

Research Article

Wealth of Maritime Country and the Welfare of Coastal People: Between Imagination and Reality

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Abstract

Indonesia is dubbed a maritime country because its water area is larger than its land area and consists of many islands. Indonesia's natural resources on land alone are already abundant, let alone the vast water areas that hold even more wealth of resources that can be utilized. However, do dreams and facts about the richness of marine resources correlate? This article discusses the welfare of coastal communities, opportunities, and challenges in optimizing the utilization of marine resources. Nearly 40 million people live in coastal areas, raising the question of why they have a low level of welfare despite this great potential. This article outlines the factors causing the low welfare of coastal communities and the associated challenges. Indonesia has a great opportunity to improve the welfare of coastal communities and the Indonesian economy through proper and effective management of marine resources if the challenges are overcome. With this article, it is hoped that readers can understand and actively contribute to maximizing the utilization of marine resources for every element of society. Library Research is the research method used with a descriptive approach to produce outputs that are easily understood by various groups. This article shows the vast potential and opportunities that marine resources hold for society and the economy in Indonesia if utilized effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: Coastal People; Sea Resources; Welfare

Introduction

Indonesia adopted the principle of archipelagic states, which means that inter-island waters are considered part of the territory of the Republic of Indonesia and are not free zones based on the statement in the Djuanda Declaration. This declaration was later formalized as Law Number 4 / PRP / 1960 concerning Indonesian Waters. The impact of this policy is the expansion of the territory of the Republic of Indonesia by 2.5 times, from 2,027,087 km² to 5,193,250 km². Through the determination of 196 straight baselines from the outermost island point, a virtual boundary line was formed that circled the Republic of Indonesia along 8,069.8 nautical miles. The Djuanda Declaration was accepted and ratified in the Third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982). Then, this declaration was reaffirmed through Law Number 17 of 1985, which confirmed that Indonesia is an archipelagic country based on UNCLOS 1982 (Ramdhani & Arifin, 2013). This

situation causes Indonesia to become the largest archipelagic country in the world, recognized by the international community.

As the largest archipelagic country in the world, Indonesia has wealth and natural resources that are very abundant along its coast. The abundance of marine and coastal natural wealth causes Indonesia to have enormous potential as a maritime country. In this case, the natural wealth of maritime countries, especially Indonesia, is a focal point of attention because it has a great influence on the economy and welfare of coastal communities.

The great potential of marine and coastal wealth has not been optimally utilized, which can be seen in the high level of poverty and low welfare of coastal communities. Based on data from the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries in 2021, the extreme poverty rate reached 4.19% in coastal areas, which is higher than the national average of 4%, and in fact, as many as 12.5% of poor people in Indonesia are people living in coastal areas (Siaran Pers Kementerian Kelautan Dan Perikanan : KKP Lawan IUU Fishing Lewat Kebijakan PIT Dan Pengawasan Terintegrasi, 2023). While it is commonly assumed that the abundant marine resources will translate into proportional improvements in the welfare of coastal communities, empirical evidence indicates that these populations often continue to experience low levels of socioeconomic well-being.

The potential of the natural wealth of maritime countries is often described with beautiful and very promising appearances that turn out to be only an imagination. The vast expanse of the blue ocean, the richness and diversity of marine life, and abundant marine resources are the main attractions. However, reality breaks all imagination. In fact, the reality of coastal communities does not always reflect wealth and prosperity. In practice, exploration and exploitation of natural resources, especially in marine areas, often have many negative impacts, both on the environment and local residents. Overfishing, habitat degradation, and conflicts between economic and conservation interests often create serious challenges.

A study contained in Trends in Marine Resources and Fisheries Management in Indonesia in 2022, conducted by the World Research Institute, found that wild fish stocks in Indonesia are overfished by more than half of their stocks (Napitupulu et al., 2022). Overfishing can cause disruption of the food chain in the marine ecosystem so that it becomes unbalanced and causes defects in the ecosystem (Napitupulu et al., 2022). Therefore, an in-depth study is needed to examine more deeply how the marine resources of maritime countries, especially Indonesia, can affect the welfare of coastal communities. My imagination and reality so far have two possibilities, namely, in line with or contradictory.

