

# Power Structure And Community Literacy As Determinants Of Participation In Tourism Management In The Tanakeke Islands, Takalar Regency, South Sulawesi Province

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**Abstract:** This study examines the level of community participation in tourism management in the Tanakeke Islands, South Sulawesi, focusing on power dynamics and community literacy as determining factors. Key issues include waste management, coastal ecosystem damage such as mangrove deforestation and coral reef degradation, and low levels of active community involvement in tourism activities. Although community involvement has been demonstrated through various activities such as MSME initiatives, transportation provision, and environmental conservation, this participation remains incidental and coordinated top-down by the village government. Based on qualitative analysis and case studies using NVIVO, it was found that community participation remains at the tokenism level in Arnstein's ladder of participation model. This is due to the dominance of local power structures and the community's lack of literacy regarding tourism, regulations, and institutions. Empowerment programs that fail to address the root of structural and educational issues will only prolong the practice of pseudo-participation. Therefore, a management model intervention is needed that can simultaneously break down power imbalances and increase community critical literacy. Thus, more deliberative, empowered, and sustainable participation can be realized to support equitable and inclusive community-based tourism development in the Tanakeke Islands.

**Keywords:** Community Participation, Tokenism, Sustainable Tourism, Critical Literacy, Tanakeke Islands

## INTRODUCTION

South Sulawesi Province as one of the main destinations in Indonesia, has natural, historical, and cultural potential that has great potential to be developed and become a trigger for the growth of tourist interest in South Sulawesi (Suriadi et al., 2022; Nur et al., 2024). One of the potential natural tourist attractions owned by South Sulawesi Province is the maritime potential in the form of islands, seas, coasts, culture, and history of the people of South Sulawesi who are known as skilled sailors who have sailed with traditional pinisi ships to various parts of the world with various purposes such as catching fish and seafood, trading, to migrating to form communities (Bugis-Makassar) in various regions of the archipelago and other countries.

South Sulawesi Province within the planning boundaries of the Coastal Area and Small Islands Zoning Plan (RZWP3K) has 332 small islands with the largest number in Pangkajene and Kepulauan Regency consisting of 140 islands and the smallest in several regencies namely Jeneponto, North Luwu, and Palopo each consisting of 1 island. Small islands fundamentally require management based on the unique characteristics of these islands, namely the condition of their natural resources (biological and non-biological), human resources (social, economic, and cultural conditions of local communities), and environmental services such as tourism activities, particularly marine tourism (Mattiyo et al., 2023).

Coastal and small island management is a process of planning, utilizing, monitoring, and controlling coastal and small island resources across sectors, including the central and regional governments, terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and science and management, to improve community welfare. According to Naiman & Dudgeon (2011) and Vannevel & Goethals (2020), good management will further enhance aquatic productivity, the effectiveness of water use, and ecosystem sustainability, ultimately increasing community income, independence, and well-being.

Resource management in coastal and small island areas in South Sulawesi Province is increasingly diverse in line with the increasing number of development activities and the increasing population living in coastal areas. With increasing population growth and rapid development activities in coastal areas, accompanied by various uses such as housing,

fisheries, agriculture, tourism, transportation, industry, and services, pressure on coastal ecosystems and resources is also increasing.

One of the major issues and problems that has emerged is waste management, such as the lack of communal waste receptacles for public places on beaches and islands, low community participation in waste sorting and environmental protection, and low government support in providing waste facilities (Naatonis, 2010). Other issues and problems related to coastal areas and oceans include: 1) Damage to coral reef ecosystems in the coastal waters of South Sulawesi, particularly in the waters of Spermonde and Bone Bay, with damage reaching 55%; 2) Deforestation of mangroves along the coast of South Sulawesi, with damage reaching 70%; 3) Pollution rates (TSS, DO, BOD, COD, Total Phosphate, Fecal-Coli, Total Coliform, heavy metals, and plastic/microplastics) in the coastal waters of South Sulawesi; 4) Damage to benthic ecosystems in coastal waters; and 5) Abrasion and seawater intrusion in coastal areas. The urgency of conducting research on community participation in the Tanakeke Islands is due to the potential for community empowerment and welfare improvement (Watanabe et al., 2015). The mangrove ecosystem in the Tanakeke Islands provides significant economic contributions to the community. However, if not managed carefully, the community will increasingly exploit the mangrove ecosystem, potentially posing a threat to its sustainability (Akram et al., 2023). This is particularly relevant in the context of tourism development, where community involvement is crucial to supporting sustainable and equitable tourism growth and development (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

Deforestation in the Tanakeke Islands has resulted in environmental damage, prompting various parties to encourage direct community involvement in the Tanakeke Islands to establish institutions and policies to preserve the mangrove ecosystem (Techera, 2020). However, the capacity of local communities to manage and benefit from tourism activities may be limited. Similarly, in the context of tourism services, low community participation in community empowerment programs for tourism activities can hinder their effectiveness (Khalid et al., 2019).

