

## Adaptation of Fishermen in Poverty: An Ethnographic Study on Fishermen Groups in Gampong Blang Naleung Mameh

Vicky Rifai Adriansyah  
Universitas Sumatera Utara

**Corresponding Author:** Vicky Rifai Adriansyah [vickyrifai567@gmail.com](mailto:vickyrifai567@gmail.com)

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Adaptation Strategies, Poor Fishermen, Ethnography, Fishermen's Empowerment

*Received :* 03, October

*Revised :* 16, November

*Accepted:* 29, December

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the adaptation strategies of poor fishers in Gampong Blang Naleung Mameh and contribute to the understanding of how fishing groups respond to economic constraints through social and cultural practices. This study uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods to explore the concepts of adaptation, daily practices, and the relationship between fishers and the boss. Data were collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews with active fishers over a three-month observation period. The results indicate that adaptation strategies emerge in response to difficulties in fishing, fuel scarcity, and cultural constraints within the patron-client structure. The most dominant strategies include leaving for sea earlier, manipulating information from the boss, and seeking additional work. These findings imply the need for policy interventions in the form of capacity building, fuel access, and strengthening the empowerment of fishers to sustainably overcome economic vulnerability.

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## INTRODUCTION

Poverty in fishing communities is a problem that is still often discussed in social studies. Especially in Indonesia, fishermen have long remained in the poor community even though Indonesia has a rich sea. Data belonging to Indonesian Traditional Fishermen's Union (2023) shows that there are 4.19% of people living in coastal areas experiencing extreme poverty. In fact, of the total 10.86 million in total poverty in Indonesia, 12.5% or as many as 1.3 million poor people are fishermen. This data reveals a misfortune that Indonesia's marine wealth does not belong to fishermen in Indonesia.

Several studies that have been conducted on fishermen in other areas explain why fishermen still remain in poverty. Research Siregar (2016) about the low level of awareness of the fishermen group towards education, even though in fact the fishermen's income should be enough to send their children to school. The study explained that it turned out that children's education was not a priority for fishermen groups because it was considered not promising to get a better life in the future. Partners (2022) In his research, it also shows that only a small number of children from fishermen can continue to higher education. The low number of fishermen who continue to higher education is caused by the poverty that plagues the fishermen group so that the income from fishermen during the sea is only used up to meet the daily needs of the fisherman's family. These two studies give the same color that poverty and the education of fisher children are interrelated causes and effects.

Local research conducted on Acehese fishermen such as research conducted by Riski & Hajad (2021) which captures how the influence of fishermen's poverty in Aceh on children's access to education. The same results are shown in this research, namely that the level of education of Acehese fishermen is directly proportional to the economic level of fishermen. The smaller the fisherman's income, the smaller the opportunity for fishermen's children to go to school. This means that it is important to empower fishermen to increase income that will improve the standard of living of fishermen. However, in research Suryadi & Sufi (2019) About empowering fishermen in Aceh to improve their welfare to get less than optimal results.

The empowerment program in the form of direct assistance provided to fishermen did not get good results due to the lack of understanding from fishermen about the empowerment. One of the obstacles faced is that many fishermen sell assistance provided by the government. In discussion by Rohidi (2000), there is an interesting and very relevant view in looking at the social reality experienced by the poor. He said that the poor are in the *conditio sine qua non*, a condition that can be interpreted simply that the existence of the poor is a prerequisite or an inevitable part of a larger system. In this context, Rohidi wants to show that poverty is not just about not having money or not having access to resources, but more deeply, it is about limited choices in their lives. In this perspective, conditions of poverty often offer only a narrow path.

Their life choices seem limited, as if life offers only one or two paths for them to take. They don't have many options in determining education, employment, housing, and even daily food. All their life decisions are often not

made out of desire, but out of compulsion. For example, a poor fisherman may not choose to become a fisherman because he aspires to do so, but because there is no other option more open to him. Children from poor families may drop out of school not because they don't love science, but because they have to help their parents work for survival.

