

When the Sea is Uncertain: Why Are Fishermen Reluctant to Start Businesses on Lowita Beach, While Non-Coastal Communities Benefit from It?

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Abstract

This study aims to explore why fishermen's involvement in entrepreneurship in coastal areas remains low and why most businesses are instead managed by non-coastal communities, even though entrepreneurship can improve welfare and economic independence for coastal families especially when weather conditions prevent fishermen from going to sea. The study uses a descriptive qualitative method with an exploratory approach to analyze fishermen's engagement in entrepreneurship at Lowita Beach. Data collection techniques include observation, documentation, and semi-structured interviews with selected informants. The research informants consisted of fishermen as key informants, fishing groups, and government representatives as supporting informants, selected through accidental sampling due to the fact that not all individuals were willing to be interviewed. Data analysis follows the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, supported by NVivo software to facilitate the analysis process. To ensure data validity, the study applies triangulation of techniques, sources, and time to strengthen the credibility and reliability of the findings. The results show that the low involvement of fishermen in entrepreneurship at Lowita Beach is driven by a complex set of factors that go beyond limited capital. Generational traditions have shaped fishing as a primary social identity, causing land-based businesses to be seen as less desirable. Low levels of education and financial literacy also make it difficult for fishermen to manage businesses, while gender norms restrict women's ability to contribute economically. In addition, past business failures have created a collective trauma that reinforces the fear of starting new ventures. In contrast, non-coastal communities tend to dominate local businesses because they possess stronger capital, experience, literacy, and social networks. To increase fishermen's participation, the study proposes strategies such as continuous training and mentoring, access to group-based microfinance, institutional strengthening, household business diversification through processed marine products, and multi-actor collaboration. Thus, empowering fishermen in coastal entrepreneurship must be viewed as a comprehensive process that integrates cultural, social, economic, and institutional dimensions.

Keywords: *Economic Well-Being; Coastal Communities; Fishermen; Tourism; Entrepreneurship.*

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INTRODUCTION

Coastal communities play a vital role in the economy as major contributors to marine resources (Sapehee et al., 2025). Most of them work as fishermen (Mardiyanto et al., 2023). This profession faces a major challenge: income uncertainty due to climate and environmental

change (Sarkar et al., 2024; Ullah et al., 2024). This often forces fishermen to stay at sea, while still meeting their basic needs (Nirmasari et al., 2021). This situation directly impacts their well-being, given fluctuating incomes and limited alternative livelihoods.

On the other hand, coastal areas have substantial development potential (Baltranaite et al., 2025), particularly in the tourism sector, which can attract tourists (Hynes et al., 2024; Fernandez-Macho et al., 2024). This tourism potential can be utilized by coastal communities or fishermen to generate additional income through entrepreneurial ventures such as culinary or food businesses.

Pinrang Regency has a coastal area of 101 km (Pinrang Regency Investment and One-Stop Integrated Services Office, 2022), from this coastal area, Lowita Beach is a promising area as a tourist destination, located in Suppa District with beautiful sea that is suitable as a tourist destination to fill the holiday, besides that there is also culinary tourism (Pinrang Regency Investment and One-Stop Integrated Services Office, 2022). This district is also the area with the highest population who work as fishermen (Pinrang Regency Fisheries Office, 2023).



Figure 1Lowita Beach

However, coastal communities, particularly fishermen, remain far from prosperous, as the majority still live below the poverty line (Maifizar et al., 2021; Hermawan et al., 2024; Zulkifli et al., 2021). Our previous research also showed that their income and education levels are very low (Nirmasari et al., 2022). This problem could potentially be addressed through entrepreneurship, leveraging the tourism potential of the area to increase income and not solely relying on fishing. However, this opportunity is less attractive to coastal communities like those at Lowita Beach.

