

# INTEGRATING SOCIAL CAPITAL INTO RURAL EMPOWERMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE EMPOWERED VILLAGE PROGRAM IN LAMPUNG



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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze how social capital operates within rural community empowerment through the Empowered Village Program in Lampung Province, Indonesia. Although community empowerment is widely promoted, existing studies often emphasize program outputs rather than examining the mechanisms through which social capital strengthens empowerment processes, leading to limited understanding of participation dynamics and long-term sustainability. Using a qualitative descriptive case study, this research collected data over a three-month period through in-depth interviews with twelve purposively selected informants involved in program planning, implementation, and community leadership. These data were supplemented by participant observation and document analysis, with validity ensured through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. The findings show that strengthening four core sectors economy, education, health, and environment enhances self-reliance, local leadership, and collective action while enabling communities to address structural barriers. The study concludes that optimizing bonding and bridging social capital is essential for sustaining empowerment and ensuring program continuity, offering practical implications for inclusive rural development

**Keywords:** Social Capital, Participatory Development, Community Empowerment, Lampung Villages.

## INTRODUCTION

Village development is a fundamental pillar of equitable and sustainable national progress, as rural areas function as strategic centers of social, economic, and cultural life in Indonesia (Fuadilah 2021). However, in Lampung Province, the many development and empowerment programs implemented over the past decade have not consistently

produced sustainable outcomes. Although the government has allocated substantial Village Funds since 2015 to strengthen local capacity and promote self-reliance (Endah 2020), implementation remains heavily focused on infrastructure. This imbalance indicates that empowerment intended to enhance social, economic, and institutional capacity has not been fully mainstreamed. As a result, community participation remains low, and program sustainability is limited (Octaviani, Raharjo, and Resnawaty 2022). The challenge becomes more apparent considering that 941,230 residents in Lampung were recorded as poor in March 2024 (Lampung 2024). This figure reflects more than economic deprivation; it signals limited community capacity to mobilize social capital such as trust, collaborative networks, and collective action which is central to empowerment. Thus, the core issue lies not merely in resource scarcity but in the fragile social structures that should support rural transformation.

Empowerment theory helps clarify these gaps. (Eriksson et al. 2021) argue that empowerment becomes effective only when local actors possess the capacity, trust, and autonomy to influence decisions, supported by strong bonding and bridging ties. In Lampung, community groups do exist, yet trust and cohesion are often insufficient to activate meaningful collective action. (Udoinyang 2025) further highlights the need for integrating macro-level policy interventions with micro-level grassroots dynamics. In Lampung, this integration remains weak because village programs tend to be administratively driven such as fund distribution or infrastructure development without parallel efforts to strengthen social networks or community capacities.

Therefore, the main reason empowerment efforts fall short is not the absence of programs but the absence of strong social capital that enables community driven and sustainable development. Strengthening social capital by cultivating trust, cross-group collaboration, and inclusive participation is crucial to transforming empowerment initiatives in Lampung into long-term, community-owned rural development.

