

The Role of Madura Coastal Women in The Public Sphere

Mi'raj Al Abshori^{1*}, Praptining Sukowati²

^{1,2} Universitas Merdeka Malang, Jalan Terusan Dieng. 62-64 Klojen, Pisang Candi, Sukun, Malang City, East Java

E-mail: mirajalabshori@gmail.co.id

* Corresponding Author



<https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v4i3.4860>

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 09 Jan 2026

Revised: 15 Jan 2026

Accepted: 21 Jan 2026

Kata Kunci:

Perempuan Pesisir
 Madura, Peran Publik,
 Penelitian Kualitatif.

Keywords:

Madurese Coastal
 Women, Public Roles,
 Qualitative Research.



ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji secara mendalam realitas partisipasi publik di kalangan perempuan pesisir yang berprofesi sebagai istri nelayan di Desa Branta, Kecamatan Tlanakan, Kabupaten Pamekasan, sebuah kelompok yang seringkali dianggap tradisional dan terkekang oleh budaya patriarki. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berperspektif sosiologis, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengalaman hidup, makna subjektif, dan praktik sosial perempuan pesisir melalui keterlibatan mereka dalam organisasi desa dan kegiatan masyarakat, seperti Gerakan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK), pelayanan kesehatan terpadu (posyandu), kelompok studi agama (pengajian), kelompok tabungan bergilir (arisan), kegiatan bersih-bersih desa, konservasi lingkungan pesisir, serta kegiatan sosial ekonomi dan pendidikan non-formal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perempuan pesisir yang berprofesi sebagai istri nelayan di Desa Branta, Kecamatan Tlanakan, Kabupaten Pamekasan, memainkan peran publik yang signifikan dan multidimensional di bidang pendidikan, budaya, kehidupan sosial, politik non-formal, dan ekonomi rumah tangga. Keterlibatan perempuan sebagai sukarelawan desa dan penggerak komunitas bukan sekadar perpanjangan peran domestik mereka, tetapi merupakan praktik sosial yang sarat dengan nilai-nilai kepedulian, solidaritas, tanggung jawab kolektif, dan negosiasi budaya. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa budaya Madura tidak sepenuhnya menghambat partisipasi publik perempuan; sebaliknya, budaya tersebut menyediakan ruang adaptif yang memungkinkan perempuan untuk menjalankan peran publik dengan cara yang sah dan diterima secara kontekstual.

This study aims to examine in depth the reality of public participation among coastal women who are fishermen's wives in Branta Village, Tlanakan District, Pamekasan Regency, a group that has often been perceived as traditional and constrained by patriarchal culture. Employing a qualitative approach with a sociological perspective, this research explores the lived experiences, subjective meanings, and social practices of coastal women through their involvement in village organizations and community activities, such as the Family Welfare Movement (PKK), integrated health services (posyandu), religious study groups (pengajian), rotating savings groups (arisan), village clean-up activities, coastal environmental conservation, as well as socio-economic activities and non-formal education. The findings indicate that coastal women who are fishermen's wives in Branta Village, Tlanakan District, Pamekasan Regency, play significant and multidimensional public roles in the fields of education, culture, social life, non-formal politics, and household economy. Women's involvement as village volunteers and community mobilizers is not merely an extension of their domestic roles but constitutes social practices imbued with values of care, solidarity, collective responsibility, and cultural negotiation. These findings affirm that Madurese culture does not entirely hinder women's public participation; instead, it provides adaptive spaces that enable women to perform public roles in legitimate and contextually accepted ways.



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How to Cite: Mi'raj Al Abshori, et al. (2026). The Role of Madura Coastal Women in The Public Sphere, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v4i3.4860>

INTRODUCTION

Coastal communities represent one of the most structurally vulnerable social groups due to their reliance on capture fisheries, a sector inherently characterized by volatility, uncertainty, and environmental risk. Within this setting, gender relations constitute a critical analytical lens for understanding how labor is divided, how access to resources is distributed, and how power is negotiated within households and communities. While a substantial body of literature on Indonesian coastal societies highlights women's active engagement in productive activities that support household livelihoods, this pattern is not uniform across regions. In the coastal areas of Madura, empirical evidence reveals a markedly different configuration, wherein women, particularly fishermen's wives experience severe restrictions on their access to the public sphere and are positioned almost exclusively within the domestic domain.

Madurese coastal women inhabit a social structure that enforces a rigid gendered division of roles. Women's responsibilities are predominantly confined to domestic functions, including household management, childcare, and the fulfillment of spousal obligations. In contrast, the public sphere, encompassing economic activities, social organizations, and community-level decision-making is normatively constructed as the legitimate domain of men. This division of roles is not merely reproduced through everyday social practices but is institutionally and symbolically legitimized through cultural value systems, local social hierarchies, and prevailing religious interpretations within Madurese society (Niehof, 2007).

Contrary to findings from several other coastal regions in Indonesia that document women's dual roles or even their dominant participation in fisheries-related economic activities, research conducted in Madura indicates that women lack meaningful social space to engage in public economic life. They are largely absent from fish processing and marketing activities, excluded from fishermen's organizations and institutions, and denied direct access to economic resources and extra-household social networks. Such exclusion reflects systemic and structural constraints embedded within local social arrangements rather than the outcome of individual preferences or choices exercised by women themselves (Setiani & Laelia, 2024).