During a visit to Lowita Beach, researchers conducted brief interviews with several residents and revealed that the majority of entrepreneurs come from rural or inland settlements, not fishing families or coastal communities. Fishermen rely more on their catch at sea, selling it to culinary businesses around Lowita Beach or at auction.



Figure 2Initial Observation

The economic potential of the tourism sector has not been optimally utilized as a source of additional income through entrepreneurship for fishermen and coastal communities. This indicates a gap in the utilization of coastal areas' potential to support fishermen's welfare.

Research on coastal communities has been widely conducted with the topic of study investigating the impact of artificial reefs on fishing communities (Sapehee et al., 2025) , finding the right model of community empowerment (Mardiyanto et al., 2023) , understanding the vulnerability of livelihoods amidst climate-induced disasters (Sarkar et al., 2024) , discussing how climate change brings changes to climate knowledge and the social life of local fishermen. Ullah et al., 2024) , is our research to determine the role of coastal women in improving the economy of fishing families (Nirmasari et al., 2021) , conducting a literature review on the impact of tourism on the coast and sea (Baltranaite et al., 2025) , contribute to maritime economic accounting (Hynes et al., 2024 , assess the level of specialization of tourist destinations along the European coast Fernandez-Macho et al., 2024) , discuss the poverty level of fishermen (Maifizar et al., 2021; Hermawan et al., 2024; Zulkifli et al., 2021) , also is our research to determine the socio-economic conditions and formulate priority strategies to improve the welfare of traditional fishermen (Nirmasari et al., 2022) .

However, no research has examined the lack of interest among fishing families in entrepreneurship, given the fluctuating income from fishing. This is a novelty in this study.

Therefore, this study aims to explore why fishermen's involvement in entrepreneurship in coastal areas is less popular and is mostly managed by non-coastal communities. Even though entrepreneurship can improve the welfare and economic independence of coastal communities, especially fishing families, when they are unable to earn income due to unfavorable weather conditions for fishing. The urgency of this research lies in the uncertainty of fishermen's income due to bad weather, and entrepreneurship can be a solution to overcome this problem, but it is actually carried out by non-coastal communities.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted at Lowita Beach, Suppa District, Pinrang Regency, to explore in-depth the involvement of fishermen in entrepreneurship in a coastal area that is less popular. Therefore, a descriptive qualitative method was used, as it allows for in-depth analysis of information and interpretation of each field finding (Agustira et al., 2023; Safas et al., 2024). We also employed an exploratory approach (Dijkstra et al., 2022), given that the primary source of data came from semi-structured interviews to explore informants' opinions, views, and responses related to the research topic and objectives.

The research data consists of secondary data obtained from journals, books or other relevant sources and primary data obtained in the field, while primary data was obtained by conducting observations, documentation and semi-structured interviews (Daruhadi et al., 2024; Rosalina et al., 2023) .

- a. Re-observation was carried out by observing the economic activities of coastal communities, especially the involvement of fishermen in entrepreneurship, this allows for a real understanding of the social, economic and environmental conditions in the field.
- b. Documentation to collect supporting data, including document analysis after field visits, including minutes, images or videos, to strengthen research findings.
- c. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with informants to explore in depth their views on entrepreneurship as an alternative source of additional income for fishermen. During the interviews, we recorded them in audio and video to facilitate the data transcription process.

The key informants for this study were coastal communities around Lowita Beach, Suppa District, Pinrang Regency. We selected informants using an *accidental sampling method* (Subhaktiyasa et al., 2024), focusing on those willing and able to meaningfully answer the research questions. This method was used considering that not all fishermen were willing to participate.

We sought assistance from sub-district government officials or fishermen's groups to assist with informant recruitment. Informants who agreed were given an informant information sheet and offered options on how and where they wanted the interview conducted (Winchenbach et al., 2022). The number of informants refers to the concept of data saturation, which indicates repeated responses (Enayati et al., 2024), so we discontinued the interview process. To ensure a more diverse data collection approach to the research problem, we also asked sub-district officials and representatives of fishermen's groups to act as additional informants if necessary.

