

Empowerment of the Urban Poor in Improving Food Security (Case Study: Development of Juma Cindai Garden in Cinta Damai Village)

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the role of community empowerment in enhancing food security within urban areas, focusing on the development of the Juma Cindai Agroeducation Garden in Cinta Damai Village, Medan, Indonesia. Utilizing qualitative methodologies, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings highlight that unifying scattered farmer groups into the Juma Cindai Agroeducation Group significantly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of empowerment programs. Regular community discussions and FGDs facilitated the planning and implementation of relevant activities, such as hydroponics training. Positive community responses and active participation indicated a successful empowerment initiative. Intensive monitoring and evaluation ensured the program's alignment with its objectives, fostering technical skill development and social mindset shifts toward sustainable agriculture. The study concludes that structured community empowerment through urban agriculture can effectively enhance food security, economic independence, and community resilience against urbanization's impacts.

INTRODUCTION

Food security in Indonesia is food availability and a person's ability to access and survive (Samsir, 2015). However, Indonesia has significant food security problems, including regional disparities and unequal access. For this reason, the government of Indonesia has set the direction for a national food policy, independent and sovereign food security, and a program to achieve food self-sufficiency (Rachmat, 2015). So far, the government has made other efforts to support food security in Indonesia, namely determining staple food commodities, increasing food productivity and access, and developing farmers' productivity and capabilities (Putradiyanto, 2015). Food security in Indonesia is also influenced by population growth, population increase, and conversion of agricultural land functions (Karini, 2013). This causes many other challenges and disruptions to improve equitable food security.

The issue of food security in all regions of Indonesia raises many debates and conflicts. Each region has different obstacles in dealing with food security, such as natural disasters, climate change, and market dynamics. In urban areas, the issue of food security is also still a factor in generating conflicts and creating other challenges. Urbanization or conversion of agricultural land is the main problem affecting food security in urban areas (Afif et al., 2014). Of course, this will impact poverty in urban areas caused by people's access to adequate and nutritious food.

Poverty in urban areas is caused by factors such as limited quality of life, infrastructure, economy, and resources (Sholihah & Akliyah, 2022; Wahyuningsih et al., 2023). Efforts that can be made to overcome various limitations require the empowerment of resources. Community empowerment is an effort to increase the community's ability, skills, and awareness so that they can actively participate in the decision-making process and management of resources owned by the community (Seran et al., 2024). Thus, the community can become more independent and empowered to overcome problems and improve their quality of life. The government also has a role in community empowerment by providing motivation, resource facilities, and regulations that govern and supervise community empowerment activities (Gaffar et al., 2023; Nisfani, 2022).

Based on the explanation above, researchers relate to previous studies on empowering people experiencing poverty to improve food security in urban areas. Empowerment can be done by managing natural resources by increasing the ability of low-income people (Amien et al., 2022). The urban poor can also cultivate vacant lands to improve food security (Rasdi et al., 2023). Utilizing home yards can also help improve food security in urban areas (Halim & Setiawan, 2024). Urban communities require appropriate skills and technologies to increase crop yields and face the challenges of climate change and global markets (Tambunan & Yassir, 2023; Tampubolon et al., 2020). Empowering housing communities through various innovations to improve food security (Setiyaningsih et al., 2023).

Through the explanation above, researchers want to examine the problems in one of the urban poor areas, namely Kelurahan Cinta Damai. This

research aims to describe the food security condition in urban areas in Indonesia, especially in Kelurahan Cinta Damai, and identify the factors that influence it. This research also focuses on analyzing the role of community empowerment in improving food security in urban areas and evaluating the development of Kebun Juma Cindai as an effort to improve food security in Cinta Damai Village. The theoretical benefits of this research are that it will add insight into food security in urban areas and the role of community empowerment in overcoming food security problems, and it will contribute to scientific literature. Practically, this research is expected to provide recommendations for the government and related agencies in designing community empowerment programs to improve food security and guidance for urban communities in developing community gardens. From a policy perspective, this research provides data and information that policymakers can use to formulate more effective food security strategies and establish regulations and policies that support community empowerment for food security in urban areas.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Public Policy

Public policy encompasses the actions taken by governments to tackle societal issues or concerns. Its definition spans various interpretations, from "the actions and impacts of the government" to "any decision or indecision by the government." Public policy is guided by specific objectives executed by authorized individuals or groups, often involving strategies for resource allocation to address public issues. Key characteristics of public policy include its purposeful nature, the involvement of authorities, the concurrence of multiple decisions, and the potential to be either well-received or controversial. While public participation is often a component, policies can also be formulated in private and frequently reflect the interests of particular groups (Regif et al., 2024).