Obstacles to community empowerment efforts in the Tanakeke Islands include limited knowledge and skills in mangrove utilization, a lack of information, and training regarding mangrove resources in the Tanakeke Islands. Currently, coastal communities, especially women, only utilize mangroves through nursery cultivation, charcoal production, firewood collection, and the sale of mangrove trees (Stone et al., 2008). Therefore, understanding and increasing community participation in the Tanakeke Islands is crucial to promoting sustainable tourism development and prosperity.

The importance of community-based island tourism management in the Tanakeke Islands which emphasizes the need for sustainable resource management and improving local livelihoods. This is due to the presence of more than 70 villages in Takalar Regency, four of which are categorized as underdeveloped. These four villages are all located in the Tanakeke Islands. Furthermore, the Tanakeke Islands region offers potential marine tourism assets, including diving spots in the Tanakeke Islands, snorkeling spots in the Tanakeke Islands, and marine nature tourism, which leverages the potential of the Tanakeke Islands for the international tourism market. It is currently gaining recognition among foreign tourists, accessed from Bali as an alternative to Komodo dragons. Although travel facilities from South Sulawesi are still not as intensive as those in Bali, with limited facilities, consumers are generally specific, couples from Europe, America, and Australia. Because it is a "reserve" area, it is necessary to develop a more extensive interconnected area.

## METHOD

This research will be a qualitative study. Qualitative research in this study aligns with the statement that qualitative research is used to gain an in-depth understanding of specific attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and behaviors. Qualitative research can be summarized into three main points: initial response, construction process, and conclusion. The initial response in qualitative research involves sensitivity to emerging environmental problems, a desire to examine in depth, and grasp the meaning of phenomena, events, perceptions, attitudes, thoughts, social activities, and ideas. The construction process in qualitative research includes collecting facts, data, and information from informants, which are described, explained, and illustrated scientifically. The conclusions in this study include discovering the meaning of each phenomenon, discovering new principles of knowledge, and developing new methods. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The qualitative approach in this research is used to explore and understand the

meaning for a number of individuals or groups of people perceived as originating from the problems developing at the research focus (Akyildiz & Ahmed, 2021). This research process involved asking questions to informants, collecting specific data from various sources, analyzing, and interpreting the data obtained. To answer the problem formulation in depth and holistically, this research, employed a qualitative case study approach.

The rationale for selecting this approach is based on three factors. First, tourism management in Tanakeke is a bounded system, where the boundaries between the phenomenon (CBT management) and its context (the social, cultural, economic, and ecological conditions of the small island) are unclear. The case study approach allows researchers to avoid separating the phenomenon from its context. Second, the research objective is to generate a rich understanding of "how" and "why" community participation is not optimal and how a model can be formulated. These "how" and "why" questions are best answered through in-depth qualitative data collection from various sources (interviews, observations, documents). Third, because this research ultimately aims to formulate a management model, a holistic understanding is required that cannot be achieved through survey or descriptive methods alone. By intensively exploring a single case, this research uncovers the complexities, contradictions, and dynamics between stakeholders, which serve as an essential foundation for building a relevant, contextual, and applicable model. The sampling method used in determining the sample was purposive sampling, which is a method of determining samples based on specific objectives and considerations, where the sample is determined in accordance with the research objectives. The sample size for this study was drawn from a customized population and depended on the research objectives, the type of instrument used, cost, and time. NVIVO was used as an analytical tool to organize, code, and explore interview data based on themes that emerged bottom-up from the experiences and narratives of the informants. The analysis process using NVIVO was carried out in the following stages: (1) Open coding: identification of 75 initial codes; (2) Axial coding: formation of six major themes (participation, constraints, expectations, etc.); (3) Selective coding: integration towards modeling; and (4) Matrix query & classification: comparison between informant groups.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Condition of the Power Structure and the Level of Community Literacy are Determining Factors that Place the Level of Participation in the Management of Tourism in the Tanakeke Islands

Sustainable tourism management in island regions relies heavily on the active participation of local communities. In the context of Tanakeke District, Takalar Regency, a thorough understanding of the forms and levels of community participation is crucial for formulating inclusive and effective development strategies. This sub-chapter will comprehensively discuss the research findings from data processing using NVIVO, specifically Figure 1 "Forms of Community Participation in Tourism Management in Tanakeke," which visualizes how local communities are involved in the tourism management process. This analysis will be integrated with qualitative data from interviews, field notes, and observations, and interpreted through the lens of participation theory, specifically Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation model, to provide a comprehensive and scientific understanding.



