

Keramat Market as a Catalyst for Community Empowerment: Integrating Cultural Preservation, Skill Development, and Sustainability in Warugunung Village, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of Keramat Market in community empowerment and economic development in Warugunung Village, Indonesia. Focusing on the integration of cultural preservation, skill development, and sustainability, the research highlights initiatives such as the Bamboo School and intergenerational engagement in arts and crafts. A qualitative case study approach was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews with six participants, including key informants from the market authority, local government, and traders. The findings underscore the transformative impact of culturally embedded and sustainability-driven initiatives. Two primary themes emerged: Empowerment Through Training and Skills Development and Inspiration and Cultural Preservation. The Bamboo School, supported by partnerships with organizations such as YBLL and PT. Multi Bintang Indonesia, equips residents, especially women, with marketable skills in bamboo weaving and sustainable cooking practices, fostering economic independence and cultural resilience. Concurrently, Keramat Market serves as a dynamic cultural hub, blending tradition with modern commerce to preserve arts, crafts, and culinary heritage while engaging younger generations. These initiatives position Warugunung Village as a model for culturally conscious community development. However, challenges such as dependency on stakeholder involvement and resource availability may limit scalability. The qualitative scope also restricts generalizability, necessitating further comparative and longitudinal studies. This research highlights the potential of leveraging local resources and cultural heritage to foster sustainable growth, offering valuable insights for policymakers and development practitioners aiming to replicate similar models in other communities.

Keywords: community empowerment, cultural preservation, Keramat Market, skill development, sustainable growth

1. Introduction

Poverty remains a widespread and persistent issue across developing nations, and its consequences are pa-

rticularly pronounced in countries with large populations like Indonesia. The challenge of addressing poverty is not merely economic but deeply rooted in structural and systemic inequalities that affect access to resources, education, and opportunities. Over the years, successive Indonesian governments have prioritized poverty alleviation, recognizing that societal welfare is a critical determinant of political stability and long-term national progress. Poverty reflects the inability to access sufficient goods and services to meet even minimal social needs (De Bruijn & Antonides, 2022; Zhao et al., 2022).

One effective way to tackle poverty is through community empowerment initiatives, which aim to enable individuals and groups to actively participate in improving their social, economic, and cultural conditions (Coy et al., 2021; Gallardo et al., 2021). Empowerment involves enhancing the capabilities of marginalized communities, allowing them to contribute meaningfully to society. For empowerment to succeed, support from external entities, such as governments, non-governmental organizations, and local leaders, is often indispensable (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022; Nimran et al., 2024). This process is essential in rural communities, where limited resources and infrastructural challenges make independent progress difficult.

In the Indonesian context, empowerment programs often intersect with traditional markets, which have long served as centers of economic and social activity. Markets facilitate direct transactions between producers and consumers, enabling the exchange of goods and services while fostering community engagement (Han et al., 2020; Khorasany et al., 2021). Beyond their economic role, traditional markets are deeply embedded in cultural practices, making them ideal venues for empowerment initiatives. By combining economic activities with cultural preservation and community participation, markets can serve as powerful tools for poverty alleviation and social development (Geoffrey Deladem et al., 2021; Maulu et al., 2021). This interplay between economic opportunity and cultural engagement positions community markets as central to sustainable rural development.

Despite the widespread recognition of community empowerment's importance, rural areas in Indonesia still face persistent challenges in realizing its potential. Warugunung Village, located in Pacet District, Mojokerto Regency, exemplifies such a case. The village grapples with high poverty rates, compounded by a lack of skills and resources among its residents. A particularly affected group is housewives, who often have limited opportunities to contribute to household income due to restricted access to education, training, and economic networks. This skills gap hinders the village's ability to harness its potential for local development, perpetuating cycles of economic stagnation and dependency.

Traditional markets have long been integral to rural economies, providing spaces for producers and consumers to interact directly. However, their potential extends beyond mere economic transactions. Traditional markets often serve as community hubs, fostering social cohesion and cultural continuity (Sforzi & Bianchi, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). Yet, despite their potential, many rural markets in Indonesia suffer from inadequate management, limited infrastructure, and lack of integration with broader empowerment programs. This disconnect between the community's needs and the market's potential remains an underexplored area of research and practice.