Therefore, the research gap addressed in this study is empirical rather than theoretical. This research does not seek to introduce new phenomenological or conceptual frameworks on poverty, but instead aims to provide field-based evidence on how fishermen in Rancong Hamlet interpret their life limitations and develop adaptive behaviors within them. By examining adaptation as a socially embedded process shaped by norms, family responsibilities, and future expectations, this study contributes empirical depth to existing poverty literature. This study argues that fishermen are not passive victims of structural poverty. Rather, they engage in adaptive practices that reflect rational planning, moral considerations, and hope for better living conditions. Understanding these adaptive behaviors at the micro level enhances sociological and anthropological insights into fishing communities and provides a grounded basis for designing more context-sensitive empowerment and poverty alleviation policies.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### ***Theory of Structural Poverty***

Structural poverty theory views poverty as a condition created by unequal social, economic, and political structures, limiting access for certain groups to productive resources, education, and economic opportunities (Chambers, 1983; Sen, 1999). From this perspective, poverty is not understood as the result of moral weakness, a low work ethic, or individual incompetence, but rather as the result of a system that creates dependency and recurrent inequality. This condition creates limited choices, where individuals lack the freedom to determine their own life direction, as decisions are driven more by survival needs than long-term aspirations.

This view aligns with the concept of *conditio sine qua non* proposed by (Rohidi, 2000) which positions poverty as a social condition inherent in a system and difficult for certain groups to avoid. In the context of fishing communities, poverty is reflected not only in low income but also in limited options available in education, employment, and social mobility. Working as a fisherman is often not considered an ideal choice, but rather the only available alternative, while children's education is hampered not by a lack of respect for education, but by economic constraints that require families to prioritize meeting basic needs. Thus, the theory of structural poverty and limited choice helps explain that fishermen's poverty is a systemic condition that shapes repetitive patterns of life, while also emphasizing that fishermen are not passive or irrational actors, but rather individuals making rational decisions within a very limited choice space.

### ***Livelihood Adaptation Theory***

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework, developed by Chambers and Conway (1992), views livelihoods as the result of an individual's or household's

ability to manage various assets to maintain and improve their lives amidst vulnerable conditions. These assets include natural resources, human resources, social capital, and available economic capital. Within this framework, livelihoods are not understood as static, but rather as dynamic processes continuously shaped through adaptation strategies to environmental changes, economic pressures, and social uncertainties, including natural risks and income fluctuations. In the context of fishing communities, this theory is relevant to explaining how fishers and their families develop various survival strategies amidst structural poverty and economic vulnerability.

These strategies can include livelihood diversification, side jobs outside the fishing sector, and the involvement of family members in economic activities to ensure household survival. These adaptations are not undertaken freely, but within the boundaries of social norms, family responsibilities, and cultural values prevailing in the fishing community. Thus, poverty does not stifle fishers' rationality but rather shapes realistic and contextual livelihood strategies. The Sustainable Livelihood Framework perspective allows fishermen to be understood not as passive victims of poverty, but as social actors who actively and rationally navigate limitations through adaptive practices in everyday life.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research is qualitative in design using ethnographic methods. The ethnographic method was chosen because it can see more deeply how the forms of adaptation carried out by fishermen in daily life (Spradley, 1979). In addition, the data collection techniques used in this research are in-depth interviews and participatory observations. This technique deepens the data obtained by not only sourcing from interviews conducted but also by seeing firsthand how the words are depicted in daily behavior (Spradley, 1980).

This research was conducted on a group of fishermen in Gampong Blang Naleung Mameh, precisely in Rancong hamlet, Lhokseumawe city, Aceh province. This research was conducted for two months. The writer lives with the community in Rancong Hamlet. This strategy makes understanding related to fishermen's daily actions more comprehensive in understanding the daily lives of fishermen. The results of the interview were recorded using a mobile phone and a transcript was carried out and then analyzed after coding using Nvivo 12 software.

