

The Potential of Fishermen's Wives as Transformation Agents in the Empowering of Family Income in Tegal, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Fishermen's income in Munjungagung Village tends to be unstable, which has a significant impact on their wives' roles. In addition to their traditional responsibilities as housewives, fishermen's wives also have the role of breadwinners, a responsibility that is difficult to balance with their domestic duties. Not infrequently, they often face marginalization and are passive in social activities, as a consequence of the gender-based division of labor in the fishing community. On this basis, this study attempted to map the role of fishermen's wives as agents of family economic change. The objective of this study was to assess the economic contributions of women in fishing households and to develop strategies to empower their economic status. This study was conducted in Munjungagung Village, Tegal Regency. Respondents for this study were 53 fishermen's wives, who were selected using the accidental sampling method. The data were analyzed descriptively comparatively to determine the income and expenditure of fishermen's families, as well as the contribution of fishermen's wives to fishermen's households. The study's findings suggest that fishermen's wives who are employed are still of working age. The results of this study indicate that fishermen's wives dedicate most of their time to domestic and economic activities, and little time to social activities. The economic contribution of fishermen's wives to fishermen's families is estimated to be between 43 and 45%. Food is the main expense for fishing families.

INTRODUCTION

Coastal communities can be defined as a group of people whose livelihoods depend directly on the use of the sea (Effendi *et al.*, 2015). The low income of fishermen and increasing family needs amidst declining catches and climate change make fishermen's wives play a dual role, namely a domestic role as a housewife and a public role as a breadwinner. This condition occurs not only in the fisheries sector but also in other economic sectors. In this modern era, women who work outside the home are common and considered normal. The opportunity for women to work outside the home is increasing with progress in various fields and sectors of life. The uncertainty of

fishermen's catches has shifted their role as the mainstay of the family economy. This condition has changed the dependence of the household economy and impacts the role, power, or structure of economic authority in the family. Fishermen's wives have the same responsibility as fishermen in meeting the family's economic needs.

However, fishermen's wives still experience marginalization due to various factors, including difficulty in obtaining capital due to minimal access to help with capital. The level of education of fishermen's wives is generally low (**Kune *et al.*, 2022**). This is also related to the low access of fishermen's wives to mastery of technology and minimal education. Therefore, efforts to improve the welfare of fishermen's wives are required to target these things. In fact, fishermen's wives can be used as empowerment assets. At the social level of coastal communities, the role of fishermen's wives in the economic sector has been an important contributor to the economic dynamics of coastal areas (**Novikarumsari, 2023; Ahmad, 2024**).

The role of fishermen's wives is of great importance to the survival of their households. As with other coastal villages, fishermen's wives in Munjungagung Village contribute to the family economy through various economic activities, including the sale of fish, trading, agricultural work and employment in fish factories. Fishermen's wives contribute to the household economy by undertaking domestic tasks and engaging in income-generating activities (**Lalopua *et al.*, 2019**). As is the case in other coastal regions, the population of Munjungagung Village is predominantly composed of fishing families. The majority of the local population engages in fishing as their primary occupation, leading to their categorization as economically disadvantaged. Despite the decline in income among fishermen, there is a pressing need to enhance their economic well-being. This decline has led to an increase in the number of fishermen's wives who are compelled to enter the workforce to support their families. In light of these observations, it is imperative to undertake a comprehensive study that aims to elucidate and map the role of fishermen's wives in the economic empowerment of their families. Specifically, the objective of this study was to ascertain the role of wives in the economy of fishermen's families and to determine the strategy for economic empowerment of fishermen's wives in Munjungagung Village, Tegal Regency.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to investigate the role of fishermen's wives as agents of family income empowerment, research was conducted in Munjungagung Village, Tegal Regency, Indonesia between March and April 2024. Munjungagung Village represents a significant center for fisheries activities on the north coast of the Java Sea. Most fishermen are engaged in small-scale fishing activities, with their catch landing at the local fishing port, namely Tanjungsari Fishing Port. The fishing community is the dominant social group in

Munjungagung Village. The husbands employed as fishermen typically do not engage in additional employment. The modest and erratic income of fishermen results in some of their families assuming that their income is inadequate. This, in turn, encourages fishermen's wives to engage in paid employment. The occupations undertaken by fishermen's wives include trading, fish seller, agricultural worker, and fish processing. Really, Munjungagung Village have several social activities that serve as a platform for interaction and friendship formation within the local community. Due to time constraints, several residents of Munjungagung Village, particularly those from fishing families, only engage in social activities, such as religious studies and social gatherings.