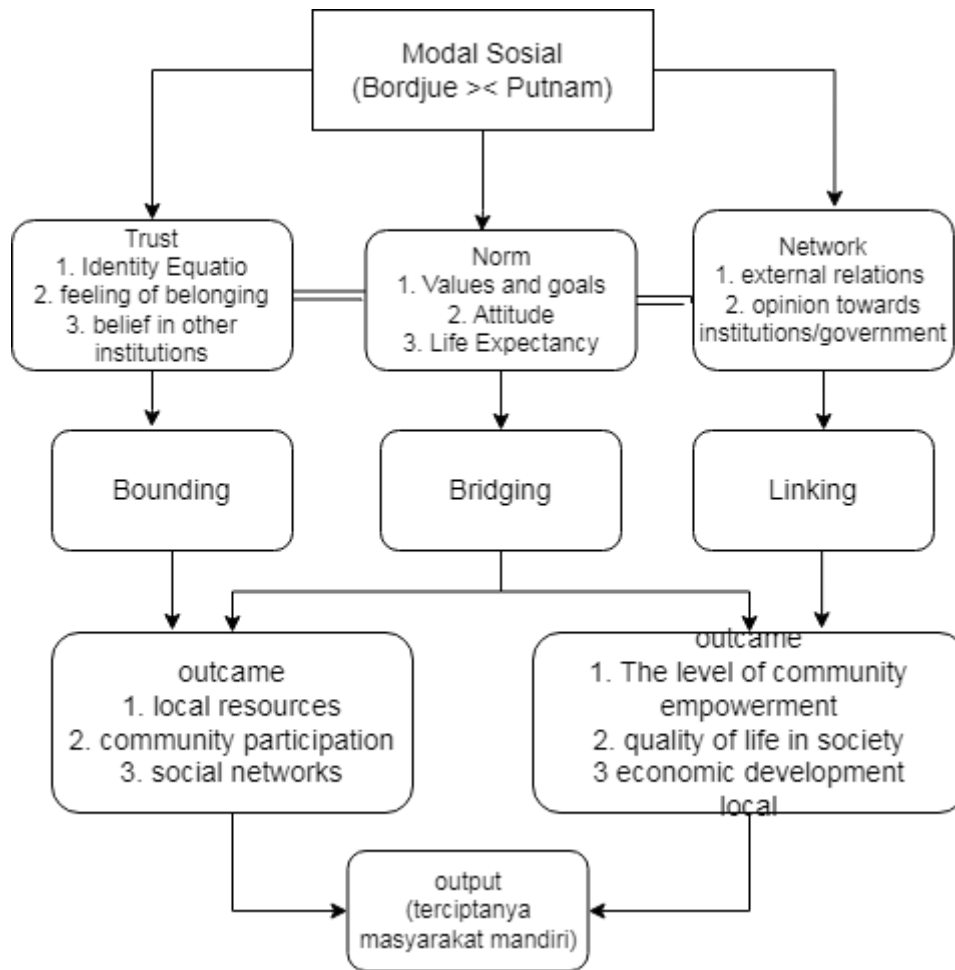


Figure 1.1 Social Capital Framework

Within this framework, social capital, understood simply as the networks, norms, and trust that enable people to work together, remains crucial for strengthening rural community empowerment. Bonding, bridging, and linking ties help communities build internal solidarity while also accessing wider institutional and economic opportunities. However, scholars such as (Sharifi et al. 2024) remind us that social capital is not neutral; it can reproduce power imbalances when influential actors dominate networks or control resource flows. This tension highlights a key gap in existing rural empowerment initiatives: although social capital is widely acknowledged as important, its potential is often underutilized because programs rarely examine how unequal relationships within village networks shape participation and outcomes. In this study, social capital serves as a central analytical lens to understand why empowerment efforts succeed in some contexts but remain limited in others.

To illustrate the dynamics described above, this study focuses on the Empowered Village (Desa Berdaya) Program implemented by Rumah Zakat in Lampung Province. Lampung provides a relevant empirical setting because many of its rural communities continue to face structural challenges such as dependence on low-productivity agricultural sectors, limited vocational skills, and unequal access to local decision-making processes. As a community-based initiative, Desa Berdaya offers a distinctive model that integrates four intervention pillars education, health, economy, and environment (Tendra Istanabi et al. 2024) making it representative of contemporary empowerment programs that emphasize holistic development. While the program has demonstrated the ability to mobilize participation and strengthen local initiatives, persistent issues such as unequal engagement across social groups and reliance on traditional livelihoods (Zvonar and Holovko 2023) show that empowerment outcomes cannot be understood solely through economic or institutional factors. Instead, they depend critically on the configuration and quality of social relations and networks within the community. This makes the Lampung case scientifically valuable for examining how social capital shapes the effectiveness of rural empowerment programs.

Research on poverty, sustainable development, and community empowerment has been extensively conducted by numerous scholars.