## **RESULTS**

### ***Classification of fishermen in Rancong Hamlet, Gampong Blang Naleung Mameh***

Fishermen in Rancong Hamlet can be divided into three groups based on the duration of the sea: fishermen returning home for the day, fishermen for three days, and fishermen for 10–15 days. Returning home fishermen are traditional fishermen who go to sea briefly, leave early in the morning and return before noon. They use simple equipment such as fishing rods, small nets, and stalls, as well as small engine boats of 7-10 PK. The catch is small-scale and is generally for self-consumption or sold informally. Their capital is relatively small and is usually obtained from the support of fellow fishermen. Three-day fishermen

have a longer range, using larger vessels with 20–30 HP engines as well as more specific fishing gear, such as cob fishing rods.

They are very dependent on toke which provides capital of IDR 3-4 million per trip. This patron–client relationship forms a strong social structure, in which the toke controls the capital and distribution of the catch. Rancong Hamlet is the center of fishermen's activities for three days, and this practice is passed down from generation to generation. The 10–15 day fishermen are the least group and have the largest scale of operations. The geographical condition of Rancong beach that is not suitable for large ships is the reason why their number is limited. They require major logistics and stronger capital attachments to toke. One of the important figures is Wak Din Belawan, a long-distance fisherman who managed to become an independent toke through his own capital accumulation. This group reflects the highest maritime social strata, with great economic potential but also high risks related to the exploitation of marine resources and capital dependence.

### *Difficulties of Fishermen's Life in Rancong Hamlet*

The difficulties of fishermen's lives in Rancong Hamlet are not only due to low fish prices or unequal power relations between fishermen and toke. From their daily lives on boats, in rolled nets, to morning conversations in coffee shops, it seems that the main problems stem from the intertwined cultures, lifestyles, and daily economies that shape their reality. The work culture in this hamlet instills the belief that sustenance has been regulated, so as to provide peace but at the same time limit long-term planning. Their lives follow the rhythm of the seasons, weather, and natural signs, so the space to save or invest is very narrow. In the daily economy, fishermen are trapped in a cycle of debt to the toke. Today's catch is immediately used up for household needs, gasoline, or paying off previous debts. When the catch is excessive, some fishermen choose to sell to collectors outside the hamlet for a better price. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of social infrastructure no social security, insurance, or microfinance institutions actually reach them. Damaged boats must be repaired on their own, while health costs often compete with the needs of going to sea. Thus, the difficulties of Rancong fishermen are not a momentary crisis, but a stream of cultural, economic, and uncertain problems that continue to permeate their lives.

### *Fisherman for a day: The story of Rudi, a fisherman who came home for the day.*

Unlike other formal jobs that have certainty of results, the fishing profession is entirely dependent on the natural conditions of the seasons, currents, weather, and wind direction that are beyond human control. In this uncertainty, there is a sense of resilience, sincerity, and tawakal that are the identity of traditional fishermen. Every day they set out without knowing what to take home. The sustenance that comes from the sea is never certain, but it continues to be sought. Fishermen "go home in the day" usually leave around 04.00–05.00 WIB. Early departure reflects discipline built from hereditary habits, as well as a strategy to avoid facing the scorching sun on the high seas. With only a flashlight, they walked to the ship in the dark and quiet.

Since it left very early, the bait had to be prepared the night before. This shows that being a fisherman is not just about going to sea, but a long and tiring process. I once helped Om Rudi make bait for fishing the next day. Bait uses squid, which is cheaper than shrimp, while reflecting the flexibility of fishermen in adjusting to economic conditions. The bait making starts at 20.00 and finishes around midnight. After that, Om Rudi slept for only four hours before waking up again to go to sea. Short sleep rhythms are part of the life of a small fisherman who is stuck in a cycle of hard work and hope. Hot tea made by the wife becomes a simple encouragement full of meaning. Together with his wife, he prepared to go to the beach. The role of fishing partners is not only as a companion, but a partner in the entire process of life. Arriving at the beach, Om Rudi prepared a boat: loaded with fishing rods, bait, and fibers filled with ice. He maintains the cleanliness of the ship's board so that it is comfortable when going to sea. In the morning, the water usually recedes so the boat has to be pushed from the mainland to the waters. This task is tough and requires cooperation.

The three of us pushed the small boat with an 8 PK engine until it floated again. This kind of mutual cooperation is part of the coastal culture that is still very much alive. Once the ship floats, the engine is started. Several pulls are needed until the engine starts, as life is not always smooth. It was at this moment that a small farewell occurred: his wife stood on higher ground, staring at her husband until it became a small dot on the horizon before finally disappearing from view.