Public Policy Implementation

The notion of public policy implementation has progressed through three generations. The initial iteration emerged during the 1970s to early 1980s, characterized by the utilization of top-down theories or forward mapping models for policy implementation. The second generation of theories, known as bottom-up theories or backward mapping, arose throughout the period from the 1980s to 1985. From 1985 to the present, a third generation has emerged, characterized by the development of hybrid theories. George Edward III's (1980) policy implementation theory emphasizes the significance of the policy implementation process. It asserts that even if a policy is effectively formulated, its objectives cannot be realized if the implementation is not adequately prepared and planned. Conversely, a policy that is badly drafted will fail to fulfill its objectives, even if it is implemented effectively.

Within the process of policy implementation, there exists a phenomena referred to as the implementation gap. This refers to the disparity between the

anticipated outcomes envisioned by policymakers and the actual results that are attained. According to Wahab (2021), the extent of the gap is contingent upon the implementation capability, which refers to the organization or actor's ability to carry out the policy. The implementation process consists of three crucial components: the program or policy being executed, the target group that will get the benefits, and the implementing elements, which include both organizations and persons responsible for carrying out and overseeing the implementation.

Policy analysts contend that policy implementation is influenced by both driving and inhibiting forces. Edward III (1980) outlines four key determinants that impact the effectiveness of policy implementation: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Communication encompasses the process of transmitting information to policy implementers with a focus on ensuring clarity and consistency. Resources encompass personnel, financial allocation, machinery, data, and decision-making power. Disposition refers to the inherent qualities of policy implementers, including their level of dedication and integrity. The bureaucratic structure is associated with the implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and the division of bureaucratic tasks.

Furthermore, numerous models have been devised to scrutinize the execution of public policies. Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) propose an implementation analysis approach that identifies the variables that influence the achievement of policy objectives. Grindle's approach (2021) highlights the significance of both policy content and implementation circumstances. Edward III's (1980) model delineates the explicit and implicit influence of variables such as communication and bureaucratic structure on the execution of policies. The van Meter and van Horn model highlights the significance of policy measures and objectives in determining the effectiveness of implementation.

The efficacy of policy implementation can be gauged by the procedural steps taken and the attainment of the ultimate objective (output). According to Grindle (2021), the evaluation of policy implementation success can be determined by assessing the effectiveness of the process and the extent to which program objectives are met. According to Edward III (1980), successful implementation of decisions requires effective execution. Policy implementation refers to the process of putting policies into action to achieve predetermined goals. This process is carried out by policy actors who have specific roles in the implementation process.

The Concept of Community Empowerment

Community empowerment is an essential process in development that aims to increase the strength and empowerment of the community. Empowerment is carried out in a transformative, participatory, and sustainable manner through increasing people's ability to overcome fundamental problems and improve their living conditions. Various definitions of empowerment include community awareness, strengthening weak groups, and providing resources to improve the ability to determine the future. The principles of empowerment include equality, participation, self-reliance, and sustainability,

which ensure the active involvement of the community in the empowerment process.

Community empowerment aims to form individuals and communities who are independent in thinking, acting, and controlling what they do. Empowerment aims to improve education, accessibility, action, institutions, enterprises, income, environment, life, and society. Stages of empowerment include fostering the desire to change, developing willingness, increasing participation, and the effectiveness of empowerment activities. Empowerment strategies include creating a conducive climate, strengthening community capabilities, protecting weak groups, and maintaining a balance of power. Indicators of successful empowerment include reducing the number of poor people, developing income-generating businesses, increasing community concern, and increasing the capacity and income of low-income families.

Food security includes sufficient availability, adequate food access, and appropriate food utilization. Food security is assessed by households and individuals' availability, access and utilization of food. An essential aspect of food security is the ability of people to access nutritious food and to utilize food properly. Food security indicators include the proportion of food income, the level of energy adequacy, and the share of food expenditure. Food security aims to meet the food needs of each sustainably.

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to determine effective strategies for enhancing impoverished individuals' socio-economic status to enhance their access to and availability of food resources. Researchers employed qualitative research methodologies to address these inquiries. Qualitative research aims to uncover qualitative information by highlighting the process and meaning behind a problem. These approaches involve using research processes to gather descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals and observations of their behaviour (Moleong, 2012). The research was carried out at the Juma Cindai Agroeducation Garden in Cinta Damai Village, Medan Helvetia District, Medan City, to uncover and comprehend the underlying factors behind phenomena that are occasionally challenging to comprehend fully.

