

POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IN RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN CITENGAH VILLAGE, SUMEDANG REGENCY

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Abstract

Rural economic development is an integral part of national development that is greatly influenced by local political dynamics. This study analyzes the relationship between political atmosphere and economic development in Citengah Village, Sumedang Regency. Using a qualitative approach, this study reveals that local political stability, development policies, and the role of political actors greatly determine the effectiveness of the implementation of village economic programs. The results of the study indicate that politicization of policies, uneven allocation of village funds, and lack of transparency in the management of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) are the main challenges in economic development in Citengah Village. However, this village also has great opportunities in developing an economy based on local resources, such as the agricultural and agro-tourism sectors. Community empowerment, strengthening the role of the village government, and optimizing BUMDes as an economic driver are the main strategies in realizing inclusive and sustainable development. This study recommends increasing transparency in village governance and synergy between the government, community, and private sector to support rural economic growth.

Keywords: Political Atmosphere, Rural Economic Development, Citengah Village, Bumdes, Development Policy

A. INTRODUCTION

Development is a systematic effort made to improve the quality of life of the community, either through infrastructure development, improving public services, or developing human capacity. In this context, politics plays an important role as the main driver of development. The political atmosphere—which includes stability, policies, and dynamics between actors in the government system—influences all aspects of the development process, from planning, implementation, to evaluation (Smith, 2020).

In a stable political situation, the government tends to focus more on formulating and implementing sustainable development policies. This stability allows for a conducive investment climate, fair distribution of resources, and a sense of security in society (Jones & Davies, 2018). Conversely, political instability often results in hampered development. Conflicts of interest, drastic policy changes, and corruption are some of the negative impacts of an unhealthy political atmosphere (Transparency International, 2022).

This phenomenon is increasingly relevant in developing countries, including Indonesia, where political dynamics greatly influence the effectiveness of development. Differences in political views between key actors often lead to polarization that actually hinders the achievement of common goals (Yusuf, 2019). In addition, in some cases, politics that are too

power-oriented cause inefficient allocation of development budgets, so that strategic programs that should be directly felt by the community are neglected (Rahman et al., 2021).

On the other hand, a conducive political atmosphere also requires active public participation. This participation can be a catalyst to monitor the progress of development and ensure that the policies taken truly reflect public needs (World Bank, 2020). Therefore, a deep understanding of the relationship between the political atmosphere and development is very important, both for policy makers, academics, and the general public.

As the third largest democracy in the world, Indonesia has a dynamic political atmosphere. Changes in leadership, conflicts of interest between parties, and differences in priorities between the central and regional governments are often major challenges in ensuring sustainable development. For example, the implementation of national strategic projects such as the construction of toll road infrastructure, airports, and ports often face obstacles in the form of political interests, which lead to delays or increases in project costs (Setiawan & Hidayat, 2020).

In addition, local political phenomena also affect the implementation of development in Indonesia. One of them is rural development. Regional autonomy which has been implemented since 1999 gives great authority to local governments to manage their regions, but on the other hand, this also opens up space for the politicization of development policies. For example, in some cases, regional heads prioritize short-term populist programs for the sake of political electability, rather than sustainable development programs that take longer to produce results (Iskandar, 2021).

Rural development is an integral part of national development that has a strategic role in strengthening the country's socio-economic resilience. Villages, as the smallest units in the Indonesian government structure, are not only home to most of the population, but also function as centers of economic activity that support the country's economy. One of the interesting villages to study in the context of rural politics and economics is Citengah Village, located in Sumedang Regency, West Java Province.

Citengah Village, with the majority of its population working in the agricultural sector, has abundant natural resource potential, such as agricultural products in the form of rice, vegetables, fruits, and other local products. However, this village, like many other villages in Indonesia, faces major challenges in improving the welfare of its people. One of the main challenges is the uneven distribution of development results which are often influenced by local political factors that do not always reflect the interests of the village community as a whole. This is related to political power at the village level which also influences the allocation of resources, use of village funds, and the development policies implemented.

Since the implementation of regional autonomy through Law No. 22 of 1999 concerning Regional Government, villages in Indonesia, including Citengah Village, have more authority in managing resources including human and financial resources, community empowerment, and governance. Because in implementing policies will be sourced from human resources and other material resources such as finance or budget (Mulyaningsih, 2017).

However, village autonomy, which should have a positive impact on the economic and social development of the community, is often hampered by political dynamics that develop at the local level. The election of Village Heads (Pilkades), for example, can influence the direction of policies implemented in village development, both in village budget allocation and development priorities that prioritize certain groups.

