



Customary Leadership in the Management of Mangrove Forests in Langsa City

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Abstract: This research examines the role of traditional leadership in the sustainable conservation and management of mangrove forests in Langsa City. The city of Langsa has an extensive and rich mangrove ecosystem that supports the ecological and economic well-being of the coastal community. However, unsustainable development and use pressures can threaten the sustainability of mangroves. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach to understand how customary leadership and customary mechanisms and values, represented by traditional customary institutions such as Panglima Laot or customary institutions that have contributed to mangrove forest protection, function. The research findings aim to show that indigenous leadership serves as a link between formal government policies and community practices. They have a strong moral and social foundation to enforce local rules, such as restrictions on logging, zoning of conservation areas, and sanctions for violations. The management model implemented is collective and participatory, incorporating local wisdom in the wise use of natural resources. The contributions of traditional leadership are: 1) community organization for conservation and monitoring; 2) resolving social conflicts related to resource use; 3) passing down traditional knowledge about mangrove ecology. Traditional leadership in Langsa City is an important pillar in ensuring the sustainability of mangrove forests. Integrating traditional leadership and customary law into the local government's forest and coastal management policy framework is highly recommended to achieve long-term conservation effectiveness. This research recommends formal recognition and capacity building for indigenous institutions as partners in natural resource management.

Keywords: Leadership, Custom, Mangrove Forest, Langsa City

1. INTRODUCTION

Mangrove forests are forests found in tropical and subtropical regions that are protected by local communities, village officials, and even the state itself. Mangrove forests are protected by the state because they have natural resources that can be preserved by the local community. Mangrove management is a form of natural resource management that has been recognized for centuries and is based on local wisdom, traditions, and customary laws that are widely respected by the community. The management of mangrove forests can have a positive and beneficial impact on the economy, felt by the local community of Kebun Dadap Timur Village, as well as on the village's original income (Widya Khairani, 2023).

Mangrove forest management aims to keep the balance of coastal ecosystems that play an important role in maintaining habitats, in addition to that, the management objectives must also mitigate and adapt to climate change because mangroves function as carbon absorbers and provide natural protection against rising sea levels, abrasion and extreme weather. Increasing the prosperity of the local community is also the goal of

mangrove forest management which always involves local communities to make sustainable management, maintenance and utilization of mangrove resources to create new jobs for the local community itself, local communities are also involved in maintaining sustainability and protection in conservation efforts, protection and restoration of mangrove ecosystems to ensure sustainability as a strategic natural resource (Akhter et al., 2021; Sri Subekti, 202

Mangrove forest management aims to focus on ecology, mitigation, and climate change in the mangrove forest. Ecologically, the goal is to protect and preserve the mangrove ecosystem, which is a vital life support in coastal areas. This can achieve efforts to prevent damaged inversion and maintain the biodiversity of flora and fauna within the mangrove forest itself. It can also maintain its ecological functions such as water filtration, coastal abrasion resistance, wave dampening, and preventing seawater intrusion. Good management can support conservation and rehabilitation in coastal areas to create healthy and productive oceans. In addition to environmental aspects, mangrove forest management also aims to support climate change mitigation and achieve sustainable development (SDGs), particularly by increasing carbon absorption and emission reduction (Islam et al., 2022).

In the social, economic, and cultural aspects of coastal communities, their active role can empower local communities and develop mangrove-based ecotourism as an alternative source of income. Furthermore, management also aims to ensure that the utilization of coastal natural resources goes hand in hand with environmental conservation, thus positively affecting the overall economic well-being of the community and strengthening economic resilience in coastal areas (Rizky Setia, 2025).

Mangrove forest conservation is carried out to generate benefits that have been made to preserve an effort that has the function of the mangrove ecosystem and prevent its destruction. Furthermore, mangrove ecotourism is also a form of mangrove conservation that is always trending and can promote the importance of mangrove forest preservation. Ecotourism is also to protect natural areas through income generation, environmental education, and involving local communities in decision-making for sustainable development (Devi Kartika Sari Utomo, 2023).