From a cultural perspective, Madurese society is widely characterized by a deeply entrenched patriarchal value system that positions men as heads of households and primary authorities in the public sphere. These values are internalized through social norms, customary practices, and moral discourses centered on family honor, which place the burden of maintaining moral respectability squarely on women. Women's engagement in activities beyond the domestic sphere is frequently perceived as a potential threat to familial honor and social propriety, thereby significantly curtailing their social mobility (Hefner, 2011). In this context, women's domestication functions not simply as a social convention but as a normalized mechanism of social regulation.

Beyond cultural norms, the social organization of Madurese fishing communities further constrains women's access to public spaces. The institutional structure of fisheries-related activities is highly masculinized, encompassing labor arrangements, production relations, and local power networks. Decision-making arenas, such as fishermen's meetings, negotiations with market actors, and interactions with village-level bureaucratic authorities are overwhelmingly dominated by men. Women are not recognized as legitimate economic or social actors within these institutional frameworks, resulting in the systematic absence of mechanisms that would facilitate their participation in public life (Kusumawardhani & Susilowati, 2024).

Religion constitutes another critical dimension shaping gendered constraints in Madurese coastal communities. Dominant religious interpretations circulating within fishing communities emphasize women's roles as wives and mothers who bear primary responsibility for domestic labor. The notion of male leadership within the family is frequently mobilized as a normative justification for restricting women's mobility and participation outside the household. In practice, these interpretations extend beyond individual belief systems to function as social criteria for evaluating women's obedience, morality, and religious piety (Sudarso et al., 2025).

Empirical findings from field research further demonstrate that Madurese coastal women generally do not engage in paid employment outside the household and remain fully dependent on their husbands' incomes. Even under conditions of economic precarity, women are consistently expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities. This economic dependency reinforces asymmetrical power relations

within households, consolidating men's authority as the sole strategic decision-makers in matters related to resource allocation and long-term household planning (Irwansyah & Supriadi, 2022).

Women's exclusion from the public sphere has broader implications for coastal development processes. Their marginalization results in minimal female participation in economic empowerment programs, skills training initiatives, and institutional activities related to coastal resource governance. Consequently, women's potential contributions as social and economic actors remain largely untapped, thereby weakening the adaptive capacity of fishing households in responding to economic uncertainty and environmental change.

Moreover, the confinement of Madurese coastal women to domestic roles contributes to the intergenerational reproduction of gender inequality. Girls are socialized within environments that normalize women's limited roles, constraining their aspirations for education, employment, and public engagement from an early age. This process perpetuates patriarchal social structures and impedes broader trajectories of social transformation within coastal communities (Niehof, 2007).

Against this backdrop, the present study conceptualizes the lived realities of Madurese coastal women, particularly housewives in Baranta Village, Tlanakan Subdistrict, Pamekasan Regency as a structural issue requiring critical examination. It interrogates dominant assumptions regarding women's presumed incapacity or unwillingness to engage in the public sphere and questions the reduction of their social roles to domestic labor alone. This study proceeds from the premise that women's restricted roles are not the product of individual choice but rather the outcome of intersecting forces of patriarchal culture, masculinized social systems, and restrictive religious interpretations. Accordingly, this research seeks to generate empirical insights into alternative realities of Madurese coastal women and to examine their implications for gender relations and the welfare of fishermen's households.

Role Theory

In examining social dynamics, one of the most widely employed conceptual frameworks in the social sciences and anthropology is role theory. This theory explains how individuals perform specific social functions based on the social positions they occupy. Consciously or unconsciously, individuals enact roles according to the expectations attached to their social statuses, such as those of mothers, wives, workers, or community members. Roles thus operate as normative guidelines that regulate behavior and social interaction within a given social structure.

Role theory is particularly relevant for analyzing women's positions within social structures, especially in contexts characterized by strong cultural norms, such as coastal societies. In such settings, women are often expected to perform domestic roles, yet in some contexts they may also assume multiple roles in economic, social, and even local political activities. These roles are not static; rather, they are shaped and reshaped by social, economic, and environmental changes. Through the lens of role theory, it becomes possible to examine how women adapt to, negotiate, or contest prevailing social expectations. Moreover, role theory provides analytical tools to assess gender inequality, divisions of labor, and power relations within households and communities. Accordingly, several strands of role theory are relevant to this study, including structural-functional role theory, dramaturgical theory, symbolic interactionism, role theory in social psychology, and conflict-oriented role theory.

Public Role Theory

Public role theory is grounded in the understanding that societies construct social role divisions based on norms, values, and power structures that determine who is entitled, capable, and legitimate to participate in the public sphere. Within classical sociological thought, public roles refer to individuals' involvement in economic, political, and social activities that take place outside the domestic domain and are associated with production, decision-making, and resource distribution (Parsons, 1951). Historically, these roles have been closely aligned with gender differentiation, wherein men are constructed as public actors while women are positioned within the private sphere.

From a gender studies perspective, public roles are understood as historically and contextually produced social constructions rather than reflections of biological difference. Oakley (1972) argues that the division between public and domestic roles emerges from processes of gender socialization institutionalized through the family, education, religion, and culture. Consequently, women's limited access to public roles cannot be interpreted as a matter of individual choice but must be understood as the outcome of unequal social structures.

Structural feminist approaches further emphasize that women's public roles are constrained by patriarchal power relations that regulate access to economic, political, and symbolic resources. Walby (1990) explains that patriarchy operates simultaneously through public and private institutions, such that women's exclusion from public roles is reinforced by the domestication of their roles within the household. In this sense, the public sphere functions as an exclusive arena that reproduces male dominance.

