

## Gender, Livelihood, and Ecotourism during Covid-19 Epidemic in North Halmahera of Indonesia

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### Abstract

*This article aims to describe women's role in maintaining livelihoods in the tourism sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. The perspectives used are gender, livelihood, and ecotourism. This research location is in Tanjung Bongo Tourism Object and Kupa-Kupa Beach Tourism Object, North Halmahera Regency, Indonesia. The research method used is qualitative. The data collection techniques used were in-depth interviews, observation, and document study. This study's results indicate the role of women in maintaining livelihoods through business in the tourism sector. In the framework of sustainable livelihoods, limited access to capital affects the capability to support a tourism sector's business. On the other hand, women entrepreneurs in each tourism destination adhere to ecotourism principles to maintain a clean environment and safety and comfort in traveling. Based on this study's results, gender, livelihood, and ecotourism theoretically support sustainable eco-tourism.*

**Keywords:** Gender, Livelihood, Ecotourism, Covid-19, Sustainability

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism will not be sustainable without gender equality. Alarcón & Cole (2019) believe that without addressing gender equality substantially, tourism's potential to contribute to sustainable development will not be optimal. Ferguson (2011) emphasized that previous studies have explored a gender equality relationship with tourism development, namely empowering women to achieve sustainable development goals. Gender problems in the tourism sector are complex, and previous studies have described a causal relationship between gender and holistic tourism (Ferguson & Alarcón, 2015). Cole & Ferguson (2015) view that social problems in the tourism environment are related to resource supply, one of

which is the need to access water sources. It shows that gender issues in the tourism sector are essential to be studied scientifically.

Social issues become complicated when there is a competition between the requirements for resource consumption by local communities and the demands for resource consumption for the tourism industry's sustainability. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to intersectionality and social reproduction. Several studies on gender and tourism discuss aspects of policy, economic inequality, politics, empowerment of women and social classes that have a significant influence on the development and sustainability of the tourism sector (Boley, Ayscue, Maruyama, & Woosnam, 2017; Je, Khoo, & Chiao Ling Yang, 2020; Xu, 2018; Xu & Gu, 2018). In the context of this research, gender and tourism studies are focused on women's efforts to maintain businesses in the tourism sector as a source of livelihood.

The sustainable livelihood framework adopted is a perspective that has been put forward by Robert John Haylock Chambers and Richard Gordon Conway in the Department for International Development (DFID) project in developing countries (Mazibuko, 2013). The adoption of DFID's sustainable livelihoods framework is still relevant to the context of development in Indonesia, particularly the livelihoods of people in the tourism sector (Y.A. Singgalen, 2020; Yerik Afrianto Singgalen, 2020; Yerik Afrianto Singgalen, Sasongko, & Wiloso, 2019d, 2019e; Yerik Afrianto Singgalen & Simange, 2018). Based on these considerations, the gender and livelihood study relies on a sustainable livelihood framework, as shown in the following chart.

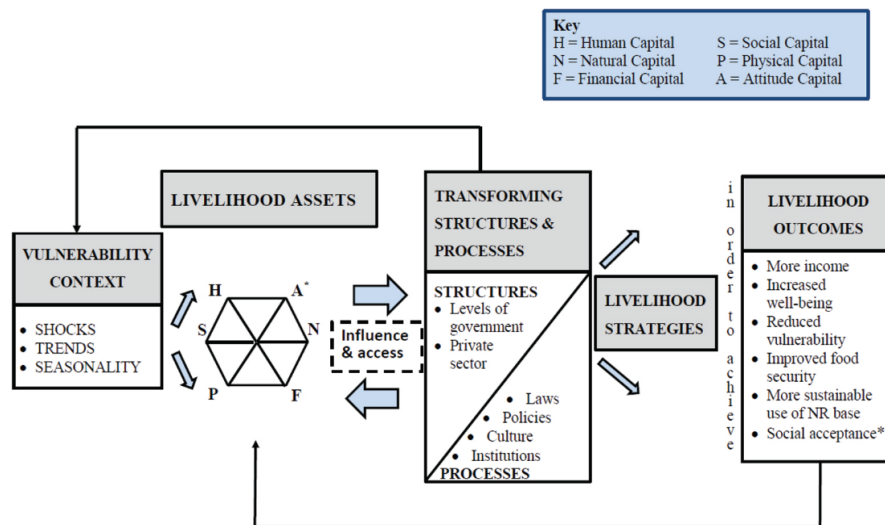


Figure 1. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework from DFID's Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

