Inequality Between the Potential of Fishery Resources and the Poverty Level of Fisherman Communities in Coastal Areas of Indonesia

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Inequality Between the Potential of Fishery Resources and the Poverty Level of Fisherman Communities in Coastal Areas of Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The background of this research is that Indonesia, as a maritime nation, recorded a capture fisheries production of 7.7 million tons in 2023, making it one of the largest in the world. However, the welfare of fishing communities in coastal areas remains low, indicating a sharp imbalance between the vast economic potential of the fisheries sector and the low social welfare experienced by fishers. The purpose of this research is to provide an updated analysis of the disparity between Indonesia's marine resource potential and the poverty experienced by coastal fishing communities. In this research, the method used is a juridical-empirical approach by reviewing policies and conducting interviews with fishers in Pekalongan, Juwana, and Tegal. The results obtained show that many fishing households live in vulnerable conditions due to inadequate fisheries management policies, excessive resource exploitation, and limited access to infrastructure and basic services such as education and healthcare. Exploitative practices by actors with economic and political power further marginalize these communities, while bureaucracy and corruption at both local and national levels hinder efforts to improve their welfare. This inequality not only weakens social and economic development but also risks causing ecological damage and threatening the sustainability of marine resources. The conclusion that can be drawn is that overcoming these challenges requires comprehensive and coordinated measures to integrate economic, social, and environmental objectives in coastal development.

Keywords: Fisheries; Poverty, Fishermen; Coastal Areas

ABSTRAK

Latar belakang dari penelitian ini adalah Indonesia, sebagai negara maritim, mencatat produksi perikanan tangkap sebesar 7,7 juta ton pada tahun 2023, menjadikannya salah satu yang terbesar di dunia. Namun, kesejahteraan masyarakat nelayan di wilayah pesisir masih rendah, menunjukkan ketidakseimbangan yang tajam antara potensi ekonomi sektor perikanan yang sangat besar dengan rendahnya kesejahteraan sosial yang dialami oleh masyarakat nelayan. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah memberikan analisis terkini tentang ketimpangan antara potensi sumber daya laut Indonesia dan kemiskinan yang dialami oleh masyarakat nelayan pesisir. Dalam penelitian ini, metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan yuridis-empiris dengan meninjau kebijakan dan melakukan wawancara dengan nelayan di Pekalongan, Juwana, dan Tegal. Hasil yang diperoleh menunjukkan bahwa banyak rumah tangga nelayan hidup dalam kondisi rentan akibat kebijakan pengelolaan perikanan yang tidak memadai, eksploitasi sumber daya secara berlebihan, dan terbatasnya akses terhadap infrastruktur dan layanan dasar seperti pendidikan dan layanan kesehatan. Praktik eksploitatif oleh aktor-aktor yang berkuasa secara ekonomi dan politik semakin meminggirkan masyarakat ini, sementara birokrasi dan korupsi di tingkat lokal maupun nasional menghambat upaya peningkatan kesejahteraan mereka. Kesenjangan ini tidak hanya melemahkan pembangunan sosial dan ekonomi, tetapi juga berisiko menimbulkan kerusakan ekologis dan mengancam keberlanjutan sumber daya laut. Kesimpulan yang dapat ditarik

adalah mengatasi tantangan ini memerlukan langkah-langkah yang komprehensif dan terkoordinasi untuk mengintegrasikan tujuan ekonomi, sosial, dan lingkungan dalam pembangunan pesisir.

Kata Kunci: Perikanan; Kemiskinan; Nelayan, Pesisir.

A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world, with its legal status as an archipelagic state recognized under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982). Indonesia encompasses more than 81,000 km of coastline and a marine area of approximately 3.1 million km², comprising a total of 17,508 islands. Under the UNCLOS 1982, Indonesia holds sovereign rights over its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), covering around 2.7 million km², which grants the authority to explore, exploit, manage, and conduct research on both living and non-living marine resources (Silviana et al., 2021). This status expands Indonesia's maritime territory through the use of archipelagic baselines, significantly increasing the area under its sovereignty and jurisdiction. The expansion of maritime space provides substantial benefits, particularly from its abundant natural resources, both living resources such as fisheries and non-living marine assets. Indonesia possesses a sea area of approximately 5.8 million km² and has the world's second-longest coastline, stretching 99,093 kilometers. The archipelagic composition reflected in the island data above underscores that the majority of Indonesia's national territory approximately 63% to 70% is maritime in nature (Direktorat Jenderal Pengelolaan Ruang Laut, 2025). Data from the Geospatial Information Agency (BIG) further confirm Indonesia's coastline length of 99,093 kilometers, making it the second longest globally and offering vast opportunities for maritime and coastal development. BIG has revised Indonesia's coastline length several times initially recorded at 81,000 km, then updated to 95,181 km, and most recently to 99,093 km. This geographical advantage results in significant natural resource availability, particularly diverse and abundant fish stocks that serve as strategic economic assets for national development.

Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (2022–2023) indicate that Indonesia's marine capture fisheries production reached 7,026,425 tons in 2022 and increased to 7,373,516 tons in 2023, marking a growth of 4.94%. This increase suggests potential improvements in the income and welfare of fishing communities. However, despite vast resource potential and consistently high national fish consumption rates, only 59% of Indonesia's marine potential has been effectively utilized. Overall, the marine and fisheries sectors remain a major national asset, considering that Indonesia's maritime area constitutes approximately 63% to 70% of its total territory (Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Kemaritiman dan Investasi, 2020). Based on the extensive marine area and existing utilization of marine resources, the following section presents detailed data on marine capture fisheries production across Indonesia's regions:

"Table 1. Data on marine fisheries production and production value derived

from capture fisheries across 37 regions in Indonesia"