Figure 1. Forms of Community Participation in Tourism Management in Tanakeke

Visualization of Forms of Community Participation in Tourism Management in Tanakeke in Figure 1 shows that so far the community has carried out various activities, which have directly or indirectly contributed to tourism activities in Tanakeke. This participation is categorized as "initiated and coordinated by the village government (pemdes) in obtaining sponsorship or support", "unstructured (incidental) tourism management carried out by the community tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis)", "supervision of the preservation of natural assets supporting tourism by the community monitoring group (Pokwasmas)", provision of independent sea transportation for visitors by the community using fishing boats (not passenger boats)", even to "pioneering MSMEs for processed marine products, such as fish, sea cucumbers, and seaweed".

### **Forms of Community Participation in the Framework of Community Based Tourism (CBT) Theory**

Interpreting these findings within the framework of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Theory, several key principles advocated by The ASEAN and Potchana can be used to evaluate the state of community participation in the Tanakeke Islands. In terms of local control and ownership, the visualization indicates "self-management by tourism groups (Pokdarwis) and community-based tourism groups (Pokwasmas)" and "self-sufficient provision of sea transportation," indicating community initiative. However, because these activities are "unstructured (incidental)" and occur "at the micro level," full control is not yet in the hands of the community. Moreover, activities such as sponsorship are still "initiated and coordinated by the village government," suggesting limited local autonomy. In terms of the distribution of economic benefits, the establishment of marine-based MSMEs and the independent provision of transportation demonstrate a direct contribution to increasing community income. This aligns with the CBT principle, which emphasizes economic diversification and improving local community welfare.

Furthermore, in terms of cultural and environmental preservation, the community has demonstrated concern through "monitoring the preservation of natural assets supporting tourism by the Community Development Group (Pokwasmas)," yet destructive practices such as "mangrove felling" and "uncaged livestock release" persist. This reflects a unequal distribution of environmental awareness and requires strengthening the understanding of conservation as a tourism asset. Regarding involvement in decision-making, the visualization does not explicitly demonstrate the active role of the community in policy formulation or strategic decision-making, beyond incidental micro-activities. This supports the finding that community participation remains limited to a passive and tokenistic level. Overall, although community-based initiatives that meet some of the basic principles of CBT have emerged, participation in Tanakeke remains in its infancy and has not yet achieved the independence and substantive control idealized in CBT theory, primarily due to the immature management structure and the dominant coordination of the village government.

### **Levels of Community Participation in Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969)**

Based on the frequency of coding and informant narratives categorized in NVIVO, the level of community participation in Tanakeke, as visualized in Figure 1, tends to be at the Tokenism level according to Arnstein's ladder of participation model. At the Information and Consultation level, activities such as "initiated and coordinated by the village government in obtaining sponsorship or support" were found to indicate that the community may only be provided with information or invited to discuss, but do not have significant influence in strategic decision-making. This is reinforced by the informant's statement:

*"The government often holds socializations, but they are more focused on delivering programs, rather than seeking input..."* (Informant 12).

Even formal mechanisms such as the Village Deliberation (Musdes) do not fully reflect meaningful participation, as evidenced by "misunderstandings between village expectations for funding and government regulations that do not allow for cash assistance." At the Placation level, the provision of legal assistance for the establishment of Pokdarwis and Pokwasmas indicates that despite efforts to recognize community groups, substantial control over policies and resources has not been fully transferred to them. Furthermore, the forms of participation that occur are still micro-scale and incidental, such as unstructured tourism management by the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), environmental monitoring by the Community Welfare Group (Pokwasmas), the provision of self-sufficient sea transportation, and the establishment of marine-based MSMEs.

While these activities demonstrate active community involvement, their role is more as implementers than decision-makers, consistent with the characteristics of tokenism according to Parker & Murray (2012). Other supporting data, such as the gap in perceptions regarding assistance where communities expect cash assistance while the government

focuses on stimulus illustrates a lack of alignment in participation goals. Furthermore, the educational background of residents dominated by junior high and high school graduates, indicates limitations in self-development initiatives, and they tend to wait for encouragement from the village government. This suggests that despite the intention to involve the community, participation in Tanakeke has not yet reached the level of "Citizen Power" such as Partnership, Delegation of Power, or Citizen Control. Consequently, the full potential of community-based tourism has not been optimally realized due to the lack of equitable distribution of power and benefits.