Source: Adapted from Department for International Development (Mazibuko, 2013)

Community livelihoods in the tourism sector have become a famous study among academics and practitioners to identify the capabilities of community access to resources and mobility to maintain livelihoods in the tourism sector through various policies and institutions (Luo & Bao, 2019; Nyaupane, Poudel, & York, 2020; Srijuntrapun, Fisher, & Rennie, 2018; Su, Sun, Wall, & Min, 2020). Several researchers focus on describing eco-tourism's contribution to improving people's quality of livelihood in rural and remote areas (Fairer-Wessels, 2017; Ma, Wang, Dai, & Ou, 2020; Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2010; Shoo & Songorwa, 2013). Some researchers also describe aspects of gendered entrepreneurship with rural communities' livelihoods (Möller, 2012). Based on previous studies, the sustainable livelihood framework is contextual and needs to be specifically studied based on substantive issues. This article describes a gender perspective in the context of women entrepreneurs' livelihoods in the tourism sector.

Based on the context of the North Halmahera Regency's research location, the discussion's scope focuses on two tourism destinations that adopt the eco-tourism approach in development, namely the Tanjung Bongo tourism destination and the Kupa-Kupa Beach tourism destination. Specifically, the efforts to support tourism activities observed were "Kedai Vera" and "Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage and Bar" from gender, and sustainable livelihood perspective, Halmahera women's involvement in entrepreneurship in the local

tourism sector adjusted according to sustainable livelihoods. Women's role in maintaining the cleanliness of the environment and tourists' safety and comfort is an essential part of the discussion on the principles of sustainable eco-tourism in the North Halmahera Regency. Thus, the perspective of gender, livelihood, and eco-tourism becomes relevant to the context of this research. This study's results can also strengthen (Wu & Pearce, 2014) argument that local communities are the motor of sustainable livelihoods through the tourism sector. Besides, the contribution of this research result also confirms the statements of previous researchers based on case studies of community livelihoods and tourism in each country that the capability of access to resources has an essential role in maintaining livelihoods, including in the tourism sector (Chen, Xu, & Lew, 2020; Munanura, Backman, Hallo, & Powell, 2016; Zhang et al., 2020).

Eco-tourism sustainability indicators in each country are different. Several previous studies show substantial differences in achieving eco-tourism sustainability (Pasape, Anderson, & Lindi, 2015a; Rivera & Gutierrez, 2019). Each country optimizes tourism destination management based on social, economic, political, and environmental contexts (Cobbinah, Black, & N-yanbini, 2020). Dangi & Gribb (2018) shows that one of the efforts to achieve eco-tourism sustainability is cooperation or collaboration between stakeholders. Besides, tourist visits' management is essential to anticipate environmental degradation due to tourism activities (Wiredu, Takyi, Amponsah, & Tetteh, 2020). Therefore, the implementation of eco-tourism concepts is closely related to ecological conservation action or ecological orientation (Nevard & Nevard, 2014).

This research offers an idea to describe the relation of gender, livelihood, and ecotourism with the context of tourism destination in Tanjung Bongo and Kupa-Kupa Beach of North Halmahera Regency in Indonesia. During the Covid-19 pandemic, one of the sectors exposed was tourism. It allows for dynamics to sustain livelihoods for communities whose livelihoods depend on tourism, especially the woman (*Moyooka and Moholebe*) in the North Halmahera Regency, North Maluku, Indonesia. It is essential to examine gender, livelihoods, and ecotourism issues to renew studies on tourism during a pandemic. The results of this study show significant similarities related to gender and livelihood issues in Ghana, where the vulnerability aspect of livelihood sustainability lies in the capability of access to capital (Amevenku, Asravor, & Kuwornu, 2019; Peprah, Kiyiyaga, Afful, Abalo, &

Agyemang-Duah, 2017). Nevertheless, the construction of ideas related to women and the socio-cultural context during Covid-19 pandemic is a novelty that contributes significantly to the development of livelihood studies from a gender perspective (Bond, Kapondamgaga, Mwenebanda, Yadav, & Rizvi, 2007; Buss & Rutherford, 2020; Chanamoto & Hall, 2015; Örnebring & Möller, 2018; Tsikata & Yaro, 2014; Walker, Mitchell, & Wismer, 2001).