Province	2022			2023			Difference		
	Marine Capture Fisheries Production (Tons)	Marine Capture Fisheries Production Value (IDR)	Marine Capture Fisheries Production Value (USD)	Marine Capture Fisheries Production (Tons)	Marine Capture Fisheries Production Value (IDR)	Marine Capture Fisheries Production Value (USD)	Marine Capture Fisheries Production (Tons)	Marine Capture Fisheries Production Value (IDR)	Marine Capture Fisheries Production Value (USD)
Aceh	311285	IDR 8.964.650.955	USD 603.558	291676	IDR 8.399.664.408	USD 551.123	-19609	-IDR 564.986.547	USD 52.435
Sumatera Utara	354013	IDR 11.635.339.080	USD 783.366	371503	IDR 12.210.020.271	USD 801.130	17490	IDR 574.681.191	USD 17.764
Sumatera Barat	205870	IDR 5.810.146.161	USD 391.177	231341	IDR 6.528.998.995	USD 428.384	25471	IDR 718.852.834	USD 37.207
Riau	114612	IDR 2.689.285.565	USD 181.061	112078	IDR 2.629.827.135	USD 172.550	-2534	-IDR 59.458.430	USD 8.511
Jambi	46892	IDR 1.499.858.341	USD 100.980	47344	IDR 1.514.315.732	USD 99.358	452	IDR 14.457.391	USD 1.622
Sumatera Selatan	61087	IDR 3.150.656.086	USD 212.123	67496	IDR 3.400.221.857	USD 223.097	6409	IDR 249.565.771	USD 10.974
Bengkulu	62494	IDR 2.946.277.135	USD 198.362	61851	IDR 2.923.312.359	USD 191.806	-643	-IDR 22.964.776	USD 6.557
Lampung	162960	IDR 4.319.407.128	USD 290.810	182574	IDR 4.839.294.532	USD 317.518	19614	IDR 519.887.404	USD 26.708
Kepulauan Bangka Belitung	222039	IDR 8.213.433.833	USD 552.980	228583	IDR 8.455.502.618	USD 554.787	6544	IDR 242.068.785	USD 1.805
Kepulauan Riau	322100	IDR 9.907.810.636	USD 667.058	320392	IDR 9.854.866.519	USD 646.609	-1708	-IDR 52.944.117	USD 20.449
DKI Jakarta	198095	IDR 6.394.436.992	USD 430.515	200527	IDR 6.792.308.770	USD 445.660	2432	IDR 397.871.778	USD 15.145
Jawa Barat	261554	IDR 6.183.057.691	USD 416.283	265709	IDR 6.281.280.638	USD 412.130	4155	IDR 98.222.947	USD 4.153
Jawa Tengah	308502	IDR 4.617.167.847	USD 310.856	358053	IDR 5.335.484.479	USD 350.074	49551	IDR 718.316.632	USD 39.217
DI Yogyakarta	4899	IDR 140.263.519	USD 9.443	5476	IDR 156.783.635	USD 10.287	577	IDR 16.520.116	USD 844
Jawa Timur	586137	IDR 11.346.457.304	USD 763.917	568955	IDR 11.013.847.642	USD 722.646	-17182	-IDR 332.609.662	USD 41.271
Banten	66722	IDR 2.279.374.745	USD 153.462	70737	IDR 2.416.536.245	USD 158.555	4015	IDR 137.161.500	USD 5.093
Bali	97980	IDR 2.089.240.825	USD 137.295	164186	IDR 3.498.800.528	USD 226.941	66206	IDR 1.409.559.703	USD 89.646
Nusa Tenggara Barat	244726	IDR 4.244.991.990	USD 285.800	251693	IDR 4.365.840.854	USD 286.454	6967	IDR 120.848.864	USD 653
Nusa Tenggara Timur	139067	IDR 3.263.936.214	USD 219.749	87276	IDR 2.048.388.885	USD 134.400	-51791	-IDR 1.215.547.329	USD 85.349
Kalimantan Barat	147163	IDR 4.418.399.223	USD 297.475	162638	IDR 4.883.008.237	USD 320.387	15475	IDR 464.609.014	USD 22.912
Kalimantan Tengah	109286	IDR 3.512.128.543	USD 236.459	110777	IDR 3.560.044.869	USD 233.583	1491	IDR 47.916.326	USD 2.876
Kalimantan Selatan	144587	IDR 5.678.364.470	USD 382.304	151087	IDR 5.934.031.665	USD 389.347	6500	IDR 255.667.195	USD 7.042
Kalimantan Timur	133200	IDR 4.545.017.833	USD 306.000	152571	IDR 5.205.985.397	USD 341.578	19371	IDR 660.967.564	USD 35.578
Kalimantan Utara	29710	IDR 807.578.646	USD 54.371	31899	IDR 867.080.149	USD 56.891	2189	IDR 59.501.503	USD 2.520
Sulawesi Utara	345529	IDR 9.616.478.309	USD 647.444	253335	IDR 7.022.779.721	USD 460.782	-92194	-IDR 2.593.698.588	USD 186.662
Sulawesi Tengah	196143	IDR 5.082.515.315	USD 342.188	432800	IDR 11.214.841.357	USD 735.834	236657	IDR 6.132.326.042	USD 393.646
Sulawesi Selatan	389383	IDR 11.052.975.316	USD 744.158	457909	IDR 12.998.145.461	USD 852.841	68526	IDR 1.945.170.145	USD 108.683
Sulawesi Tenggara	264559	IDR 7.216.973.845	USD 485.893	270327	IDR 7.374.320.619	USD 483.848	5768	IDR 157.346.774	USD 2.045
Gorontalo	130916	IDR 3.891.783.482	USD 262.020	120059	IDR 3.569.033.831	USD 234.173	-10857	-IDR 322.749.651	USD 27.847
Sulawesi Barat	64606	IDR 1.970.920.863	USD 132.695	69708	IDR 2.126.566.441	USD 139.529	5102	IDR 155.645.578	USD 6.834
Maluku	508615	IDR 13.247.225.474	USD 891.889	503049	IDR 13.105.050.533	USD 859.855	-5566	-IDR 142.174.941	USD 32.034
Maluku Utara	356982	IDR 7.787.193.797	USD 524.284	354650	IDR 7.736.323.624	USD 507.599	-2332	-IDR 50.870.173	USD 16.685
Papua Barat	133422	IDR 5.483.478.470	USD 369.183	78565	IDR 3.228.923.911	USD 211.858	-54857	-IDR 2.254.554.559	USD 157.325
Papua Barat Daya	0	IDR 0		84230	IDR 2.304.280.110	USD 151.190	84230	IDR 2.304.280.110	USD 151.190
Papua	240119	IDR 8.265.519.682	USD 556.488	150754	IDR 5.167.822.337	USD 339.074	-89365	-IDR 3.097.697.345	USD 217.415
Papua Selatan	0	IDR 0		15776	IDR 431.594.032	USD 28.317	15776	IDR 431.594.032	USD 28.317
Papua Tengah	0	IDR 0		14861	IDR 406.552.377	USD 26.675	14861	IDR 406.552.377	USD 26.675
Papua Pegunungan	0	IDR 0		0		USD -	0	IDR 0	USD -
Indonesia	7026425	IDR 192.222.345.315	USD 12.940.651	7373516	IDR 199.761.780.775	USD 13.106.868	347091	IDR 7.539.435.460	USD 165.217

Source: Biro Pusat Statistik, 2022–2023

Based on the data presented above, marine capture fisheries production in 2022 reached 7,026,425 tons with a production value of IDR 192,222,345,351 (USD 12,941,651.20). In 2023, the total production increased to 7,373,516 tons, valued at IDR 199,761,780,775 (USD 13,106,868.37). Within one year, the production volume rose by 347,091 tons (4.94%), while the production value increased by IDR 7,539,435,460 (USD 165,217.16). The 2023 data also indicate a significant rise in capture fisheries production across 37 coastal regions.

From an economic perspective, production data reflect the performance and condition of the fisheries sector. Increased production generally implies a potential rise in fishing communities' income levels, contributing to improved living standards among coastal populations.

Demographic data show that Indonesia's population reached 275.77 million in mid-2022, an increase of 1.13% from 272.68 million in 2021, and rose again to 278.7 million in mid-2023. In 2022, males accounted for 50.48% of the population and females 49.52%. In 2023, the proportion of males slightly increased to 50.52% (140.8 million), while females accounted for 49.48% (137.9 million) (Medistiara, 2022). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP) reported that Indonesia's national fish consumption rate in 2021 was 55.37 kg per capita, increasing to 56.48 kg per capita in 2022 and remaining at the same level in 2023. This reflects a 2% rise in consumption from 2021 to 2022, which was maintained in 2023. Historically, the highest growth in fish consumption occurred in 2014 (8.32%), while the lowest decline occurred in 2020 at 0.11% (Annur, 2022). According to the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and

Fisheries, Indonesia has a total of 1,459,874 fishermen (Commission IV of the People's Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021). Given these challenges, considerable investment has been directed to enhance, diversify and/or develop alternative livelihoods for rural coastal households engaged in Small Scale Fisheries, including in Indonesia. Evidence of the effectiveness of these interventions, measured primarily in economic terms and with respect to reduced fishing pressure, in achieving substantial improvements in livelihoods outcomes, is mixed. While internally prepared project evaluation reports provide reflexive assessments, highlighting the most positive outcomes, the limited peer-reviewed literature for Indonesia provides a less positive picture. (Stacey, et.al. 2021)

This inconsistency underscores a persistent structural problem: livelihood interventions alone have not been sufficient to lift many coastal households out of poverty. Despite Indonesia's rich fisheries resources and high fish consumption, fishermen's welfare is not always assured. In 2021 extreme poverty in coastal areas reached 4.19%, higher than the national extreme poverty rate of 4%. Approximately 1.3 million individuals living in coastal regions fall within national poverty statistics, representing 12.5% of the total poverty count (Indraswari, 2023). Official extreme poverty data for 2022–2025 have not yet been released.

Fishermen's poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon characterized not only by income below the minimum wage, but also by low capacity, destructive resource utilization practices, weak supply chains, and degradation of marine ecosystems (Cahyagi & Gurning, 2018) Paradoxically, many coastal fishing communities remain impoverished despite being close to abundant marine resources. This inequality demonstrates that natural resource potential does not automatically improve well-being. Factors such as suboptimal resource management, limited market access, weak infrastructure, and inconsistent policies exacerbate the situation.