The data were gathered using the accidental sampling method, a technique for collecting samples from individuals or objects that are easily accessible and close to the researcher (Sugiyono, 2014; Aditia *et al.*, 2020). A total of 53 respondents were selected from 110 fishing families. The socio-economic conditions were studied through observation, interviews and the collection of secondary data from the village archive. To map the social and economic roles of fishermen's wives in fishermen's families, a survey was conducted to gain insight into the following aspects: the work of fishermen's wives, the role of fishermen's wives, the allocation of fishermen's wives' time, income and expenses, and types of social activities. This was achieved through observation and interviews. Furthermore, to develop an empowerment strategy for fishermen's wives in Munjungagung Village, Tegal Regency, data were collected on the obstacles faced by fishermen's wives, the skills possessed by fishermen's wives, and the opportunities, threats, advantages, and disadvantages present in Munjungagung Village. This was achieved through observations, interviews, and the processing of secondary data.

Data analysis

1. Contribution of fisherman's wife's income

The contribution of fishermen's wives to the overall income of their families was determined through a series of calculations. The results of these calculations were then employed to categorize the role of women's income in relation to the total income of their families (Table 1).

$$CWI = \frac{WI}{TFI}$$

$$\overline{CWI} = \frac{\sum_1^n CWI_n}{n}$$

Where:

CWI = contribution of fisherman's wife's income (%)

WI = wife fisherman income from activity economy (IDR)

TFI = Total of fisherman family income (Rp)

\overline{CWI} = Average of CWI

n = total number of sample

Table 1. Contribution assessment fisherman's wife

CWI (contribution)	Category
1 % - 19%	Very low
20% - 39%	Low
40% - 59%	Moderate
60% - 79%	High
≥ 80%	Very high

To ascertain the role of wives in fishing families in Munjungagung, the data were divided into five categories based on the role's interval value, as described in Table (2).

Table 2. Classification of the role of the fisherman's wife within the family

WR _i	Category
0% - 34%	No role
35% - 50%	Little role
51% - 65%	Moderate role
66% - 80%	Play a role
81% - 100%	Very Role

2. The role of the fisherman's wives in the fisherman's family

To gain insight into the role of fishemen's wives in family empowerment, examining the role of wives in fishermen's households is necessary. The role of wives was elucidated through a comparative descriptive analysis, which assessed fishermen's wife's perceptions of several indicators. Eight questionnaire assessment indicators were employed to describe the role of wives in the family. Respondents were asked to answer these criteria, selecting one of five Likert scale scores. The scores from each respondent were then tabulated and calculated using the following formula:

$$R_i = \frac{\sum_1^s f_{s,i} x S_i}{\sum_1^s f_{s,i}}$$

$$AR_i = \frac{1}{c} \sum_1^i R_i$$

$$WR_i = \frac{1}{i} AR_i$$

Where:

R_i = The role of fishermen's wife in criteria i

$f_{s,i}$ = frequency of score s for criteria i

S_i = value of score S

AR_i = Average role of fisherman's wife

WR_i = weight of role

c = total number of criteria

i = number of criteria

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RESULTS

Time allocation of fishermen's wives

Fishermen's wives in Munjungagung are very active. As social beings, they gather in their neighbourhood to carry out socio-economic activities, such as household, religious, social, economic, and organizing activities. To understand how fishermen's wives divide their time in a day, we mapped their time allocation based on their activity background. The present study categorized the time allocation of fishermen's wives into three distinct categories: economic activities, social activities, and domestic activities. The economic activities undertaken by fishermen's wives encompass fish processing, operating a food stall, farm labor, and fish sales. Notably, fishermen's wives engaged in trade allocate the most time to economic and social activities, while those engaged in farm labor allocate the least (Fig. 1). The results of this study demonstrate that traders allocate a greater proportion of their time to economic activities, while farm laborers exhibit the lowest levels of income from other employment. This suggests that fishermen's wives who allocate more time to economic activities may be able to generate higher incomes. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of **Hutapea *et al.* (2012)**, who asserted that increasing working hours is a proven positive and significant factor for income. That is to say, the more time a person spends working, the more income they earn.

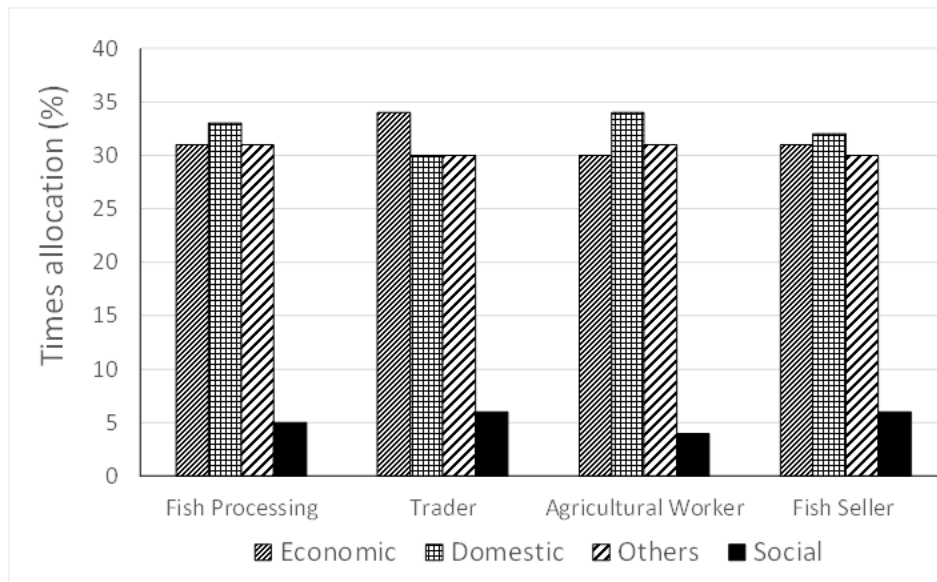


Fig. 1. Times allocation of fishermen's wives

Fisherman's family income

The term "family income" is defined as the total income earned by all members of a particular household. This income is used to meet the collective needs of the household in addition to the individual requirements of each household member (Safitri, 2019). The income of fishermen's families in Munjungagung is derived from various sources, including the husbands, wives, and, in some instances, children of the household. The analysis findings indicate that wives of fishermen play a crucial role in compensating for their husbands' income deficits and have the potential to enhance household family income. The results of this study indicate that a husband's limited income may prompt his wife to contribute her income to meet the household's needs. The role of fishermen's wives is particularly significant in the context of their husbands' uncertain income, given the nature of their work. The study findings (Table 3) indicate that fishermen's wives generate the highest income engaged in trading activities, with an income of IDR 260,000. The next highest income earners are fish traders, who earn an income of IDR 200,000; fish processors, who earn an income of IDR 70,000; and farm workers, who earn an income of IDR 70,000. The types of employment in question are contingent upon the possession of capital assets and the acquisition of requisite skills by fishermen's wives. The level of capital and the degree of skill possessed by the individual in question have a significant impact on the income they receive.

Table 3. Income of fisherman's wife in fisherman family

Occupation	Income (IDR)/day	Average (IDR/day)
Fish processing	34,667 - 100,000	70,000
Trader	87,895 - 431,579	260,000
Farm worker	70,000 - 70,000	70,000
Fish seller	67,333 - 326,667	200,000

The average expenditure of a fisherman's family

In general, expenditures by fishing households can be classified into two categories: food and non-food. As shown in Table (4), food expenditures exceed non-food expenditures. The average total food expenditure of fishing families in Munjungagung Village is 66% per day, while non-food expenditure is 34% per day.