After that, he returned home to prepare food and other domestic work. When entering the fishing spot, Om Rudi turned off the engine. The ship was swayed by the waves, a situation that required physical endurance and long adaptation. As a daily fisherman, he uses a three-hook fishing rod, so he can catch more than one fish at a time. The squid bait is installed with a special technique so that it does not come off easily. Once the bait reaches the seafloor, the strings are pulled slowly to create small movements that catch the fish's attention. Hand sensitivity is key; If it is too late, the fish will just "snack" the squid until it runs out without being caught. The type of fish that is commonly obtained is Juventus fish, a type of fish for consumption. Fishermen go home from the sea generally until 12 noon.

The catch is often used for family consumption; if there is excess, some are sold. However, it is not sold to the village toke, because the price is usually lower. They choose to sell to collectors outside the hamlet who offer better prices and already have social relationships with them. In addition to fishermen returning home for the day, there are fishermen who are 3-10 days away who face more complex problems. Their challenges include access to fuel, high fuel prices, uncertainty of catches, and fluctuations in fish prices. Fuel is the biggest problem. According to Pak Basri (55), a former fisherman for three days, not all fishermen have access to SPBN. Only large toke meets the administrative requirements, so small fishermen must buy from toke at a higher price: from IDR 6,200/liter to IDR 8,000/liter.

The high cost of oil is very burdensome, especially for fishermen who go far and wide and need large supplies. This situation has not had a complete solution

until now. The uncertainty of fish catches and selling prices makes the economic life of fishermen even more vulnerable. There is no clear price standard. Fishermen can get a lot of results today, but tomorrow go home with no results. The relationship between fishermen and toke is often understood as a symbiosis of mutualism. But from the fisherman's point of view, this relationship is often unfair. The capital of the toke is considered a debt that must be returned regardless of the proceeds of the sea. When the catch is bad, fishermen go home without income and continue to bear debts. Unpaid debts accumulate and weaken the bargaining position of fishermen. In this situation, the sentence that best describes their condition is: "**Winning** is possible, losing is certain." They left with hope, but returned home carrying the burden of debt that still had to be paid. This system continues for generations due to the lack of access for fishermen to formal financial institutions and the lack of government support.

### *Culture-based limitations*

Fishermen in Rancong Hamlet not only face challenges from the sea, but also limitations stemming from the culture, customs, and social rhythms of the Acehnese people. One of the moments that most affected their income was the *meugang tradition*, when people switched to consuming meat ahead of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha. In this period, the demand for fish decreased drastically so that the selling price plummeted, such as the complaint of a toke who said that "no one wants fish." In addition to *meugang*, Friday is also a limit to going to sea. This prohibition is not written, but it is understood as a day of worship, as well as the belief that "fish do not exist" on that day. Similar restrictions apply on major holidays, where fishermen stop going to sea from one day before to three days after the holiday.

Despite the limitations of workspace, these customary rules are accepted as part of the collective identity. During the holiday period, fishermen use it to make cod fishing gear, repair nets, and maintain and paint boats. This activity is seen as "ship rejuvenation," a form of readiness for the next sea season. Thus, the work rhythm of the Rancong fishermen shows a balance between traditions, beliefs, and strategies to survive in a coastal life full of uncertainty.

### *Adaptation of Fishermen in Daily Life*

The limitations experienced by the fishermen of Rancong Hamlet arise along with the social, economic, cultural, and customary dynamics that suppress their lives. In this context, limitations are not just obstacles, but triggers the birth of social adaptation strategies for survival. Fishermen's adaptation is not passive, but an active step based on experience, intuition, and local knowledge that is inherited from generation to generation. As a coastal community, fishermen live in uncertainty: weather, seasons, customary prohibitions, fluctuations in fish prices, to uneven economic relations with toke.