This study adopted a qualitative method. Meanwhile, the theoretical perspectives used as a guidance of this research are gender, livelihood, and ecotourism. The location of this research is in North Halmahera Regency, North Maluku Province, Indonesia. This research observation focuses on the Tanjung Bongo tourist attraction, namely the "Kedai Vera" business and the Kupa-Kupa Beach tourist destination, especially the "Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage, and Bar" business. This research is divided into four stages of study, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Research Stages on Gender, Livelihood, and Eco-tourism in North Halmahera, Indonesia

<b>Pre-Research</b>	<b>Data retrieval</b>	<b>Data processing</b>	<b>Research Report</b>
Review previous literature to Find Research Gaps	Observation on Selected Tourism Destination	Making Map of Research Locations using QGIS 12.18.4	Triangulation results according to the Gender Perspective
Determination of Research Location in North Halmahera Regency	In-depth Interviews with Key Informants	Documentation of Research Results in Visual & Audio using DJI Phantom 4 version 2 and Sony a6400 using Adobe Premier Pro	Triangulation Results Following the Framework of Sustainable Livelihoods
Determination of Qualitative Research Methods	Document Study: Central Bureau of Statistics	Compilation of Transcripts and Triangulations using Nvivo 12 Plus	Triangulation Results According to the Perspective of Sustainable Eco-Tourism

Table 1 represents the stages of this research, starting from the pre-research stage, data collection, data processing, and research reports. Researchers conducted a literature review to identify research gaps from previous research related to gender, livelihood, and ecotourism issues in the pre-research stage. Furthermore, the researcher determined the location of the study and the method used. The consideration of choosing the scope of the research area in Indonesia, especially North Halmahera, North Maluku Province, is adjusted to the relevance

of the socio-cultural, economic, political, and environmental contexts that can answer the formulation of this research problem. Meanwhile, the research location map is in the following figure.

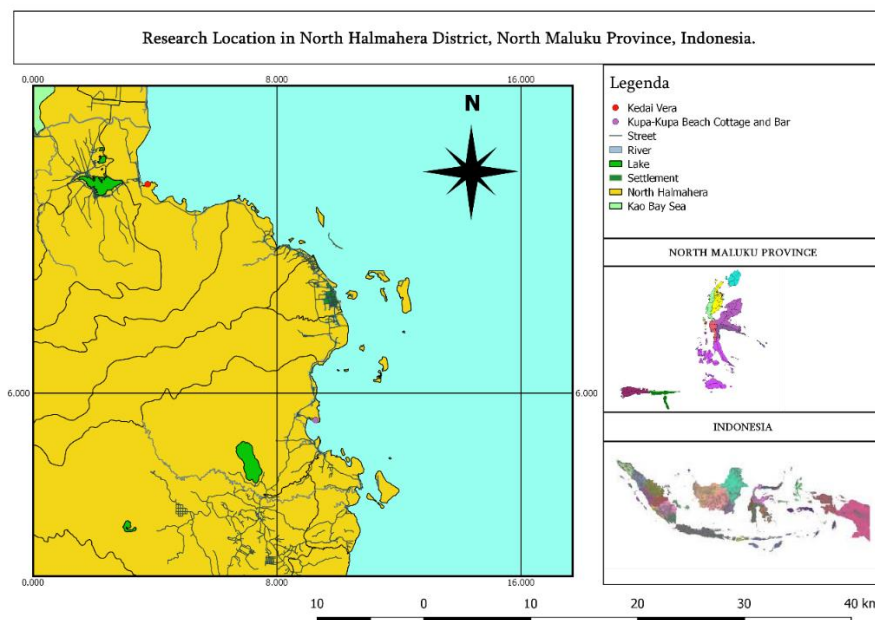


Figure 2. Research Location in North Halmahera District of Indonesia. Source: Digitized by QGIS 2.18.4 With Grass 7.2.0

To clarify our research findings, we attach a data collection stage using an in-depth interview approach to key informants. Informants involved in research at the Tanjung Bongo tourism destination in the "Kedai Vera" business are Sitna Badarudin, Rahma Abubakar, Vera Badarudin, Nurbaya Poluan, Jama Hamisi, Marwati Manumpil. Meanwhile, the critical informant involved in research on the Kupa-Kupa Beach tourism destination in the "Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage and Bar" business is Yusnaeni Rongalaha. The informant involved has a background on women's gender as entrepreneurs in accommodation and restaurants, supporting local tourism.