Until now, the research conducted has only focused on and been limited to the welfare of coastal communities. (Stacey et al., 2021) revealed that although there are quite strong government programs, most fishermen in Indonesia still face income instability and limited access to markets. Therefore, long-term and locally based interventions are deemed important to enhance their welfare. In line with this, (Mirajiani, 2023) emphasizes that economic assistance to coastal communities in Banten needs to be complemented by strengthening community capacity through training, access to funding, and technology to encourage diversification and innovation in economic activities. Meanwhile, a policy review by (Utomo & Sara, 2025) shows that fishing households in Indonesia generally still have low income levels and limited access to health and education services. Fisheries subsidy programs and insurance are often ineffective due to distribution issues and a lack of awareness among beneficiaries. Therefore, they recommend strengthening regulations such as secure access rights to resources and conservation as well as improving the quality of public services to support the effectiveness of welfare programs for fishermen.

Research on the welfare of coastal communities has been carried out. Based on the observations of researchers, there is a gap between the abundance of marine wealth and the low welfare of coastal communities, which should make it very possible for them to get welfare. This is influenced by factors and challenges that must be resolved if they want to improve the welfare of coastal communities, as has been studied in previous studies (Pangemanan, 2023), (Ramadhan & Hafsaridewi, 2017), and (Susilawati & Rahmah, 2023). Several efforts have been studied to overcome this in the form of empowerment and development of coastal communities. This aims to train and increase the productivity of coastal communities so that they are able to make the best use of the potential of coastal and marine wealth to improve their economies. These

efforts have been explained by Darmaningrum (2021) provide important insights into efforts to improve the welfare of coastal communities in Indonesia. He highlights the implementation of the Coastal Community Empowerment and Coastal Program (P2MPP) which has proven effective in enhancing the welfare of communities through training and access to resources, thereby increasing their income and quality of life. Meanwhile, the research by Humune et al., (2017) emphasizes the importance of human resource development in Sangihe Islands Regency, where proper education and training can strengthen community capacity in managing marine resources and increase their participation in economic activities. On the other hand, Akbar et al., (2021) examine the strengthening of sustainable marine economy through a socio-ecological market approach in Bintan Regency, showing that assistance in the form of training and market access can help coastal communities develop sustainable businesses, thereby increasing their income. Overall, these three studies emphasize the importance of empowerment, education, and economic support to improve the welfare of coastal communities in Indonesia.

This article will examine more deeply the potential of coastal and marine wealth and see the harmony between the abundance of marine and coastal wealth and the conditions faced by coastal communities. This alignment becomes a blurry area that is not clearly visible and is covered by the beautiful imagination of the potential of rich marine and coastal resources. Thus, the reality of the actual conditions that must be taken by coastal communities is a big question as to why there are contradictory conditions. It is this aspect that has not been studied and discussed in previous studies.

Literature Review

Previous research related to the welfare of coastal communities has been conducted Irawan & Tanzil, (2020); Merdeka, (2022) and Butarbutar et al., (2020). The research discusses the concept of well-being that emphasizes empowering the capabilities of its human resources or the population. Meanwhile, this article differs by discussing the potential of natural resources that can be utilized to improve the welfare of coastal communities. This article also contains several determinants of well-being and the conditions of coastal communities. In addition, this research also highlights the gap that occurs between natural wealth and the conditions of coastal communities, which are inversely proportional.

The Coastal Communities

Coastal community activities include various economic activities that utilize natural resources and the environment, such as fisheries, tourism, sea transportation, industry, mining, and energy generation. These activities also encompass settlements and agriculture that use land. The goal of all these activities is to improve the welfare of the community, which depends on the condition of the environment and natural resources. The government plays a role in managing the environment and natural resources, as well as supporting social institutions in the fields of economics, education, and health (Pinto, 2016).

Understanding coastal communities is crucial in formulating sustainable resource management strategies, given their dependence on marine ecosystems for livelihoods. In addition, coastal communities often face social and economic challenges, such as poverty and injustice, which highlight the need for more equitable and inclusive policies. With the increasing threats of climate change, understanding the adaptation and responses of coastal communities becomes essential, sparking debates about the necessary interventions from governments and international organizations. Finally, a deep understanding of these communities can enhance public engagement in decision-making related to marine policies, potentially positively influencing policy outcomes (E. Portman & Portman, 2025).