We evaluated the collected data for adequacy and appropriateness, then analyzed it using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Rahmawati et al., 2023; Putra et al., 2022). Data obtained in the field were reduced by eliminating irrelevant information and then transcribed into text for coding. To facilitate the analysis process, we utilized the NVivo application.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data obtained, we will test its validity using triangulation methods (Rahman et al., 2025; Gainau et al., 2023). The triangulation methods used include technical triangulation (comparing results from various data collection methods), temporal triangulation (checking the consistency of data collected at different times), and source triangulation (comparing information from various informants or documents). After the data reduction process, the research results will be systematically compiled and strengthened with references from previous research or other relevant sources. This is followed by drawing conclusions, where the research findings will be analyzed to comprehensively answer the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General description of research informants

This study used six selected informants from diverse backgrounds, including fishermen, young people, fishermen's group leaders, fishermen's wives, non-coastal communities, and local government representatives. Six informants were selected because they were sufficient to meet the research data requirements and because the collected data had reached saturation, eliminating the need for additional informants. To protect the informants' privacy, their identities were disguised using codes and initials.

Overview of research data

The primary data used in this study came from interviews with informants, which we transcribed. We then entered the transcripts into the Nvivo application for further processing and analysis. One of the application's features we utilized was *Word Frequency Query*. This feature is useful for visualizing interview transcripts, helping us see the frequency of the most dominant words in the data. Based on the Nvivo output, the most dominant word was "Fisherman," followed by "Business."

The data also highlights the main challenges faced by fishermen: limited capital, low education, and a lack of confidence in entrepreneurship. However, there is hope and encouragement to change the mindset of fishing communities, particularly through training, mentoring, and support in business management, enabling them to capitalize on new economic opportunities such as opening culinary businesses, small businesses, or independently trading seafood.

Furthermore, intergenerational dynamics are emerging, with some parents still insisting their children stay at sea, while the younger generation is starting to grow weary and seek alternative livelihoods. Overall, this *Word Tree* illustrates that fishermen are dependent on the sea, but opportunities for economic and social transformation remain open through empowerment, education, and a shift in mindset toward entrepreneurial independence.

This study sought to answer several questions, including the reasons and reasons why fishermen are less interested in entrepreneurship. Therefore, we conducted further data analysis to address these issues.