The qualifications of key informants are determined based on the discussion on gender, livelihood, and ecotourism. Based on the pre-research results, the involvement of women through entrepreneurship in the Tanjung Bongo tourism destination and the Kupa-Kupa beach tourism destination supports the discussion of this study's results. Besides, observations were made using the DJI Phantom 4 version 2 drone hardware and a Sony a6400 camera, then processed using Adobe Premiere Pro software, as in the following table.

Table 2. Observation Results of Research Locations in North Halmahera Regency, Indonesia



Device	Location	Picture	Documentation Link
DJI Phantom 4 Version 2 and Sony a6400	Tanjung Bongo Tourism Object		<a href="https://youtu.be/EjiEWNm2LSg">https://youtu.be/EjiEWNm2LSg</a>
DJI Phantom 4 Version 2 and Sony a6400	Kupa-Kupa Beach Tourism Object		<a href="https://youtu.be/jxsaskpIepI">https://youtu.be/jxsaskpIepI</a>

Table 2 results from observations documented visually and audio and published online via the Youtube platform. The results of recorded interviews with informants were made in the form of transcripts and then analyzed thematically using the Nvivo 12 Plus application to support discussions according to the theoretical perspectives of gender, livelihood, and eco-tourism. On the other hand, a document study was carried out to deepen the analysis related to development in North Halmahera Regency. The documents in question are Human Development Index (HDI) of North Halmahera Regency in 2019, Manpower Indicators for North Halmahera Regency in 2019, Regional Statistics of North Halmahera Regency in 2020, Statistics of the People's Welfare of North Halmahera Regency in 2020.

## DISCUSSION

The discussion of this research can be classified into three sub-topics: the involvement of women as entrepreneurs in the tourism sector; efforts to maintain livelihoods through entrepreneurship in the tourism industry during the Covid-19 Pandemic; Efforts to achieve sustainable ecotourism in North Halmahera, Indonesia.

### **Halmahera Women as Tourism Entrepreneur : Gender Perspectives**

The role and position of women in the cultural structure of North Halmahera cannot be separated from the various norms reconstructed based on the cultural context of Hibualamo (Big House). The intensity of cross-cultural interactions causes changes in standards in structures that tend to be rigid to be more adaptive to change. As a result, women's role and position in North Halmahera underwent a severe structure change with local cultural norms, becoming more flexible and protecting women and women's rights in accessing various parts of society's social sphere. The identity of North Halmahera women

is known as *Moyooka* and *Moholebe*. Both are identities that distinguish unmarried women's status (*Moholebe*) and married woman's status (*Moyooka*).

*Moyooka* can be categorized as a housewife in the family, while girls in their teens can be classified as *Moholebe*. The meaning of *Moyooka* and *Moholebe's* identities is sacred. As women, *Moyooka* and *Moholebe* have a cultural symbol in a traditional bag called *Saloi*. *Saloi* is used to hold food supplies when going to the garden for farming. *Saloi* can also be used as a container to accommodate food products when returning from the garden. In *Hibualamo* culture, *Moyooka* and *Moholebe*, who were carrying *Saloi* on their way to the garden, received respect from all local indigenous peoples. This honor is given to *Moyooka* and *Moholebe* to support the family in maintaining a livelihood, while the men go to sea or do hard work to support the family through an income.