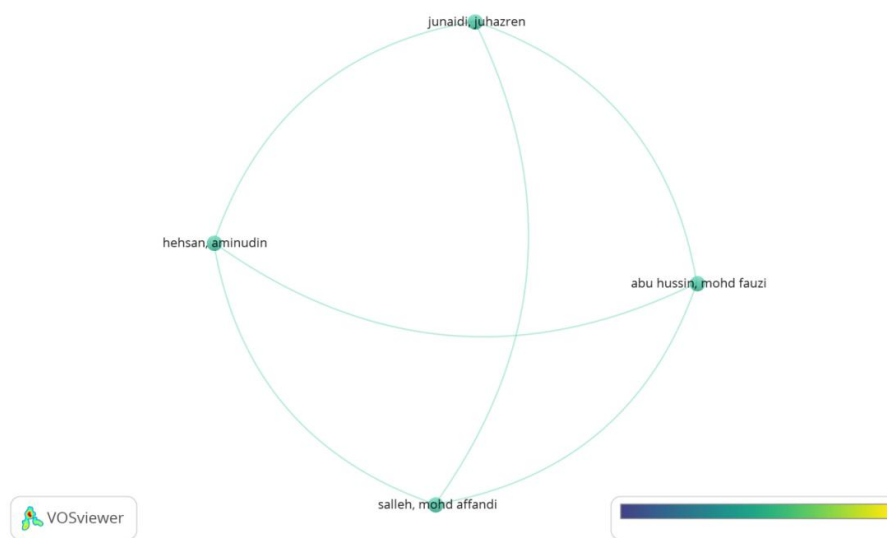
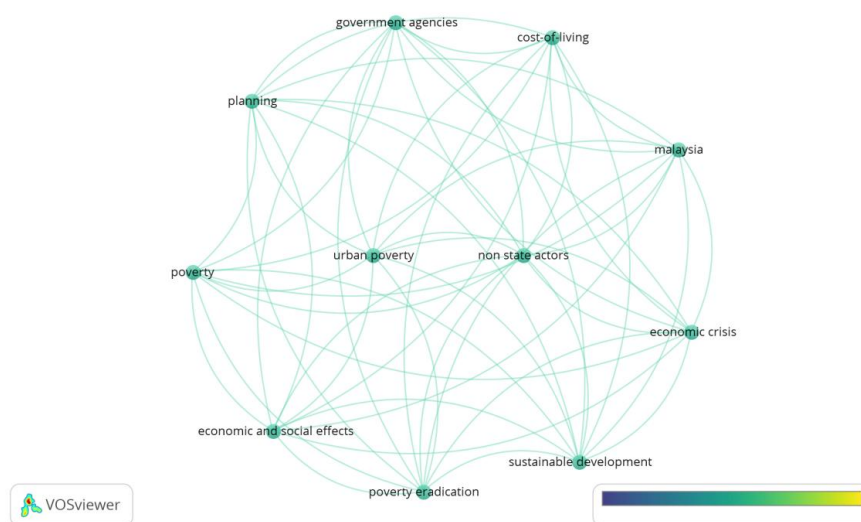


Figure 1.2 Scholars who have conducted research on community empowerment.

Several scholars who have conducted studies on this issue are presented in Figure 1.2, existing studies show that government-led poverty alleviation programs play an

important role, yet their impact remains limited when operated without support from non-state actors such as NGOs, zakat institutions, and local social foundations (Abu Hussin et al. 2018). A recurring challenge concerns financing, as public subsidies and regulatory frameworks often fall short of meeting community needs (Lubis and Sinaga 2018). Ridwan's findings further indicate that the utilization of existing funds is still dominated by consumptive programs, while allocations for productive models remain relatively small, despite evidence that economic empowerment of beneficiaries is more sustainable when directed toward productive activities (Ridwan, Andriyanto, and Suharso 2019). These insights are relevant to the Lampung context, where structural poverty persists despite various governmental interventions. This suggests a research gap: the need to understand how collaboration with non-state actors such as Rumah Zakat's Desa Berdaya initiative can complement government programs, particularly through strengthening social capital and community-driven empowerment mechanisms.

In addition, Scopus data reveals that previous studies employing keywords related to community empowerment can be mapped, as shown in Figure 1.3. This mapping highlights the dominant research trends in the field and provides a clearer understanding of existing scholarly contributions. At the same time, it also underscores the research gap that remains to be addressed, particularly concerning how empowerment programs can be optimized through the integration of social capital, multi-actor collaboration, and sustainable development frameworks.



*Figure 1.3 Research keywords referring to poverty alleviation and community empowerment based on global research trends (Scopus Data).*

Figure 1.3 presents a mapping of research keywords derived from Scopus data, highlighting terms relevant to poverty and development studies, such as urban poverty, poverty eradication, economic crisis, cost of living, sustainable development, government agencies, and non-state actors. This mapping demonstrates that poverty is not a stand-alone issue but is closely intertwined with social, economic, institutional, and public policy dimensions. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of integrated planning, the role of both governmental and non-governmental actors, and community participation in mitigating the impacts of economic crises and enhancing social welfare (Wang, Lu, and Li 2024).