On the other hand, the agricultural sector, which is the mainstay of the Citengah Village economy, faces various challenges, including limited access for farmers to modern agricultural technology, inadequate infrastructure quality, and lack of support for other

economic sectors such as MSMEs and tourism. Although it has the potential to develop local products and a village-based tourism sector, Citengah Village is still struggling with difficulties in terms of infrastructure development and product marketing.

The great potential of Citengah Village requires more inclusive and transparent policies, as well as collaboration between various parties, including the village government, the community, and the private sector, so that it can be utilized optimally. For organizations, employees are important resources because they have the talent, energy, and creativity that are greatly needed by the organization to achieve its goals (Mulyaningsih, et al, 2020).

Therefore, a study of the interaction between political and economic factors in Citengah Village is very important to understand the dynamics that occur, as well as to find solutions to improve the quality of life of village communities through targeted policies. With this background, this study aims to analyze rural political economy in Citengah Village, see how political dynamics affect village economic management, and identify challenges and opportunities in efforts to develop sustainable and inclusive villages.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Political Atmosphere in Rural Development

The political atmosphere significantly influences the direction and success of rural development programs. A supportive and stable political environment allows for consistent policy implementation, efficient resource distribution, and better coordination between government and communities. In rural areas, political leadership and governance quality can determine whether development efforts are inclusive and effective. Political tension or the dominance of particular interests often leads to stagnation, delays, or even misuse of development funds, limiting the potential for real economic growth (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020).

Political Institutions and Economic Growth in Rural Areas

Political institutions at the village and regional levels contribute directly to the economic development of rural communities. Clear regulations, accountable leadership, and transparent governance processes create a foundation for local economic activities to grow. When institutions function properly, they enable the delivery of public services, encourage small-scale business initiatives, and support infrastructure development. However, weak political institutions, marked by corruption or lack of capacity, often become barriers to sustainable economic progress in rural areas (Mombeuil & Diunugala, 2021).

Local Political Participation and Community Empowerment

Community involvement in political and decision-making processes is essential for rural development to be inclusive and responsive. When local residents participate in planning and implementing development programs, they help ensure that policies reflect actual needs and priorities. Political participation at the grassroots level strengthens accountability, builds trust between citizens and leaders, and promotes a culture of transparency. In rural villages, active civic engagement also contributes to the emergence of local initiatives that can drive long-term economic improvement (Haryatmoko, 2021).

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, qualitative methods are used to explore in depth how rural economic politics in Citengah Village. This study will collect primary data through in-depth interviews with various stakeholders, such as village officials and civil society. In addition, focus group discussions (FGD) can also be used to explore broader perspectives.

Direct observation of rural economic politics in Citengah Village in the field is also an important part of this method. Secondary data in the form of policy documents, development reports, and previous research results will be used to complement the understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Furthermore, the collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, which identifies patterns and themes that emerge from interviews and group discussions. This technique allows researchers to find the relationship between the existing political atmosphere and the development policies implemented, as well as their impact on society. With this qualitative approach, the study aims to provide a more holistic understanding of how political factors shape the course of development, and how efforts to improve the political atmosphere can encourage more effective achievement of development goals.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Political Dynamics in Citengah Village

Local politics in Citengah Village greatly influence the direction of village policies and development. Like other villages, Citengah Village undergoes a democratic process through the Village Head Election (Pilkades), which is one of the important moments in determining village development policies. The election of the Village Head is often influenced by local political networks involving actors such as community leaders, interest groups, and political parties. This election, although democratic, sometimes produces policies that do not fully reflect the needs of all levels of society. Victory in the Pilkades often brings political advantages for the winning party, such as greater control over the allocation of village funds and determining development priorities.

One important aspect of political policy in Citengah Village is the management of Village Funds (DD) and the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBDes). The uneven or non-transparent distribution and allocation of village funds often leads to inequality in the distribution of development. The programs that are implemented more often focus on the development of more visible physical infrastructure, while community-based economic empowerment, such as the development of the MSME sector and village tourism potential, still receive less attention.

In addition, politicization in the management of village policies also has an impact on the management of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes). BUMDes, which should be a tool for empowering the economy of village communities, are often trapped in unhealthy political dynamics. Sometimes, its management focuses more on the interests of certain individuals or groups, instead of prioritizing the economic empowerment of the community as a whole. This has an impact on the less than optimal role of BUMDes in driving the village economy, even though with proper management, BUMDes has great potential to develop various businesses that are beneficial to the community.