The theory of the gendered public sphere highlights that public spaces are not neutral but are shaped by masculine norms that define standards of participation and legitimacy. Fraser (1992) demonstrates that women are frequently excluded from dominant public spheres, both symbolically and institutionally, rendering their participation illegitimate or irrelevant. In religious and traditional societies, public roles are further shaped by religious interpretations that regulate gender relations. Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the *patriarchal bargain* explains how women negotiate patriarchal systems by accepting restrictions on public roles as adaptive survival strategies. This framework is particularly relevant for understanding coastal women who internalize limitations on public participation as moral and social norms. Thus, public role theory provides an analytical framework for interpreting women's limited participation not as an individual phenomenon but as the result of complex interactions among social structures, culture, and power.

Gender Theory

Gender theory begins with a conceptual distinction between sex and gender. Sex refers to biological differences between men and women, whereas gender is understood as a social and cultural construction that shapes roles, identities, and expectations associated with masculinity and femininity (Oakley, 1972). Gender is therefore neither natural nor fixed, but continuously produced and reproduced through social, historical, and institutional processes.

From a sociological perspective, gender constitutes a system of social relations that organizes the division of labor, access to resources, and the distribution of power. West and Zimmerman (1987) introduce the concept of **doing gender**, emphasizing that gender is not something individuals possess, but something they actively perform through everyday social practices. Through this process, gender norms appear natural and unquestionable, despite being socially constructed and context-dependent.

Structural feminist approaches conceptualize gender as a social structure embedded within core societal institutions, including the family, economy, politics, and religion. Walby (1990) argues that gender inequality is reproduced through patriarchal systems operating across both public and private spheres. Within this framework, women's subordination is not the result of individual choices but of social structures that systematically privilege men.

Gender theory also underscores the importance of cultural and ideological contexts in shaping gender relations. Scott (1986) conceptualizes gender as an analytical category for understanding power relations, as gender differences are frequently employed to legitimize social hierarchies. Gender thus functions both as a symbolic system and as a set of practices that organize broader social relations.

In religious and traditional societies, gender theory highlights the role of moral norms and religious interpretations in regulating relations between men and women. Kandiyoti (1988) explains that women often negotiate patriarchal systems through **patriarchal bargains**, whereby they accept role restrictions as adaptive strategies within unequal structures. Overall, gender theory provides an analytical framework for understanding inequalities in roles and access not as individual or biological phenomena, but as outcomes of complex interactions among social structures, culture, and power.

Coastal Sociology

Coastal sociology derives semantically from the terms "sociology" and "coastal." Sociology, first introduced by Auguste Comte in 1839 in **Cours de Philosophie Positive**, refers to the systematic study of society (Sunarto, 2000; Narwoko & Suyanto, 2006; Komarudin, 2011). Earlier intellectual foundations of sociological thought can also be traced to the fourteenth century through the work of Ibn Khaldun, particularly **Muqaddimah**, which analyzed social dynamics in a systematic manner (Khaldun, 2000).

Sociology broadly examines society, but in practice it analyzes social life from specific analytical perspectives. Contemporary sociology provides conceptual and methodological tools for applying scientific knowledge to address practical and social problems (Narwoko & Suyanto, 2006). Coastal sociology, as a subfield, focuses specifically on coastal communities whose livelihoods depend on

marine resources, including fishermen, laborers, and aquaculture producers. The emergence of coastal sociology reflects the limited attention historically given to coastal societies within Indonesian sociological discourse, despite the strategic significance of coastal areas as spaces of transportation, resource extraction, processing, commercialization, and national maritime governance.

As a scientific subdiscipline, coastal sociology serves both theoretical and practical purposes. It contributes to understanding coastal societies from a sociological perspective, contextualizing sociological theories within coastal dynamics, examining social consequences of coastal development, and analyzing micro-, meso-, and macro-level realities of coastal life. Furthermore, coastal sociology supports social mapping efforts related to progress and decline within coastal communities.

Coastal and agrarian communities exhibit distinct social characteristics. Coastal communities, particularly fishermen, operate within open-access resource systems that involve high levels of risk and uncertainty. Consequently, fishermen are often characterized by resilience, sociability, and openness. Nevertheless, coastal communities in Indonesia are frequently associated with poverty and underdevelopment. In response to economic vulnerability, women often participate in supporting household livelihoods by assisting their husbands in fisheries-related activities. At the same time, women remain responsible for domestic roles as wives and mothers. Empirical research indicates that coastal women may occupy critical economic positions, functioning as household breadwinners by processing fishery products into marketable goods and engaging in marketing activities (Wardana et al., 2022).

Research Model

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive–critical research model that conceptualizes women’s public roles in Madurese coastal households as socially constructed and structurally mediated phenomena. The household is positioned as the primary analytical arena in which gendered roles, power relations, and divisions of labor are negotiated. Women’s participation in public and economic activities is examined as the outcome of interactions between patriarchal cultural norms, religious interpretations, and socio-economic pressures. The model emphasizes role negotiation processes through which women legitimate public engagement while maintaining domestic expectations, and analyzes the consequences of such participation for household power dynamics, gender relations, and the reproduction or transformation of normative gender roles.