Various studies confirm that the poverty experienced by fishers is not only caused by low income but also related to limited adaptive capacity. Livelihood diversification is a crucial strategy for poverty reduction, reducing vulnerability, and alleviating pressure on marine resources (Roscher et al., 2022). A global analysis in the study "Poverty Line Income and Fisheries Subsidies in Developing Country Fishing Communities" reveals even more alarming figures: in 30 countries, approximately 87% of fishers live below the extreme poverty line (USD 1.90/person/day). Raising them above this threshold would require approximately USD 2.2–2.6 billion annually. The study also noted that in 37–43% of the countries studied, the current amount of fisheries subsidies would be sufficient to cover the entire income gap if effectively redirected (Teh et al., 2024).

Other research on tropical coastal communities confirms that food insecurity, poverty, and the pressures of global change have triggered

various livelihood diversification projects as an adaptation strategy. The study explains that coastal communities face complex and ongoing challenges, making innovation in income sources an unavoidable necessity (Diedrich et al., 2022).

In the Indonesian context, the urgency of income diversification is even stronger. Recent research underscores the need to provide equipment and vessels appropriate to current needs, develop the aquaculture sector, and strengthen the capacity and institutions of fishermen. These efforts are crucial for increasing resilience and ensuring the sustainability of coastal community livelihoods (Riantini et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, research on fisher poverty and welfare disparities amidst increasing fisheries production reveals gaps in research from a legal perspective (Lucas et al., 2024). The study found that the unequal distribution of economic value in commodity chains, such as swimming crab and mahi-mahi, is influenced by fishermen's weak bargaining position, unfair market structures, and limited access to supporting facilities such as financing and infrastructure. As a result, despite increasing production and export volumes, fishermen's economic conditions remain vulnerable.Despite these extensive welfare efforts, persistent issues remain. Challenges in catch reporting, limited monitoring systems, and the unique characteristics of small-scale fisheries continue to impede accurate policy formulation (Sari et.al.,2021)

Evidence of social vulnerability among Indonesian fishing communities is also presented in several comparative and empirical studies. The study "Comparative Social Vulnerability of Fishermen in the Coastal Provinces of Indonesia" (Prawito, Priyono & Mulyasari, 2021) reveals that factors such as access to resources, education levels, economic assets, and dependence on weather and ecological conditions are primary determinants of high vulnerability among fishermen. The study emphasizes that poverty conditions are not necessarily linked to low fisheries potential, but rather to socio-economic and institutional constraints faced by coastal communities.

Another relevant study, "Poverty in Golden Fishing: A Regulatory Impact Assessment of Fishermen Poverty in Indonesia" (Sugi, 2023), illustrates the phenomenon of resource rich but people poor. The study finds that although fisheries regions exhibit high production levels and national fish consumption continues to rise, fishermen in several regions remain in poverty. One of the key causes is ineffective policy performance, implementation barriers, and a mismatch between existing regulations and the actual needs of small-scale fishermen. Previous research employing a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) approach shows that various government poverty-alleviation programs for fishermen have not produced optimal outcomes because policy strategies are not aligned with the real needs of coastal communities. As a result, programs such as the construction of boat workshops and shipyards become irrelevant and fail to improve fishermen's welfare. The study also highlights institutional factors including weak

policy design, limited community participation, and low-quality regional regulatory formulation and implementation as major reasons why poverty persists despite abundant fisheries potential.

More recent legal scholarship strengthens this pattern. A philosophical legal analysis of Indonesia's enforcement policy against illegal fishing during 2014–2019 (Sulistyawan, Indarti & Sularto, 2020) shows that the regulatory approach reflects a constructivist paradigm, positioning law as a consensual instrument of state responsibility aimed at protecting marine resources and national sovereignty. While this study highlights the normative orientation of fisheries law enforcement, it does not address how such philosophical underpinnings intersect with grassroots welfare outcomes among fishermen. Likewise, the legal review on *Efektivitas Pemberian Kartu Nelayan* (Ruby & Saraswati, 2021) empirically demonstrates that the Fisherman's Card particularly through insurance protection provides a measurable improvement in fishermen's welfare. Although the policy delivers tangible benefits, the study primarily evaluates administrative effectiveness and does not extend its analysis to broader structural disparities between abundant fisheries resources and persistent poverty in coastal communities.

However, these studies have not examined the root of the problem from a legal standpoint, including how fisheries regulatory frameworks, coastal governance, and legal protections for fishermen contribute to the disparity between significant resource potential and low levels of welfare. This research aims to fill that gap by analyzing the misalignment between the legal framework (das sollen) and empirical reality (das sein) that sustains such disparities. From these three studies, it becomes apparent that fishermen's poverty has been extensively discussed from economic, social, and public policy perspectives. Nevertheless, no existing research specifically analyzes the disparity between fisheries resource potential and fishermen's poverty from a legal perspective, particularly concerning the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks, institutional arrangements, and the exercise of state authority in managing fisheries resources. This is the point at which the present research addresses the academic gap by conducting an empirical legal analysis of the inconsistencies between das sollen (the legal framework governing fisheries management) and das sein (the actual welfare conditions of fishermen in Indonesia's coastal regions). Understanding the disparity between fisheries resource potential and the persistent poverty of coastal fishing communities is essential because the issue has economic, social, and environmental implications. Such imbalance may generate economic losses for regions that rely heavily on the fisheries sector and threaten marine resource sustainability if management does not adopt a fair and sustainable approach. Given its complexity and multidimensional impacts, addressing these disparities requires coordinated and comprehensive interventions integrating legal

policy, resource governance, and community empowerment.

Despite these valuable contributions, none of these studies examines the core issue from a legal standpoint that connects resource abundance, welfare disparities, and regulatory performance into a single analytical framework. Specifically, there remains a lack of research that systematically evaluates how fisheries regulatory structures, coastal governance mechanisms, and legal protections for small-scale fishermen construct or exacerbate the gap between *das sollen* (the normative legal framework) and *das sein* (empirical welfare conditions). This is the precise academic gap addressed by the present research through an empirical-normative legal analysis of the inconsistencies sustaining such disparities. Understanding the divergence between fisheries resource potential and the sustained poverty of coastal fishing communities is crucial due to its economic, social, and environmental consequences. Unresolved imbalances may hinder regional development, perpetuate socio-economic marginalization, and threaten long-term marine sustainability.

Driven by this urgency, the author is motivated to examine the imbalance between fisheries potential and fishermen's poverty in coastal areas, which is formulated in the research title: "Inequality Between the Potential of Fishery Resources and the Poverty Level of Fisherman Communities in Coastal Areas of Indonesia." This study focuses on two central research questions:

1. What are the underlying causes of the disparity between fisheries resource potential and the poverty of coastal fishing communities?
2. What solutions can be proposed to address these disparities?

B. RESEARCH METHODS

The research applied is by combining normative and empirical methods. According to Abdulkadir, normative-empirical research invests in the use of norm-based and empirical research techniques to analyze legal issues, including the material aspects of law and the implementation and process of law enforcement in society. Abdulkadir defines normative-empirical research as a study that combines norm-based research techniques with research techniques that focus on empirical experience in analyzing legal issues, both regarding the material aspects of law and the implementation and process of law enforcement in society (Muhammad, 2004). The research specification used is descriptive research, a research method that explains in detail the problem being researched and provides solutions to existing problems. The approach used in this research is a statutory approach, which examines all laws and regulations related to the legal issue (Marzuki 2007).

The data used are primary and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained directly in the field through interviews with informants, which are fishermen located in:

1) Pekalongan – Nusantara Fisheries Port (PPN) Pekalongan, Location: WR. Supratman Street

No. 1, Panjang Wetan, North Pekalongan, Pekalongan City, Central Java, Indonesia.

2) Juwana – Coastal Fisheries Port (PPP) Bajomulyo, Pati Regency, Location: Bajomulyo Village, Juwana Subdistrict, Pati Regency, Central Java, Indonesia.
3) Tegal – Pelabuhan Perikanan Pantai (PPP) Tegalsari Location: Coastal Fisheries Port (PPP) Tegalsari Location: Tegalsari Subdistrict, West Tegal, Tegal City, Central Java, Indonesia.

Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from the Faculty of Law Library of Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, the Faculty of Law Library of Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, the Faculty of Law Library of the University of Indonesia, Depok, and the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Library. Secondary data is data that has been collected or is already available, so it is easy to process. This secondary data consists of primary legal materials, secondary legal materials, and tertiary legal materials. The primary legal material consists of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which is the most basic regulation. Furthermore, Law Number 45 of 2009 concerning Amendments to Law Number 31 of 2004 concerning Fisheries, Law Number 1 of 2014 concerning Amendments to Law Number 27 of 2007 concerning Management of Coastal Areas and Small Islands, Law Number 7 of 2016 concerning Protection and Empowerment of Fishermen, Fish Farmers, and Salt Farmers,Government Regulation in Lieu of Law (Perppu) Number 2 of 2022, which was later ratified as Law Number 6 of 2023,Presidential Regulation Number 96 of 2015 concerning Amendments to Presidential Regulation Number 15 of 2010 concerning the Acceleration of Poverty Alleviation, Regulation of the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Number 58 of 2020 concerning Capture Fisheries Business, Regulation of the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Number 7 of 2012, Government Regulation Number 50 of 2015 concerning the Empowerment of Small Fishermen and Small Fish Farmers, Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs Number 53 of 2020, Government programs to overcome national poverty among fishermen, such as the National Independent Community Empowerment Program (PNPM) and other fishermen's economic empowerment programs implemented by the central government and area. In addition, secondary legal materials include books, journals, other official publications, and the internet. Tertiary legal materials include the Legal Dictionary and the Great Indonesian Dictionary, which complement the research. Data collection techniques used in this study included interviews and literature review, which involved reviewing relevant journal, books, literature, and records.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Inequality Between the Potential of Fishery Resources and the Poverty Level of Fishing Communities in Coastal Areas

The disparity between fishery resource potential and the poverty rate of fishing

communities demonstrates that the relationship between fisheries and poverty is complex and cannot be understood as a simple correlation. In various literature, this relationship is often simplified, making it impossible to develop appropriate policy responses. This complexity is exacerbated by the fact that small-scale fishers are often excluded from macroeconomic development planning processes due to the nomadic nature of their work, their residence in marginal areas, and their low recognition of their contributions. Furthermore, social discrimination and power asymmetries contribute to the economic exclusion of poor fishing communities. (Béné & Friend, 2011).

This situation is clearly evident in the context of Indonesia, an archipelagic nation with abundant marine resources, yet many fishers live in poverty. (Handayati et al., 2025). This imbalance reflects the paradox between the vast potential of natural resources and the low welfare of coastal communities. Fishermen are often trapped in a cycle of poverty caused by low fish prices, limited access to technology and markets, and inadequate infrastructure and basic facilities. Instead of benefiting from the abundance of marine resources, they experience recurring economic pressures. (Handayati et al., 2025).

The various challenges faced by fishing communities encompass economic, social, and environmental aspects. Fishermen's incomes are often low and unstable due to high fishing costs, fluctuating fish prices, and dependence on middlemen who offer low prices and unfair terms. These conditions weaken fishermen's ability to invest in better fishing gear, children's education, and family welfare. Lack of access to capital, technology, and markets also limits their opportunities to increase productivity, so dependence on fishing remains high and difficult to reduce. (Obie, 2024).

From an environmental perspective, climate change and marine ecosystem degradation also exacerbate the disparity between fisheries potential and fishers' welfare. Declining catches due to coral reef damage, pollution, and mangrove deforestation reduce fishermen's incomes and threaten the sustainability of their livelihoods. This environmental degradation not only reduces fish availability but also deepens the economic vulnerability of coastal communities. This issue demonstrates that poverty among fishermen is not merely an economic issue but also a structural one that requires a holistic approach. (Handayati et al., 2025).

In coastal areas such as the Sangihe and Tahuna Islands, the community's dependence on the marine environment further emphasizes the significant potential of fisheries. (Sarapil, Kumaseh, & Mozez, 2022).With waters covering up to 90% of the area and the majority of the population working as fishermen, fisheries are a crucial economic asset. However, this substantial potential has not been aligned with the community's level of well-being due to various inhibiting factors on the ground.(Sarapil, Kumaseh, & Mozez, 2022).

To address this imbalance, cross-sectoral synchronization and coordination involving all stakeholders is required. Local governments need to provide training, implement strategies, and develop alternative livelihoods so that fishing households are less dependent on catches. Income diversification can increase their economic resilience to environmental and market pressures. Furthermore, access to credit from the public and private sectors needs to be expanded to support the sustainability of fisheries businesses. (Quyen, Phuong, & Quyen, 2024).

Efforts to address inequality must also incorporate a gender perspective, as research shows that gender approaches in livelihood improvement programs remain under-recognized. Integrating gender into program planning and evaluation will provide synergistic benefits for more inclusive natural resource governance and policymaking. Increasing gender awareness capacity and developing clear strategies and indicators are necessary to ensure that the programs implemented can truly support the transformation of coastal communities' livelihoods in a sustainable manner. (Stacey, 2019).

In response to the challenges faced, the government has implemented policies and regulations aimed at alleviating poverty in fishing communities and ensuring their well-being. These policies are outlined in various laws and regulations. These provisions are analyzed using the collected data. Analysis is necessary to examine the relationship between norms and the implementation of regulations:

A. *Law Number 45 of 2009 concerning Amendments to Law Number 31 of 2004 concerning Fisheries. This law regulates the management of fishery resources, including pre-production, production, processing, and processing. Essentially, this law replaces the previous law, which was deemed inadequate to accommodate the evolving legal and technological needs in fishery resource management. Therefore, it is not merely a change but also an update.*

   This law emphasizes the importance of empowering small-scale and traditional fishers. In practice, however, coastal fishers continue to face constraints related to capital, technology, and market access. Under this regulation, the government is obligated to provide support such as marine-sector microcredit schemes, capacity-building programs, and legal safeguards against exploitative middlemen practices. These measures are expected to reduce poverty levels among coastal fishers, who are often trapped in cycles of debt.

   Law No. 45 of 2009 further stipulates zoning of marine areas, including designated fishing grounds for small-scale fishers. For coastal fishers, this provision offers legal certainty to utilize marine resources within nearshore areas without having to directly compete with large commercial vessels. Such legal certainty is essential for stabilizing incomes

and preventing further marginalization. Additionally, the law mandates the formulation of policies aimed at ensuring the welfare of fishers, including the provision of insurance schemes, occupational safety guarantees, and financial assistance during lean seasons or adverse weather conditions. This is particularly relevant since most coastal fishers live under vulnerable circumstances, with irregular incomes, often ceasing during the west monsoon season. The implementation of insurance and social protection programs can therefore play a vital role in alleviating poverty across coastal communities.

B. *Law Number 1 of 2014 concerning Amendments to Law Number 27 of 2007 concerning Management of Coastal Areas and Small Islands. This law regulates the management of coastal areas and small islands in general, including the planning, utilization, supervision, and control of resources on which most fishermen live and depend for their livelihoods. This law emphasizes the importance of ecosystem-based management and the protection of coastal environments. The condition of coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass beds significantly influences fishermen's catch. Furthermore, the law regulates zoning, conservation, and rehabilitation of coastal ecosystems to ensure the sustainability of fishery resources.*

In the long term, this approach can contribute to income stability for coastal fishers by ensuring the sustainability of fish stocks, while also strengthening the participation of coastal communities in the formulation of the Coastal Zone and Small Islands Zoning Plan. This condition provides an avenue for fishers to voice their needs such as access to fishing grounds, recognition of traditional routes, and protection from large-scale industrial exploitation. Consequently, fishers become more empowered both politically and socially, functioning not merely as policy recipients but as active stakeholders in coastal governance. Beyond capture fisheries, this law also creates opportunities for coastal communities to develop alternative livelihoods such as marine aquaculture (mariculture), marine ecotourism, and seafood processing. This diversification is crucial, as coastal fishers are highly dependent on seasonal cycles, and such initiatives can help reduce their economic vulnerability.

C. *Law Number 7 of 2016 concerning the Protection and Empowerment of Fishermen, Fish Farmers, and Salt Farmers. Several articles in Law Number 7 of 2016 have been amended by Law Number 11 of 2016.2020, concerning Job Creation. Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation has been revoked and replaced by Government Regulation in place of Law (Perpu) Number 2 of 2022, which was later ratified as Law Number 6 of 2023. This law does not specifically regulate fishermen, but in general,*

it can be said that the Job Creation Law has an impact on the maritime and fisheries sector, including fishermen, because it regulates business licensing, investment facilitation, and worker protection.