The development of the tourism sector in North Halmahera has triggered a diversification of livelihoods that has attracted Halmahera women (*Moyooka* and *Moholebe*) to be involved as entrepreneurs. Through a case study at Tanjung Bongo Tourism Destination, it can be seen that there is a restaurant business called "Kedai Vera," which was initiated and managed by women, including women who have been widowed. The following is an excerpt from an in-depth interview with the manager of "Kedai Vera":

*"An early-stage, to start this business was tough because we had to work independently to row a boat (canoe) every night to pile up the stones so that it was feasible to build a small tent. Since Tanjung Bongo has become popular among the public, the tents we made have become a shelter for visitors when it rains. Seeing this opportunity, we sell food needs to visitors who come to Tanjung Bongo. Gradually we raised money to fix a simple tent and build a simple wooden house combined with bamboo. Even though we are women, we work independently to dive, picking up small rocks and stockpiling in the area of "Kedai Vera" to become a comfortable coffee shop for visitors. On the other hand, we use enough capital to build a fish pond to hire male workers in the village to help with the stone piling process. So far, we have made all efforts without assistance from the village government and the local government. The income we get is uncertain, depending on the number of visitors. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, our revenue was quite large and met family needs for food and education, and children's health costs. However, during the corona (Covid-19 pandemic), there was a significant decrease. Sometimes, we only get IDR 500,000 per day from visitors."*

The workers of "Kedai Vera" are women from Pune and Soa-Sio villages, Galela District, North Halmahera Regency, North Maluku Province, Indonesia. The initiation to help each other in the "Kedai Vera" business is inseparable from the local cultural norms called "*Higaro*" (inviting one another). As a widow, involvement in the "Kedai Vera" business

is a strategic choice to accumulate financial capital even though the income earned is fluctuating, depending on the number of visitors during the Covid-19 pandemic. On the other hand, the entrepreneur of "Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage and Bar" at the Kupa-Kupa Beach Tourism Destination has a different experience. Her business involvement in the tourism sector began with the initiative to maintain livelihoods after the riots in Tobelo in 1999-2000. Traumatized by the dark incident, the Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage and Bar business owner decided to live in an area far from Tobelo, namely Kupa-Kupa Village. Based on the experience of visiting the Teluk Kupa-Kupa Village, the "Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage and Bar" entrepreneur saw a small business opportunity by providing food for hungry visitors. These efforts are carried out independently to maintain livelihoods in post-conflict areas. The following is an excerpt from the interview with the informant:

*"I never thought that my business would be what it is today. My experience started with the displacement due to the 1999-2000 conflict. After returning from the evacuation, my house in the town of Tobelo was burned down. I was traumatized by the conflict, so I decided to live in an area far from urban areas. Unintentionally, I visited Kupa-Kupa beach to calm my mind. I observed visitors bringing supplies for recreation, but they starved when they finished bathing at the beach because the supplies had run out. I saw this as a business opportunity, so I decided to rent a place on Kupa-Kupa beach and started selling local food (fried banana). I contacted the landowner, then rented the place for IDR 1,000,000 per year. I got the profits I managed to build a simple but as a good sales place. One time, the landowner wanted to sell the land to me. I see this as an opportunity to expand my business, so I am willing to buy the land even in installments. After I owned the land, I added facilities until it became the cottage and bar like it is today. When I think back, my initial capital to start all of these businesses was IDR 300,000. Currently, the income I have is sufficient to develop this business in the future. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, income decreased because foreign tourists did not come to Indonesia, especially Tobelo. I try to minimize losses by making operational cost efficiencies. I don't fire my employees during these difficult times, but I talk about these difficult conditions and reduce their uptime and salaries. So far, they are not complaining but grateful. Because I am the sole manager, I do everything myself. Hopefully, the Covid-19 pandemic will pass quickly, and tourism business in North Halmahera will return to normal"*

Based on entrepreneurial experience in the tourism sector, the gender perspective in women entrepreneurs' study is relevant to women's context in the North Halmahera Regency. Based on the results of in-depth interviews with informants, the role and position of women in society's social structure in North Halmahera, Regency has undergone an adaptation process and diversified livelihood forms. Tourism is one of the sectors that encourage society's norm to be more flexible and less rigid. It is happening in other areas in

the same region of North Maluku, Indonesia (Singgalen & Kudubun, 2017; Singgalen, Sasongko, & Wiloso, 2018a, 2019b). Changes in the social structure for women in Halmahera, which are more flexible in adjusting the diversification of livelihoods in the tourism sector, allowing for increased participation as women entrepreneurs.