#### **Citizen Education Conditions and Capacity Building in CBT Theory**

The NVIVO findings, visualized in the figure, regarding "The Lack of Awareness of Community Development in Community-Based Tourism" crucially highlight the urgency of sustainable education and training programs in the context of community-based tourism (CBT). These data indicate that informants with junior high and senior high school education backgrounds tend to lack the initiative to plan for self-competency development. This indicates a community capacity deficit, which is a major barrier to active and autonomous participation. In CBT theory, building community capacity is a key element of success. Emphasize that "increasing community capacity to learn together and improve the quality of tourism services and products" is one of the three key transformational elements of CBT. These data also confirm that without substantial capacity interventions, communities tend to remain passive or tokenistic, preferring "waiting to be involved and employed" rather than acting as agents of change.

The role of these three transformational elements of CBT is crucial in addressing this challenge. First, transformational leadership is needed from the village government and the Tourism Office to not only take the initiative but also actively empower the community and facilitate a paradigm shift from "aid recipients" to "active actors in development." Second, community capacity building must be carried out through training programs that focus not only on technical skills such as hospitality or guiding, but also build critical community awareness about the purpose of government assistance as a stimulus, not a dependency. Training must be inclusive and tailored to the specific needs of the community, such as integrated training for fishermen who also act as tourism managers. Third, development facilitation needs to be directed at creating an environment conducive to learning and active participation, including strengthening access to information, resources, and cross-sector partnerships between the community, government, the private sector, and NGOs. Thus, the NVIVO findings in Figure 5.35 not only diagnose the problem but also indicate the urgency and direction of strategic interventions to elevate Tanakeke community participation to a higher level in accordance with CBT principles.

#### **Community Participation: Between Hope and Reality**

The coding results for the theme of "participation" (Figure 1) show that community participation is sporadic and tends to be at the implementation level, not the planning level. When analyzed using Nunes (2020) model, most forms of participation are still at the tokenism level, such as informing and consultation, and have not yet reached the level of partnership or delegated power. The use of matrix coding shows that: (1) Younger and more educated community groups tend to be skeptical of the benefits of tourism; (2) In contrast, village officials tend to assess that the community is "sufficiently involved," indicating a dissonance in perception between groups. These findings require a more in-depth understanding of the structure of power relations at the local level, including the dominance of village elites or certain groups in the decision-making process.

#### **Asymmetry in Access and Engagement**

Using case classification, it was found that hamlets closer to the village center tended to be more frequently involved in tourism activities, while women and residents aged 18–30 showed the lowest levels of participation. This analysis indicates that tourism programs are not yet sufficiently sensitive to social diversity and have not paid attention to the inclusiveness of participation. In the spectrum of community participation, the participation ladder formulated by Palerm (2000) provides a relevant framework for analyzing the level of community involvement. Findings in the Tanakeke Islands consistently show that participation practices are at the level of Tokenism, where the community is "involved" through the provision of information or consultation, but without real bargaining power to influence policies or programs. This phenomenon of pseudo-participation is not a random condition, but rather a logical consequence of the interaction of two interlocking determinants: (1) the asymmetry of the power structure that positions the government as the controller of information and resources, and (2) the low level of tourism literacy among the community that creates dependency and weakens their agency.

### **First Determinant: Dissecting the Asymmetry of Power Structure**

In-depth analysis of the interview data revealed an unequal power structure (power asymmetry) between external parties (the government) and local communities. This asymmetry manifests itself in two main aspects: control over information and agendas, and control over resources.

First, control over information and agendas effectively positions the government as the director of development. Meetings almost always take the form of "socialization," a one-way communication in which the government or external parties present pre-made plans or programs. There is minimal room for deliberation or co-design. Meeting agendas, times, and materials are determined top-down, relegating communities to passive audiences.

Second, control over resources, particularly budgets and programs, becomes the most effective tool of power. The government's view as planner and regulator is clearly evident in their narratives, where development solutions are often framed within formal planning schemes.

*"Later, perhaps development patterns will be more detailed. There are many development patterns. They can be developed by indigenous communities. They can be developed by the private sector... Most are purely private. The government only provides support." (Informant 16).*

This perspective, which views the government as the "supporter" and the community or private sector as the "implementer," inherently creates a hierarchy. This contrasts sharply with the voices of the community, who position themselves as recipients awaiting assistance.