The case of Warugunung Village adds another dimension to this gap. The village's Keramat Market, once a neglected garbage site, has been transformed into a vibrant space for cultural tourism and economic activity. Despite its promising premise, questions remain about how effectively it integrates community empowerment into its operations and whether it adequately addresses the village's socioeconomic challenges. The need for focused interventions, particularly those targeting skill development and creative entrepreneurship, underscores the importance of examining the market's role in driving sustainable

economic improvement. By situating the discussion within this context, the study identifies a critical niche: the exploration of how traditional markets can serve as platforms for community empowerment in rural Indonesia. This focus provides a basis for understanding how targeted interventions can maximize the potential of such markets to drive economic growth and social transformation in underserved areas. As such, the aim of this research is to analyze how the Keramat Market has contributed to community empowerment and economic improvement in Warungnung Village. Specifically, the study examines the market's integration of cultural preservation, skill development, and sustainability through initiatives such as the Bamboo School and intergenerational engagement in arts and crafts. By exploring the market's innovative management strategies and its role in fostering economic independence, cultural pride, and environmental consciousness, this research provides insights into how such markets can serve as models for sustainable poverty alleviation and rural development in similar underserved settings.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This research adopted a qualitative case study approach as suggested by Yin (2003) to examine how Keramat Market has contributed to community empowerment and economic development in Warungnung Village. Specifically, the study investigates the market's management strategies, the implementation of skill development programs for local residents, and its role as a model for sustainable poverty alleviation in similar rural settings. By focusing on these aspects, the research seeks to provide a detailed understanding of the mechanisms through which local markets can drive long-term social and economic change. The qualitative case study approach is particularly well-suited for this research because it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex, context-specific phenomena. This approach enables the researcher to capture the nuanced interplay of social, economic, and cultural factors that influence the market's impact on the local community. Furthermore, it facilitates a holistic analysis of the strategies and programs employed by Keramat Market, shedding light on best practices that can inform similar initiatives in other rural areas.

2.2 Research Participants

The participants of this research consist of six individuals, carefully selected to provide insights relevant to the study's objectives. The group includes three key informants: the authority of Keramat Market, the local officer of Warungnung Village, and traders operating within Warungnung Village. The remaining participants are additional traders from the same locality, chosen to provide a broader perspective. The research utilized convenience sampling as the participant selection technique. This approach was chosen due to its practicality in accessing participants who are readily available and willing to provide data within the constraints of time and resources. The target population was localized within the Warungnung Village and Keramat Market areas, making convenience sampling an efficient method for identifying individuals with direct relevance to the research. This technique also ensured that participants from key stakeholder groups—such as market authorities, local officers, and traders—were included, offering diverse yet contextually grounded viewpoints for the study. All participants were approached individually, and their consent was obtained before their inclusion in the research. The consent process involved providing participants with detailed information about the study's objectives, methods, and their role in the research. Participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential, and their contributions would be used solely for academic purposes. The participants' demographic details are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Demography of Participants

| Participant ID | Role | Age | Gender | Years of Experience |
|----------------|--------------------------|-----|--------|-------------------------------|
| P1 | Keramat Market Authority | 45 | Male | 15 years (Market Management) |
| P2 | Local Officer of Village | 38 | Female | 10 years (Local Governance) |
| P3 | Local Officer of Village | 50 | Male | 7 years (Local Governance) |
| P4 | Trader | 42 | Female | 20 years (Business Ownership) |
| P5 | Trader | 35 | Male | 12 years (Business Ownership) |
| P6 | Trader | 30 | Female | 8 years (Business Ownership) |

2.3 Research Instrument

The research instrument employed in this study is the semi-structured interview, a method well-aligned with the qualitative case study approach. The semi-structured interview is designed to gather in-depth and meaningful insights from participants while allowing for flexibility in the conversation. This approach ensures that key topics and questions related to the research objectives—such as the management strategies of Keramat Market, its skill development programs, and its role in poverty alleviation—are systematically addressed. At the same time, it allows participants to share their unique perspectives and experiences in their own words, enabling the researcher to uncover unexpected or emergent themes that may not have been anticipated during the study design. The semi-structured format strikes a balance between structure and flexibility, incorporating pre-determined, open-ended questions to guide the discussion while giving participants the freedom to elaborate on areas they consider most relevant. This adaptability is particularly important in qualitative research, as it allows the interviewer to probe deeper into responses, clarify ambiguities, and explore new ideas that arise during the interview process.

2.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns, or "themes," within the data. This approach was chosen for its ability to capture both explicit and implicit meanings in participants' responses, making it effective for exploring complex social and economic issues, such as Keramat Market's contributions to community empowerment and economic development. The analysis began with familiarization, where interview transcripts and notes were reviewed to identify key ideas and recurring patterns. The data were then systematically coded into smaller units of meaning, which formed the basis for identifying broader themes aligned with the study's objectives, such as management strategies, skill development, and poverty alleviation. These themes were refined, categorized, and compared across participants to highlight similarities, differences, and unique insights. Finally, the themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions and existing literature, providing a comprehensive understanding of Keramat Market's role in fostering sustainable development. This structured yet flexible process ensured meaningful conclusions and actionable insights for future initiatives in similar rural contexts.

3. Findings

Based on the analysis of the interview results, two main themes emerged: Empowerment Through Training and Skills Development and Inspiration and Cultural Preservation. Each of these themes is explored in detail in the following sections.