This squeezed condition gives birth to various adaptation strategies, ranging from finding alternative jobs, diversifying income, to tactical strategies such as getting around toke when in desperation. These adaptations are not just tricks, but a form of toughness and ingenuity in reading the situation. Rancong

fishermen do not give up on the situation, they are responsive, quick to make decisions, and are able to take advantage of every gap to survive. This is where it can be seen that survival is not determined by physical strength, but by adaptability. The following sections will describe these adaptive behaviors more comprehensively.

### *A form of adaptation of fishermen returning home*

One of the most obvious forms of adaptation of fishermen returning home from Rancong Hamlet is the adjustment of the time to go to sea which is now done much earlier than before. In the past, departure at 05.00 am was still considered ideal because fish were still easy to find in waters near the coast. However, in recent years, fish populations have declined due to overfishing, ecosystem degradation, climate change, and local pollution such as ammonia waste from factories. This condition encourages fishermen to modify their strategies. Now many fishermen leave at 04.00 or even 03.00 in the morning to reach the catch point faster and maximize opportunities when small pelagic fish are still active.

This time change is a form of ecological adaptation that shows the ability of fishermen to modify old habits based on their local knowledge. However, this adaptation has consequences: reduced rest time, increased risk of working in the dark, and increased physical load. The strategy of leaving early reflects the structural pressures faced by smallholder fishers due to resource inequality and less partisan policies. This adaptation is also a form of their silent resistance in the face of ecological and social limitations in order to sustain life.

### *Forms of adaptation of fishermen 3 days and 10 days*

Toke in Rancong Hamlet is not only a financier, but an ambiguous figure who becomes at the same time a helper and a binder. In many difficult situations – empty catches, high costs, or fuel needs – toke is present to provide debts, provide ice and provisions, and even forgive fishermen's debts. That is why he is often considered a "savior". But behind this seemingly harmonious relationship, there is subtle resistance from fishermen. Some fishermen take advantage of the toke relaxation by taking fuel even though they are not at sea, borrowing capital without the intention of going to sea, hiding leftover fuel to sell, or selling fish to other collectors secretly. This resistance is not rebellion, but a strategy to survive in an unbalanced patron-client relationship. Fishermen need capital, but toke also needs them to keep their ships operating. This two-way dependence creates an unequal but stable power, where toke reprimands are informal and fishermen take advantage of loopholes to survive.

### *Forms of Fisher Adaptation in General*

The adaptation strategy of fishermen in Rancong Hamlet can be seen in two main forms: entrusting the future to the younger generation and adding new income columns. Changes in ecological conditions and declining catches have made fishermen start thinking about life outside the sea. Education is an important strategy to break the chain of structural poverty. The free school policy opens up new opportunities for fisher children to complete their education without burdening the family's economy. Parents are starting to encourage their

children to pursue a future that no longer rests on the sea. This change in values marks the transition of coastal culture from "living for the sea" to "living with choices", although challenges such as inequality in the quality of education and lack of job assistance still loom.

The next adaptation is family income diversification. In addition to going to sea, fishermen's families increase their income through productive domestic work, especially by wives. They run home-based businesses such as making bread, sewing, opening small stalls, to typical regional jobs such as breaking hazelnut shells. This activity allows women to contribute to the family economy without abandoning domestic roles. The Geutanyoe Foundation's report identifies three main livelihoods in the region of fishermen, farmers, and hazelnut breakers that demonstrate the importance of alternative economies for fishing households. Overall, the poverty of Rancong fishermen is a structural and cultural condition that limits their life choices. To survive, fishermen develop strategies such as leaving early, diversifying their work, and subtle resistance to take, such as borrowing fuel without going to sea or selling fish to other collectors.

These strategies show that fishermen's adaptation is not only an economic action, but also a socio-cultural process born out of life pressures and structural limitations. Adaptation to fishermen's poverty in Blang Naleung Mameh hamlet is active and passive which also appears in research related to fishermen's adaptation (Dewi et al., 2025; Scott, 2016; Nurlaili, 2012). Equipment constraints, fuel access, price/yield uncertainty, and strong influence of tradition (meugang, Friday, holidays). Referring to the findings (Humaedi, 2012) and (Hidayat et al, 2024) that not only production factors can cause poverty for fishermen but also socio-cultural factors that In each local area, it also has an influence in suppressing the lives of fishermen. But fishermen don't give up, creatively reading through gaps in the patron-client system in order to survive. Research Fitriani et al., (2023) emphasizing the same thing that job diversification is one of the most effective strategies for fishermen in their paanceklik.