Table 4. Average fisherman's households expenditure

Fisherman's wife's occupation	Expenditure family fisherman/day				Total (IDR)
	Food (IDR)	%	Non Food (IDR)	%	
Fish processing	55,000	61	35,333	39	90,333
Trader	57,105	64	32,281	36	89,386
Agriculture worker	63,750	74	22,500	26	86,250
Fish Seller	58,000	65	30,556	35	88,556
Average	58,464	66	30,167	34	88,631

The number of family members and the income earned by a household both have a significant impact on household expenditure. The number of family members in a household affects the potential for improvement in expenditure on the fisherman household. However, if this is not balanced with sufficient income, it can lead to a decrease in the level of household welfare (Bawolye *et al.*, 2019). The results of this study (Table 5) indicate that the trader reported the highest income margin (IDR 798,596), while the lowest income was reported by agricultural workers (IDR 157,500).

Table 5. Margin income House ladder fisherman

Work	Margin income/day (season)		Amount (Rp)
	Fishing season (Rp)	Lack season (Rp)	
Fish processing	289,222	54,222	343,444
Trader	683,772	114,825	798,596
Agriculture worker	123,750	33,750	157,500
Fish Seller	543,667	76,000	619,667
Average	410,103	69,699	479,802

Contribution fisherman wife's to the family income

The income contribution of the housewife refers to the share of income earned by the fishers' wives in the total household income. It has been observed that as the income generated by the husband decreases, the contribution of the wife increases (Wulandari *et al.*, 2017). In Munjungagung village, the contribution of fishermen's wives during the peak season ranges from 32.66% to 63.10% with an average of 43.27%, which is in the moderate category (Fig. 2). Meanwhile, the husband's contribution is 53.71%.