Law Number 6 of 2023 regulates the simplification of business licensing through a risk-based licensing system. For small-scale fishers, this means that legal processes such as permits to go to sea, fisheries business management, and seafood processing enterprises become more accessible and affordable. With more simplified licensing procedures, fishers can improve their access to formal markets and receive government support programs (such as fuel subsidies and environmentally friendly fishing gear assistance).

The impact of this regulation is the reduction of bureaucratic barriers that have long burdened small-scale fishers. This law also strengthens the integration of regulations within the marine and fisheries sector, including coastal area management. Additionally, it mandates Environmental Impact Assessments (AMDAL) and Strategic Environmental Studies (KLHS), which serve to protect fishers from ecosystem damage caused by industrial projects in coastal zones. Consequently, coastal fishers who are often affected by reclamation, marine sand mining, or port development are ensured compensation and given opportunities for participation. This is crucial for maintaining the sustainability of fishery resources, which is directly linked to the income levels of fishers.

D. *Presidential Regulation Number 96 of 2015 concerning Amendments to Presidential Regulation Number 15 of 2010 concerning the Acceleration of Poverty Alleviation. This Presidential Regulation establishes a policy and program framework for reducing poverty on a national scale, including various efforts to improve the welfare of fishermen.*

Presidential Regulation Number 96 of 2015 strengthens the government's strategy in accelerating poverty alleviation through more effective cross-sector coordination. The primary focus is to reduce the number of people living in poverty by ensuring program synergy across various sectors, including health, education, infrastructure, and economic empowerment. For coastal communities, including fishermen, this regulation holds significant importance, as they often face structural poverty caused by limited access to markets, education, and capital, as well as their high vulnerability to weather fluctuations and environmental degradation.

E. *Regulation of the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Number 58 of 2020 concerning Capture Fisheries Businesses. This regulation covers various aspects of capture fisheries businesses in the*

Fisheries Management Area of the Republic of Indonesia, including the definition of fisheries businesses, fishing activities, permits, and other provisions related to capture fisheries businesses. This regulation serves as a technical framework governing the management of capture fisheries, encompassing aspects such as business licensing, vessel types, fishing gear, fishing zones, and the procedures for reporting catch results. The primary objective is to establish a sustainable and well-regulated fisheries management system that ensures optimal benefits for both fishers and the state. By providing clearer licensing mechanisms including the Fisheries Business License (SIUP), Fishing License (SIPI), and Fish Transport Vessel License (SIKPI) fishers are granted legal certainty in conducting their activities at sea. This regulatory clarity is crucial to protecting small-scale fishers from criminalization practices and unfair competition with larger fishing vessels.

F. *Regulation of the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Number 7 of 2012. This regulation regulates policies and strategies for overcoming poverty among fishermen and various economic empowerment programs for fishermen, such measures include regulating fishing zone allocations based on vessel size and type of fishing gear, as well as ensuring access rights in which small-scale fishers are granted designated fishing areas, preventing direct competition with large industrial vessels. Furthermore, sustainability of marine resources is maintained through the implementation of a management approach based on the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) principle. This ensures long-term availability of fish stocks and greater security for fishermen's incomes.*

G. *Government Regulation Number 50 of 2015 concerning the Empowerment of Small Fishermen and Small-scale Fish Farmers. Essentially, this Government Regulation regulates various aspects related to the empowerment of small-scale fishers, namely to enhance capacity, provide protection, and ensure business certainty for small-scale fishers.*

H. *Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs Number 53 of 2020. This Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs regulates the Regional Poverty Alleviation Coordination Team, which is tasked with coordinating and supervising the implementation of poverty alleviation programs in the regions. This process is carried out through the Regional Government Information System (SIPD) reporting mechanism, which enables the central government to assess whether assistance programs for small-scale fishers (such as fuel subsidies, fisher insurance, and vessel aid) are effectively reaching their intended beneficiaries. Furthermore, coastal local governments are required to report the*

outcomes of their development initiatives, including the establishment of Fish Landing Bases, Fish Auction Sites, and other coastal infrastructure. Through this supervisory mechanism, local governments are encouraged to foster and organize fishing communities into cooperatives or business groups, thereby enhancing governance and efficiency within the fisheries sector.

I. *The government programs aim to alleviate poverty among fishermen nationwide. These programs, such as the National Independent Community Empowerment Program (PNPM) and other economic empowerment programs for fishermen, are implemented by the central government, namely the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and local governments. Essentially, the government and other stakeholders, including the active participation of fishermen and coastal communities, are working to alleviate poverty through various integrated policies and programs.*

Coastal regions, despite their abundant natural resources, often serve as economic hubs with dense populations. Yet, a persistent paradox remains: many coastal communities continue to live in poverty despite residing in areas with substantial resource potential (Gandoyo, Soemarni, & Prihatin, 2016). This disparity illustrates that resource availability alone does not guarantee improved welfare, particularly when structural constraints, limited accessibility, and socio-economic vulnerabilities hinder communities from fully benefiting from these assets. Poverty rates among coastal communities remain extremely high. Considering the regulations outlined above, it is clear that, at the legal level, regulations regarding how natural resources, particularly fish, can be utilized sustainably and support the livelihoods of fishermen, ensuring a decent and prosperous life, appear to have been incorporated into regulations, both in the form of laws and subordinate regulations, as well as other policies that support the welfare of the community, particularly fishing communities.

Poverty among coastal fishing communities remains a major issue in economic development. The fisheries, aquaculture, and salt aquaculture industries all contribute significantly to Indonesia's economy and are the primary sources of income for many of the country's population (Purwanti Ani, et al., 2023). The poverty of coastal fishermen remains a concerning condition, and their hopes remain unrealistic. This is characterized by uncertain or fluctuating income, consumptive spending, underutilization of their family's labor potential, and low levels of education. In many cases, these challenges are compounded by limited human resource capacity within fishing households. A substantial number of fishers continue to rely on inherited, traditional practices that are passed down from generation to generation without significant innovation or skills upgrading. This intergenerational pattern, in which children of fishermen often follow the same occupational

trajectory as their parents, reinforces low adaptability and limits opportunities for upward mobility (Riyani, Soemarni & Herawati, 2016). Therefore, this condition, referred to as multidimensional poverty, requires an investigation into the underlying factors and the provision of appropriate solutions to address the problem. Within this broader context of multidimensional vulnerability, it is also crucial to note that fishing itself is a high-risk occupation. The act of venturing into the sea exposes fishermen to substantial occupational hazards (Dzulqarnain, Wisnaeni, & Diamantina, 2022). These inherent risks further intensify their economic insecurity, as each fishing trip carries potential dangers that may disrupt or threaten income stability.

Considering the lives of fishermen in their efforts to meet their own needs and those of their families, they face significant risks, such as the risk of natural factors. Based on direct interviews with fishermen, it was stated that the income they receive is not commensurate with the risks/challenges they face. In addition to the risks of natural factors, as discussed above, there are also various other causal factors such as limited fisheries facilities and infrastructure, low access to capital, the dominance of middlemen in the catch distribution chain, and a lack of financial literacy. This means that many factors contribute to the uncertainty of fishermen's income.

The data obtained from interviews conducted by the author with fishermen in three coastal regions Pekalongan, Juwana, and Tegal revealed that during each fishing trip, the fishermen caught no more than 7 kilograms of fish, with an average selling price of IDR 12,000 per kilogram (Interview Findings, 8 & 15 February 2025). As a comparison, the researcher also referred to several studies conducted by previous scholars in various regions of Indonesia to examine fishermen's sources of income. According to an interview published by The Junction with a fisherman in Cirebon, Suswanto stated that during the fishing season, he could catch between 5 and 10 kilograms of fish per trip, with a selling price of IDR 15,000 per kilogram. His average monthly income reached IDR 2,500,000, which must be allocated for household expenses, diesel fuel, fishing nets, and boat maintenance (Chandra et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the average income of fishermen at PPI Kranji, Paciran District, Lamongan Regency, in the 2020–2021 period was IDR 1,216,901.10 (Sahidu, 2024). In Muara Gading Mas Village, East Lampung, in 2022, the main fishing products were threadfin bream (ikan kurisi) and beltfish (ikan layur), with selling prices ranging from IDR 25,000 to IDR 40,000 per kilogram. The income earned per fishing trip was recorded at IDR 2,462,304 for boat owners and IDR 625,576 for fishing crew members (Istiani, 2023). Furthermore, in the Tangkolak coastal area, East Karawang, in 2022, fishermen who owned their boats earned an average monthly income of IDR 17,336,607 at the highest level, while others earned between IDR 5,000,000 and IDR 15,000,000 (Fitri & Sulandjari, 2023). In Bunga

Bali Village, East Pantar District, Alor Regency, the projected average income of fishermen in March 2023 was IDR 1,473,302 (approximately IDR 1.47 million) (Tang et al., 2022). Based on direct interview findings and supporting evidence from previous studies, it can be concluded that there has been a decline in fishermen's income.