Welfare Concept

Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990) defines the welfare state as an 'institutional matrix' in which the state, market, and family interact to form a social security system. In *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Esping-Andersen classifies 18 industrialized Western countries into three main regimes: social-democratic (Nordic), liberal (Anglo), and conservative/corporatist (Continental Europe) (Noyoo, 2017). Conversely, liberal regimes (Britain, the US, Canada, etc.) provide minimal, means-tested support and encourage market-based solutions to social problems. Conservative regimes (Germany, France, Italy, etc.) emphasize employment-related social insurance, maintain the traditional status of the family, and only intervene when the family's capacity is exhausted. Esping-Andersen uses core concepts such as decommmodification, defamilization, social stratification, and state-market relations to differentiate these regimes.

In Global South countries (developing countries), the concept of welfare is often associated with social protection and poverty alleviation in the context of development. Many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have developed modern social policies relatively early as part of their industrialization strategies and national political mobilization. For example, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, and Uruguay have initiated public welfare programs since the early 20th century to alleviate tensions arising from dependent capitalism and the demands for democratic participation (Wehr et al., 2012). However, despite being inspired by the successes of Western countries, the model adopted does not simply mimic the European pattern. The uniqueness of the Global South – such as the legacy of colonialism, the widespread informal economy, and different social class structures – produces its own form of welfare (Wehr et al., 2012). In recent decades, the term "social protection" has replaced discussions of the welfare state. Social spending in the Global South has historically been relatively low (averaging 5-13% of GDP) and only includes limited groups. It was only since the 1990s, especially after the pressure of structural reforms, that an expansion of social protection programs such as conditional cash transfers emerged. For example, Brazil (Bolsa Família), China (social security program), India (MGNREGA), and South Africa implemented need-based cash programs in the 2000s. The concept of welfare in the Global South is often more residual and selective, focusing on compensating for inequalities and mitigating individual risks, rather than a universal egalitarian system (Wehr et al., 2012).

In summary, researchers in social policy view regimes as analytical frameworks rather than immutable laws of nature, with the patterns of social expenditure, labor market policies, and social citizenship rights influenced by political, cultural, and historical factors. Welfare practices vary significantly across different social and economic contexts. In agrarian societies, such as rural farming communities, formal state support is often limited, leading to reliance on community and family networks to shoulder responsibilities. Rural residents may collaborate on labor (for instance, through reciprocal planting), share resources during difficult times, and depend on informal credit systems instead of state-provided insurance. This perspective aligns with Scott's concept of moral economy, where subsistence farmers anticipate social responsibilities from neighbors or authorities to prevent starvation, rather than expecting formal entitlements. Even when states do intervene, such as through famine relief or agricultural subsidies, the main safety nets continue to be kinship ties and local customs (Nordensvärd & Ketola, 2024). As Gough and Wood highlight, "informal welfare" often prevails in these contexts. Anthropologists have observed phenomena such as patriarchal redistribution, where elders manage resources for the family, and communal land-use rights, which serve as indigenous welfare systems. Theoretical discussions in this area reference "agrarian state formation" and moral economy theory, emphasizing the distinct nature of welfare claims made by peasants compared to the demands of urban workers.

In contrast, coastal communities, such as fishing villages and riverine ports, exhibit their own unique welfare dynamics. The livelihoods of fisherfolk are often unstable due to factors like storms and declining fish stocks, leading to social protection that frequently takes on hybrid forms. Informally, fishing communities may establish cooperatives or share their catches, and they often rely on remittances from migrants. Formally, some governments implement specific programs, such as fisheries insurance funds, subsidized boats, and disaster relief for storm damage. Recent research underscores the importance of both types of support, with a study on the "blue economy" asserting that both formal and informal social protection mechanisms are essential in the context of fisheries (Tabe-Ojung et al., 2025). It emphasizes initiatives such as pensions for