3.1 Empowerment Through Training and Skills Development

The interviews highlight a comprehensive and collaborative effort to empower the Warugunung Village

community, spearheaded through partnerships between local stakeholders, the Sustainable Environment Bamboo Foundation (YBLL), and PT. Multi Bintang Indonesia. These partnerships have been instrumental in establishing key initiatives like the Keramat Market and the Bamboo School, which serve as platforms for both economic and cultural enrichment. The training programs introduced under these initiatives focus on equipping residents with skills in bamboo weaving, traditional food preparation, and sustainable practices. For example, the Bamboo School educates participants, particularly women, about the entire lifecycle of bamboo—from its cultivation and maintenance to its processing and crafting into woven products. This hands-on approach ensures that residents not only understand the material's versatility but also gain practical skills that can be monetized, offering a steady source of income.

Bamboo emerges as a central resource, celebrated for its symbolic and practical importance. According to community leaders, bamboo is likened to nurturing mothers due to its inherent qualities of adaptability and utility. Residents learn traditional weaving techniques that allow them to create a variety of products, contributing to the preservation of cultural craftsmanship while promoting economic sustainability. Additionally, the weaving activities offer financial opportunities beyond immediate market operations, as residents can produce items for sale during off-market periods.

Another crucial aspect of these programs is the preservation and revitalization of traditional knowledge. Through cooking programs, for instance, residents build on generational recipes while incorporating new ideas to create menus that emphasize traditional cooking methods and environmentally friendly practices, such as avoiding preservatives and single-use plastics. These efforts not only sustain cultural heritage but also align with broader goals of environmental sustainability. Below is selected quotation from the participants.

"In bamboo schools, bamboo is usually taught to understand bamboo, related to the process of maintenance, cutting, and marking the age of bamboo." (Keramat Market Authority)

"The bamboo school that is intended for mothers is because bamboo itself has properties like mothers, so here mothers learn many things about bamboo in this bamboo school." (Trader)

"Our residents actually already have recipes from generation to generation, but this program can add to the list of new menus, traditional cooking methods, and serving that traditionally does not use preservatives and plastics in its presentation." (Local Officer of Village)

Together, these initiatives illustrate a multi-dimensional approach to community development. They foster economic independence by equipping residents with marketable skills, strengthen the village's cultural identity by preserving traditions, and promote a sustainable mindset through eco-conscious practices. This integrated model serves as a blueprint for empowering rural communities through collaborative, resource-driven, and culturally rooted programs.

3.2 Inspiration and Cultural Preservation

The interview results reveal a shared enthusiasm among participants for blending inspiration with cultural preservation, particularly through the development of the Keramat Market. This project is driven by a collective desire to create a space where tradition meets innovation, ensuring that the rich cultural heritage of Warugunung Village is both celebrated and sustained for future generations. Participants express a unified vision of the market as more than just a commercial hub; it is envisioned as a living testament to the community's identity, offering opportunities to showcase traditional arts, crafts, music, dance, and culinary traditions in meaningful and engaging ways. The initiative, deeply inspired by the successful Papringan Market model, represents a thoughtful approach to cultural continuity and economic empowerment. By integrating local values and cultural storytelling into every aspect of the market's

design and activities, the Keramat Market aims to reflect the history, uniqueness, and pride of the community. Participants recognize that this fusion of culture and commerce can serve as a catalyst for revitalizing traditional practices, particularly those at risk of being forgotten.

A recurring theme across interviews is the importance of involving the younger generation. Participants believe that engaging youth through programs like dance schools and other cultural activities not only instills a sense of pride in their heritage but also ensures that traditional practices remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. This intergenerational connection is seen as vital for preserving the community's cultural legacy while also inspiring innovation within traditional art forms. Furthermore, the Keramat Market is envisioned as a dynamic cultural hub where storytelling, performances, exhibitions, and workshops are seamlessly integrated into the market's daily operations. This multifaceted approach is designed to foster community pride, attract visitors from outside the village, and create sustainable economic opportunities. Below are example of the participants quotation from the interview.

"We are designing the Keramat Market to not only function as a market but as a center for cultural preservation." (Keramat Market Authority)

"My children are participating in the dance school, and it has been very exciting for them to learn traditional dances." (Trader)

"By highlighting traditional arts and crafts, we create opportunities for both cultural appreciation and financial independence." (Trader)

Participants believe that by showcasing the richness of their traditions in a vibrant, engaging manner, the market can elevate Warugunung Village's profile both nationally and internationally, positioning it as a model for culturally conscious community development.