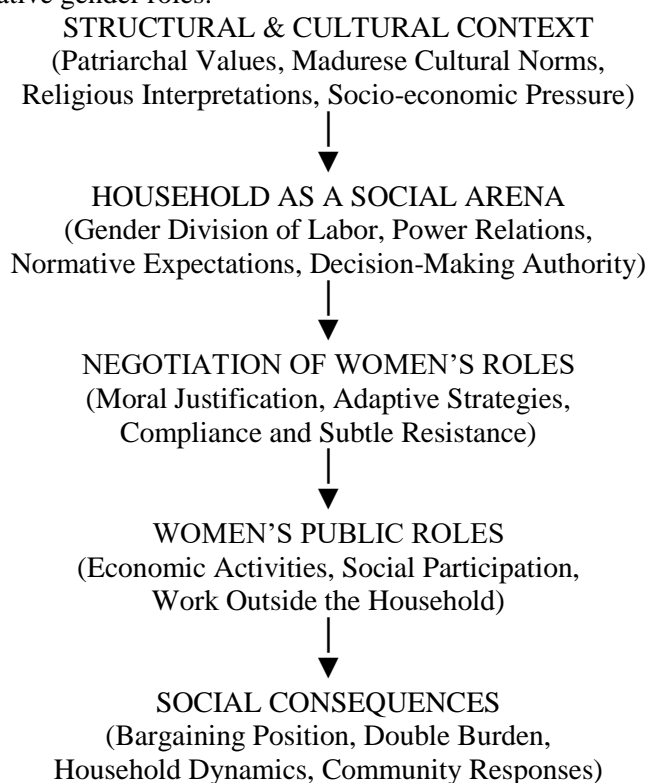


Figure 1 illustrates the qualitative research model explaining women's public roles in Madurese coastal households. The model conceptualizes women's participation in the public sphere as the outcome of negotiated processes within households, shaped by structural, cultural, and economic constraints, and producing consequences for gender relations and household dynamics.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach grounded in a sociological perspective to examine women's public roles within Madurese coastal households. Qualitative research is particularly suited to this study because it prioritizes in-depth understanding of social phenomena from the perspectives of social actors, rather than relying on numerical measurement or statistical generalization (Creswell, 2013). In the tradition of social sciences, especially sociology, qualitative methods are essential for capturing meanings, values, lived experiences, and social dynamics that cannot be adequately explained through quantitative indicators alone (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This approach enables the researcher to explore social reality as a complex, contextual, and socially constructed process.

Sociology, as a discipline concerned with social interaction, institutions, and power relations, provides a strong conceptual foundation for qualitative inquiry. A sociological qualitative approach does not merely ask what happens in society, but seeks to explain how and why social phenomena occur within specific configurations of norms, values, structures, and power relations (Bryman, 2016). In this study, women's participation in public and economic activities is not treated as an individual decision detached from context, but as a social practice shaped by household dynamics, cultural expectations, and structural constraints. Accordingly, the researcher is positioned not as a neutral observer, but as an interpretive analyst who seeks to understand social reality from within, based on the perspectives and narratives of the research participants (Schwandt, 2014).

This research adopts a qualitative case study design focusing on coastal households in Desa Baranta, Kecamatan Tlanakan, Kabupaten Pamekasan. The case study approach is particularly appropriate because it allows for an intensive and holistic examination of a social phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2018). By situating women's public roles within a specific cultural and geographical setting, the study avoids abstract generalization and instead emphasizes contextual depth. In sociology, case studies are widely used to analyze households, communities, or social groups as arenas of social relations, role negotiation, and power dynamics (Salim, 2001).

Data were collected through multiple qualitative techniques, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted to capture women's narratives regarding their experiences, motivations, and negotiations related to working outside the household. Participant observation enabled the researcher to observe everyday practices, interactions, and gendered divisions of labor within households and the community. Documentation, including local records and informal community texts, was used to complement and triangulate primary data. The use of multiple data sources strengthens the credibility of qualitative findings through methodological triangulation (Patton, 2015).

From a theoretical standpoint, this study is situated within an interpretive-critical paradigm. The interpretive dimension emphasizes understanding the subjective meanings that women and household members attach to public work, domestic responsibilities, and gender roles (Geertz, 1973). At the same time, the critical dimension allows the analysis to examine how these meanings are embedded within patriarchal structures, cultural norms, and unequal power relations that shape women's opportunities and constraints (Walby, 1990). This dual orientation enables the study to connect individual experiences with broader structural processes.

The analytical process follows an interactive and cyclical model of qualitative data analysis, as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection and involved three interconnected processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting, coding, and categorizing field data according to emerging themes related to gender roles, household power relations, and public participation. Data display was achieved through thematic matrices and narrative summaries that facilitated pattern recognition. Finally, conclusions were drawn through iterative interpretation, constantly comparing empirical findings with theoretical concepts and existing literature.

Importantly, qualitative analysis in this study is not linear but iterative and reflexive. The researcher continuously moved back and forth between data and theory, allowing new insights to refine analytical categories. This approach aligns with the inductive logic commonly employed in qualitative sociology, where theoretical understanding emerges through sustained engagement with empirical material (Charmaz, 2014). By adopting this methodological framework, the study aims to produce a nuanced and context-sensitive explanation of women's public roles in Madurese coastal households, contributing both to sociological theory and to locally grounded understandings of gender and family life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

History of Baranta Village

Baranta Village (often referred to as *Branta Pesisir* for the coastal area; *Branta Tinggi* refers to the upland area within Tlanakan) is located in Tlanakan District, Pamekasan Regency, Madura Island, East Java. It is one of the coastal villages in Tlanakan that hosts a fisheries harbor and several coastal hamlets serving as centers of marine-based economic activities (administrative data, village profile, and village map sourced from the village website and the Central Bureau of Statistics of Pamekasan Regency).