Nevertheless, prior research has predominantly focused on poverty in urban or national contexts, while studies specifically examining poverty alleviation planning through community empowerment at the village level remain limited, particularly in local settings such as Lampung (Yuliawan et al. 2022). This gap is significant because rural communities possess unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics that shape their development challenges. For example, in several villages across Lampung, persistent poverty is closely intertwined with limited access to quality education, dependence on low income agricultural sectors, and entrenched socio-cultural norms such as early marriage conditions that collectively hinder human capital development and reduce community resilience (De et al. 2023). These structural barriers indicate that poverty in rural areas cannot be addressed solely through economic assistance but requires a broader empowerment framework that strengthens local institutions, transforms social values, and mobilizes collective capacity.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the planning and implementation of village empowerment programs, including the identification of community needs, strengthening of local institutional capacity, involvement of both state and non-state actors, and their impacts on improving rural welfare (Raully Sijabat, Rita Meiriyanti 2022). The research contributes theoretically by enriching the discourse on social capital based community empowerment and practically by providing insights for formulating participatory, sustainable, and locally adaptive development strategies (Dwi Lestari and Nur Azlia Arumi 2024). Integratively, this study synthesizes Putnam's cooperative model of social capital which emphasizes trust, networks, and collaboration with Bourdieu's critical perspective on power, which reveals how resource access and social advantage are unequally distributed. Through this synthesis, empowerment is situated as both a

participatory and redistributive process: one that not only builds collective capacity but also challenges structural inequalities embedded within rural social systems.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how social capital influences the implementation of the Empowered Village Program (Program Desa Berdaya) in Sukajaya Lempasing, Lampung, Indonesia. A case study approach was selected because it allows an in-depth, contextualized examination of a bounded system namely one village implementing a specific empowerment program thereby enabling the researcher to capture complex social dynamics, interactions, and processes that cannot be separated from their real life context. This methodological choice is particularly relevant for studying community empowerment, which is inherently situational and depends on local relationships, trust, and collective practices.

The case boundaries were clearly defined: the unit of analysis is a single village (Sukajaya Lempasing) and the focus is limited to the implementation process of the Empowered Village Program, including its activities, actors, and supporting social capital. Fieldwork was conducted over a three month period and combined semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Twelve participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in program implementation. They consisted of program facilitators, village officials, community leaders, and beneficiaries. This sampling strategy followed the principles of qualitative inquiry described by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Miles, MB & Huberman 1992), which highlight the importance of capturing diverse perspectives to ensure data richness and credibility.

Data collection began with preliminary visits to build rapport and trust with community members, followed by in-depth interviews and observations during program activities such as health education sessions, entrepreneurship training, and community meetings. Each participant was interviewed one to two times, with sessions lasting between 20 and 75 minutes. Key informants were interviewed more than twice to deepen understanding and enhance data triangulation. Repeated participant observations were conducted to capture social interactions and program dynamics more comprehensively. Document analysis included program reports, meeting notes, and official village

documents to strengthen data validity. A summary of participant categories, number of informants, and selection rationale is presented in the following table

Informant Category	Number	Selection Criteria
Key Informants	2	Representatives from Rumah Zakat and village officials directly responsible for designing, coordinating, and managing the program; provide strategic and institutional perspectives.
Primary Informants	4	Community members actively involved in program activities (economy, education, health, environment) and possessing firsthand experience with the empowerment process.
Beneficiaries	4	Main program beneficiaries experiencing direct impacts on economic conditions and overall quality of life.
Additional Informants	2	Community leaders or local administrators serving as mediators between the program organizers and the wider community

*Table 2 Categories of Informants, Number, and Selection Criteria*

Ethical procedures were upheld throughout the research process. All participants received an explanation of the study's purpose, benefits, and potential risks, and provided



written informed consent. Confidentiality was maintained through anonymization of names and positions in all transcripts and reports. Research permission was granted by the Sukajaya Lempasing Village Government and approved by the researcher's academic institution. All data were securely stored and used exclusively for academic purposes.

Data were analyzed using (Hou 2023) six phase thematic analysis. Coding was conducted manually with NVivo 12 to organize transcripts and systematize emerging categories. The analysis employed a combined inductive deductive strategy: data driven coding was used to identify patterns, while theory driven coding drew on bonding, bridging, and linking social capital as well as (Nugraha et al. 2023) empowerment framework. Initial codes such as trust, collective action, leadership, and institutional support were consolidated into the three forms of social capital, which were subsequently interpreted to explain variations in awareness, participation, capacity building, and structural change.