elderly fishers, grants for fishing equipment, and local self-help groups. However, similar to farming villages, welfare in coastal regions tends to be fragmented and targeted rather than universal. Gough and Wood's observation is relevant here as well: coastal villagers also "depend significantly on community and family connections" for their security (Nordensvärd & Ketola, 2024). Whether via kinship ties or village guilds, welfare in small-scale societies, whether agrarian or maritime, merges traditional forms of support with (often limited) modern state interventions. It continues to be a dynamic arena for local politics and culture.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative descriptive research type to provide an in-depth explanation of the issues or topics being studied (Ahmad Saebani & Sutisna, 2018). This method allows for a holistic and contextual understanding of social phenomena. In data collection, this study adopts a literature approach, including the use of various sources such as books, journal articles, and relevant internet articles. The researcher collects data through documentation techniques, identifying credible and relevant sources, as well as gathering information from specified sources. The collection process is carried out in stages, focusing on the relationship between the potential of marine resources and the well-being of coastal communities.

The collected data was then analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis, which includes categorizing data based on themes, interpretation to understand the relationship between the wealth of marine resources and the reality of welfare, as well as presenting the findings in the form of a systematic narrative. With this approach, the research is expected to provide deeper insights into the harmony between the wealth of marine resources in Indonesia and the welfare of coastal communities, as well as the factors that influence that relationship.

Result and Analysis

The Wealth of Natural Resources in Indonesia's Coastal and Marine Areas

Coastal areas hold strategic significance as they serve as transition zones between terrestrial and marine ecosystems, boasting a wealth of natural resources and environmental services. As a nation governed by the rule of law, Indonesia recognizes that the wealth derived from these resources normatively belongs to the state and must be managed responsibly to promote public welfare, as outlined in Article 33 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. This management aims to benefit current society while safeguarding the interests of future generations, particularly concerning the utilization of coastal resources in accordance with legal regulations on environmental protection and the management of natural resources in Indonesia's coastal and marine regions (Sutrisno, 2012). Indonesia is rich in a variety of coastal resources, which encompass coastal regions, swamps, estuaries, and more. Among these, several coastal and marine resources are particularly significant for the country, including:

Mangrove Forest

Mangrove forests, also known as mangal forests, consist of a variety of coastal plants found in tropical and subtropical regions, primarily dominated by flowering plants that take the form of trees or shrubs. These plants thrive and proliferate in tidal areas with high salinity levels. In Indonesia, mangrove ecosystems are typically found in small clusters, predominantly in Irian (Papua). While mangroves in regions such as Sulawesi, Java, Kalimantan, and Sumatra have been impacted by development activities, the mangrove forests in the Maluku and Nusa Tenggara regions remain relatively untouched (Yudi et al., 2019).

One of the ecological roles of mangrove ecosystems is to serve as a natural barrier that protects environmental health from damage caused by waves. Mangroves can mitigate the effects of storm surges and

shield coastal areas from the negative impacts of storms, even contributing to the reduction of tsunami damage, as seen in India in 2004 (Winata et al., 2017). Additionally, mangrove ecosystems actively support the daily needs of local communities. For instance, mangrove wood, particularly from species such as *Rhizophora*, *Bruguiera*, and *Ceriops*, is utilized as a building material for homes. Furthermore, these ecosystems provide a source of protein through the harvesting of shellfish, snails, crustaceans, and fish. They also serve as a source of traditional medicine derived from various herbs and natural ingredients (Winata & Rusdiyanto, 2016). Moreover, mangrove forests play a crucial role in absorbing carbon dioxide emissions, which are significant contributors to the greenhouse gas effect and global warming.

Coral Reefs

Indonesia is estimated to have approximately 50,000 km² of coral reef area, which supports a diverse array of species and exhibits high primary productivity (Ramadhan et al., 2017). Coral reefs hold significant social, economic, and cultural importance, particularly since nearly one-third of Indonesia's coastal population relies on shallow marine fisheries for their livelihoods. These reefs serve multiple functions, including being rich habitats for marine biodiversity, providing temporary or permanent shelter, foraging sites, spawning grounds, and nurseries for various marine species. Additionally, coral reefs contribute to global biological, chemical, and physical cycles with exceptionally high productivity levels. They are sources of both food and medicine, both directly and indirectly, and also act as natural barriers against waves while serving as a primary source of construction materials (Irawati et al., 2023). Consequently, coral reefs play a crucial and essential role in maintaining the ecological balance of marine ecosystems, particularly in coastal areas, as they provide vital habitats for marine life.