4. Discussion

The findings reveal a multi-faceted strategy for empowering the Warugunung Village community through targeted training and skills development initiatives. These efforts, facilitated by partnerships with YBLL and PT. Multi Bintang Indonesia, emphasize economic independence, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. For instance, the Bamboo School provides participants, particularly women, with comprehensive knowledge of bamboo, from cultivation to its application in traditional crafts. This hands-on approach not only imparts marketable skills but also strengthens residents' connection to their cultural heritage. The symbolic association of bamboo with nurturing mothers highlights its cultural resonance, which reinforces the community's intrinsic value system.

This finding aligns with studies that underscore the importance of culturally embedded skills development programs in rural empowerment. For example, a study by Tim et al. (2021) suggests that rural communities achieve higher economic resilience when development initiatives incorporate traditional resources and practices, as seen with bamboo in Warugunung. Moreover, the emphasis on traditional cooking methods that avoid preservatives and single-use plastics reflects a commitment to sustainability, paralleling Thakur and Kumar (2024) and Bhatti and Alawad's, (2023) research on eco-conscious practices as a driver for cultural and environmental alignment. By equipping residents with marketable skills and fostering cultural pride, the programs serve as a blueprint for sustainable rural development (Bhattacharya, 2021; Yi et al., 2024). However, the findings suggest that continued support and resource allocation are necessary to ensure long-term impact and scalability.

The second theme highlights the community's innovative approach to preserving cultural heritage while fostering economic growth through the Keramat Market. Inspired by the Papingan Market model, this

initiative integrates traditional arts, crafts, and culinary traditions with commercial activities, creating a vibrant cultural hub. The emphasis on intergenerational engagement, such as involving youth in dance schools, underscores the community's recognition of the younger generation as both inheritors and innovators of traditional practices.

The vision of the Keramat Market as a dynamic cultural hub reflects broader trends in community-driven cultural preservation. Research by Qu and Cheer (2022) demonstrates that markets designed as cultural spaces enhance not only community cohesion but also attract external attention, elevating the profile of participating communities. This aligns with participants' aspirations to position Warugunung Village as a model for culturally conscious development. The findings also emphasize the market's role in revitalizing endangered practices, a critical aspect of cultural preservation. For example, workshops and exhibitions integrated into the market's operations encourage both local participation and external appreciation, fostering pride and economic opportunities (Daldanise, 2020; Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Suryawan et al., 2024). However, challenges may arise in maintaining the balance between commercialization and cultural authenticity, as noted in comparable community-market models.

The research has significant implications for community development programs, emphasizing the need for integrated approaches that combine economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and sustainability. The success of initiatives like the Bamboo School and Keramat Market highlights the value of partnerships and resource-focused development models in rural contexts. Policymakers and organizations can draw from these findings to design similar programs in other communities, ensuring that cultural heritage is both preserved and leveraged for economic benefits. However, limitations exist in the scalability of these initiatives. The success of the Warugunung Village programs depends heavily on consistent stakeholder involvement and resources, which may not be replicable in resource-constrained settings. Additionally, the research is based on qualitative interviews, which, while rich in insights, may not fully capture the broader community's perspectives. Future research should explore longitudinal outcomes of these initiatives, examining their economic and cultural impacts over time. Expanding the scope to include comparative studies with similar communities could also provide deeper insights into best practices for sustainable rural development. Strengthening collaborations with governmental and international organizations may enhance resource accessibility and program scalability, ensuring that these initiatives continue to thrive and inspire similar efforts globally.

5. Conclusion

This study underscores the transformative potential of culturally embedded and sustainability-driven community development initiatives. Two key themes emerged from the findings: Empowerment Through Training and Skills Development and Inspiration and Cultural Preservation. The first theme highlights the critical role of partnerships, such as those with YBLL and PT. Multi Bintang Indonesia, in fostering economic independence and cultural resilience. Programs like the Bamboo School equip residents, particularly women, with marketable skills, such as bamboo weaving and sustainable traditional cooking practices. These efforts not only bolster economic opportunities but also preserve cultural craftsmanship and promote environmentally conscious practices. The second theme illustrates the community's innovative approach to cultural preservation through the development of the Keramat Market. By blending tradition with modern commerce, the market serves as a vibrant cultural hub, showcasing arts, crafts, and culinary traditions while engaging the younger generation to ensure intergenerational continuity. These initiatives position Warugunung Village as a model for culturally conscious community development. The

research has significant implications for policymakers and development practitioners. It demonstrates the value of leveraging local resources and cultural heritage to foster sustainable and inclusive growth. However, the study also highlights limitations, including the reliance on consistent stakeholder involvement and resource availability, which may challenge scalability. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the research limits the generalizability of findings to other communities. Future efforts should focus on ensuring the long-term sustainability of such programs by strengthening partnerships and exploring funding opportunities. Comparative studies with similar communities and longitudinal assessments could offer deeper insights into best practices. By addressing these areas, culturally rooted development models like those in Warugunung Village can inspire broader, more impactful applications.

6. References

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