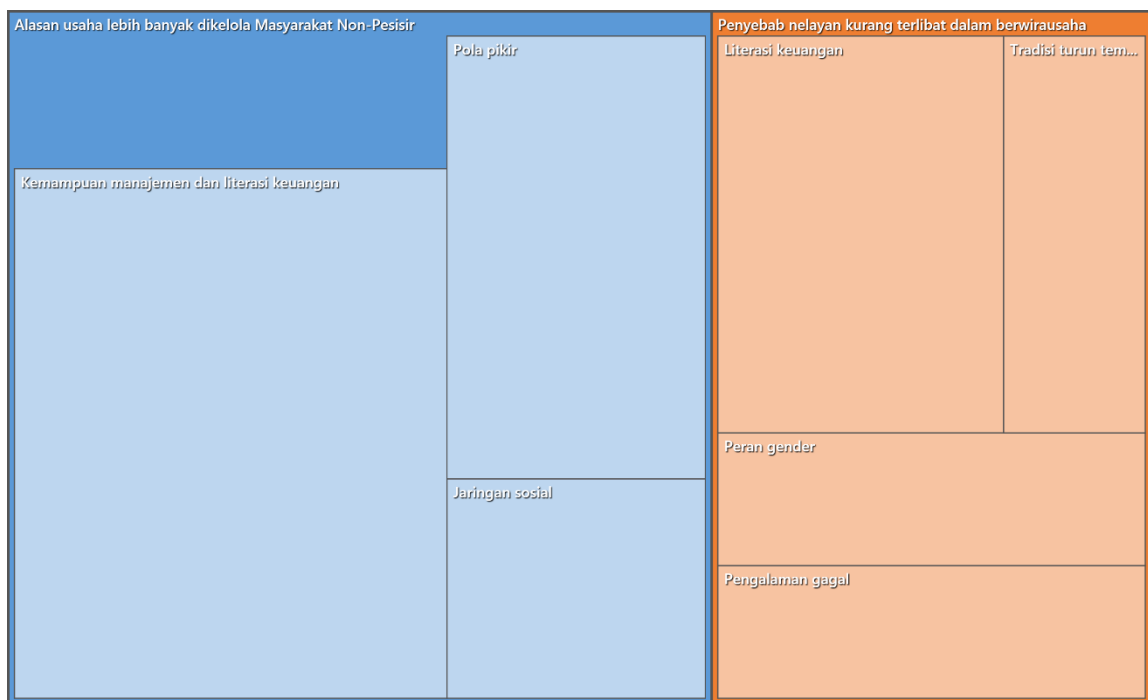


Figure 5 *Hierarchy Chart*

Our analysis shows that businesses are more often run by non-coastal communities than by coastal communities or fishermen because they have limited management skills and financial literacy, limited mindsets, and limited social networks. Meanwhile, fishermen's lack of entrepreneurial involvement is due to several factors, such as low financial literacy, inherited traditions, gender roles, and experiences of failure.

Reasons why fishermen are less involved in entrepreneurship

Based on interviews with informants, it was discovered that fishermen on Lowita Beach still have very limited involvement in entrepreneurial activities. Most informants stated that their livelihoods are highly dependent on seafood, leading to a narrow mindset, focused solely on fishing activities. As one informant explained:

"Fishermen's income is limited. If they have money, it's spent on daily necessities: buying rice, paying for their children's school fees, electricity, and so on. There's nothing left to start a business."

Another informant emphasized a similar sentiment, stating that the choice to become a fisherman is a hereditary tradition, despite the uncertain livelihood of fishermen. He stated:

"My parents always said, 'Just work at sea, son, that's what we've always done.' So it was as if we were taught from a young age that our lives should be at sea, ji."

Apart from traditional factors, other informants emphasized the existence of gender roles and double burdens on women which make it difficult for fishing families to become entrepreneurs:

"If I run the shop, who's going to take care of the kids? ... My husband sometimes doesn't really agree. He says, 'Come on, you're enough at home.' So there's a sense of attachment."

From the fishermen's group's perspective, the informant said that there had been failed experiences which made fishermen reluctant to try again:

"One member once tried selling coconut ice on the beach. It worked at first, but because there was no one to support him, he eventually ran out of capital. He was confused about how to manage his money, so he eventually returned to the sea."

The main obstacles are seen in the education and mindset of fishermen. One informant stated:

"Most fishermen haven't finished school, so they lack confidence in running their own businesses. They worry about not being able to calculate profits and losses or deal with customers."

The results of these informants' statements indicate that the primary reason fishermen are less involved in entrepreneurship is not only limited capital, but also cultural factors, education, experience, and social roles. First, the traditional fishing tradition, passed down through generations, makes fishing a key identity, making starting a business less of a priority. This aligns with previous research (Zamzami et al., 2023), which emphasized that cultural attitudes and traditions in fishing communities are often the main obstacles to developing an entrepreneurial mindset.

Second, low financial literacy and managerial experience make it difficult for fishers to manage their businesses when they attempt to leave the sea. Previous research (Dalimunthe et al., 2025) also found that limited literacy and access to financial services are significant barriers, especially for female fishers, thus widening the economic gap within coastal households.

Third, gender roles within the household also limit the opportunities for fishermen's wives to contribute to the family economy through small businesses. Other research also shows that gender norms and traditional roles remain strongly held within fishing communities, leaving women more tied to domestic work than direct involvement in economic endeavors (Oloko et al., 2024).