By not only having one job, fishermen can continue to support their families in their daily lives. There are interesting findings in this research, namely the role of wives and family members in economic terms is vital. Wives and other family members (children) often help husbands find additional work, including in home businesses, so that they can reduce their sole dependence on marine income.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Adaptation of Fishermen in Poverty: An Ethnographic Study on Fishermen Groups in Gampong Blang Naleung Mameh***

This discussion describes how fishermen in Gampong Blang Naleung Mameh – especially in Rancong Hamlet—face economic, ecological, and cultural pressures through various forms of adaptation. Using an ethnographic perspective, the results of the study show that fishermen's adaptation is not single, but in the form of a series of active and passive strategies that are intertwined in daily life. The adaptation is not only related to seafaring techniques, but also

concerns social relations, value systems, cultural practices, and patron-client dynamics that dominate the coastal economic structure.

The classification of fishermen in Rancong Hamlet as fishermen returning home for days, fishermen for three days, and fishermen for 10-15 days shows that there is a social stratification that forms opportunities as well as obstacles for each group. Fishermen returning home from the day are in the most vulnerable position due to limited capital, reach to sea, and catches. Meanwhile, three-day fishermen have a greater dependence on toke due to the need for travel capital, while long-distance fishermen are the elite group with the highest risk and capital.

This socioeconomic structure creates differentiation of adaptation. The smaller the scale of the operation, the greater the pressure, and the higher the need for immediate daily adaptations, such as leaving early or selling fish to collectors outside the hamlet. On the contrary, long-distance fishermen develop adaptations based on capital accumulation and network management, as exemplified by figures such as Wak Din Belawan who managed to become independent toke. These findings are in line with (Humaedi, 2012) and Hidayat et al. (2024) who affirm that fishermen's poverty is not only caused by production factors, but also influenced by the social and cultural structures that bind them in a pattern of long-term dependence.

The poverty of Rancong fishermen is structural because they are in an unequal economic system, lack of social protection, and limited access to essential resources such as fuel. The high price of fuel due to dependence on toke weakens the bargaining position of fishermen, especially three-day fishermen who need capital of up to Rp3-4 million for one trip. The price of fuel which rose from IDR 6,200 to IDR 8,000 per liter added to the economic pressure they had to bear. However, this poverty is also reinforced by cultural factors. Traditions such as meugang, the prohibition of going to sea on Fridays, and taboos on religious holidays limit working hours as well as fishermen's income. Although seen as part of a collective identity, such cultural rules indirectly create economic stagnation and narrow the space for adaptation.

The rhythm of life that follows the seasons, signs of nature, and the concept of "sustenance is set" provide spiritual tranquility, but it also reduces the fisherman's ability to carry out long-term planning. This condition strengthens the findings (Nurlaili, 2012) regarding how local culture contributes to determining the poverty pattern of fishermen. The most striking adaptation for fishermen returning home from the day is the change in departure time that is getting earlier. The decline in fish populations due to overfishing, pollution, and climate change makes fishermen have to depart between 03.00-04.00 to find catches that are still productive. This is a form of ecological adaptation that is very important in the coastal context. In addition, fishermen after the day make adaptations to technical aspects, such as the flexibility of using bait (replacing shrimp with cheaper squid), the management of very limited sleep time, and mutual cooperation in pushing boats at low tide. These practices show that fishermen's adaptation is not only an economic strategy, but also a cultural process that is intertwined in their daily lives as coastal communities.