Local historical accounts and community narratives indicate variations in the village's name. Documents and oral testimonies from residents refer to earlier forms such as *Bandaran*, derived from the term *bersandar* (to dock), reflecting its function as a mooring site for boats. Over time, this designation evolved into *Branta or Baranta* in local pronunciation. Several village summaries suggest that Branta Pesisir was among the last villages established in Tlanakan District, with its naming and formation closely associated with its role as a docking point for fishing and traditional sailing vessels. This indicates that the village's historical roots are strongly tied to its function as a coastal port and marketplace.

The coastal region of Pamekasan, including the Branta area, is recorded in local historical sources as one of the landing points and operational zones during the Dutch Military Aggression following Indonesian independence in 1947. Regency-level historical records note landings at Camplong and Branta Pesisir on August 4, 1947, followed by Dutch entry into Pamekasan City on August 6, 1947. These events mark the direct involvement of coastal areas in the struggles and conflicts of the national revolution. The names of local religious leaders (*kiai*) and militia groups are also documented as having played active roles in resistance movements across Madura during this period.

Historically, Branta has been known as a fishing village, with the majority of its residents relying on capture fisheries, fish processing (such as shredded fish and fish crackers), and the trade of marine products for their livelihoods. In addition, the coastal areas of Tlanakan District are part of Indonesia's small-scale salt production zones. Salt farming constitutes an important seasonal livelihood that absorbs a significant amount of labor during the dry season. Various case studies and community service reports confirm that fisheries and salt production have remained the backbone of the local economy into the modern era, despite undergoing transformations due to technological change, market dynamics, and policy interventions.

Ethnographic studies and undergraduate theses focusing on Branta document the richness of maritime cultural practices that integrate Islamic values with local wisdom, such as the *Rokat Tase'* ritual, which functions as a communal expression of gratitude and a prayer for safety among fishing communities. Such rituals illustrate how the people of Branta combine local traditions, religious practices, and work ethics within their maritime livelihoods. Fishing traditions, kinship relations, and cooperative networks, such as harbor management and profit-sharing arrangements collectively shape the village's local social structure (Devi, 2016).

Educational Background of Women in Baranta Village

The educational background of women in Baranta Village is predominantly limited to primary education. According to data obtained from the village office, the total female population of Branta Village is 3,025 individuals. Of this number, 1,032 are not yet of school age or do not attend school. Women who did not complete primary school or its equivalent number 422 individuals. Those who have

completed primary education or its equivalent constitute the largest group. Meanwhile, 444 women are currently enrolled in junior secondary education, 302 are attending senior secondary education, and only 115 women are pursuing higher education at the diploma, undergraduate, or postgraduate levels.

These statistical data indicate that the highest proportion of female educational attainment in Branta Village is at the primary school level. This finding is consistent with interview data collected by the researcher. Most women, particularly the wives of fishermen, reported that their formal education ended at the elementary level.

Daily Work of Women in Branta Village

Women in the coastal community of Branta Village perform a wide range of tasks, encompassing both domestic labor and activities outside the household or within the public sphere. Domestic responsibilities include cooking, washing kitchen utensils and clothes, cleaning the house, caring for family members, and supervising household management as well as children's education. One informant, Amanda Rosa Iklilia, explained that coastal women in Branta Village are engaged not only in domestic work but also in various forms of work outside the household.

According to Amanda, in addition to daily domestic tasks such as cooking, washing dishes and clothes, cleaning the house, caring for family members, and overseeing children's schooling, women are also actively involved in public activities, including trading, participating in Family Welfare Movement (PKK) programs, and attending Posyandu (integrated health service posts). Similar views were expressed by another informant, Rina Puspit Ningrum, a housewife and community activist.

Rina stated that beyond managing household responsibilities, coastal women in Branta Village are actively involved in supporting their husbands' economic activities, supplementing household income through trading or working as wage laborers. In addition to income-generating activities, women also play active roles in community organizations, and some are even involved as legislative candidates. Community activities commonly attended by women include PKK, rotating savings groups (*arisan*), *Posyandu*, election organizing committees (KPPS), and various training and empowerment programs organized at the village level. Another informant, Hanik Machsunah, the wife of a neighborhood association (RW) official, confirmed these observations.

Women's Relations within the Family

In the social context of Branta Village, the position of women as fishermen's wives within the household is shaped by patriarchal values that designate men as heads of households and women as managers of domestic affairs. Normatively, husbands are positioned as primary breadwinners and symbolic decision-makers, while wives are expected to be obedient and to uphold family honor. However, in everyday practice, coastal women in Branta Village perform dual roles: managing domestic responsibilities while simultaneously making substantial contributions to household economies through fish processing, fish trading, financial management, and survival strategies during lean fishing seasons.

Domestic duties continue to be performed alongside public and economic activities. Although women's economic contributions are often framed as merely "assisting the husband," women exercise significant practical authority over household consumption, children's education, and social relations. Spousal relationships are characterized by mutual dependence but are not fully egalitarian, as male symbolic dominance remains strong. Nevertheless, coastal women in Branta Village demonstrate high levels of social resilience and continuously negotiate cultural norms, poverty, and gradual social change. One informant, Rohtina, stated that her relationship with her husband remains harmonious despite her active involvement in public activities, noting that her husband views her participation outside the home positively.