Fourth, failed experiences in several fishing businesses have created a collective sense of trauma, reducing the courage to start again. Low *self-efficacy*, minimal social support, and fear of failure are major psychological barriers to developing entrepreneurial intentions (Yusriani et al., 2025).

The reason why more businesses are managed by non-coastal communities

Interviews revealed that most businesses in the Lowita Beach area, particularly food stalls, kiosks, and culinary businesses, are run by non-coastal residents. One informant explained:

"For example, if a non-coastal person opens a food stall on the beach, it grows very quickly. They're smart about managing money, know how to sell, and have a network. Meanwhile, fishermen, let alone managing their business, sometimes don't even know how to use the money they earn from their catch."

This is in line with the views of other informants who saw a difference in courage between fishermen and non-coastal communities:

"Because they're bolder. They come with the intention of being financially backed, setting up a stall, buying chairs and tables, and selling grilled fish. Meanwhile, here, let alone having money to build a stall, we sometimes still have to think about buying cigarettes. So, the preparation is different, ji."

One informant who is a trader from a non-coastal community explained that their trading experience made them more prepared to enter the tourism market:

"We're used to business; we've been familiar with trading since we were little. So when we see an opportunity, we jump at it. Fishermen, on the other hand, are used to the sea. When asked about starting a business, many say they can't, they don't know how."

Meanwhile, from the government's perspective, the informant stated that the limited education of fishermen also widened the gap with non-coastal traders:

"Landlanders are accustomed to trading. They also have networks. So when they see an opportunity, they jump in. Meanwhile, our fishermen, let alone opening a shop, are already struggling to meet their daily needs."

The dominance of non-coastal communities in managing businesses on Lowita Beach can be explained by several key factors. Non-coastal communities possess more financial capital and trading experience, inherited from their background as traders. An entrepreneurial mindset is more developed among non-coastal communities, enabling them to recognize the tourism potential of Lowita Beach and respond quickly. This suggests that coastal communities interacting with tourists develop an entrepreneurial culture more quickly than traditional groups who are entirely dependent on the sea (Zulvanita et al., 2025).

Differences in managerial capacity and financial literacy also contribute to differences. Fishermen accustomed to a subsistence economy struggle to allocate income for business investment, while non-coastal communities are more disciplined in managing capital. Entrepreneurial literacy plays a crucial role in influencing a family's ability to start alternative businesses, especially under resource constraints (Guampe et al., 2022).

Non-coastal communities have broader social networks than fishermen, both in terms of suppliers, customers, and access to business information. New entrepreneurs with strong social networks and entrepreneurial cultures find it easier to create new economic pathways within a region (Rypestol et al., 2017). Thus, more established social networks enable non-coastal traders to capitalize on tourism opportunities at Lowita Beach more quickly than local fishermen.

The dominance of non-coastal communities in the Lowita Beach tourism business is not simply due to fishermen's unwillingness, but rather due to differences in social, cultural, and economic capacity. Non-coastal communities possess stronger capital, experience, financial literacy, and social networks, while fishermen remain tied to tradition and limited capacity, making it difficult to compete in the entrepreneurial world.

Strategy to increase fishermen's participation in entrepreneurship

From the interviews, informants proposed several strategies to encourage fishermen to become more involved in entrepreneurship at Lowita Beach. One informant stated:

"If there were a serious program, such as teaching them how to start a business, providing them with a small amount of capital, and providing ongoing support, I think many people could thrive. Especially today's young people, who are more open-minded."

Then according to the statement of another informant, it emphasized the importance of successful examples:

"First, there must be a successful example. If one young fisherman can successfully start a business on Lowita Beach, others will surely follow suit."

Other informants also added institutional aspects:

"There needs to be someone to accompany you every week, teaching you how to manage your business. Don't just show up once and then disappear. Having a mentor makes group members more confident."