Therefore, based on the sample data above, it is evident that the abundance of fishery resources in Indonesia is not proportional to the income levels of fishermen. This indicates a disparity between fishery potential and fishermen's earnings, resulting in poverty within coastal fishing communities.

Discussion about fishermen at the level of reality, based on the author's observations, fishermen are divided or grouped into:

1. fisherman owner (boss),
2. fisherman (laborer/worker),
3. small fishermen,
4. Traditional fishermen,
5. port fishermen (transport fishermen), and
6. fishing companies/industry.

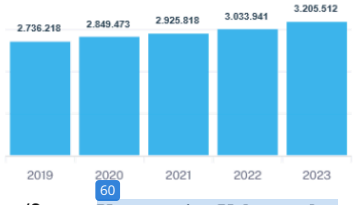
A fisherman owner (boss) is a person or individual who carries out a fishing business, with the right or authority over the ship/boat and/or fishing gear used to catch fish. A fisherman (laborer or worker) is someone who provides his labor or works to catch fish, which generally constitutes/forms a unit with others by receiving wages based on the profit sharing of the sale of the fish caught. Traditional fishermen are individuals whose work is fishing using boats and simple (traditional) fishing gear. With the limitations of boats and fishing gear, the reach of their fishing area is also limited, usually only 6 nautical miles from the coastline. These traditional fishermen are usually hereditary fishermen who fish to meet their living needs. Small fishermen are basically derived from traditional fishermen, only with the modernization/motorization program of boats and fishing gear, they no longer solely rely on traditional boats or conventional fishing gear, but also use diesel or motors, so that the reach of the fishing area is somewhat wider or far. Carrier fishermen (transport fishermen) are fishermen who do not directly catch fish and do not own their fishing gear (Halim, et.al. 2020) . Therefore, carrier fishermen or transport fishermen only provide capital, usually from the boss. After purchasing fish at sea, they then resell them on land, acting as intermediaries. Meanwhile, the term "fishing company" or "fishing industry" refers to the economic sector encompassing various activities related to fish and fishery products, such as processing, preserving, storing, distributing, and marketing fishery products.

Furthermore, regarding the discussion on fishermen, particularly small-scale and traditional fishermen, their standard of living is also greatly influenced by their work system. Generally, their working hours are relatively short, usually just one day (*one day of fishing*). These conditions or habits result in suboptimal catches, resulting in low production levels and suboptimal incomes, resulting in low levels of welfare. Work system, *one day fishing* is due, among other things, to the

vessels and equipment they use, as well as the culture of working only one day a week. Consequently, government policies, such as programs to increase vessel size and change fishing patterns from one day to multiple days, appear to be challenging to implement. These conditions pose obstacles to data collection and guidance provided by the central/regional government.

To find out more about the standard of living of fishermen living in coastal areas, below is the Statistical Data from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP), related to the number of fishermen, as follows:

Figure 1. Number of Fishermen

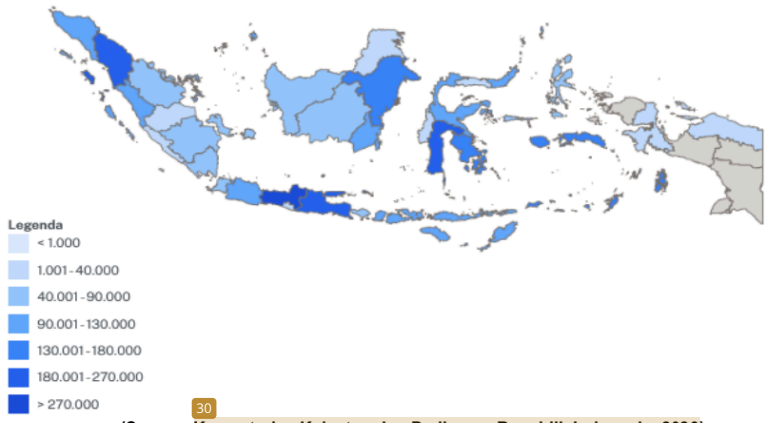


(Source: Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan Republik Indonesia, 2023)

Based on KKP statistical data, the number of marine fishermen in the capture fisheries sub-sector in 2021 was 2,925,818, in 2022: 3,033,941, and in 2023: 3,205,512. The large number of fishermen indicates the high dependence of coastal communities on marine resources, and based on these statistical data also shows a tendency for the number of fishermen to increase from year to year, meaning that the number of fishing communities who are increasingly dependent on marine resources to meet their living needs is increasing.

Next, the distribution data for fishermen can be seen below:

Figure 2. Distribution of Fishermen



(Source: Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan Republik Indonesia, 2023)

Figure 3.Top10 Fishermen

(Source: Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan Republik Indonesia, 2023)

Based on the number of fishermen as stated above, most of them, more or less 95.6 percent, are small fishermen (*small-scale fishery*) or traditional fishermen who operate around coastal areas. According to Law Number 31 of 2004 concerning Fisheries in conjunction with Law Number 45 of 2009, Small-scale fishermen are people whose livelihood is fishing to meet their daily needs, using fishing vessels with a maximum size of 5 Gross Tons (GT) (Prasetya, 2024).

Of the 95.6 percent categorized as small-scale fishers or traditional fishermen operating around coastal areas, as many as 80 percent of

households are small-scale fishermen who do not have boats or have boats without motors (Asiati & Nawawi, 2016). Yet, to support their work activities, fishermen require a fleet of vessels for maritime transportation. Ironically, according to the latest Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries data, capture fisheries production in the first semester of 2024 exceeded the target by 111.33%, or 3.34 million tons (Humas Ditjen Perikanan Tangkap, 2024). This means that the natural resources found in Indonesia's seas are highly potential and can be utilized through skills and expertise (education and training) and, of course, the use of technologically advanced vessels. The resulting capture fisheries production exceeds targets, certainly not achieved by small-scale or traditional fishermen.

Fishing vessels are divided into two categories based on technology: traditional and modern. Traditional fishing vessels utilize traditional equipment. They do not utilize technology and do not rely on modern equipment. Using relatively simple equipment is safer for the environment. They are not equipped with engines (boats without motors) and are relatively small (<5 GT) and use nets or fishing gear (Halim, *et.al*. 2020).This type of vessel is commonly used by traditional fishermen in various coastal areas of Indonesia. According to data from the Directorate General of Capture Fisheries, Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, the number of fishing vessels in Indonesia has reached 570,000, the majority of which are non-motorized vessels, with a daily catch of only 10–20 kg. Meanwhile, in Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), there are 4,230 vessels, or less than 1% of the total fleet (Fithriah, 2023). The fleet size is the sum of three types of vessels: non-motorized boats, outboard motorboats, and motorized boats. Data from the Directorate General of Capture Fisheries at the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (2009) shows that 90% of Indonesian fishermen are small-scale fishermen with vessels under 30 GT deadweight who fish for subsistence purposes. The remainder are fishing companies with commercial or commercial purposes using vessels over 30 GT (Arsandi, Afriyanto, & Kumalasari, 2022).

The gap that occurs, namely between capture fisheries production in the first semester of 2024 exceeding the target (reaching 111.33% or 3.34 million tons) with the poverty level of fishermen in coastal areas, is very relevant when seen from the vessels used, which can be classified as traditional vessels with simple equipment, meaning that the vessel cannot reach further waters (limited distance) will automatically get little results, while technological vessels can reach distant waters, even to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), this shows that the need for fishing vessels is a major problem faced by traditional fishermen, of course not just vessels but technological vessels.