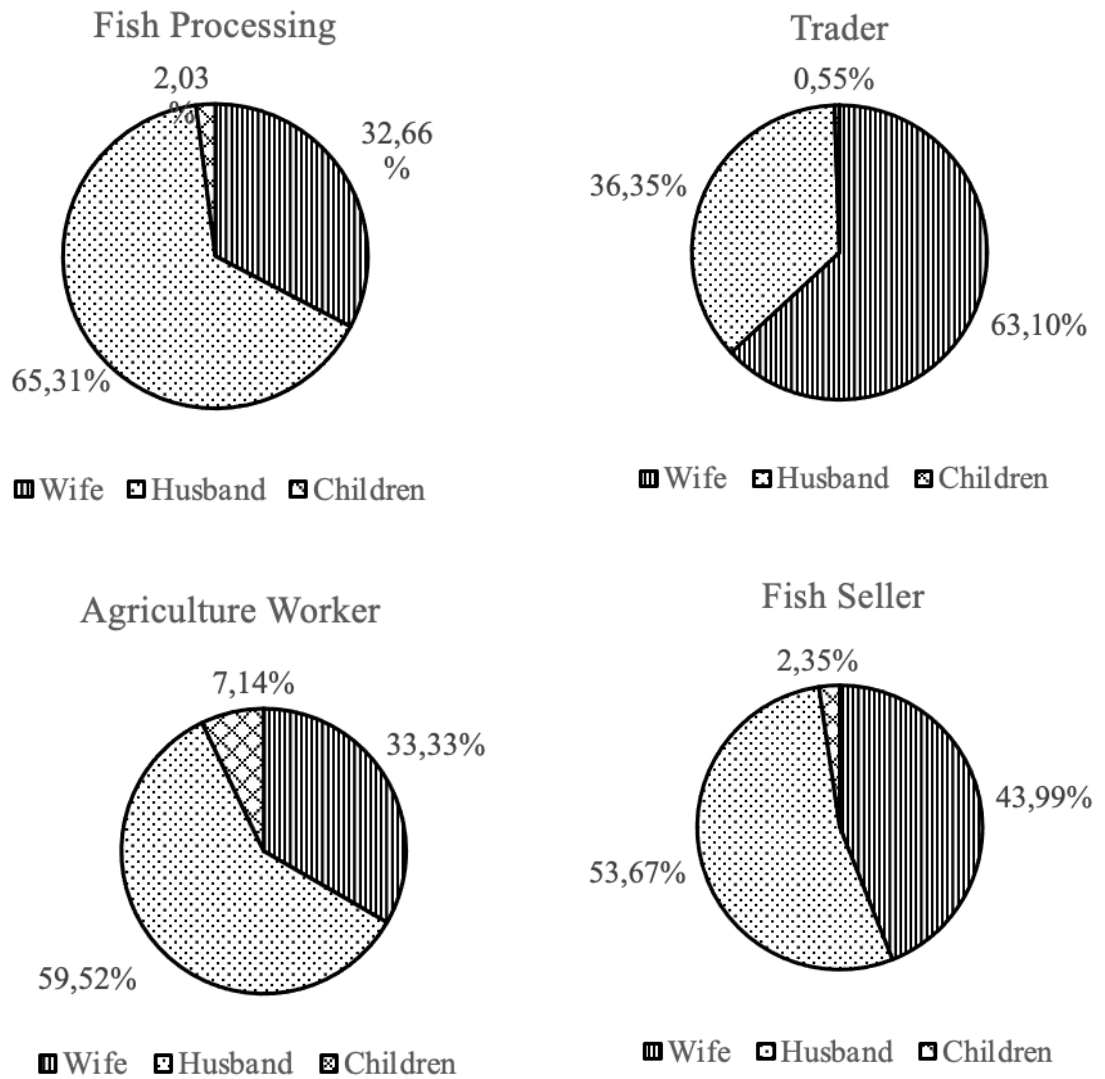


Fig. 2. Contribution of fishermen's wives (CWI) to the family income during the peak season

As illustrated in Fig. (3), the contribution of fishermen's wives during the low season, when fishermen's income is currently not stable enough, increased on average by 46.22%. This is included in the moderate category. If the contribution of fishermen's wives increases during the low season, the contribution of fishermen to total household income decreases to around 48.67%. Furthermore, an analysis of the contribution of fishermen's wives in Munjungagung Village indicated that the contribution of wives engaged in fishing during the low season is higher (2.95%) than the contribution of fishermen's wives during the high season. These findings also suggest that the contribution of wives' income is relatively lower than that of their husbands.