Women's Relations within the Community

Coastal women in Branta Village are highly active in community life and maintain strong social relations within the village. The majority of community activities are carried out by women, including PKK programs, rotating savings groups, voter education campaigns, environmental awareness initiatives, fire safety socialization, and various village celebrations.

This observation was corroborated by Siti Muniroh, a resident of Mayang Hamlet, who stated that women's relations with the wider community are very positive. According to her, coastal women in Branta Village are more actively involved in community activities than their husbands. This is largely due to the fact that husbands spend much of their time at sea for fishing-related work. When on land, men tend to focus on maintaining fishing equipment, such as repairing nets or boats.

Overall, women's relations with the community in Branta Village can be described as exceptionally strong, with women occupying a dominant role in community participation. Their active involvement is motivated by a desire to support their husbands, who are often unable to participate due to their occupational responsibilities at sea. Coastal women in Branta Village are involved in organizations and activities such as *PKK*, *Dasawisma*, *POKDARWIS*, *arisan*, *Posyandu*, as well as village-organized programs including election socialization, fire prevention campaigns, and environmental conservation initiatives. All informants, including the village head, consistently emphasized this point.

Women's Activities Beyond the Household in Branta Village

Women in the coastal village of Branta are not confined solely to domestic activities within the household but are also actively engaged in a range of activities beyond the domestic sphere. One of the primary motivations for such engagement is to support household economic needs by working outside the home. Coastal women in Branta are involved in diverse forms of employment, including working as teachers, cooperative staff, small and medium enterprise (UMKM) employees, shop assistants, market traders, home-based traders, and seasonal vendors.

According to an informant, Triutami, women's participation in work outside the household is primarily driven by the need to supplement household income. Employment outside the home is perceived as a strategy to strengthen family economic resilience, particularly in the context of unstable and seasonal livelihoods associated with fisheries. As such, women undertake various forms of work, ranging from private-sector employment and UMKM-related activities to teaching and trading, depending on available opportunities and individual capacities.

Beyond their involvement in household economic activities, many coastal women in Branta also actively participate in social and religious activities, such as *pengajian* (religious study groups) and *arisan* (rotating savings and social gatherings). According to Siti Amaliyah, participation in *pengajian* and *arisan* predates her marriage and constitutes an established social practice deeply embedded in local culture. These activities serve as important social spaces where women can interact, maintain social ties, and fulfill culturally embedded expectations of sociability and communal harmony. For many women, not participating in these activities is perceived as a social absence, underscoring their role as integral components of women's social identity in Branta.

In addition to economic and social activities, coastal women in Branta are also involved in village governance, either directly or indirectly. Some women hold formal positions as village officials, while others assume governance-related responsibilities informally, particularly when their husbands are unable to perform such roles due to occupational constraints. Hanik Machsunah, for example, explained that although she does not officially hold a village administrative position, she effectively carries out the duties of the RW secretary because her husband, a fisherman, has limited time on land. Consequently, most administrative tasks associated with the position are managed by her.

This pattern illustrates that women's participation in village governance often operates through informal yet substantive forms of involvement. The limited availability of men due to their work at sea creates spaces in which women assume critical organizational and administrative roles. Overall, the engagement of coastal women in Branta in economic, social, and governance activities demonstrates their significant contribution to sustaining household welfare, social cohesion, and local governance, even though such contributions are frequently framed as auxiliary rather than formally recognized roles.

Discussion

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This pattern illustrates that women's participation in village governance often operates through informal yet substantive forms of involvement. The limited availability of men due to their work at sea creates spaces in which women assume critical organizational and administrative roles. Overall, the engagement of coastal women in Branta in economic, social, and governance activities demonstrates their significant contribution to sustaining household welfare, social cohesion, and local governance, even though such contributions are frequently framed as auxiliary rather than formally recognized roles.

Economic Roles as Workers

Fishing households in the coastal area of Branta Village experience a high level of economic vulnerability due to their strong dependence on marine natural resources. Fishermen's incomes are highly affected by seasonal cycles, weather conditions, climate change, and fluctuations in fish prices, rendering them unstable and high-risk (Kusnadi, 2009). Within this context, coastal women in Branta Village, particularly fishermen's wives, are not only engaged in the domestic sphere but are increasingly involved in productive economic activities as employees, workers, and wage laborers. Such involvement can be understood as an adaptive household strategy for coping with economic uncertainty.

From the perspective of household economics, women's participation in non-fishing sectors represents a form of income diversification. Household economic theory suggests that families with diversified income sources tend to have higher levels of economic resilience than those relying on a single source of livelihood (Ellis, 2000). In Branta Village, women work as cooperative employees, shop assistants, home-industry laborers, fish-processing workers, and participants in other informal service sectors. Income generated from these activities is relatively more stable than that earned by their husbands as fishermen and therefore functions as a buffer income to meet basic household needs.

Women's earnings are generally allocated to daily necessities such as food, children's education, healthcare, and family-related social obligations. This pattern is consistent with the findings of Sajogyo (1985) and Todaro and Smith (2015), which indicate that income managed by women is more likely to be directed toward basic consumption and investments in human capital. Despite their engagement in paid work outside the home, coastal women in Branta Village continue to bear primary responsibility for domestic tasks, including household management, childcare, and the organization of family needs. This situation produces a double burden, whereby women simultaneously perform productive and reproductive roles (Suryakusuma, 2011). Within household economic analyses, this dual workload is often underrepresented, as domestic labor is not monetarily valued despite its substantial contribution to household welfare.