Furthermore, the author's observations indicate that not every fisherman can afford to have a fishing vessel to carry out their fishing activities at sea. This is because fishermen

generally live in poverty and economic uncertainty due to the hardships they and their families face.

The number of poor fishermen in the whole land water reached 14.58 million souls, or around 90% of the 16.2 million fishermen throughout Indonesia are still below the poverty line (Goso & Anwar, 2017). These fishermen are classified as having a fishing capacity of no more than 30 gross tons. Most traditional small-scale fishermen live in 3,216 coastal villages.

Other data indicates that the number of poor fishermen in Indonesia accounts for 25% of the total national poverty rate. Of the 4 million coastal families living in 8,090 villages, 32% live on less than Rp 400,000 per month (Listyawati, 2021). The poverty of the fishermen can be seen from the inadequate conditions of their housing.

The vast potential of Indonesia's fisheries resources has not yet translated into a significant improvement in the welfare of fishing communities. This gap emerges because the utilization of marine space still faces various governance challenges, including the weakness of an integrated maritime security system. As a result, traditional fishing activities do not receive adequate legal protection, creating unequal access to marine resources between large-scale commercial actors and small-scale fishers. Maritime vulnerabilities, unlawful exploitation, and overlapping institutional authorities further exacerbate this imbalance and contribute to the persistent poverty experienced by coastal communities. Therefore, regulatory reforms and the strengthening of maritime security systems are urgently needed to ensure that the utilization of fisheries resources is equitable and capable of delivering direct economic benefits to local fishers. (Aryani, 2021)

The state has a legal obligation to ensure security, order, and protection for all activities within its maritime territory. This obligation is not only relevant to threats such as maritime terrorism, but also to traditional fishing activities that depend on safety and legal certainty in marine areas. Weak maritime oversight has the potential to cause losses for communities that rely on the sea, including small-scale fishers. This condition reinforces the argument that the disparity between the potential of fisheries resources and the welfare of fishing communities can occur when the state does not optimally carry out its functions in managing and protecting marine areas. (Putra & Setyawanta, 2020)

The vulnerability of outermost islands due to weak state surveillance makes maritime areas prone to illegal activities, including illegal fishing. Yet the state is obligated, under UNCLOS 1982, to supervise and protect its marine resources. This weakness in maritime oversight affects not only security but also exacerbates inequality in the utilization of fisheries resources, as small-scale fishers become the most disadvantaged when access to and safety in marine areas are not guaranteed. This condition demonstrates that the vast potential of fisheries resources does not automatically improve the welfare of fishers if the state's management functions are not carried out

effectively. (Kusuma & Kurnia, 2022)

2. Solutions to the Problem of Inequality Between Fishery Resource Potential and the Poverty Level of Fishermen in Coastal Areas

In addressing the challenge of the imbalance between fishery resource potential and the poverty level of fishing communities in coastal areas, the author agrees with Yanto Yulianto, which was then formulated in detail by the relevant agency, namely the Ministry of National Development/Bappenas. Furthermore, it is important to understand that the survival of fishing communities is highly dependent on the utilization of available natural resources. Through sustainable efforts, it can be ensured that fishing communities can not only overcome economic challenges but also maintain environmental sustainability. In this context, the implementation of concrete steps is crucial to achieving the shared goal of creating a balance between fishery resource utilization and the welfare of fishing communities. One important aspect that requires attention is the sustainable management of fishery resources. Fishery resource management aims to maintain the sustainability of ecosystems and fish stocks by controlling fishing effort. As part of this effort, the Ministry of National Development Planning (Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas) and the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) have formulated strategies for implementing sustainable fisheries management, namely:

1. *Policy Direction Setting: Utilizing Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs) as the spatial basis for the management of marine and fishery resources (*Workshop Kementerian PPN/Bappenas dan Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan, *2019).*
2. *Measured Fishing Concept: Assessing the health of fish stocks in each FMA to regulate catch limits, vessel capacity, and types of fishing gear (*Workshop Kementerian PPN/Bappenas dan Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan, *2019)*
3. *National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020–2024: Integrating sustainable fisheries management into the Economic Resilience Development Agenda through the National Priority Program on Maritime and Marine Resource Management (*Dialog Kementerian PPN/Bappenas dan Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan, *2021)*
4. *Support for SDG 14: Committing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 14 concerning Life Below Water (*Dialog Kementerian PPN/Bappenas dan Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan, *2021)*

Beyond the technical aspects of fisheries resource management, empowering fishing communities also requires attention. This empowerment can begin with the simplest approach, namely, outreach. This can then be further enhanced with mentoring and skills training, including education. This is directly related, for example, to operating technologically advanced vessels. However, it doesn't stop there.

Operating or "owning" a fishery, even if initially done as a group, requires access to capital. This is where strengthening the institutions of fishing groups and improving their social welfare becomes crucial. Recent studies also indicate that adaptive certification schemes when aligned with local capacities can widen fishers' room to maneuver in managing their assets, deepen their involvement in collective governance, and improve the role of certification in promoting both social and ecological sustainability (Wiranthi, Toonen, & Oosterveer, 2024).

Below, it will be explained in more detail, as follows:

1. Long-term goals include increasing access to education. This is necessary to improve the quality of human resources in the future. One way to achieve this is by helping fishermen's children obtain a better education.
2. Medium term, namely by providing more technical assistance, such as providing gradual and rotating training to fishermen regarding the use of modern fishing gear, including repairs in the event of damage, and fishing technology to increase productivity.
3. Short-term measures include the government assisting in the form of modern fishing gear and more suitable vessels, facilitating access to business financing for fishermen through financial institutions, and involving fishermen's families in training on fisheries processing.

Empowering fishing communities means encouraging their active participation in decision-making regarding fisheries resource management through the formation of fishing groups, cooperatives, or joint management institutions. Community empowerment involves encouraging and motivating communities to identify and develop their potential and to have the courage to take steps to improve their quality of life. One way to achieve this is through education aimed at increasing individual awareness and capabilities (Putri, 2021).

Fishermen's empowerment can be carried out through three main strategies. First, a persuasive approach through guidance activities aimed at improving fishermen's understanding and awareness of the information provided. Second, education through training programs designed to enhance their skills in fish processing as well as in group management, including administration, financial management, and program implementation. Third, facilitation through business assistance, either direct or indirect, to support fishing activities and fish-processing efforts. These empowerment initiatives are expected to strengthen fishermen's capacities in managing marine resources, thereby improving their welfare, supporting coastal community development, and contributing to food security (Badriyah et al., 2021).

Various studies have shown that coastal community empowerment can be achieved through natural resource management, including developing them into conservation-based tourism destinations. Management involving business partnerships or Village-Owned Enterprises

(BUMDes) has been proven to increase village income and welfare (Turisno et al., 2021). One example is the use of reclaimed land for mangrove cultivation, port construction, and tourism development. This utilization not only supports environmental conservation but also opens up new economic opportunities for coastal communities (Dewi, 2019). With proper management, reclamation can even be transformed into a sustainable tourism area that maintains environmental sustainability while strengthening the local economy (Turisno & Dewi, 2021).

Furthermore, fisheries management policies such as quotas and zoning are also crucial for empowering coastal communities. These policies are necessary to prevent overexploitation, maintain fish stocks, encourage the use of environmentally friendly fishing gear, and improve catch reporting systems (Suherman et al., 2025). However, the development of maritime zones also impacts the livelihoods of fishers, particularly small-scale fishers, who are often under pressure due to environmental degradation, competition for space, and reduced access to fishing grounds (Fabinyi et al., 2022).

The sustainable approach described above requires a comprehensive framework encompassing economic, social, cultural, environmental, educational, legal, and institutional dimensions. Fishermen's empowerment programs should not stop at providing fishing gear but must also encompass improved market access, education for fishermen's children, strengthening cooperatives, and marine environmental management. Inequality reduction policies are also needed without neglecting fisheries sustainability, for example through social assistance for poor fishermen, sustainable fisheries training, a fairer tax system, green financing mechanisms, and environmentally friendly coastal planning (Uzar & Eyuboglu, 2025). Limited access to administrative knowledge and population-documentation procedures continues to hinder many coastal households from obtaining essential public services at both local and national levels (Alfons, Soplanit, & Bakarbessy, 2024). These barriers indicate that empowerment programs alone are insufficient when communities lack the administrative literacy required to navigate formal mechanisms for accessing government assistance. Such structural limitations restrict their eligibility for social protection schemes, reduce their participation in development programs, and weaken their bargaining power in institutional settings. This pattern suggests that improving welfare in coastal regions requires not only economic interventions but also the removal of bureaucratic constraints that prevent fishermen from fully benefiting from state policies.