This study indicates that each region's social and cultural context determines women's space to move in various activities. The social and cultural context of the people in North Halmahera is very flexible and prone to acculturation or assimilation. It is different from the context of the Wamena tribe in Jayapura-Indonesia, which was researched by Timisela et al. (2020), which shows a space limitation for women by local cultural norms known as *Honai*. This study's results indicate a similar context to the effects of Ramadan's (2015) research, which shows that women entrepreneurs in Albania pioneered a business as a sustainable livelihood strategy. Tinker (2000) argues that women's involvement in entrepreneurship is also one process for reducing poverty. Das (2000) argues that women's participation as entrepreneurs is indicated by various factors, motivations, and goals related to their livelihoods' sustainability. The same condition occurs in the two research locations that women's involvement as entrepreneurs in the tourism sector is an effort to maintain their sustainability.

### **Efforts To Maintain Livelihoods in Eco-tourism Approach During The Covid-19 Pandemic: Sustainable Livelihood Perspective**

Efforts to maintain livelihoods in the tourism sector during the Covid-19 pandemic can be carried out with various strategies: first, to keep running a business by implementing health protocols recommended by the government; second, minimizing operational costs, or reduce an employee salary. Based on the results of in-depth interviews with the “Kedai Vera” business manager at Tanjung Bongo Tourism Destination, the strategy to maintain livelihood sustainability in the tourism sector is carried out by running a business according to health protocols. The "Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage and Bar" business manager at the Kupa-Kupa Beach Tourist Destination minimizes operational costs, salaries, and employee working time during the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the sustainable livelihood framework reconstructed by DFID, it can be seen that the context of the Halmahera women's livelihood in the tourism sector during the Covid-19 pandemic can be seen in the following Figure.

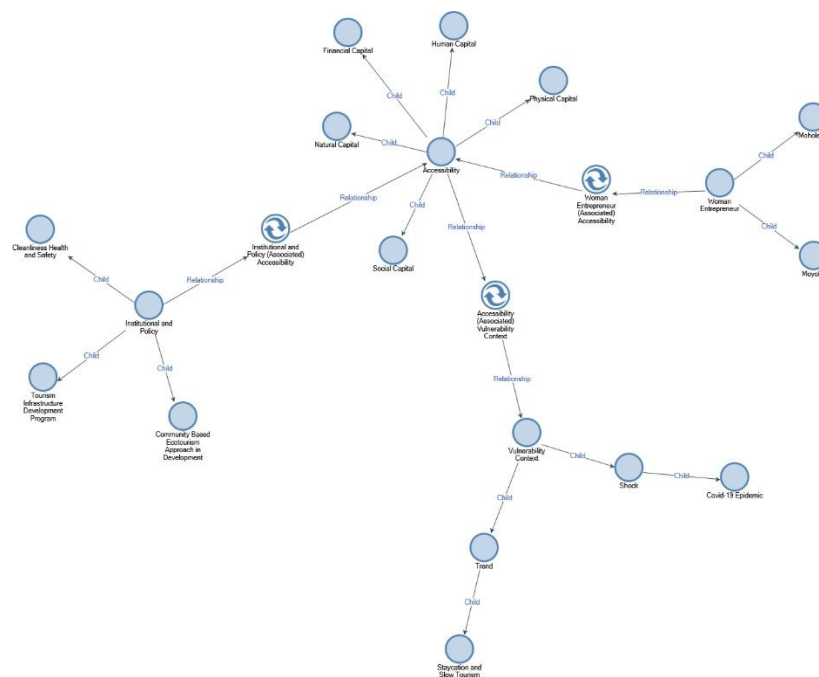


Figure 3 Sustainable Livelihood of Woman Entrepreneurship in Tourism Industry through the case study of North Halmahera District, Indonesia. Source: Adapted from Department for International Development.

Figure 3 is a framework for sustainable livelihoods reconstructed based on Halmahera (*Moyooka* and *Moholebe*) women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, North Halmahera District, North Maluku Province, Indonesia. Each entrepreneur has a different capital accumulation trajectory based on the results of in-depth interviews with key informants. “Kedai Vera” entrepreneurs take advantage of social capital (cultural norms of “*Higaro*”) in the early stages of starting a business to accumulate Financial Capital (income) and physical capital (land for business). The same thing is also done by “Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage and Bar” entrepreneurs who take advantage of social capital (business network) to accumulate Financial Capital (income) and physical capital (land for business).