Customary leadership in Langsa City is a crucial pillar in ensuring the sustainability of mangrove forests. Integrating customary leadership and rules into the local government's forest and coastal management policy framework is highly recommended to achieve long-term conservation effectiveness. This study recommends formal recognition and strengthening the capacity of customary institutions as partners in natural resource management. Customary leadership in Langsa City is the primary guardian of cultural identity and social order within the customary community. Customary leadership has the right to make decisions, and their actions are often based on deliberation and consensus. This reflects the principle of collectivism that is at the heart of many traditional cultures. Customary leadership also serves as a bridge between the past, present, and future of a community, balancing modern needs with traditional guidance. Although formal government structures exist, customary leadership must continue to play a crucial role, particularly in matters related to customary land, rituals, and family law. It must also ensure that local wisdom remains a guiding principle.

Based on the introduction that has been presented, the formulation of the problem in this research is how traditional leadership in managing mangrove forests in Langsa city improves sustainable development and what foundations they have to maintain the management of these mangrove forests.

Based on the background described above, this study aims to find out how traditional leadership in managing mangrove forests in Langsa City improve sustainable development and to find out what foundations they have for maintaining these mangrove forests.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, the author used qualitative research methods that focus on gaining a deep understanding of a social phenomenon or research problem. Qualitative research methods do not try to measure or test hypotheses, as in quantitative research, but rather explore and interpret the meaning of the collected data. Qualitative research methods aim to examine how individuals feel, think, and experience, and to discover comprehensive meaning.

This study uses a qualitative method through the stages of (a) interviews, (b) observation and (c) documentation to find out how customary leadership and customary mechanisms and values, represented by traditional customary institutions such as Panglima Laot or customary institutions that have contributed to the protection of mangrove forests. The reason the researcher chose this method is so that he can explain and describe customary leadership in the management of mangrove forests in Langsa City, as well as the foundation of leadership management in the mangrove forest.

2.1 Interview

An interview is a form of interaction between two or more people in which one party (the interviewer) asks questions of another party (the source) to obtain specific information, opinions, and data. Interviews can be conducted face-to-face, by telephone, or through other means. The purpose of an interview is to gather relevant and accurate information for various purposes such as research, news reporting, job selection, or evaluation.

according to (Kumparan.Com, 2023), interviews are a method used in various fields, including research. This method is important because it can provide a deeper understanding of a topic or subject being investigated.

2.2 Observation

Observation is the deliberate, systematic, and planned activity of observing and obtaining empirical information about an object or phenomenon. This activity involves the use of the senses, such as sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste, as well as aids if necessary. Observation is often used in scientific research, evaluation, and problem-solving, and it is also defined as an important data collection method. Data obtained from observation are descriptive and qualitative, providing an in-depth picture of the object or phenomenon being

seen. Observation can also be used to test hypotheses, develop theories, and understand human behavior or interactions.

According to Sugiyono (2023), Sugiyono defines observation as a research process that examines the situation and conditions of the research. This observation technique is particularly appropriate for classroom action research (CAR), which involves seeing the learning process, student attitudes and behavior, and interactions between students and teachers.

2.3 Documentation

Documentation is the process of collecting, recording, and storing information or evidence in written, pictorial, audio, or video form. Its purpose is to provide correct and complete record of an event, process, or object. Documentation plays a crucial role in various fields, such as science, technology, history, law, and business, as it allows us to understand, track, and reproduce information. Documentation also has a broader definition, encompassing the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of collected information. This involves organizing data, writing reports, creating diagrams, and other forms of presentation aimed at making information more accessible and understandable. Effective documentation should be clear, concise, and easily accessible to stakeholders.

Based on the explanation above, for this research, the researcher uses Anthony Giddens' structural agency theory to explain the research that the researcher conducted with the title "Traditional Leadership in Mangrove Forest Management in Langsa City".

Anthony Giddens is a British sociologist whose work has had a profound impact on modern social thought. He is recognized as one of the most influential contemporary thinkers and held the important position of Director of the London School of Economics (LSE) from 1997 to 2003. His most important contribution is Structuration Theory, which tries to bridge the gap between views that focus too much on individual free will (agency) and views that emphasize the shaping forces of society (structure). Giddens argues that agency and structure are not separate, but rather mutually constitutive in a dualistic relationship. Giddens is also known for his role in British politics, particularly as the intellectual architect behind the Third Way political ideology, which influenced the Labor Party under Tony Blair.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this discussion have used Structuration Theory, which says that humans have the ability to create structures and voluntarily figure out structures for themselves, meaning humans have complete freedom to build their own living environment. One of the typical nomenclatures in structuration theory is the relationship between humans as "agency" and "structure" or institutions (Achmad, 2020).

