well as the participation of the community in supporting their village to become an independent village. Human resources (HR) here are quite good due to the role of the village government in empowering the village community. Community empowerment plays an important role in efforts to build the independence of the village population.

Judging from the Village Development Index (IPD) published by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and the Village Development Index (IDM) published by the Ministry of Villages, Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration [1]. Both the IPD and IDM refer to Article 74 on village development needs and Article 78 on village development objectives. In Gemaharjo Village itself, general food needs have been met, as the village government has provided assistance in the form of seeds.

In the field of education, the Gemaharjo Village Government has access to and provides comprehensive facilities ranging from early childhood education, kindergarten, primary school, junior high school, to senior high school. In the field of health, Gemaharjo Village has adequate health personnel, enabling health programmes to be implemented effectively. These programmes include the provision of free health services for those who are less fortunate.

The village infrastructure is already good, in terms of road access, and village development is adequate, as the village already has a village market, village hall, mosque and rest area. With the available infrastructure, Gemaharjo Village has become a self-sufficient village because it is able to provide for the basic needs of its residents independently, while also serving as an example that inclusive development based on local needs can drive the progress of a region.

Several previous studies discussing self-sufficient villages in Indonesia, such as. The study identified four main strategies, namely mapping village potential, community training, building synergy among stakeholders, and implementing modern village organisational governance, which improve the quality of public services and health facilities [4]. The implementation of this strategy has not been effective, with challenges in training managers, limited funds, and sub optimal supporting facilities [5].

This study will analyse the strategies implemented by the Gemaharjo Village government in maintaining the existence of an independent village from 2020 to 2025 using Kurt Lewin's theory of change (1951). This theory provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of innovation in village development through three stages: unfreezing, which focuses on building community awareness of the importance of autonomy and resource management; changing, which includes concrete steps taken by the village government to empower the community and optimise local potential; and refreezing, which serves to maintain the status of an independent village through strengthening organisational structures and community participation [6]. By applying this theory, this study aims to identify key factors that influence the success of innovation and formulate practical recommendations for other villages that wish to achieve a similar status.

II. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach [7]. According to Creswell, this approach aims to explore and understand data from a group of people or individuals in depth [8]. To explore the data in this study, interviews and data analysis were used. In-depth interviews were conducted by asking informants several open-ended questions. In determining the informants, the researcher used purposive sampling (based on consideration) [9]. Informants in this study included the Head of Gemaharjo Village, the Secretary of Gemaharjo Village, and the Head of Planning of Gemaharjo Village. This data analysis used (Miles et al., 2014) using three stages. The stages of analysis in this data collection technique include data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing and verification. [10]. The data validity technique in this study utilised triangulation. This study employed methodological triangulation, in which the researcher compared data or information obtained through several methods. This study utilised methodological triangulation with interviews, observations, and documentation to validate credibility [11].

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Transformation of Gemaharjo Village into an Independent Village

The transformation of a village into an independent village is a complex journey involving structural changes, community empowerment, optimisation of local potential, and good village governance. The transformation of Gemaharjo Village into an independent village is not merely an administrative change in official documents, but a process that encompasses economic, social, institutional, and environmental strengthening. An independent village is essentially a community that is able to meet the basic needs of its people in a sustainable manner without being fully dependent on external funding, and has the internal capacity to innovate and manage its resources. This is part of the balance between economic, social and environmental aspects within the framework of sustainable local development [12].

This transformation often begins with mapping and developing local potential and utilising village policy instruments, such as the Village Fund and the Village Innovation Programme. The Village Fund, which is regulated by the Village Law, provides authority and fiscal space for village governments to identify local potential and design development programmes that meet the needs of the community. The targeted use of village funds through the development of basic infrastructure, improvement of education and health services, and economic empowerment can boost the Village

Development Index (IDM) score, thereby accelerating the transformation process towards self-sufficient villages [13].

In Gemaharjo Village itself, the success of becoming an independent village was explained by the Head of Gemaharjo Village, who said that the Village Development Index (IDM) had met the criteria for becoming an independent village. This includes the facilities needed by the community within the village, covering a consistent strategy in encouraging community economic empowerment through the development of local leading sectors, as well as the education, health, livestock and agriculture sectors.

Village independence is also characterised by transparent and accountable financial management. Good village financial management strengthens community trust in the village government and minimises corruption or misuse of the village budget. Participatory financial system assistance is an important factor in the process of transforming villages into independent villages, as it helps village officials to gain a deep understanding of the village financial system and encourages active community participation in the supervision and planning of village development budgets [14].