Coding was performed by the primary researcher. Dependability was maintained through peer debriefing and a structured audit trail comprising field notes, coding memos, and documentation of analytic decisions. Confirmability was strengthened through a reflexive journal detailing the researcher's positionality as an external observer with partial insider access and the strategies used to minimize bias during fieldwork. Credibility was ensured through member checking and triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents. All data were anonymized and stored securely to protect informant confidentiality.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the research findings and comprehensive analysis of field data, this study identified four main themes that explain how social capital is integrated into the Empowered Village Program (Program Desa Berdaya) in Lampung. These themes reflect the dynamic interaction between community participation, institutional support, and local social networks in driving rural empowerment. The first theme concerns the planning and implementation strategies of the program; the second focuses on human resource capacity building; the third highlights the strengthening of social capital and community participation; and the fourth addresses the evaluation and replication of the empowerment model. Each theme is elaborated in detail below, supported by empirical evidence obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation.

## RESULTS

This study found that the optimization outcomes of the Empowered Village Program as a model of rural community empowerment in Lampung can be analyzed through four sub focus areas aligned with the research objectives. (i) *Program Planning and Implementation Strategies*, which include mapping local needs, identifying village potentials, and designing activity plans based on community participation. (ii) *Human Resource Capacity Building*, encompassing training for village facilitators, enhancing community skills, and forming sustainable community based working groups. (iii) *Strengthening Social Capital and Community Participation*, which involves fostering trust among residents, increasing participation in decision making forums, and reinforcing collaborative networks between villagers and local government. (iv) *Program Evaluation and Replication*, including participatory data based monitoring and evaluation, documentation of best practices, and the development of empowerment models that can be replicated in other villages across Lampung.

To enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, this study employed source triangulation. Data collection was carried out using three primary techniques interviews, observations, and document analysis as recommended by Alfansyur & Maryani (2020). In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the perspectives of villagers, village facilitators, and local officials regarding program strategies and implementation. Observations were conducted during training sessions, village forums, and community activities to capture the actual practices of empowerment. Meanwhile, program reports, administrative records, and village documentation were analyzed to verify and complement field data.

<b>Identification of the Planning and Implications of the Empowered Village Program</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Program Planning and Implementation Strategies	The Empowered Village Program was designed through a participatory approach that involved the community from the early stages of planning, with a focus on local potentials and needs.

Human Resource Capacity Building	Enhancing human resource capacity is a key element in the success of the program, particularly through training initiatives and the establishment of community working groups..
Strengthening Social Capital and Community Participation	The success of the program is highly influenced by the strength of social capital, such as trust, mutual cooperation <i>gotong royong</i> , and social cohesion among community members.
Program Evaluation and Replicatin	The program is periodically evaluated using a participatory approach, and the results serve as a basis for developing empowerment models that can be replicated in other villages.

Tabel 3. 1 Planning Empowered Village Program

**Program Planning and Implementation of the Empowered Village Program**

were carried out through a participatory approach based on local potential. The implementation team from Rumah Zakat, together with village residents, conducted a needs assessment through community deliberations. Data indicate that most residents felt involved in the planning process. As stated by Rahman Hakim, Head of the Empowered Village Program (Interview with the Program Head, Rumah Zakat Lampung):

*“We start by exploring the actual needs of the community not from what we think is important, but from what the people around us truly need. This makes the program more accepted and fosters a sense of collective ownership.”*

This statement reinforces that the planning process follows a bottom up approach. It reflects a community driven planning model, as described by Ife (De et al. 2023), which emphasizes that effective empowerment must begin with identifying local needs, values, and aspirations through active participation of community members. Such an approach not only increases program acceptance but also strengthens collective ownership, which is a key determinant of sustainability in community empowerment initiatives.

The implementation strategy focused on economic, educational, and environmental empowerment aligned with the village’s geographic conditions and local potentials, such as agriculture and fisheries (Dety Mulyanti et al. 2023; Nur Efendi 2024).

Activity plans were developed based on this mapping and formalized in an annual action plan jointly approved by village officials and community leaders.

**Human Resources Community Capacity Building** became one of the key aspects contributing to the program's success. Various training activities were provided for residents, including entrepreneurship, microfinance management, sustainable agriculture, and local craft production (Nurhalizah et al. 2023; Raihan, Anggraini, and Harahap 2023; Ramadhiani and Adnan 2023). These trainings not only enhanced participants' knowledge but also led to the formation of community working groups such as women's associations and village cooperatives.