This theory is based on its ability to analyze the reciprocal relationship between the actions of traditional leaders and the surrounding system of rules/norms. It helps us see how local communities' mangrove management practices are not merely a reaction to rules, but also part of a process that shapes and transforms those rules themselves. Structuration theory can potentially solve this research title, which will be divided into two interrelated

components: Customary leadership acts as an agency or agent, which can refer to the ability to act and make decisions. In this case, customary leadership, such as the pawang laot (traditional leader) or other traditional figures in Langsa City, are the primary agents. This analysis can be used to analyze, for example, issuing regulations prohibiting the cutting of mangrove trees, deciding conservation zones, or imposing customary sanctions, which can be considered social practices of customary leadership. Mangrove management within a structural framework can refer to rules, resources, and norms that can enable or limit an agent's actions. In this case, there are two (2) customary structures and formal structures: customary structures are customary rules, norms, and local wisdom that have been passed down from generation to generation that can regulate the use of mangroves. Meanwhile, formal structures are state laws (Forestry Law, Regional Regulations), Langsa City Government Policies, and the role of formal institutions (FMU, Environmental Agency, etc.). The core relationship within a dual structure is that customary leaders act as agents, using customary rules or even formal laws within the structure as resources for making decisions about managing mangrove forests. As customary leaders and communities implement or enforce these rules, they simultaneously reproduce (reinforce) these customary rules as their own structures to maintain their relevance and accuracy in considering current environmental challenges.

Therefore, structural agency theory is highly relevant because it examines not only whether customary leadership follows government regulations but also how power and practices run in everyday life. Customary leadership can determine and shape mangrove forest governance, both within the context of customary systems and in negotiations with the formal state system.

Customary leadership in Langsa City is a crucial pillar in ensuring the sustainability of mangrove forests. Integration of customary leadership and rules into the local government's forest and coastal management policy framework is highly recommended to achieve long-term conservation effectiveness. This study recommends formal recognition and strengthening the capacity of customary institutions as partners in natural resource management. Customary leadership in Langsa City is the primary guardian of cultural identity and social order within the customary community. Customary leadership has the right to make decisions and actions, often based on deliberation and consensus. This reflects the principle of collectivity that is at the heart of many traditional cultures. Customary leadership also serves as a bridge between the past, present, and future of the community, balancing modern needs with traditional guidance. Although formal government structures exist, customary leadership must continue to play a crucial role, especially in matters related to customary land, rituals, and family law. Customary leadership must also ensure that local wisdom is still a guiding principle.

Based on the results of earlier research, the mangrove forest management and restoration program shows that the program's results are significant, especially in the environment and climate change mitigation. This mangrove forest program has shown that survival is very high with significant biomass growth. Planting mangrove trees has proven successful in increasing biodiversity by increasing the number of species inhabiting the ecosystem, as well as being effective in minimizing the impact of coastal erosion through a strong root system, this ecological benefit is in line with the finding that the area of

mangrove ecosystems is directly proportional to the results of capture fisheries, where mangrove degradation will have an impact on reducing fishermen's catches (Lalu Sarwan Hamit, 2025).

The results of this study write down that customary leadership serves as a link between formal government policies and community practices. They have a strong moral and social foundation for enforcing local rules, such as logging restrictions, conservation area zoning, and sanctions for violations. The management model implemented is collective and participatory. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), collective means together or a combination, where this term is used to refer to a group of people who have worked together to have a specific goal. Meanwhile, participation is participation, involvement, or the active involvement of an individual or group in an activity, process, or decision-making. Local wisdom in using natural resources wisely.

The contributions of traditional leadership are as follows:

1. Community organizations for conservation and monitoring.

According to the interview results, the community organization is a pro-climate organization (climate change) formed for mitigation and adaptation efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Hossain et al., 2007). In addition, activities carried out for the preservation and monitoring of mangrove forests include mangrove planting activities, community development activities, mangrove forest development activities, and business entities that have been carried out with the Sungai Lueng Village (BUMG) environment. In addition, there are also community activities in the form of coaching on fisheries in the mangrove forest. The local community also proved an organization for cleaning and planting mangrove trees. Every time there is an event that has been formed, the community also coordinates funds and cleans up trash in the mangrove forest environment.