In addition to economic and governance dimensions, the transformation towards self-sufficient villages also requires the strengthening of social institutions and community participation. Active community participation in decision-making, programme planning and evaluation of results shows that village development is not only a structural project but also a socio-cultural project that must reflect the aspirations and local wisdom of the community. Villages with inclusive, transparent government structures supported by visionary leadership tend to achieve self-reliance more quickly [13].

Transformation also comes with challenges, particularly in terms of human resource capacity, infrastructure support, and the competence of village officials in planning and implementing development programmes. Villages often face human resource constraints, which slow down efforts to empower and develop local potential. Therefore, training, technical capacity building, and assistance tailored to the needs of each village are integral parts of this transition process. An independent village must be able to turn the human resources in its area into agents of change who are ready to face global and local challenges [4].

In its implementation, the transformation towards independent villages is also related to the development of social and technological innovations. For example, digital literacy and the adoption of information technology in public services, including in the management of village-owned enterprises, marketing of local products, and village information systems, can help villages transform more quickly and respond to the dynamics of the times. Such digital innovations enable villages to access wider markets, improve governance transparency, and expand community participation in development [15].

The transformation of Gemaharjo Village into an independent village shows that when the community is empowered, local potential is optimised, and village governance is carried out transparently and accountably, villages can reduce their dependence on external funds and strengthen their internal capacity to grow and develop. Independent villages are not only able to meet the basic needs of their residents, but also become sustainable development at the local level and contribute to national development [16].

B. Independent Village Flagship Programme

The Independent Village Flagship Programme in Gemaharjo Village, Pacitan Regency, is a tangible manifestation of the efforts of the village government and community to build sustainable village independence. Gemaharjo Village, which has natural, social and cultural resources, continues to improve through various flagship programmes designed to improve community welfare, strengthen the local economy and encourage active community participation in village development. These programmes not only focus on physical development but also emphasise community empowerment and strengthening the capacity of village institutions. It should be noted that before these programmes were

implemented, the Gemaharjo Village Government also provided information to the community in accordance with the relevant fields so that the community would understand and be able to apply them.

. From the explanation of the Head of Gemaharjo Village, there are several programmes, including in the education sector, which includes Early Childhood Education (PAUD), Kindergarten (TK), Primary School (SD) and Junior High School (SMP). The Head of Affairs (Kaur) of Gemaharjo Village also explained that in the health sector, there are already Puskesmas and Puskesmas Pembantu (Pustu) to reach communities that are far from the Puskesmas. In the health sector, free health services are also provided in the form of normal childbirth and outpatient treatment.

The majority of the community in Gemaharjo Village work in agriculture and animal husbandry, with many people growing crops and raising livestock. The Head of Gemaharjo Village explained that animal husbandry in Gemaharjo Village focuses on dairy cows, which also provides opportunities for the community to earn money. This is due to the development of dairy cattle farming based on collaboration between the government and the private sector. In this case, the government collaborates with Nestlé to collect milk from the community, and it is guaranteed to be purchased.

In the agricultural sector, the community cultivates empon-empon. During harvest season, farmers typically sell their empon-empon harvest only at traditional markets for IDR 4,000 per kilogram. Due to the abundant harvest, they manage the natural resources available in Gemaharjo to create superior products that can be marketed. This product is made from a mixture of medicinal herbs and pure cow's milk from local farms, which is then processed into a drink called Raja Subali (a pure herbal milk concoction). This product has become an icon for Gemaharjo Village because it is made from natural resources found in Gemaharjo Village. For its marketing, the village utilises digital media as a promotional tool to inform the general public about the Raja Subali product. Since this product is made from natural ingredients, its production is only carried out upon receiving orders.

This success shows that economic empowerment based on local resources can drive structural change in the village economy, create jobs, and reduce poverty rates [14]. In Gemaharjo Village, the dairy cow programme is not only seen as an agricultural commodity, but as the foundation of the local economy that empowers the community in a sustainable manner.

This inclusive community empowerment is in line with other research findings which show that active community participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of village programmes is essential for creating independent and sustainable villages. Community participation is a key factor in village development, as programmes designed based on local needs are more likely to be successful and sustainable [17].

Despite its significant achievements, Gemaharjo Village also faces challenges, such as the need to improve human resource capacity, supporting infrastructure, and broader market access for local products. However, Gemaharjo's status as an independent village that has competed at the national level provides momentum to continue improving the quality of its programmes.

Strategies that can strengthen the sustainability of village development include partnerships with the private sector, improving the digital literacy of the community so that they are able to take advantage of technological opportunities, and training in creative economic skills [18].

C. Implementation of Government Strategies in Maintaining Independent Village

The implementation of the Gemaharjo Village government's strategy in maintaining its status as an independent village is carried out in an integrated manner through the strengthening of the social, economic and governance dimensions of village administration. This strategy is in line with the IDM village development index indicator, which places village independence as a result of sustainable development [19].