Fisheries sector

With approximately 81,000 km of coastline and an area of about 6.32 million km², it is not surprising that Indonesia is home to a rich biodiversity, particularly in marine life. Out of the estimated 7,000 fish species globally, around 2,000 species are found in Indonesia. This substantial number indicates that fish are the most dominant group among vertebrate animals, making up 48.1% of the total (Lasabuda, 2013). The Indonesian Sea is estimated to contain about 3,200 fish species, with 51% inhabiting marine waters, 48% in freshwater, and 1% being species that migrate between saltwater and freshwater environments (Samdani et al., 2021). According to data from the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, during the period from January 23 to 29, 2023, total fish production reached 26,570 kg, with a production value of approximately IDR 348,805,000. It is no surprise that Indonesia ranks as the second-largest fish supplier in the world, following China, with a total production of 6.43 million tons (Jurnalis Pangannews, 2023).

Seagrass Beds

Seagrass beds are coastal ecosystems characterized by relatively high primary productivity and play a crucial role in sustaining the diversity and health of surrounding marine organisms (Riniatsih, 2016). Similar to coral reefs, seagrass beds serve as habitats for marine life. They provide essential functions such as spawning, nurturing, sheltering, and foraging areas for various species. This role is vital for the conservation of marine ecosystems. Additionally, seagrass beds contribute to the absorption of carbon dioxide emissions, thereby helping to mitigate these harmful pollutants (Irawan, 2017).

Furthermore, seagrass beds play an important role in maintaining the balance of marine ecosystems by acting as nutrient recyclers in the water. Organic materials are returned to the aquatic environment through the decomposition process facilitated by microorganisms (Jayanti, 2020).

Seaweed

Seaweed, commonly utilized as a raw material, offers a variety of additional benefits, including serving as food, herbal medicine, organic fertilizer, and even as feed for marine organisms, among many other uses. With the growing demand for seaweed both domestically and internationally, as well as the need to boost the country's foreign exchange earnings from non-oil and gas sectors, cultivating seaweed presents an effective solution that reduces reliance on carbon-based natural resources (Priono, 2016).

Indonesia has significant potential for seaweed cultivation due to its expansive sea area of 5.8 million km². Approximately 1,110,900 hectares are designated for seaweed farming. Within Indonesia, there are around 555 species of seaweed, representing 45% of the total seaweed germplasm species found worldwide, all located in Indonesian waters (Khaldun, 2017). Moreover, similar to seagrass beds, seaweed is also capable of absorbing carbon dioxide emissions.

Indonesia's marine resources such as fisheries, mangrove forests, seaweed cultivation, oil and gas fields, and marine tourism sites hold great potential for improving the welfare of coastal communities. Each has its own benefits: fisheries and aquaculture support food security, mangroves are nutrient-rich and provide natural protection against storms, seaweed cultivation generates cash income for rural areas, oil and gas production can fund infrastructure, and beautiful beaches create job opportunities. However, to achieve these benefits fairly, it is necessary to address governance issues and long-standing inequalities. Overly centralized management and past over-exploitation have often left local communities with little benefit.

Studies show that without reforms such as increased participation, fair benefit distribution, effective law enforcement, and strengthening local capacities inequality will persist even as the blue economy continues to grow. Nevertheless, a number of new strategic initiatives (such as marine conservation areas, tourism master plans, and extended moratoriums) are starting to address these challenges, and several pilot projects (for example, community-based coral reef patrols and tourism cooperatives) have shown positive results. Moving forward, marine policies must truly prioritize the perspectives of coastal communities. Both central and local governments need to redirect resource management so that the benefits of Indonesia's marine wealth are primarily felt by coastal communities, not just by bureaucracies or large corporations.

Conditions of Coastal Communities in Indonesia

Coastal communities consist of individuals who reside, settle, and rely on coastal areas for their livelihoods (Muliati, 2016). Most people in these regions work as fishermen, sand miners, fish farmers, or in sea transportation. The defining characteristic of coastal communities is their dependence on the environment and seasonal changes, which significantly influence their livelihoods (Sidiq, 2019).