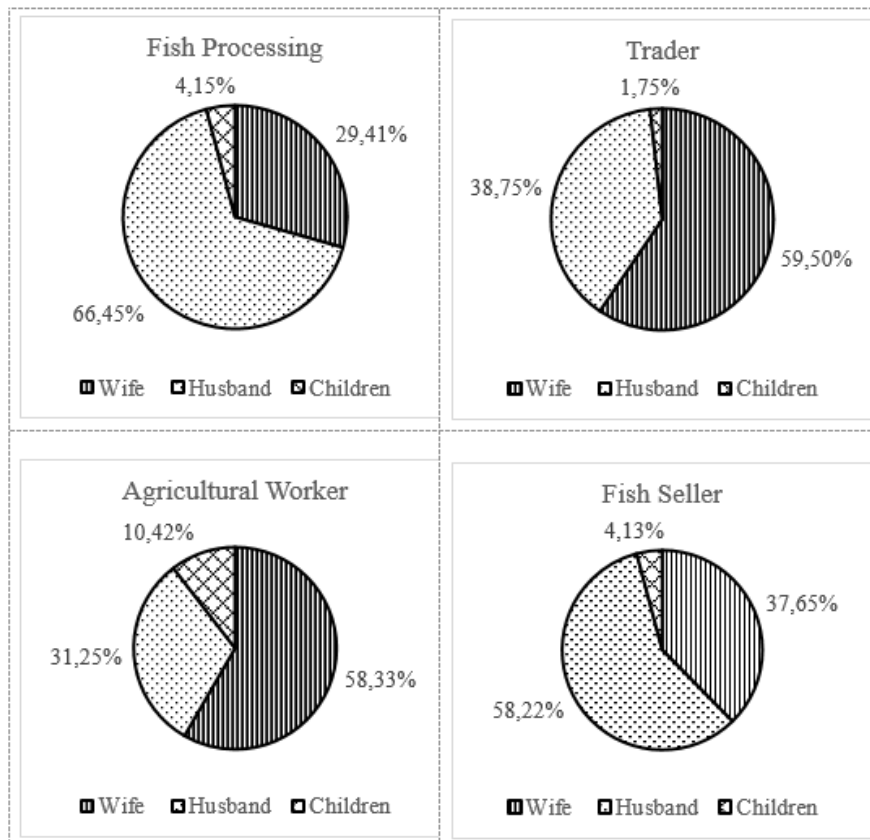


Fig. 3. Contributions of fishermen's wives (CWI) to the family income during low season

Role of fisherman’s wife in fisherman household

In order to gain insight into the role of wives in fishermen's households, this study employed a measurement approach, utilizing the perceptions of fishermen's wives in relation to eight key indicators. To map the perception of the role of fishermen's wives, a Likert scale was provided to fishermen's wives, who were asked to provide answers in the form of alternative answer choices. The results of this study (Table 6) indicate that fishermen's wives are willing to assume responsibility for childcare (76%),

meeting non-food (secondary) needs (73%), and organizing social activities (71%). Furthermore, fishermen's wives indicated that they played a significant role in their children's education (52%), food needs (54%), health (63%), and interaction with family (64%). However, they stated that their involvement in earning a living was less significant.

Table 6. The Role of the wife in fisherman's household

Description	Frequency					Score	Average	Weight (%)	Category
	1 NR	2 LR	3 MR	4 PR	5 VR				
Earning for family living	14	24	9	4	2	115	2,17	43	LR
Parenting	-	3	5	45	-	201	3,79	76	PR
Child education	-	35	5	11	2	139	2,62	52	CR
Providing for food	-	33	6	12	2	142	2,68	54	CR
Providing for non food	-	5	10	36	2	184	3,47	73	PR
Organization	-	8	8	37	-	188	3,55	71	PR
Healthy	-	17	12	22	2	168	3,17	63	CR
interaction with relatives	-	14	15	24	-	169	3,19	64	CR
Average						163	3	62	CR

Note: NR: No role; LR : Little role; MR: Moderate role; PR: Play a role: VR: Very role

DISCUSSION

The role of wives in fishermen's households in Munjungagung Village is multifaceted. Fishermen's wives in Munjungagung Village usually have a more prominent role in the family than their husbands. It is a common practice for fishermen's wives to engage in paid work to meet the social and economic needs of their households. The result of this division of labor is that women take a dominant role in the household economy and in managing household resources (**Raodah, 2013**). During the study, it was observed that a large number of fishermen's wives in Munjungagung Village brought their children to work. Due to the informal nature of their work, they have the flexibility to care for their children while working. In addition, their residences are close to their workplaces, allowing them to do household chores and work simultaneously, especially traders, with a distance from their residence to the trading place of about 5-7 meters. The proximity of the residence to relatives also allows for easy assistance in case of need. Fishermen in Munjungagung Village go on one-day fishing trips, which allows fishermen's families to share the responsibilities of taking care of children and household chores. After the fishermen return from the sea, some families help their children with housework or do household chores such as drying and folding clothes.

The results of this study indicate that fishermen's wives have a significant role in terms of time spent working, which reaches 32% of the total time, and up to 5% for social activities. The contribution of fishermen's wives to the economic stability of their families is 41.79% during the fishing season and 41.57% during the non-fishing season. Since the income earned from work as fishermen is not enough to meet household needs, it has become common practice for fishermen's wives to work to earn additional income. This has an impact on the shift in the division of roles in the household. As a result, women become a dominant force in terms of household economy and an important figure in this role (**Raodah, 2013**). It can be concluded that fishermen's wives play a significant role in the transformation of the economic empowerment of fishermen's families, thus providing them with the opportunity to improve their welfare and financial independence.