The context of vulnerability that affects the accessibility of the entrepreneurs “Kedai Vera” and “Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage and Bar” can be categorized into shock and trend. The trend of tourist visits to Tanjung Bongo Tourism Destinations can increase business income. Simultaneously, the shock caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic has caused a decrease in revenue from businesses in the tourism sector. Nonetheless, the policy to implement health protocols (Cleanliness, Health, and Safety) allows the “Kedai Vera” and “Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage and Bar” entrepreneurs to continue operating. On the other hand, the

Tanjung Bongo tourist destination development program is still ongoing in preparation for the tourism sector's recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic.

People who depend on the tourism sector have experienced a shock due to large-scale social restriction policies that impact foreign tourist visits. Several previous researchers argued that tourism conditions after the Covid-19 pandemic would change, tourists prioritizing health aspects as an indicator of safety and comfort during their tour (Benjamin, Dillette, & Alderman, 2020; Hall, Scott, & Gössling, 2020). Quang et al. (2020) show that new habitus in the tourism sector is a priority for implementing health protocols to indicate safety and comfort in each tourist destination. Therefore, positive thinking as motivation for the recovery of the tourism sector after the Covid-19 pandemic emphasizes cleanliness, health, and Safety (Yeh, 2020). Optimism for the recovery of the tourism sector after the Covid-19 pandemic is a coping strategy for local people whose livelihoods depend on the tourism sector. During the pandemic, entrepreneurs "Kedai Vera" and "Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage and Bar" evaluated the operational system to be more optimal when the Covid-19 pandemic ended. Vaishar & Št'astná (2020) show that Covid-19 pandemic has implications for the tourism sector in remote areas. It also affects the sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises in rural communities.

Furthermore, Plyzos et al. (2020) show that efforts to write about the tourism sector in each country are characterized by various policies that prioritize people's livelihoods in health and economic aspects. Restrictions on social activities are accommodated through procedures to anticipate an increase in patients exposed to Covid-19. Despite this, the tourism sector's demand continues to increase, only limited by the government for the public good. Otherwise, Sheller (2020) shows that several tourist destinations update supporting facilities and infrastructure during the Covid-19 pandemic. Something similar happened in the Tanjung Bongo tourist destination. The reconstruction process of supporting ecotourism facilities became more controllable because there were few visitors. This condition reflects that the Covid-19 pandemic has harmed the people's economy in the tourism sector and becomes an opportunity to improve infrastructure to be more optimal. Based on this study's results, the sustainability of livelihoods dramatically depends on the accessibility of resources. It is also influenced by the context of vulnerability and policies implemented by the government. Halmahera women's livelihoods (*Moyooka and Mobolebe*) can be sustainable

during the Covid-19 pandemic because of capital access. Implementing the ecotourism approach in tourism development in the North Halmahera Regency naturally limits massive tourist visits integrated with large-scale social restriction policies.

### **Efforts to Achieve Sustainable Ecotourism In North Halmahera, Indonesia: Eco-tourism Approach**

To clarify the results of our article improvements, we attach Eco-tourism to be one of the approaches to tourism development known as environmentally friendly. The implementation of ecotourism development principles in North Halmahera can support sustainable tourism even during the Covid-19 pandemic (Yerik Afrianto Singgalen, Sasongko, & Wiloso, 2019c). The concept of ecotourism development in the tourist destination of Tanjung Bongo is supported by the entrepreneur "Kedai Vera" through awareness of maintaining the sustainability of the environmental ecosystem and cleaning the environment of tourist sites from plastic waste. The same thing is done by the entrepreneur "Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage and Bar," who pays attention to the cleanliness of the coastal environment from plastic waste and protecting the waters of Kupa-Kupa Bay from destroying coral reefs using explosives. Based on the results of observations of the research location, the concept of developing Tanjung Bongo tourist destinations is guided by Eco-tourism principles. Pasape et al. (2015a) suggested several ecotourism indicators: conservation of natural diversity, preservation of cultural diversity, stakeholders, infrastructure support. Based on the results of observations at Tanjung Bongo tourism destinations and Kupa-Kupa Beach tourist destinations, infrastructure support, conservation of cultural diversity, preservation of natural resource diversity, and participation of all stakeholders are available (Yerik Afrianto Singgalen, Sasongko, & Wiloso, 2019a).