Based on the explanations provided by the Head of Gemaharjo Village, the Head of Village Planning Affairs (Kaur) of Gemaharjo Village, and the Secretary of Gemaharjo Village, the success of

maintaining the status of an independent village depends not only on the fulfilment of administrative indicators, but also on the consistent implementation of programmes and synergy between the village government and the community. The village head emphasised that the joint commitment of all village officials is a key factor in maintaining the sustainability of village development.

In the social dimension, the village government ensures the availability and affordability of basic services, particularly in the fields of education and health. Gemaharjo Village has complete educational facilities and adequate health services, which are supported by sustainable village planning and budgeting [20]. The Head of Planning and Village Secretary explained that village development planning is carried out in a participatory manner through village deliberations, so that the programmes implemented are in line with the needs of the community.

In the economic dimension, the village government's strategy focuses on strengthening local potential and increasing community economic independence. The village government optimises the existence of village markets and develops leading sectors such as dairy farming, agriculture and plantations. The village head explained that partnerships with the private sector, particularly in the management and marketing of dairy products, are a sustainable strategy that can guarantee market certainty for the community [21]. In addition, the village's flagship product innovation, RAJA SUBALI, is a form of implementation of a local potential-based economic strategy that also strengthens the village's identity.

The aspect of governance includes the principles of communication, coordination, and collaboration (K3) with internal and external stakeholders. This approach shows that the strategy of maintaining independent villages does not only depend on the transfer of funds but also on the ability of villages to manage their resources independently.

D. Government Efforts to Maintain the Existence of Independent Village

The Gemaharjo Village government's efforts to maintain its existence as an independent village are carried out continuously through community empowerment, strengthening village innovation, and increasing public participation in every stage of development. Based on explanations from the Village Head, Head of Planning, and Village Secretary, it is understood that the status of an independent village is not seen as a final achievement, but rather as a condition that must be continuously maintained through consistent policies and the active involvement of all elements of the village [20].

Community empowerment is a key effort that is consistently carried out by the village government in order to maintain the sustainability of village development. The Head of Planning explained that the village government regularly organises various community capacity building programmes, such as skills training, micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) development, and assistance for economic activities based on local potential. In its implementation, the village government acts as a facilitator and mentor, while the community is encouraged to play an active role in developing their businesses independently. This approach aims to increase the economic independence of the community while reducing dependence on external assistance.

In addition to community empowerment, the village government also makes efforts to maintain the existence of independent villages through the development of adaptive and sustainable village innovations. The Head of Gemaharjo Village emphasised that village innovation is not static, but must be continuously adapted to the needs of the community, socio-economic dynamics, and developments in the village's strategic environment. The development of the dairy cattle sector integrated with industry partnerships, as well as the strengthening of the village's leading products, are concrete examples of innovations that can provide economic added value and maintain the stability of the village community's income.

Other efforts are made through strengthening community participation in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of village development. The Village Secretary explained that community involvement is not only manifested in the form of attendance at village deliberation forums, but also in the form of contributions of labour, materials, and self-funded financing. The high level of community participation reflects strong social capital and a sense of ownership of village development programmes. The synergy built between the village government and the community is an important factor in maintaining the sustainability of development and preserving the existence of Gemaharjo Village as an independent village.

IV. CONCLUSION

The success of Gemaharjo Village as an independent village is demonstrated by its fulfilment of the Village Development Index (IDM) criteria, supported by adequate village facilities and the strengthening of the economic, education, health, livestock and agricultural sectors. The Independent Village Flagship Programme in Gemaharjo Village reflects the success of sustainable village development through the strengthening of the local economy, improvement of education and health services, and community empowerment based on the village's potential. The village's independence is supported by the development of the agriculture and livestock sectors, particularly dairy cattle managed in collaboration with Nesle, as well as local product innovations such as Raja Subali, which is marketed digitally as an icon of the village. The Gemaharjo Village Government's strategy in maintaining its independent village status is implemented in an integrated manner through the strengthening of social, economic, and governance dimensions in line with the Village Development Index (IDM) indicators. This success is supported by consistent programme implementation, the commitment of all village officials, community participation, the strengthening of local economic potential through partnerships and innovative superior products, and the application of communicative, collaborative and accountable governance. The Gemaharjo Village Government's efforts to maintain its existence as an independent village are carried out sustainably through community empowerment, the development of adaptive village innovations, and the strengthening of public participation. Policy consistency, the role of the village government as a facilitator, and the active involvement of the community in every stage of development are key factors in maintaining the sustainability of development and independence in Gemaharjo Village.

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