The patron client relationship between fishermen and toke in Rancong is ambivalent the toke is seen as a helper, but also as a controlling figure. Toke provides capital, fuel, and facilities, but sets a profit sharing pattern that strengthens fishermen's dependence. In such conditions, fishermen develop a form of adaptation in the form of fine resistance (everyday resistance). Some of the strategies found include borrowing fuel even though it is not going to sea, hiding the rest of the fuel to sell, selling fish to outside collectors secretly, and taking capital without going to sea. These practices are not a form of open resistance, but a strategy to survive in the inequality of the patron-client relationship. This phenomenon is in line with James C. Scott's analysis of the "weapons of the weak" in which subordinate groups practice subtle resistance to negotiate structural pressures. Income diversification is a very important adaptation strategy for fishing families, as also shown by (Fitriani et al, 2023). Wives and other family members were often involved in home-based businesses such as breaking candlenuts, making bread, and opening small stalls. This activity reduces a single dependence on the ocean and provides an additional layer of security for families.

The role of women is vital in this adaptation strategy. They not only support the family economy, but also become important actors in maintaining household stability when the husband suffers losses or fails to harvest fish. Thus, the adaptation of fishermen is not only centered on men as seafarers, but is the result of the collective work of coastal families. In addition to daily adaptation, Rancong fishermen began to develop long-term strategies through investment in children's education. The free school policy provides an opportunity for fishing families to encourage children to access social mobility pathways that are not dependent on the sea. This change in values marks a generational orientation shift from "*living for the sea*" to "*living with choices*". However, the uneven quality of education and lack of access to jobs outside the marine sector are still challenges. However, this strategy suggests that fishermen's adaptation has gone beyond short-term survival patterns toward a vision of a better life.

The findings of this study confirm that the adaptation of fishermen in Gampong Blang Naleung Mameh is a complex process that involves ecological, economic, social, cultural, and moral aspects. Adaptation is not always synonymous with technological innovation, but rather emerges as a social strategy based on experience, intuition, and recognition of the rhythms of nature. In line with (Dewi et al, 2025), (Manggabarani, 2016), and (Nurlaili (2012), fishermen's adaptation is active and passive at the same time. Active, when they change their behavior at sea, find additional work, and respond to the patron-client system. Passive, when they follow a tradition that restricts activities due to cultural and religious values. The combination of these two forms of adaptation shows that the lives of fishermen are shaped not only by economic conditions, but also by the cultural values that direct their actions in the face of poverty.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates that fishermen in Rancung Hamlet actively develop adaptive strategies to cope with the limitations that shape their everyday lives. Economic uncertainty, limited access to resources, and restricted livelihood

choices compel fishermen to continuously strategize in order to meet household needs. These findings reinforce earlier studies which argue that poverty in fishing communities is not merely a condition of passivity, but rather one that stimulates adaptive responses rooted in practical reasoning and social norms (Dewi et al., 2025; Scott, 2016; Nurlaili, 2012). The adaptation strategies identified in this research such as diversifying income sources, adjusting fishing schedules, leveraging family labor, and relying on social networks are consistent with livelihood studies that highlight adaptation as a key survival mechanism among marginalized groups facing structural constraints (Humaedi, 2012) and (Hidayat et al, 2024).

However, this study contributes empirical depth by illustrating how such adaptive practices are lived and negotiated in a specific local context, shaped by family responsibilities, cultural expectations, and collective experiences of hardship. In line with poverty and development literature, these findings also support arguments that coping strategies alone are insufficient to enable fishermen to sustainably escape poverty (Siregar, 2016; Riski & Hajad, 2021). While adaptation allows fishermen to endure uncertainty, it often reinforces precarious conditions when not supported by structural interventions. Therefore, this research underscores the importance of rethinking fisherman empowerment approaches beyond short-term assistance models. As highlighted by Suryadi & Sufi (2019) empowerment programs that do not align with fishermen lived realities and adaptive logics tend to produce limited outcomes. Based on the integration of empirical findings and existing literature, this study calls for a more contextual and participatory approach to poverty alleviation among fishing communities. Policies and programs should recognize fishermen's adaptive capacities as a foundation for designing interventions that expand livelihood options, strengthen economic certainty, and reduce vulnerability.

#### **FURTHER STUDY**

Future research may explore the role of policy interventions, livelihood diversification, and climate change adaptation strategies in improving the welfare of impoverished fishing communities across different coastal regions.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The author sincerely thanks the fishermen groups of Gampong Blang Naleung Mameh for their openness and cooperation in sharing experiences and local knowledge essential to this ethnographic study.

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