The same structural challenge is further reflected in recent empirical findings demonstrating the growing importance of digital inclusion for coastal welfare. A study employing a two-stage procedure (2SPS) shows that Internet adoption significantly enhances small-scale

fishermen's subjective well-being particularly happiness and life satisfaction. While also identifying distinct socio-economic factors that shape the likelihood of becoming Internet users. Education, fishing experience, and off-farm work were found to strengthen well being, whereas access to credit and certain fishing equipment had the opposite effect. These findings underscore that both administrative literacy and digital connectivity constitute critical gateways to public services, information access, and socio-economic opportunities. Accordingly, coordinated policies that expand telecommunication infrastructure and strengthen regional Internet strategies become instrumental in reducing institutional exclusion and supporting long-term coastal development (Putri et al., 2024).

Given these multidimensional constraints and the need for an integrated empowerment framework, targeted governmental interventions become indispensable to address structural poverty in coastal regions.

"Blue Justice", a concept introduced by Moeniega Isaacs in 2018 during the TBTI 3rd World Small-Scale Fisheries Congress in Thailand, refers to a social justice–oriented perspective on small-scale fisheries. It critiques the marginalization of small-scale fishers resulting from ocean privatization, elite-driven tourism, and conservation initiatives promoted under the Blue Economy and rights-based fisheries. The term highlights the need for fair recognition, equitable treatment, and meaningful participation of small-scale fishers in the use, management, and access to marine and coastal resources. It underscores that these communities must be actively involved in and able to influence policy decisions and activities that shape their coastal environments and the sustainability of marine ecosystems. The Blue Justice framework emphasizes several key elements: guaranteeing access to fisheries resources, promoting gender equality and food security, protecting aquatic ecosystems, ensuring sustainable marine resource management, improving fishers' economic and social well-being, supporting positive cultural impacts, and fostering inclusive governance. (Wisnaeni et al., 2025)

The relevance of Blue Justice becomes especially clear when viewed through the lens of poverty in small-scale fishing communities. Many coastal households experience structural poverty not merely due to limited productivity, but because their access to marine resources is increasingly constrained by privatization, restrictive conservation policies, and development projects that favor capital-intensive actors. Such exclusion weakens their livelihood security and reduces their ability to benefit from the ocean economy. By advocating equitable access, recognition of rights, and participatory policy-making, Blue Justice provides a framework for addressing these root causes of poverty. It emphasizes that fair governance and inclusive management of marine resources are essential for improving the welfare of small-scale fishers and advancing sustainable coastal development.

(Wisnaeni et al., 2025).

In 2021, the government strived to reduce extreme poverty in 35 key districts across 7 provinces, 24 of which are located in coastal areas. The government is paying close attention to efforts to address poverty in coastal areas. According to information from the Ministry of Finance, the 2021 cross-ministerial budget for various productivity improvement and empowerment programs in coastal areas reached more than 76 trillion rupiah. Programs such as basic food aid and direct village cash assistance were also expanded to 35 districts/cities in 7 priority provinces, including 24 coastal districts. Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto stated that efforts to reduce extreme poverty in coastal areas cannot be separated from overall efforts, such as basic infrastructure development, cash-for-labor programs, capital assistance, and financing for MSMEs, and productive programs related to job creation (Komdigi, 2021). Within this broader policy landscape, recent empirical work underscores that access to financial capital particularly formal credit plays a decisive role in enabling fishers to implement adaptation measures. Fishers with reliable credit pathways are significantly more capable of covering the costs associated with adaptive strategies, while those lacking such financial support are more likely to forgo necessary adjustments, thereby heightening their vulnerability to environmental and economic stressors (Rahman, Toiba, & Huang, 2021). At the same time, strengthening institutional governance remains essential, particularly regarding the management of fisheries infrastructure across different administrative levels. Provincial governments are entrusted with determining the location and overseeing the operation of provincial fishing ports, whereas regencies and municipalities are limited to managing Fish Auction Sites (TPI). This division of authority underscores the importance of maintaining and expanding fisheries port facilities anging from core operational structures to functional and supporting facilities to ensure that fisheries activities can operate efficiently and sustainably (Nurhadi, Diamantina & Indarja, 2024).

Beyond this administrative mandate, the role of TPI is fundamentally tied to fishermen's economic welfare. In practice, TPIs serve as formal market institutions where fishers and buyers engage in transparent price negotiations within a regulated auction space. Ideally, this structure helps protect fishers from price manipulation by intermediaries and ensures that transactions reflect fair market value. Moreover, TPIs are designed to strengthen fishers' financial resilience through mandatory savings mechanisms attached to every sale, offering a form of managed capital accumulation that can support future operations. These institutional functions indicate that TPIs should operate not merely as transactional hubs but as protective economic instruments capable of reducing fishermen's exposure to exploitative market dynamics (Aji, Wisnaeni & Herawati, 2016). The

government is committed to improving the welfare of fishermen by improving their operations and maintaining the quality of their catch. To maintain the quality of their catch, the government is providing cold storage facilities and an ice factory. According to the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, a 600-ton cold storage facility and a 100-ton ice factory have been established in the Brondong and Paciran areas (Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture, 2024).

The government has assisted poor fishermen, including Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT) provided in non cash form or the form of necessities, usually rice and eggs worth Rp600,000.00 per month. In addition, there is the Family Hope Program (PKH) to break the chain of poverty. Poor fishermen who meet the requirements are (1) pregnant women with a maximum of two pregnancies; (2) having a toddler in one family with a maximum of two children; and (3) having a maximum of one elementary school-aged child in one family. Not all poor fishermen receive this assistance because they do not meet the requirements.

Beyond these social assistance programs, the government also implements a broader set of structural protection measures designed to enhance the socio-economic resilience of fishermen. These measures include the provision of fisheries and salt-farming infrastructure, assurance of business certainty, risk-mitigation schemes for fishing, aquaculture, and salt production, as well as efforts to eliminate high-cost economic practices. The government further regulates the importation of fisheries and salt commodities, strengthens safety and security standards, and provides legal facilitation and assistance for fishermen (Lestari, Soemarmi, & Diamantina, 2017).

These initiatives illustrate that fisher protection does not rely solely on direct assistance but also on institutional improvements and governance reforms that underpin coastal economic activities.

Based on various empirical conditions and government policies discussed in the previous sections, it can be understood that the issue of disparity between the potential of fisheries resources and the poverty level of coastal communities cannot be analyzed solely from a practical or policy-oriented perspective. This problem fundamentally stems from the lack of harmony between resource management, economic access, social structure, and the legal institutions that govern the lives of coastal communities.

D. CONCLUSION

The disparity between the potential of fishery resources in Indonesia's coastal areas and the sources of income of traditional fishermen is quite significant. The majority of small-scale or traditional fishermen living in Indonesia's coastal areas suffer from substandard or poor livelihoods, despite abundant fish resources. This condition is not solely attributable to the potential availability of

fishery resources, but is influenced by a variety of underlying factors. Therefore, efforts to improve the welfare of fishermen require economic interventions such as subsidies or equipment assistance. Furthermore, a comprehensive strategy is needed, which includes improving marketing systems, strengthening fishermen's cooperatives, implementing sustainable social protection policies, and enhancing access to education.

At the legal level, regulations related to fisheries resource potential, coastal area management, including empowerment, and poverty alleviation strategies for fishermen appear to be adequate, but their implementation has not yet achieved the desired results. The government has also attempted to take strategic steps to address this imbalance, but this goal appears to have failed. Based on the research conducted, the author concludes that the appropriate solution to achieve a balance between fisheries resource utilization and community welfare is to empower fishing communities using a holistic and sustainable approach. The government, relevant institutions, and fishing communities themselves need to work together to create effective and targeted programs.

Inequality Between the Potential of Fishery Resources and the Poverty Level of Fisherman Communities in Coastal Areas of Indonesia

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