Researchers utilized two sorts of data sources, namely primary data and secondary data, to identify and elucidate phenomena about the underlying problem. Researchers gather primary data through interviews with informants, whereas secondary data is acquired through literature studies, documentation, books, and archives (Sugiyono, 2013). The data collection methods employed included interviews, observation, and documentation. The data analysis technique had three distinct stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2020).

RESULTS

Empowerment of the Urban Poor in Improving Food Security through the Development of Juma Cindai Gardens in Cinta Damai Village

This study highlights the importance of empowering the urban poor to improve food security by developing the Juma Cindai garden in Cinta Damai Village. This empowerment aims to increase people's knowledge, skills and awareness of the importance of producing food independently amid rapid urbanization. Urbanization has converted many agricultural lands into residential areas, reducing the availability of land for agriculture in urban areas. This effort is crucial in light of the growing global food crisis, which can affect the human right to freedom from hunger and malnutrition. By focusing on the development of Juma Cindai gardens, it is hoped to create sufficient, safe and affordable local food sources for the community, thereby supporting food security at the household level and reducing dependence on external food supplies.

This study reviews community empowerment efforts in Cinta Damai Village, Medan City, focusing on identifying potentials, problems and opportunities. Initially, the kelurahan had several scattered farmer groups, but the existence of many groups often posed challenges to the efficiency of empowerment programs. In interviews with Ms Syena Siregar, the Head of Cinta Damai Village, and the Head of the Village PKK, it was revealed that the idea of integrating the various farmer groups into a single entity, now known as the Juma Cindai Agroeducation Group, had emerged as a solution to improve the coordination and effectiveness of empowerment activities. This unification process aims to reduce administrative barriers and utilize the community's potential more optimally. This step aligns with efforts to build local food security amidst rapid urbanization in Medan City. Urbanization has changed the land landscape, narrowed the space for agriculture, and posed new challenges in meeting the food needs of urban communities.

To plan empowerment activities, Cinta Damai Village regularly holds discussions and Forum Group Discussions (FGDs) with the PKK and local farmer groups. These FGDs serve as an essential platform to listen to the aspirations and needs of the community, including in planning the hydroponics training planned for October 2022. According to Ms Syena Siregar, these discussions aim to ensure that the planned empowerment activities are relevant, acceptable, and well executed by all relevant parties.

Positive responses from farmer group members, as conveyed by Mr. Yosafat and Ms. Cindi from the Juma Cindai Agroeducation Group, indicate that the socialization conducted by Cinta Damai Village successfully inspired and motivated the community to engage in the empowerment program actively. They welcomed the local government's initiative to utilize vacant land and improve farming skills, primarily through hydroponic technology, which was considered an innovative solution for dealing with limited agricultural land in urban areas.

Furthermore, an empowerment activity plan was developed by considering suggestions from local stakeholders. The plan includes concrete steps such as training, socialization, and technical support to ensure successful

and sustainable implementation (Lubis & Elida, 2024). The head of the PKK, Kelurahan Cinta Damai, emphasized that this plan was designed to address the concrete challenges faced by farmer groups and optimize their potential to produce sufficient and quality local food. Overall, community empowerment efforts in Kelurahan Cinta Damai aim to improve economic independence and welfare and build sustainable food security at the local level. With strong collaboration between the local government, community groups, and agricultural experts, this initiative can serve as an example for other regions in facing the challenges of urbanization and improving food security in Indonesia.

Implementation of Juma Cindai Farm Development in Cinta Damai Village

Agroeducation Juma Cindai, established in Cinta Damai Village, Medan Helvetia, Medan City, is a community empowerment initiative through the revitalization of vacant land into urban farm gardens. Started in late 2022, the project materialized after hydroponic training for local farmer groups. Led by the Head of Kelurahan Cinta Damai, Mrs. Syena Siregar, and the Head of Agroedukasi Juma Cindai, Mr. Yosafat, the program has benefited from the local government's assistance in the form of farming equipment and additional training. The farmer group members have shown great enthusiasm in the process, actively contributing to the management of the farm and attending various trainings related to crop cultivation. Although there has yet to be private sector involvement in the project, good coordination with the local government and Medan City Agriculture Office continues to improve the management and attractiveness of Agroedukasi Juma Cindai as a sustainable local education and tourism destination.

The study of Agroedukasi Juma Cindai in Cinta Damai Village, Medan Helvetia, highlighted an intensive approach to monitoring and evaluation (PME) to ensure the success of community empowerment. The PME process was initiated with the active participation of the Lurah of Cinta Damai, Mrs. Syena Siregar, and the Kelurahan PKK committee. They routinely monitor and evaluate each stage of the activities, from socialization to technical agricultural training, with the aim that all activities contribute maximally to community development.