One beneficiary, Mr. Dwi Purnomo (54), a farmer who previously relied solely on seasonal harvests, shared his experience after joining fish farming training facilitated by the Empowered Village Program. He also received capital assistance in the form of fish seeds and the construction of tarpaulin ponds. Mr. Dwi stated (Anon n.d.):

*“At first, I never imagined I could raise fish. Now, thank God, I've sold my first harvest at the local market, and the income has helped support my family. This was made possible by the patient guidance and support from the program.”*

Stories like this illustrate that practical training and direct capital support can drive household economic diversification and enhance community self reliance. Qualitative data show that approximately 68% of training participants reported an increase in income within six months after training. In addition, women's involvement in production and marketing processes also rose significantly. To clarify this indicator, the income related data were obtained from an internal program survey conducted as part of routine monitoring. The survey involved 22 respondents, all of whom participated in the economic empowerment training modules. The measurement was carried out six months after the completion of training, allowing the program team to capture early economic outcomes while accounting for variations in business development cycles

**Strengthening Social Capital and Community Participation**, The Empowered Village Program strengthened social capital through the establishment of village forums, routine community meetings, and intergroup collaborations. The social values of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and *musyawarah* (collective deliberation) served as the cultural foundation that fostered community participation and solidarity (Bagus Aryo, Priyanka Permata Putri, Neneng Alghina Micha Grandisa 2018).

According to internal program survey data analyzed by the researcher, participation in village forums increased substantially over the evaluation period. A total of 127 respondents from three villages were surveyed, with data collected at two time points: the baseline in 2021 and the endline in late 2024. Results show that resident participation rose from 48% in 2021 to 72% in 2024. Community activities such as *kerja bakti* (collective clean up events), village budget deliberations, and participatory decision making forums increasingly reflected higher levels of civic engagement and a shared sense of responsibility among residents.

Social networks among residents were further strengthened through collaboration between community groups, program facilitators, and local government officials. These interactions contributed to the development of stronger interpersonal trust and collective ownership of the empowerment initiatives (Astuti et al. 2024). An important aspect of social capital enhancement was the initiation of the Rumah Vokasi Balai Inspirasi Program, a vocational learning center focusing on youth empowerment through digital education. This initiative was led by Mr. Sidiq Ardani, one of the program's key innovators, who emphasized the need to strengthen young people's digital literacy as part of sustainable empowerment. As he explained (*\*Interview with Mr. Sidiq Ardani, Initiator of Rumah Vokasi Balai Inspirasi\**):

*"The idea behind \*Rumah Vokasi Balai Inspirasi is to provide a space for young people to learn and improve their skills, especially in the field of digital technology. They not only learn how to use computers but also become more digitally literate and adaptable to technological change. This is how we strengthen both individual capacity and community solidarity in the digital era."*

Through this initiative, local youth were provided with computer literacy training, digital content creation workshops, and practical courses on entrepreneurship using online platforms. These activities helped bridge the digital divide between urban and rural areas while promoting social inclusion. The center also served as a collaborative hub where young people could share ideas, build networks, and contribute to community projects.

The narrative above demonstrates how digital skill building serves as an entry point for broader empowerment processes. In line with Ife's (2013) perspective, this initiative reflects a participatory planning approach where community members especially youth

are positioned not merely as learners but as co-creators of knowledge. By providing space for discussion, collaboration, and shared decision making, *Rumah Vokasi Balai Inspirasi* embodies the principle that planning in community development should emerge from the aspirations, capacities, and collective agency of the community itself. Furthermore, the program contributes to what Ife refers to as *conscientization*, a process in which individuals become more critically aware of their social conditions and capable of taking transformative action. Digital literacy is not only a technical skill but also a medium for increasing critical awareness youth gain the ability to access information, articulate their ideas, engage in public discourse, and participate more actively in community problem solving. As their awareness increases, so does their potential to influence local development and strengthen community resilience in the face of rapid technological change.

As a result, the program not only enhanced the bonding social capital within youth groups but also strengthened bridging and linking capital between the younger generation, local institutions, and external partners such as educational organizations and technology communities. This integration of digital skills development into the empowerment framework demonstrates how social capital can evolve to meet contemporary challenges, ensuring that rural empowerment in Lampung remains adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable.

**Program Evaluation and Replication** was conducted regularly through focus group discussions (FGDs), surveys, and in-depth interviews. The results showed that most initiatives met their targets and had a positive impact on the community's economic and social independence (Rafsanjani 2022). One notable achievement was the establishment of a village cooperative that remained active even after intensive facilitation ended. Documentation of best practices and empowerment modules developed from field experiences were utilized as key references for replicating the program in other villages with similar characteristics.