The contribution of fishermen's wives to the financial stability of their households has consistently been an important aspect of their families' livelihoods (**Nirmasari 2022; Nainggolan & Puspitawati, 2023**). In fact, their presence in meeting the needs of the family on an ongoing basis is often a key factor in maintaining the financial stability of the household when facing economic challenges. **Kusnadi (2006)** highlights the significant economic contribution of coastal women, noting their important roles at both the household and community levels. At the household level, coastal women play an important role in the economic stability of the family, either by working with their husbands or with others. The functional relationship between husband and wife in meeting the economic needs of the household is not only complementary or helpful in meeting these needs but also determines the availability of economic resources for household needs (**Puspitawati et al., 2024**). It is widely recognized that equal conditions are needed for men and women, allowing them to participate in various activities, including politics, economics, socio-culture, national defense and security, and enjoy the fruits of development. Gender equality is the absence of discrimination against women and men in terms of opportunities, resource allocation, benefits, and access to health services. Equality between men and women is achieved when there is equality in power and influence, equality in opportunity and freedom to work or do business, equality in education levels, aspirations, internet access, talents and abilities, equality in the sharing of domestic responsibilities and childcare, and equality in freedom from pressure, intimidation and violence against women at home and at work (**Sasmita et al., 2022**).

Strategy for empowering fishermen's wives ability

The Fishermen's Wives Empowerment Program in Munjungagung Village is a program designed to improve the capacity of individuals to take initiative and act independently. Furthermore, empowerment of fishermen's wives includes the capacity to be involved in all aspects of life (**Aflandari et al., 2018**). To strengthen the role of wives, it is important to provide comprehensive assistance to all wives involved in income-generating work. The methods used to empower fishermen's wives should be based on

field research. The ensuing evaluation has yielded several strategic recommendations for the enhancement of the role of fishermen's wives in Munjungagung Village, Tegal Regency, which are as follows:

1. The contribution of wives to productive activities needs to be maximized through the implementation of skills training, providing support, and encouraging productive businesses. The role of wives in the household economy is very important. They can make a significant contribution to the local economy by developing productive economic businesses, which is part of their empowerment efforts in utilizing existing resources.
2. Development of technology to support fishermen's wives' businesses. The development of technology that is in line with the needs and challenges faced by fishermen's wives' businesses can increase their productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness, thereby strengthening their contribution to the regional and national economy.
3. The utilisation of existing social activities is a further avenue for consideration. It is recommended that fishermen's wives become more active in existing social activities in order to increase their knowledge and facilitate access to each other. This will strengthen their role in building society and increasing effectiveness.
4. Forming mutually beneficial partnerships with the aim of improving business sustainability. This training focuses on the management of catches and the processing of unsold fresh fish into products such as fish floss, meatballs, or fish crackers. These products have a high market demand.

CONCLUSION

Based on the current investigation, it can be concluded that, the primary livelihood of the people in Munjungagung Village is fishing. On average, fishermen in the village do not have secondary jobs, which leads their wives to seek employment. Most working fishermen's wives are within the productive age range. Regarding their education levels, 81% of working fishermen's wives have completed elementary school, 6% have finished junior high school, and the remaining 13% have not attended school. In addition, fishermen's wives predominantly spend their time on domestic activities. However, those who work as traders devote most of their time to their jobs, resulting in low participation in social activities. The contribution of fishermen's wives to their household income during the fishing season is 0.22% higher than during the lean season. Household expenses are primarily allocated to food (66%) and non-food items (34%). The role of fishermen's wives in supporting their households in Munjungagung Village is classified as fairly significant, contributing 62% to household well-being. The analysis identified five strategies for empowering fishermen's wives in Munjungagung Village, with three key recommended objectives:

1. Supporting and optimizing fishermen's wives' involvement in productive businesses.
2. Developing technology to enhance businesses owned by fishermen's wives.
3. Utilizing existing social activities to foster engagement and support.

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