The Role of Religious Education in Pengajian

In the coastal community of Branta Village, women particularly fishermen's wives assume social roles that extend beyond domestic and economic domains. One prominent role is their active involvement in organizing and managing *pengajian* (religious study groups). *Pengajian* is not merely a religious activity but also a socio-educational space that functions as a medium for learning, value

transmission, and character formation within the community. From an educational perspective, the participation of coastal women in managing *pengajian* can be understood as a form of community-based nonformal education with significant implications for the development of knowledge, attitudes, and social practices (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974).

Within the field of religious education, *pengajian* activities can be categorized as nonformal education, namely organized educational activities conducted outside the formal school system to address the learning needs of community members (Coombs, 1985). In Branta Village, *pengajian* groups for fishermen's wives serve as relatively egalitarian and accessible learning spaces, particularly for women with limited formal educational backgrounds. The learning materials typically include religious teachings, moral values (*akhlak*), women's roles within the family, child education, and values of patience and perseverance in confronting the uncertainties of coastal life.

In this context, coastal women who manage *pengajian* act as agents of community education, even though they may not hold formal status as educators. They organize learning schedules, select discussion themes, invite religious speakers, and ensure the continuity of activities. This practice demonstrates that education is not confined to formal classrooms but also occurs within social spaces collectively managed by the community (Sudjana, 2004).

As fishermen's wives, coastal women who serve as *pengajian* organizers perform an educational role on two levels. First, they function as facilitators of learning by creating social conditions that enable educational processes to take place. Second, they serve as models of lifelong learners, as their sustained engagement in *pengajian* reflects an ongoing commitment to self-improvement and continuous learning (Knowles, 1980).

From an andragogical perspective, adult learning processes such as those occurring in *pengajian* are participatory, experience-based, and closely linked to everyday life contexts (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). *Pengajian* activities managed by coastal women in Branta Village frequently connect religious teachings with the lived realities of fishermen's households, including child education, household economic management, and social ethics. In this way, *pengajian* serves as a meaningful and contextually grounded medium for the internalization of values within the coastal community.

The Cultural Role of Arisan

The coastal areas of Pamekasan Regency, particularly in districts such as Tlanakan, Pademawu, and Galis, are predominantly inhabited by traditional fishing communities. The economic lives of fishermen's households in Pamekasan are characterized by strong dependence on marine seasons, fluctuating catch yields, and limited access to formal financial institutions (Kusnadi, 2009). Within this context, women, especially fishermen's wives develop various social and cultural strategies to sustain household livelihoods. One prominent strategy is the practice of *arisan*, which carries not only economic significance but also deep social and cultural meanings.

From an anthropological perspective, *arisan* constitutes a form of rotating savings and credit association (ROSCA) that has long been embedded in rural Indonesian societies (Geertz, 1962). In the coastal areas of Pamekasan, particularly in Branta Village, Tlanakan District, *arisan* among fishermen's wives has evolved as an informal social institution closely intertwined with local Madurese culture. These *arisan* gatherings are typically organized on a weekly or monthly basis and are often linked to socio-religious activities such as *pengajian* or routine community meetings.

Within Madurese culture, including in Pamekasan, the values of *taretan* (kinship or brotherhood) and togetherness form the foundation of social relations (Wiyata, 2013). *Arisan* functions as a medium for strengthening social bonds among coastal women who share similar life circumstances as fishermen's wives living under conditions of economic uncertainty. Consequently, *arisan* is not merely an individual financial activity but a collective cultural practice rooted in shared experiences and mutual dependence.

Arisan activities in the coastal communities of Pamekasan, particularly in Branta Village, are imbued with strong norms of social solidarity. Contributions to *arisan* are perceived as moral obligations to the group rather than purely financial commitments. In Madurese society, which places high value on honor and dignity (*ajina aba*), punctuality in fulfilling *arisan* obligations serves as a symbol of personal and familial integrity (Wiyata, 2013). When a member faces economic hardship due to reduced fishing activity or declining catches, *arisan* groups often provide flexibility or informal assistance. This practice

reflects what Scott (1976) conceptualizes as a moral economy, namely an economic system governed by norms of social justice and solidarity rather than market rationality alone.

The Political Role within the Village Sphere

In coastal areas, including Branta Village, fishermen's wives have become increasingly visible in various village-level activities, such as serving as *posyandu* volunteers, PKK organizers, health cadres, members of social event committees, and volunteers in village government programs. At first glance, this engagement is often interpreted as an extension of women's domestic roles or as social service. However, from a political perspective, the involvement of coastal women represents an important phenomenon that reflects everyday political practices and forms of nonformal political participation at the local level (Scott, 1985).

Contemporary political studies no longer restrict politics to elections, political parties, or formal offices but also encompass everyday practices of power, negotiation, and citizen participation in daily life (Leftwich, 2004). Accordingly, the active involvement of coastal women as village volunteers can be analyzed as a form of substantive political participation within the village context.

Within theories of political participation, citizen involvement in decision-making processes and in the implementation of public policies is considered a key indicator of local democracy (Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). In coastal villages, fishermen's wives are rarely directly involved in formal political structures such as the position of village head or membership in the Village Consultative Body (BPD). Nevertheless, their active roles as *posyandu* volunteers, village cadres, and social mobilizers constitute significant forms of nonformal political participation that contribute to governance processes and community welfare at the local level.