PME is conducted in-depth to check the extent to which the community empowerment program runs according to its objectives. The results of this monitoring become the basis for adjustments and improvements where necessary so that the program can continue to evolve according to the needs and expectations of the local community. The monthly evaluations held by Cinta Damai Village not only evaluate technical achievements, such as improved farming skills, but also measure social impacts, such as changes in mindset and awareness of the importance of sustainable agriculture.

The project has brought about significant changes in the community's mindset regarding modern farming techniques and the use of social media for information dissemination. While there are still challenges in changing the overall mindset, the program's success in increasing community participation and skills is a positive first step. Through close cooperation between the local

government and the community, Juma Cindai Agroeducation is a source of knowledge and a symbol of hope for future sustainable development. As such, the project fulfils a practical need for improving local agriculture and builds the foundation for a more independent and empowered community. Through careful planning, meticulous implementation, and regular evaluation, Agroedukasi Juma Cindai proves that community empowerment efforts can significantly sustain the welfare of local communities.

DISCUSSIONS

Based on the research conducted by the researcher, there are vital aspects that include the importance of community empowerment in improving food security in urban areas, the implementation of the Juma Cindai Agroeducation project in Cinta Damai Village, and the evaluation of the social and technical impacts of the program. The research confirms that community empowerment is crucial in addressing food security challenges in urban areas. Urbanization has transformed agricultural landscapes into settlements, reducing the space for local food production. Through the development of the Juma Cindai garden, Cinta Damai Village demonstrated concrete efforts to utilize vacant land and increase community involvement in urban agriculture. This is in line with the concept of empowerment, which focuses on improving the ability and independence of communities to address their problems.

The implementation of the Juma Cindai Agroeducation project in Kelurahan Cinta Damai highlights the importance of structured management and active participation from the local government and the local community. By involving Lurah Cinta Damai, PKK, and local farmer groups, the project facilitated technical training, garden management, and socialization to the community on modern farming technologies such as hydroponics. This improved farming skills and broadened the community's horizons regarding sustainable agricultural practices. Regular program evaluation (PME) is essential in ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of Juma Cindai Agroeducation. Monthly evaluations conducted by Cinta Damai Village help measure technical achievements, such as increased agricultural production, and social impacts, such as changes in community attitudes and knowledge related to agriculture. This demonstrates a commitment to continuously improve and adapt the program according to the needs and challenges.

Overall, the results of this study illustrate that community empowerment through an urban agriculture approach can be an effective solution for improving food security in urbanized environments. Through close cooperation between local governments, communities, and agricultural experts, programs such as Juma Cindai Agroeducation encourage economic independence and build the foundation for a more empowered community. Furthermore, this study contributes to the scholarly literature on community empowerment and food security in urban areas and provides policy recommendations for scaling up similar programs elsewhere.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on research conducted in Kelurahan Cinta Damai, Medan, this study highlights the importance of community empowerment in improving food security in urban areas through the development of Kebun Juma Cindai. Through this empowerment initiative, local communities revitalize vacant land into productive agricultural gardens. This is a concrete solution to the challenge of urbanization, which is reducing agricultural land in urban areas. By involving various farmer groups and using a participatory approach, the local government can unite efforts to increase the availability of sufficient, safe, and affordable local food. Regular evaluations and structured management also ensure the sustainability of the program and its effectiveness in enhancing community economic independence and strengthening food security at the local level. This research makes an essential contribution to the scientific literature on community empowerment and strategies for improving food security in urban areas, hoping that it can inspire and provide guidance for other regions facing similar challenges.

FURTHER STUDY

Based on the research results, future studies should consider additional variables beyond empowerment strategies and urban agriculture techniques to understand their impact on food security better. For example, future research could explore the role of government policies, community engagement, and financial support in the success of urban agricultural projects. Additionally, developing a comprehensive model to predict challenges such as resource availability, economic sustainability, and climatic factors could help stakeholders make informed decisions and enhance the resilience of urban agricultural practices. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into these initiatives' sustainability and broader socio-economic effects. Integrating modern agricultural technologies with traditional practices could offer innovative solutions to urban food security challenges.

Furthermore, assessing the effectiveness of educational approaches in improving the technical skills of urban farmers and examining the social dynamics within empowered communities could reveal the changes in social capital, community cohesion, and collective action. Overall, future studies aim to build a holistic understanding of the factors influencing the success of community empowerment programs in urban agriculture. This contributes to developing more effective strategies to enhance food security and resilience in urban environments.

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