*"We, as residents of the Tanakeke Islands, certainly want the government to play a role in all of this." (Informant 21).*

NVivo data analysis reinforces this finding. A Matrix Coding Query comparing narratives across informant groups shows that the "Budget" and "Planning" nodes are dominated by government sources, while community narratives are coded more heavily in the "Expectations" and "Program Needs" nodes. This is empirical evidence of discourse hegemony, where powerful groups define problems and solutions from their perspective, while community groups voice their needs from a position of passive recipients.

### **Second Determinant: Analyzing the Impact of Limited Literacy**

This external power asymmetry is exacerbated by internal community factors, namely low literacy rates. "Literacy" here is not simply defined as the ability to read and write, but rather encompasses a broader spectrum: (1) Tourism Literacy, an understanding of basic tourism industry concepts, such as attractions, services, and destination management; (2) Organizational Literacy, the ability to form and manage groups independently, create proposals, and build networks; (3) Bureaucratic Literacy, knowledge of how government functions and how to access available programs or assistance. This limited literacy is clearly recognized by the community itself, which underlies psychological phenomena such as low self-efficacy and even learned helplessness.

*"Perhaps the community lacks or lacks the skills or knowledge in tourism development." (Informant 22).*

*"So far, we've seen no programs or training, making it difficult to develop." (Informant 20).*

The argument is that these sentences are not simply complaints about a lack of facilities, but rather symptoms of a deeper condition: a lack of confidence to take initiative. When people feel "skillless," they are less likely to try. When they feel change can only come from external "programs or guidance," they remain in a waiting position. This limited literacy is what weakens the capacity of community agencies.

### **Synthesis: How Power and Literacy Together Create Tokenism**

The most crucial part is understanding how these two determinants interact. Unequal power structures exploit (intentionally or not) low levels of public literacy. For those in power, conducting one-way outreach to an audience that tends to be uncritical and lacks counter-data is the most efficient way to implement a program. On the other hand, low literacy reinforces and legitimizes the existing power structure. Feeling incompetent and ignorant, the public tends to accept what is given, thus strengthening the government's position as "the expert" or "the provider."

Under these conditions, "socialization" becomes the most dominant mode of participation. It is the most comfortable meeting point for both parties in an asymmetrical relationship: efficient for those in power, and "safe" for those who lack the confidence to speak up or challenge. This perception and experience of predominantly passive participation are powerfully visualized in the NVivo data. The visualization of this data, in the form of a word cloud, serves as empirical evidence that summarizes the overall argument. The dominance of words such as socialization, involvement, and information, as well as the absence of words that convey power such as "decide" or "partnership", confirms that

the reality of participation experienced and perceived by the community is participation at the tokenism level.

### Implications of Findings

In conclusion, the level of tokenism in the Tanakeke Islands is not a natural state, but rather a socio-political construct shaped by the dialectical interaction between external power asymmetries and limited internal literacy capacity. This finding has important implications for intervention efforts. It is clear that empowerment programs that focus solely on technical training (e.g., souvenir-making) without addressing the root causes of this problem will fail. Therefore, an effective management model, such as the I2RE2ME Model discussed in the next chapter, must explicitly design mechanisms to simultaneously break down power asymmetries (through participatory regulation) and fundamentally improve community literacy (through empowering education). Without interventions to address these two root causes, community participation will forever be trapped in the trap of tokenism.

## CONCLUSION

Community participation remains at the tokenistic stage, dominated by incidental forms of participation based on short-term economic interests. Centralized local power structures and low community literacy in tourism, regulations, and institutional aspects are determinants of low community participatory autonomy. Despite a willingness to engage, limited human resource capacity and the lack of systematic government empowerment programs hinder the transformation of participation to a deliberative and empowered level. Critical literacy and community organizational capacity need to be enhanced to achieve a more meaningful and independent level of participation.

### Suggestion

To optimize tourism management in the Tanakeke Islands, the local government needs to prioritize the development of basic infrastructure such as access to clean water and electricity, and conduct ongoing training (hospitality, guiding, waste management, digital marketing) with the involvement of universities or NGOs. The government also needs to strengthen local institutions such as the Tourism Group (Pokdarwis) and develop integrated marketing strategies based on culture and nature, as well as regulations that support the principles of Community-Based Tourism (CBT). Communities are encouraged to be active in program planning and implementation, increase capacity through training, develop local tourism products such as homestays and mangrove educational tours, and build networks of cooperation between villages and externally. The private sector/investors are expected to develop inclusive partnerships with the community through environmentally friendly investments and the use of local products. Meanwhile, NGOs play a crucial role in expanding conservation programs integrated with tourism, as well as facilitating collaboration and sustainable community capacity building.

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