The Social Role within Community-Based Organizations

In social science scholarship, phenomenology is employed to understand the meaning of lived experiences as they are perceived, felt, and interpreted by social actors themselves (Schutz, 1967). The active involvement of coastal women in Branta Village, particularly fishermen's wives, in community-based social organizations is not merely a form of technical participation but a socially meaningful experience imbued with subjective significance. Their engagement as PKK volunteers, *posyandu* cadres, organizers of village sanitation activities, and initiators of coastal environmental conservation reflects how women interpret their identities, social roles, and relationships within the coastal community.

From the perspective of social phenomenology, the activities of coastal women must be situated within their *lifeworld*, the realm of everyday lived experience that shapes meaning and action (Husserl, 1970; Schutz, 1967). The lifeworld of fishermen's wives in Branta Village is characterized by economic uncertainty resulting from seasonal marine conditions, the persistence of heavy domestic responsibilities, and strong cultural values of collectivism and religiosity. Participation in community-based organizations thus emerges from shared lived experiences of risk, vulnerability, and mutual dependence, rather than from individualistic motivations.

Serving as PKK or *posyandu* volunteers is commonly understood by women as an extension of maternal roles and social care. Phenomenologically, however, such experiences also foster a sense of self-awareness that they constitute an essential component of village sustainability. Through active engagement, women experience social recognition and derive existential meaning within their community, reinforcing their sense of belonging and collective responsibility in the coastal social order.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study affirm that the social realities of Madurese coastal women, particularly fishermen's wives, cannot be reduced to stereotypical portrayals of passivity, traditionalism, or complete confinement within patriarchal cultural structures. Rather, these women demonstrate the capacity to engage actively in the public sphere. The study reveals that coastal women perform substantive and diverse public roles across several domains.

First, in the *economic sphere*, women participate in income-generating activities outside the household to support family livelihoods. Their roles include working as traders, factory laborers, domestic workers, private-sector employees, and, in some cases, government employees.

Second, in the religious education sphere, women are actively involved in organizing and conducting *pengajian* and informal religious instruction, both in neighborhood prayer halls (*mushola*)

and local mosques. Through these activities, they contribute to the transmission of religious knowledge and moral values within their communities.

Third, in the *cultural sphere*, women play significant roles in *arisan* activities conducted within various social settings, including market environments, Islamic boarding school communities, neighborhood units (RT and RW), and village-level networks. These practices function as cultural mechanisms for fostering solidarity and mutual support.

Fourth, in the *political sphere*, women participate in village-based governance-related activities at the RT, RW, and village levels. Their involvement includes engagement in disaster preparedness and environmental conservation programs, fire prevention initiatives, electoral socialization, participation in polling station committees (KPPS), and the organization of national independence celebrations.

Finally, in the *social sphere*, women are central actors in community-based social activities organized by neighborhood and village institutions. These include *posyandu* services for infants and older adults, PKK activities, and the distribution of subsidized basic necessities. Collectively, these findings underscore the active and multidimensional public roles of Madurese coastal women, highlighting their agency and contributions within the social, economic, cultural, and political life of their communities.

Based on the empirical findings and the scholarly novelty of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Village governments and local stakeholders are encouraged to more fully recognize and strengthen the public roles of Madurese coastal women as strategic social actors in village development. Such recognition should be institutionalized through more meaningful involvement of women in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of village programs, particularly in the areas of nonformal education, public health, coastal environmental management, and the economic resilience of fishermen's households.
2. Local governments and supporting institutions are advised to develop coastal women's empowerment programs that are grounded in existing social practices, such as *pengajian*, PKK activities, *posyandu*, and *arisan*, rather than imposing intervention models that conflict with local cultural values. This contextual approach is essential to avoid social resistance while simultaneously strengthening the cultural spaces through which women already negotiate and perform their public roles.
3. For academics and social science researchers, further studies are recommended to explore in greater depth the nonformal political practices, community-based education, and social labor of coastal women using in-depth qualitative approaches, including ethnography and phenomenology. Comparative studies across different coastal regions are also important to enrich understanding of the variation in women's roles within diverse cultural contexts.
4. Finally, coastal development and social protection policies should adopt a more gender-sensitive orientation by providing tangible support for women's social contributions, including capacity building, improved access to resources, and institutional recognition. Through such measures, the contributions of Madurese coastal women can be acknowledged not only symbolically but also strengthened structurally, thereby promoting social sustainability and the well-being of coastal communities.

This study is of substantial importance as a consideration and reference for local governments in policy formulation and decision-making. The implications of the findings can be articulated in terms of theoretical and practical contributions.

Theoretical Implications

This study demonstrates the need to expand analytical frameworks within research on women and coastal societies. The findings indicate that classical dichotomies, such as domestic versus public and traditional versus modern are insufficient for explaining the complex realities of Madurese coastal women's participation. Accordingly, social science scholarship should integrate perspectives on social praxis, nonformal political engagement, and cultural negotiation to more comprehensively understand women's roles in local contexts. This research contributes to the literature by illustrating that local culture functions not merely as a constraining structure but also as an adaptive space that enables women's agency and active participation in public life.

Practical Implications

This study has direct relevance for the formulation of coastal village development policies and programs. The findings show that Madurese coastal women are key actors in nonformal education, public health, environmental conservation, and household economic resilience. Therefore, development policies should recognize, support, and strengthen women's social contributions through meaningful participation, capacity building, and institutional support. Neglecting these roles risks undermining the effectiveness and sustainability of village development initiatives.

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