Citengah Village Economy: Challenges and Opportunities

The economy of Citengah Village is highly dependent on the agricultural sector, which includes food crops such as rice and vegetable and fruit commodities. However, the agricultural sector in this village faces several significant challenges. Among them is the low access to modern agricultural technology, which hinders the increase in productivity and quality of agricultural products. Inadequate infrastructure, such as damaged roads and limited agricultural storage facilities, are also obstacles for farmers in marketing their products.

However, the agricultural sector in Citengah Village also has great opportunities to be further developed by utilizing modern agricultural technology, such as efficient irrigation systems, the use of organic fertilizers, and the use of superior seeds. In addition, the

development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) based on local and agricultural products can also be the main driver of the village economy. For example, processed agricultural products, such as vegetable chips or fruit juice, can be used as superior products that can be marketed to big cities around Sumedang.

In addition, although Citengah Village has rich natural potential, such as natural beauty that can support the tourism sector, this village has not yet developed the village tourism sector to its full potential. Citengah Village, whose majority population are farmers, has the potential to develop an agricultural-based tourism village or agrotourism. Agrotourism, which combines agricultural activities with tourist attractions, can be an alternative source of income for village communities, apart from the conventional agricultural sector.

Rural Economic Politics with BUMDes in Citengah Village

BUMDes should be the driving force of the village economy by running various businesses that can benefit the village community. In Citengah Village, although there is a BUMDes formed to manage the village's economic potential, it has not been able to function optimally. One of the main factors that hinders the development of BUMDes is the influence of politics in the management of the organization.

Local politics in Citengah Village, as explained earlier, greatly influences the management of BUMDes. In some cases, BUMDes management is more directed towards the interests of certain groups that have political power, so that it does not focus on empowering the wider community. This often leads to inefficiency in fund management and a lack of innovation in running businesses that should be able to drive the village economy.

Furthermore, if BUMDes does not have good and transparent management, then the great potential it has, such as managing local products or providing public facilities, will be neglected. In fact, BUMDes can manage various businesses based on village potential, such as agricultural processing businesses, handicrafts, or even village tourism management that can increase community income. However, in this context, there are opportunities that can be utilized by BUMDes. The development of agricultural-based tourism villages or agrotourism, which has not been optimized in Citengah Village, can be a great potential. BUMDes can be the main manager in developing the village tourism sector, by organizing agricultural-based tourism activities, such as garden tours, fruit picking, or even agricultural training for tourists. Collaboration with the private sector and district government can be the key to realizing this potential.

Potential for Developing Tourism Villages and Their Relationship with BUMDes

Potential for Tourism Villages in Citengah Village

Citengah Village has enormous potential to be developed as a tourism village, but so far this potential has not been optimally utilized. This village is located in a fertile area with green rice fields, cool mountain air, and strong local culture. All of these factors can be the main attraction for tourists who want to enjoy the beauty of nature and learn about the lives of farmers and traditional culture.

Several aspects that can be the main attraction in developing tourism villages in Citengah Village include:

- a. Agrotourism (Agricultural Tourism): Citengah Village has a fairly large area of agricultural land with various agricultural products, such as rice, vegetables, and fruits. The concept of agrotourism can be developed by offering direct experiences for tourists to interact with farmers, such as fruit picking, planting rice, or participating in the harvest process. Tourists can experience authentic rural life and appreciate the struggles of farmers.

- b. Nature Tourism: The natural beauty of Citengah Village with mountains, cool air, and flowing rivers can be an attraction for tourists seeking peace and tranquility. The development of trekking trails around the rice fields and mountains for tourists who want to enjoy nature more intensely can be an interesting alternative for nature tourism.
- c. Cultural Tourism: Citengah Village has rich cultural potential, such as local traditions, handicrafts, and local arts. Visitors can be invited to witness or be directly involved in cultural activities, such as traditional ceremonies, learning local arts, or making traditional handicrafts. This can be an attraction for tourists who are interested in local culture and traditions.
- d. Local Culinary Tourism: Local agricultural products in Citengah Village can also be used as raw materials to develop culinary tourism. Tourists can taste various typical dishes that use fresh ingredients from local farms, such as organic vegetables, local fruits, and regional specialties.