In 2021, coastal areas experienced extreme poverty rates of 4.19%, surpassing the national extreme poverty rate of 4%. Out of the total national poverty, which affects approximately 10.86 million people, around 12.5% (or 1.3 million individuals) belong to coastal communities. About 90% of the 12,510 coastal villages rely on the sea as their primary source of economic benefits (Indrawari, 2023). This aligns with earlier research conducted on rural fishermen in Cangkol, Bogor City, in 2014 (Sutrisno, 2012) which identified 2,694 poor families in Lemahwungkuk District and 2,751 in Kejaksan District. The data also highlights the number of workers in the fisheries sector, including fishermen and laborers, as well as 1,378 fishermen employed as crew members for ship owners. Additionally, there are 1,396 non-fisherman households engaged in fish transportation and as rickshaw drivers for fishermen.

A study in Bantur District, Malang Regency, in 2021 on the welfare of fishermen workers (Andriani & Nuraini, 2021) found that, at that time, fishermen were considered prosperous. However, the Fishermen's Exchange Rate (NTN), which compares the price index received and paid by fishermen, fluctuates significantly due to seasonality, inadequate electricity, adverse weather conditions, and rising fuel costs for fishing vessels.

Furthermore, marine environmental conditions and the natural behavior of fish during migration, along with the infrastructure used for fishing, also impact this rate.

Another study focused on the poverty levels of coastal communities in the Belang sub-district (Pangemanan, 2023) revealed that 53% of respondents were classified as having low welfare or belonging to poor families. Many coastal residents live in non-permanent houses made of boards and dirt, although a small portion of the population has semi-permanent or permanent homes.

The low welfare levels in coastal communities are influenced by several factors, that are (Zebua et al., 2016):

- a. Low productivity stemming from inadequate human resources, which affects income.
- b. The use of traditional fishing techniques, which are less effective, and a lack of trust in weather forecasts from the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG).
- c. A detrimental culture surrounding seafood harvesting that leads to rapid consumption of income, resulting in debt to loan sharks due to poor financial management.
- d. Fishermen often have to share their earnings with employers or other fishermen as payment for borrowed fishing equipment, as many lack their own capital or tools.
- e. Limited use of technology, with most employed being relatively simple, making fishing less effective and efficient.
- f. Some coastal regions in Indonesia still lack access to adequate health and education facilities.
- g. A mindset among some individuals that prioritizes immediate employment over education, resulting in a lack of quality human resources.

These factors collectively impact the welfare levels of coastal communities. Additionally, natural factors such as changing environmental conditions can lead to decreased productivity or pollution that harms marine ecosystems, making it challenging for fishermen to achieve good catches.

Between Imagination and Reality

Indonesia is often referred to as a maritime country due to its thousands of islands, vast sea expanses, and rich natural resources both on land and in the ocean, making it the second-largest fish supplier in the world. The country is home to many beautiful beaches, clear blue waters, and unique flora and fauna both on land and in the sea. Despite this abundance of natural wealth, many coastal communities that are directly connected to these resources have not experienced prosperity.

Unfortunately, there are still numerous exploitative practices that harm marine ecosystems, perpetrated by irresponsible individuals, which negatively impact coastal communities. These practices include the use of tiger trawls, explosives, and poisons for fishing. Such actions significantly affect fishermen who depend on natural conditions for their livelihoods. When marine ecosystems are damaged, it becomes increasingly difficult for fishermen to catch fish, leading to a decline in their income. In response, the government has implemented policies to combat illegal fishing, as outlined in Law Number 45 of 2009, which amends Law Number 31 of 2004 concerning Fisheries, and Presidential Regulation Number 115 of 2015 regarding the Task Force for the Eradication of Illegal Fishing, as well as the Regulation of the Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Number 37/Permen-KP/2017 concerning Standard Operating Procedures for Law Enforcement Tasks to Eradicate Illegal Fishing (H. Arianto, 2017).