Then another informant suggested that the business be directed towards household activities:

"Teach us how to make simple products. For example, processed fish: fish floss, fish crackers, or seafood snacks. We can do these at home while taking care of the kids."

One informant who is a non-coastal community (trader) emphasized the collaboration strategy:

"If there's cooperation. For example, fishermen team up with traders like me. They provide the fish, I provide the space, and then they share the profits. That's easier than starting from scratch."

The sub-district government, which was also an informant, emphasized the need for policy intervention:

"We hope for three steps. First, creating an official platform at Lowita Beach, a kind of coastal culinary center... Second, education and mentoring... Third, policy support and access to capital."

Interview findings indicate that the most relevant strategy for increasing fishermen's participation in entrepreneurship at Lowita Beach is through training accompanied by long-term mentoring, which is an urgent need. Fishermen are not only given theory but also need practical guidance in managing their daily businesses. This aligns with previous findings (Sri et al., 2020), which demonstrated that intensive mentoring in fish product diversification training can improve the skills of female fishers while strengthening the sustainability of their businesses. In addition to ongoing training and mentoring, access to micro-capital is also key for fishermen to start businesses without being burdened by heavy administrative

requirements. Small-capital schemes based on fishermen's groups are more effective in increasing entrepreneurial courage than cash assistance that quickly runs out (Juharni et al., 2023).

Institutional strengthening is also necessary to ensure that fishermen operate not alone, but through groups or cooperatives that can manage capital, allocate roles, and expand market access. Empowering female fishers through diversified fish processing groups can create social solidarity and strengthen their bargaining position in local markets (Botutihe et al., 2023). Diversifying household businesses managed by fishermen's wives presents a significant opportunity to strengthen family economies. Simple processed fish products such as meatballs, nuggets, and fish sticks, prepared at home, have been shown to increase the income of fishing families without disrupting women's domestic roles (Juharni et al., 2023).

Collaboration across actors is necessary to ensure that fishing businesses operate in a non-partisan manner. Village/sub-district governments, non-coastal traders, non-governmental organizations, and universities can act as strategic partners, providing facilities, training, and ongoing mentoring. Therefore, strategies to increase fishermen's participation in entrepreneurship should not focus solely on providing capital but must be comprehensive, incorporating aspects of mentoring, institutionalization, business diversification, and multi-stakeholder synergy.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the low level of entrepreneurial involvement of fishermen on Lowita Beach is caused by complex factors, not solely limited capital. Hereditary traditions make fishing a primary social identity, making land-based businesses less desirable. Low levels of education and financial literacy make it difficult for fishermen to manage their businesses, while gender norms restrict women's ability to support their families. Furthermore, failed experiences create collective trauma and reinforce the fear of starting new businesses. This contrasts with non-coastal communities, who are more likely to manage businesses due to their capital, experience, literacy, and more established social networks. To increase fishermen's participation, proposed strategies include ongoing training and mentoring, group-based access to micro-capital, institutional strengthening, diversification of household businesses based on processed seafood, and multi-actor collaboration. Therefore, empowering fishermen in coastal entrepreneurship must be understood as a comprehensive process that integrates cultural, social, economic, and institutional aspects.

It is recommended that local governments, in collaboration with higher education institutions, NGOs, and the private sector, develop an integrated fishermen empowerment program. This program should emphasize practical entrepreneurship training, intensive mentoring, and access to revolving capital managed collectively through fishermen's groups. Furthermore, a gender-friendly household business model should be created, focusing on diversification of processed seafood products, so that female fishermen can play a greater role in increasing family income. Village/sub-district governments should also provide institutional frameworks in the form of culinary centers or coastal cooperatives that provide space for active participation by local fishermen. At the same time, it is also important to present successful examples of fishermen who have become entrepreneurs as role models for the community. This multi-actor collaborative effort is expected to build courage, independence, and competitiveness among fishermen in navigating the economic dynamics in the Lowita Beach tourist area.

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