Relationship between Tourism Villages and BUMDes

The development of tourism villages that are integrated with the management of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) can be the key to success in encouraging local economic growth in Citengah Village. BUMDes functions as an institution that manages village resources for the common good, and the development of tourism villages based on BUMDes has enormous potential to provide a positive economic impact. Here are some ways in which the relationship between BUMDes and the development of tourist villages can support each other:

- a. Tourism Management and Marketing: BUMDes can be the main manager in organizing tourism activities in Citengah Village. BUMDes can manage various tourism-related businesses, from providing accommodation facilities (homestays), restaurants with typical village menus, renting agricultural equipment for tourists who want to try farming, to transportation that connects tourist locations with the village center. BUMDes also plays a role in marketing the Citengah tourist village to tourists through various promotional channels, both offline through exhibitions or online through social media and the village website.
- b. Development of Tourist Village Infrastructure: Infrastructure is one of the main factors in the success of developing a tourist village. BUMDes can play a role in the development and maintenance of infrastructure needed by tourists, such as roads to tourist locations, parking lots, public facilities, and proper sanitation. Investment in the development of this infrastructure will create a positive impact on the entire community, both in the context of increasing accessibility and comfort for tourists.
- c. Community Empowerment and Training: BUMDes can be an institution that facilitates training for village communities to manage tourism businesses professionally. Training that can be done includes training for local tour guides, training in processing local products into souvenirs, or training in managing tourist-friendly homestays. This not only improves community skills, but also improves the quality of services provided to tourists, thus creating a more satisfying experience.
- d. Job Creation: With the development of tourist villages, BUMDes can create various new jobs for the community. Villagers can act as tour guides, homestay managers, local culinary providers, farmers involved in agrotourism, and MSMEs who sell local products. This will increase the income of village communities and help reduce unemployment rates.
- e. Source of Income for Village Development: Income obtained from managing tourist villages through BUMDes can be used to finance various other village development

programs, such as education, health, and improving basic infrastructure. This will create a sustainable development cycle, where income from the tourism sector can fund various other needs that support the welfare of village communities.

Challenges in Developing Tourism Villages through BUMDes

Although the great potential for developing tourism villages and its relation to BUMDes is very clear, there are several challenges that need to be faced in this process, including:

- a. **Limited Human Resources:** One of the main obstacles is the lack of skilled workers who are able to manage the tourism sector well. Village communities who mostly work in the agricultural sector may not have skills in the tourism sector. Therefore, training and education for village communities are very important.
- b. **Lack of Promotion and Marketing:** Citengah Village, although it has great natural and cultural potential, is not yet well known among tourists. Ineffective marketing and limited access to information can be obstacles in attracting tourists. BUMDes needs to be more aggressive in using social media and digital platforms to introduce this tourism village to a wider market.
- c. **Limited Infrastructure and Accessibility:** Inadequate infrastructure such as roads to tourist locations, limited accommodation, and inadequate public facilities can reduce the attractiveness of tourists. Investment in infrastructure development must be carried out in a planned manner and involve the community so that it can run well.
- d. **Seasonal Dependence:** The agricultural sector, which is one of the main attractions of agrotourism in Citengah Village, is highly dependent on the seasons. For example, rice and fruit harvests that only occur at certain times can limit tourism activities throughout the year. Therefore, it is important to diversify tourism activities that can be done throughout the year, such as developing cultural or culinary tourism.

E. CONCLUSION

Citengah Village has great potential to be developed into a tourist village that can improve the local economy, especially through the management of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes). Natural potential such as vast expanses of rice fields, cool mountain air, and rich local culture and traditions are the main attractions that can be utilized to develop the agriculture and culture-based tourism sector.

However, the development of tourist villages in Citengah Village still faces a number of challenges, especially related to the limited human resources skilled in the tourism sector, inadequate infrastructure, and limited marketing. Nevertheless, BUMDes has an important role in managing and promoting this tourist village, starting from providing tourism facilities, developing local products, to empowering village communities through training and job creation.

The active involvement of BUMDes in the tourism sector can be a major driver for sustainable village economic development. Income obtained from the tourism sector will strengthen village resources to finance various development programs, as well as create jobs and new business opportunities for the community. With proper management, Citengah Village has the potential to become a model tourist village that can improve community welfare through local resource-based economic development.

The researcher's suggestions are: Strengthening the Role of Village Government in Economic Decision Making Village government must be more active in formulating economic policies that support the development of the tourism sector in Citengah Village,

Sustainable Utilization of Natural Resources In the context of rural economy, it is important for Citengah Village to manage its natural resources wisely and sustainably, Local Economic Empowerment and Diversification of Income Sources From a rural political economy perspective, it is important to encourage local economic empowerment through programs that can reduce community dependence on one sector, such as agriculture alone.

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