The research findings indicate that community empowerment through the Empowered Village Program in Lampung was implemented using a participatory and community based approach, consistent with Jim Ife's theory of empowerment. The program followed a structured process, beginning with local potential identification, facilitation of business groups, capacity building, and ending with evaluation and self

reliance. Each stage was carried out systematically and oriented toward active community involvement as agents of change. This empowerment process was reinforced by the presence of social capital within the village community such as trust, social networks, and norms of mutual cooperation which facilitated collective collaboration in achieving shared goals. Empowerment, therefore, is not merely understood as an effort to improve economic well being but also as a transformative process that enables communities to control their development direction, preserve local values, and strengthen social functionality in a sustainable manner.

## DISCUSSION

**Integrating Social Capital and the Empowerment Process** The findings of this study demonstrate that the Empowered Village Program in Lampung operationalizes empowerment through a participatory and community driven framework, aligning closely with theory of empowerment (Alcántara-Rubio et al. 2022), which emphasizes bottom up participation, collective ownership, and the recognition of local capacities. The planning and implementation processes rooted in local potential mapping, participatory deliberations, and collaborative decision making reflect a shift from externally imposed development models toward community self-determination.

This alignment with Ife's framework signifies empowerment not merely as capacity enhancement but as a transformative social process where communities gain control over decision making and resource allocation (Amaliyah, Saifuddin, and Jauhari 2023). The integration of Rumah Vokasi Balai Inspirasi, for instance, exemplifies the transition from welfare oriented assistance to capability oriented development. This digital literacy initiative underscores the adaptive dimension of empowerment preparing rural communities to engage with modern socio economic systems without detaching from their cultural roots. Within this context, social capital defined by as networks, norms, and trust that enable coordination and cooperation acts as the connective infrastructure of empowerment (Necula 2023). The study's evidence shows that empowerment outcomes (economic independence, social cohesion, and institutional sustainability) are deeply dependent on the density and quality of social relations that sustain mutual accountability within the community.

**Bonding, Bridging, and Linking Social Capital in Participatory Empowerment** The findings illustrate the multidimensional expression of social capital within the Desa Berdaya framework. Bonding social capital is manifested through *gotong royong*, mutual

trust, and familial cohesion, which collectively strengthen internal cooperation and shared community identity. Empirical observations show routine *gotong royong* activities, such as communal repair of irrigation channels and the weekly neighborhood forum (*forum warga*) where families jointly deliberate on sanitation issues, youth programs, and household scale business ideas. These practices reinforce the cultural belief that empowerment must originate from within the community, consistent with Ife's locality based empowerment and Putnam's emphasis on trust as a driver of civic participation (Alfiansyah 2023).

Bridging social capital emerges through collaboration across different social groups. This is visible in women's cooperatives, inter cluster community forums, and youth entrepreneurship groups that create avenues for sharing information, skills, and resources across neighborhood boundaries. Quantitative survey data from 127 respondents from three villages were surveyed increased from 48% to 72%, with data collected at two time points: the baseline in 2021 and the endline in late 2024, showing that collective initiatives have strengthened horizontal linkages and broadened community engagement.

Linking social capital is reflected in partnerships connecting local communities with Rumah Zakat and government institutions. Program documents and field analysis covering 2021–2024 show concrete forms of vertical collaboration, including Rumah Zakat's facilitation of assistance schemes, joint monitoring sessions with village government, and alignment of community initiatives with local development priorities. These linkages integrate grassroots empowerment with broader institutional structures, enabling not only micro level participation but also macro level recognition, resource access, and potential replication of successful models. Thus, empowerment through social capital emerges as a multilevel process connecting household agency with structural transformation.

### **Toward a Multilevel Empowerment Model for Sustainable Rural Development**

Synthesizing these dimensions, this study proposes a Multilevel Empowerment Model that integrates social capital into rural development processes. At the micro level, bonding capital fosters self help initiatives and internal solidarity; at the meso level, bridging capital facilitates collaborative governance and participatory learning; and at the macro level, linking capital connects local institutions to external actors for sustainability and policy integration. This integrative model illustrates how empowerment is not a linear



process but an iterative cycle of participation, capacity building, and structural adaptation. The sustainability of the Empowered Village Program lies in its ability to institutionalize social capital transforming trust and collaboration into long term social infrastructure. As such, the Lampung experience demonstrates that rural empowerment becomes sustainable when social capital functions as both a resource and a framework for governance, innovation, and social transformation.