Nevertheless, the challenges of developing ecotourism in the North Halmahera Regency cannot be separated from several managerial issues and land rights (Yerik Afrianto Singgalen, Sasongko, & Wiloso, 2018b). Ecotourism is an approach that is relevant to the socio-cultural context of the people of North Halmahera. In addition, the development of ecotourism supports the sustainability of the livelihoods of coastal communities, especially in research locations. Through the ecotourism approach, local communities can maintain a culture with the meaning of human interaction with nature. One of the indigenous people's traditional dances in the Tanjung Bongo tourist destination is *Tokumela*, a dance of

brotherhood and mutual support. In addition, there are cultural norms and local wisdom known as *Babari* and *Balelean*, which means helping each other and visiting one another. Through the ecotourism approach, the protection of local culture is one indicator of sustainability. Meanwhile, the tourism environment condition was also built conservation facilities for the preservation of fish in Tanjung Bongo waters. The various parties involved as stakeholders, both providers of sea transportation services, namely traditional boats (*Ketinting*), security forces, village government, are interested in protecting the environment in Tanjung Bongo.

The control of tourist visits to the Tanjung Bongo destination can be well controlled because the only access to tourist sites must use a traditional boat (*Ketinting*) from the *Soa-Sio* port. Thus, the quantity of visitors is adjusted to the capacity or carrying capacity of the Tanjung Bongo tourism destination. In addition, mangroves are one of the habitats protected by every stakeholder. Tourists visiting Tanjung Bongo tourist destinations are oriented towards natural beauty and the best photo spots with a background of small islands like the *Raja Empat* tourism destination in Papua. During the Covid-19 Pandemic, the entrepreneur "Kedai Vera" took the initiative to keep the environment clean from plastic waste and maintain security at the Tanjung Bongo tourist destination by monitoring it 24 hours. It shows awareness and participation in the development of ecotourism in the North Halmahera Regency. This study's results strengthen the arguments of several previous researchers that tourism is sustainable because of public awareness and participation and is integrated with the concept of regional tourism development (Dangi & Gribb, 2018; Pasape, Anderson, & Lindi, 2015b; Wiredu et al., 2020).

## **CONCLUSION**

The results indicate that the participation of women in Halmahera (*Moyooka and Moholebe*) through entrepreneurship has supported sustainable ecotourism in Tanjung Bongo tourist destinations and Kupa-Kupa Beach tourist destinations. Based on a gender perspective, woman entrepreneurs in the tourism industry describe the social structure of the indigenous Hibualamo community that has undergone changes and the demands of livelihood. On the other hand, the livelihoods of Kedai Vera entrepreneurs and Kupa-Kupa Beach Cottage and Bar entrepreneurs can be sustainable because they have access to

resources as the framework for sustainable livelihoods, according to DFID. However, the context of vulnerability, policies, and institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic also affected business income. One of the benefits of implementing the North Halmahera Regency's ecotourism approach is the resilience of entrepreneurs' livelihoods during the Covid-19 pandemic. By implementing health protocols and controlling visitors to the destination, the local government allows community businesses to continue operating. It shows that ecotourism is one approach capable of supporting sustainable tourism in North Halmahera Regency, North Maluku Province, Indonesia.

Based on this study's results, women's involvement in entrepreneurship in the tourism sector supports ecotourism in North Halmahera Regency. On the other hand, the ability to access women as entrepreneurs in the tourism sector needs to be mobilized through policies and institutions that are more *structured* in empowerment programs. Thus, the structure, function, and position of women in developing tourism in the North Halmahera Regency will be optimal through broad access to various capital, according to DFID's sustainable livelihood framework. This study's results need to be considered seriously for Indonesia's orthodox community's sustainable livelihood who utilizes ritual capital for their livelihood capability and security. In the context of developing rural tourism, the role of local, sub-district, and rural governments is needed in formulating local-cultural-values-based tourism development policies so that they are sustainable. On the other hand, this research is limited to local communities' cultural aspects from a sustainable livelihood approach. Therefore, future investigations are suggested to study collaboration among stakeholders as an essential part of achieving livelihood sustainability. Thus, the new cultural paradigm in sustainable rural tourism development in Indonesia does not seem static but dynamic.

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