2). Resolving social conflicts related to resource use.

The social conflicts that consistently arise include illegal levies (extortion) from local communities. Furthermore, there is also illegal logging carried out by outsiders, using boats to cut down trees on a large scale. In addition to outsiders, local communities themselves have also engaged in illegal logging of mangrove trees on a small scale, typically 2-3 trees per tree.

3). Inheritance of traditional knowledge about mangrove ecology.

The results of customary leadership's management of mangrove forests have led to the inheritance of knowledge and income from mangrove management, including fish, shrimp, and crabs. Cultivated fish can generate income from products such as shrimp feed, salted fish, and dondong crackers. The inheritance of this traditional knowledge creates employment opportunities that can reduce illegal logging, which continues to occur on both a large and small scale.

Through the management program implemented by the traditional leadership represented by the Panglima Laot and Imam Mukim, the traditional leadership has increased the village's accreditation, particularly in the economic sector, which has helped the

community find work, thus reducing unemployment in Langsa City and enabling the community to engage in mangrove-based businesses through the community established by the Imam Mukim in Langsa City. The community in Langsa City has also experienced an increase in living standards, and the people of Langsa City continue to live in a healthy environment. However, despite the decline in unemployment, local and outside communities still carry out illegal mangrove theft operations, commonly known as illegal logging. These communities carry out this by carrying axes and using boats to transport the illegal logging. However, illegal logging carried out by local and outside communities is strictly prohibited because it can damage the mangrove forest ecosystem itself.

Management and conservation efforts for communities involved in illegal logging will result in sanctions and imprisonment if the logging is carried out on a large scale. These efforts are often carried out by mangrove forest managers, but the communities involved in illegal logging always manage to flee the scene. In response to these incidents, mangrove forest managers have collaborated with the local police, the village head (imam mukim), and the sea commander (panglima laot), who have become the main pillars of traditional leadership.

The impact of mangrove forests that have been managed and preserved by the manager is that even though they have been guarded with tight security by the manager, there are still those who commit theft, communities who are still unable to adapt to climate change, Changes in the mangrove forest ecosystem and risks to local resources require empowerment that focuses on the management and preservation of mangrove forests sustainably. However, over time the management of mangrove forests began to develop and began to be known with the trend of ecotourism in the mangrove forest. The impacts that have occurred in the mangrove forest are not only negative impacts such as illegal logging, mangrove theft, small-scale conflicts. But not only negative impacts but also positive impacts such as having a friendly, cool, safe and peaceful environment, having a very beautiful ecotourism view.

Currently, not all mangrove forest managers can sustainably manage their forests, focusing solely on economic benefits. This means that mangrove forests everywhere must be managed effectively and consistently preserved. With sustainable management, mangrove forests everywhere will become ecotourism destinations and forests rich in their own unique natural resources.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to provide recommendations for formal recognition and capacity building of customary institutions as partners in natural resource management. The findings prove that customary leadership serves as a link between formal government policies and community practices. They also have a strong moral and social foundation for enforcing local regulations, such as logging restrictions, conservation area zoning, and sanctions for violations. The contributions of customary leadership include: 1) community organization for conservation and monitoring; 2) resolving social conflicts related to resource use; and 3) passing on traditional knowledge about mangrove ecology. This study examines the role of customary leadership in the conservation and sustainable management of mangrove forests in Langsa City. Langsa City has a vast and rich mangrove ecosystem that supports

the ecology and economy of coastal communities. However, development pressures and unsustainable use can threaten mangrove sustainability. This research uses qualitative methods through interview, observation and documentation stages to find out how traditional leadership and customary mechanisms and values, represented by traditional customary institutions such as Panglima Laot or customary institutions that have contributed to the protection of mangrove forests.

5. DECLARATION

This study has demonstrated the use of ChatGPT to refine ideas and improve language. In this study, the researchers also used QuillBot to translate the text from Indonesian into English. The researchers' rationale for using this tool was to facilitate the research process.

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