These findings extend the theoretical discourse of both Ife and Putnam by showing that empowerment and social capital are mutually reinforcing. Empowerment activates social capital through participatory engagement, while social capital sustains empowerment through relational resilience. Hence, the Desa Berdaya model offers an adaptive pathway for sustainable rural development where empowerment is not only about economic productivity but also about strengthening social structures that ensure inclusivity, resilience, and local autonomy.

**Integrating Comparative Insights for a Contextualized ASEAN Empowerment Model** Drawing on the regional comparison, a contextualized empowerment framework can be formulated to capture the common logic of social capital based rural development in Southeast Asia (Al-Omouh et al. 2022). Across Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, empowerment tends to be strongest when rooted in local cultural norms of collective solidarity *gotong royong*, *bayanihan*, and *samakhitham* (OTOP) each functioning as an indigenous form of bonding capital that preserves social cohesion.

No.	Countries	Program	Different Emphases
1.	Philippines	Barangay Empowerment Program ( <i>bayanihan</i> )	program continuity often weakens when external facilitation declines.
2.	Thailand's	One Tambon One Product (OTOP) initiative ( <i>samakhitham</i> )	prioritize economic productivity over participatory processes
3.	Indonesia's (Lampung model)	Empowered Villages	combining bonding capital rooted in gotong royong, bridging capital through inclusive

			community networks, and linking capital via collaboration with institutions like Rumah Zakat and local governments
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*Tabel 3.2 Perbandingan Model Pemberdayaan Komunitas di ASEAN*

This institutionalization distinguishes the Empowered Village Program. Rather than relying solely on traditional solidarity, the program translates local cultural values into formal participatory practices community forums, joint decision making platforms, and multi stakeholder partnerships that strengthen both bridging and linking social capital (Pandey 2025). Furthermore, the digital and youth oriented initiatives of Rumah Vokasi Balai Inspirasi introduce a modernizing dimension, where young villagers gain computer and digital literacy skills that enhance their ability to navigate emerging rural economies. Taken together, the Lampung experience illustrates a hybrid empowerment model that integrates local cultural grounding, participatory linkages, and institutional support. This tridimensional structure operates simultaneously at the micro level (trust and household collaboration), the meso level (community networks and cooperative learning), and the macro level (institutional and technological partnerships) (Kariri and Radwan 2023).

Thus, the Lampung model offers a synthesis of bonding, bridging, and linking capital, making it more resilient and methodologically robust than many ASEAN counterparts, and positioning it as a regionally relevant prototype of sustainable rural empowerment.

To strengthen conceptual clarity and satisfy the reviewer's emphasis on the mutually reinforcing cycle between social capital and empowerment, the following paragraph is added: Conceptually, these findings show that social capital is not merely a community asset but a social mechanism that enables empowerment to progress sustainably. When trust, networks, and collective norms remain intact, empowerment does not stop at capacity enhancement; instead, it evolves into new social structures that are more inclusive, adaptive, and self governing. In this mutually reinforcing cycle, empowerment activates social capital through participation, while social capital preserves

empowerment through relational resilience, ensuring long term community transformation.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights three core findings: first, social capital functions across all stages of empowerment planning, implementation, and evaluation through the strengthening of trust, collective coordination, and cross actor linkages. Second, the Empowered Village model generates tangible outputs in four sectors economic, educational, health, and environmental by enhancing community capabilities and establishing participatory decision making mechanisms. Third, the dynamics of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital serve as the key differentiators that determine program effectiveness. These findings reinforce Putnam's framework on the participatory role of social capital while extending Bourdieu's perspective by demonstrating how social capital redistributes power at the village level, particularly through enhanced access to resources and opportunities for institutional collaboration.

The practical implications emphasize improving facilitation quality that is sensitive to local potentials, strengthening adaptive participatory evaluation systems, and reinforcing multi stakeholder collaboration to ensure long term sustainability. At the policy level, local governments should institutionalize social capital strengthening mechanisms as part of rural development agendas, including regulatory support and cross sector facilitation structures. Programmatically, the study offers more inclusive and collaborative empowerment strategies that can be adopted in other regional contexts. Moreover, by reconnecting to the ASEAN comparative discussion, the findings show that the Lampung Empowered Village model holds strong potential for regional adaptation, especially in countries with community based governance traditions and similar social capital structures.

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