According to the Kompas.Id page (Grahadhiyarini, 2023), from January to May 2023, marine and fisheries surveillance officers from the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries arrested 70 illegal vessels, comprising 61 Indonesian fishing boats and 9 foreign vessels. Among the foreign vessels, five were flagged from the Philippines, one from Vietnam, and three from Malaysia. This highlights the Indonesian government's firm commitment particularly through the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries to addressing the persistent problem of illegal fishing within its territorial waters. The recorded apprehension of both domestic and foreign vessels illustrates the substantial challenges involved in marine resource surveillance and underscores the

critical role of effective law enforcement mechanisms. Furthermore, the data signals an urgent need for enhanced regional collaboration to tackle the broader issue of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (IUUF), which poses a direct threat to marine ecosystem sustainability and the well-being of coastal populations. The involvement of foreign actors in these illegal activities also reflects the considerable value of Indonesia's marine resources, which continue to attract exploitation beyond national boundaries.

Coastal communities can benefit from their natural wealth, particularly in coastal and marine areas, by collaborating and working together to develop existing potentials. They do not need to limit themselves to fishing but can explore tourism as an alternative source of income. Additionally, enhancing productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency in their work will not only increase their income but also positively impact the overall Indonesian economy.

Moreover, there is a growing trend towards businesses focused on conservation and environmental sustainability, such as carbon trading. Communities can engage in the management of mangrove forests, seagrass beds, and seaweed, creating job opportunities for local coastal residents.

As the largest archipelagic nation in the world, Indonesia boasts abundant marine resources, consisting of 17,508 islands and an ocean area of 5.8 million km², which accounts for 70% of the country's total territory (M. F. Arianto, 2020). Marine resources hold significant economic and ecological value, encompassing both biological and non-biological aspects. Therefore, implementing the Blue Economy concept is crucial for harnessing the potential of natural resources in coastal areas while ensuring profitability and minimizing negative impacts on ecosystems (Sari & Muslimah, 2020).

Utilizing the Blue Economy Model to develop a marine economic strategy is an effective approach for managing and utilizing marine resources. The Blue Economy concept is based on three fundamental principles: High Investment, Low Carbon, and Waste Reduction. These principles advocate for development plans that prioritize poverty alleviation, economic growth, job creation, and environmental protection (Erianto et al., 2024). Development under the Blue Economy framework moves away from excessive resource exploitation and encourages a shift in practices that can enhance and uplift the conditions of coastal communities. The Blue Economy seeks to balance resource management and utilization by rejecting short-term profit-driven thinking and consistently adopting a low-carbon economy (Sari & Muslimah, 2020).

The current government has taken steps to facilitate the implementation of the Blue Economy, as demonstrated by Presidential Regulation Number 34 of 2022. However, the contribution of the Blue Economy to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) remains relatively small, amounting to Rp126 trillion or 2.83% of the total national GDP (Darajati, 2023). This indicates that the growth of the Blue Economy has not been fully optimized. To achieve a sustainable Blue Economy, the Government of Indonesia must effectively align its sustainability and economic growth objectives by efficiently utilizing maritime resources while prioritizing environmental excellence in line with Blue Economy principles.

Efforts to enhance the marine economy as a pillar of the national economy include making the fisheries sector a dominant force in the Exclusive Economic Zone and offshore areas, elevating small-scale fisheries to higher-value activities, applying advanced technology for offshore marine aquaculture, promoting the seaweed and shrimp industries, transforming traditional pond businesses into silvofisheries, strengthening the salt industry with renewable energy, and exploring and utilizing marine energy (Darajati, 2023).

Conclusion

Indonesia, as a maritime country, has enormous potential for improving its economy through the utilization of natural wealth, especially coastal and marine areas. It is necessary to develop and improve facilities as well

as foster cooperation between the government and coastal communities to overcome poverty problems and low welfare levels through the empowerment of coastal communities themselves.

Between the imagination of the abundance of natural resources on the coast and the sea and the reality of coastal communities, this makes the gap between imagination and reality a focal point. Although there are fantasies involving the wealth of abundant marine resources and a major contribution to prosperity, the reality is that there are a number of challenges and complexities. The imagination of the beautiful abundance of natural resources on the coast and sea and the reality of coastal communities can be in line if the potential is managed properly and optimally so that it has a good impact on all parties. By applying a sustainable approach to the wise use and management of marine resources, it will support the welfare of coastal communities. In addition, several aspects that need to be considered are education, access to health, and improving the facilities and infrastructure of coastal communities. These also need attention from related parties.

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