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Reconstruction of Eco-Cultural Values through Community Empowerment in Coastal Tourism Management: A Case Study of Dlodo Beach, Indonesia

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the reconstruction of eco-cultural values through community empowerment in coastal tourism management at Dlodo Beach, Indonesia. It addresses limited local integration and explores strengthening ecological and cultural values for sustainable tourism.

Method: Using an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) participatory qualitative approach, activities followed the Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny stages. Data were gathered through observation, focus group discussions, interviews, and participatory documentation to drive asset identification, planning, ecological education, and cultural revitalization.

Practical Applications: The project increased community participation in tourism planning, established beach conservation initiatives, and strengthened stakeholder collaboration. Participants initiated regular beach cleanups and integrated local culture into tourism, demonstrating heightened ecological awareness, cultural preservation, and local ownership.

Conclusion: Reconstructing eco-cultural values fosters sustainable tourism by uniting conservation, culture, and empowerment. Participatory approaches effectively transform local communities into active stewards of coastal resources, offering a viable model for community-based tourism governance.

Introduction

The reconstruction of eco-cultural values has become an important issue in sustainable tourism development, particularly in coastal areas experiencing ecological pressures and rapid social transformation. Tourism development models that prioritize economic growth and profit often neglect environmental sustainability and local cultural values, resulting in environmental degradation, declining ecological carrying capacity, and the marginalization of local communities. This urgency is increasingly evident in many coastal areas of Indonesia, including Dlodo Beach, where ecological pressures emerge from everyday community practices.

Dlodo Beach, located in Rejosari Village, Kalidawir District, Tulungagung Regency, has recently emerged as a community-based coastal tourism destination managed through the village-owned enterprise (BUMDes Citra Gemilang). The area possesses approximately two kilometres of coastline characterized by black sandy beaches, coastal vegetation, and estuarine ecosystems that provide considerable opportunities for nature-based tourism and environmental education. Local livelihoods primarily depend on small-scale fisheries, culinary businesses, agriculture, and micro-enterprises associated with tourism activities. Although tourism has created alternative economic opportunities, its sustainability remains closely dependent on the environmental quality of coastal ecosystems and the active participation of local communities in tourism governance.

Preliminary observations conducted in 2025 indicate that more than 70% of coastal residents still dispose of used cooking oil directly into the surrounding environment. This practice contributes to water pollution, disrupts aquatic ecological processes, and introduces hazardous compounds that accumulate in marine ecosystems. Environmental degradation at Dlodo Beach therefore threatens not only ecological sustainability but also the social and economic resilience of coastal communities. Consequently, the reconstruction of eco-cultural values becomes an essential strategy for reconnecting ecological, social, and economic interests within sustainable tourism development.

The preliminary needs assessment further revealed that environmental management systems had not yet developed in proportion to the increasing tourism activities. Approximately fourteen culinary stalls operating within the tourism area generated between five and seven litres of used cooking oil per business each day, yet no organized collection or recycling mechanism had been established. Focus group discussions with community leaders, youth organizations, BUMDes managers, and local entrepreneurs indicated that environmental conservation activities were conducted only sporadically and were not integrated into tourism planning. Nevertheless, the assessment also identified substantial local assets, including strong traditions of gotong royong, active village institutions, and a shared aspiration to develop Dlodo Beach as a sustainable tourism destination. These findings demonstrate that the principal challenge was not the absence of community willingness but the limited institutional capacity and environmental literacy needed to transform local ecological values into collective tourism practices.

In social science, reconstruction is understood as a process of reinterpretation, reorganization, and reproduction of social knowledge in response to structural and environmental changes. Berger & Luckmann (1990) explain that social reality is continuously reconstructed through social interaction, while (Giddens, 1991) emphasizes reflexive modernization, namely the ability of communities to reassess traditional values in contemporary contexts. In coastal communities, reconstruction is not merely a process of preserving traditions but rather a creative adaptation that enables local values to remain relevant amid tourism development and social change.

Operationally, reconstruction involves several dimensions, including value reinterpretation, restoration of ecological-cultural practices, and adaptation to contemporary contexts. Chambers (1997) argues that reinterpretation allows communities to revive weakened local principles, while (Kimmerer, 2013) dan (Cajete, 2001) emphasize the

revitalization of ecological and cultural practices. Martin (2022) and Berkes (2012) further explain that adaptation enables traditional values to be transformed into contemporary forms without losing their local essence.

Eco-cultural values represent the integration of ecological knowledge and cultural systems that shape how communities understand and manage their environment. Berkes (2012) defines these values as the relationship between local ecological knowledge and social institutions, while (Maffi, 2005) describes them as part of biocultural heritage that links biological and cultural diversity. Posey (1999) emphasizes that ecological and cultural relationships are reflected in traditional practices that maintain environmental sustainability. In coastal communities, eco-cultural values are manifested through collective understandings of coastal ecosystems, seasonal knowledge, and social norms governing resource use. In the context of Dlodo Beach, these eco-cultural values remain visible through local beliefs regarding the sea as a shared source of life, collective environmental stewardship, and community traditions of mutual cooperation. Interviews with village elders revealed that the traditional expression “Segoro iku urip, ora kena dikotorni” (“The sea is life and should never be polluted”) continues to represent an important moral foundation for environmental responsibility. However, increasing tourism activities and changing consumption patterns have gradually weakened the practical implementation of these values, highlighting the need for their reconstruction within contemporary tourism governance.

The operational dimensions of eco-cultural values include local ecological knowledge, ecological-cultural practices, and socio-environmental norms. Berkes (2012) conceptualizes these as local ecological knowledge, while (Toledo, 2001) highlights the importance of ritual traditions, customary practices, and collective environmental responsibilities. In the context of Dlodo Beach, these dimensions are reflected in ecoprint activities utilizing local plant materials, increasing disaster mitigation awareness, and strengthening collective commitments to coastal conservation.

The concept of sustainable tourism further emphasizes the balance among environmental, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions. United Nations World Tourism Organization (2018) states that sustainable tourism aims to meet present tourism needs while preserving opportunities for future generations through conservation, community participation, and equitable distribution of benefits. Weaver (2006) argues that sustainability in tourism also involves social transformation through responsible tourism behavior. Inskeep (1991) emphasizes the importance of environmental carrying capacity, socio-cultural conditions, and local economic capability, while (Holden, 2008) highlights the ethical dimensions of tourism concerning community rights and ecosystem integrity.

The environmental dimension of sustainable tourism includes natural resource conservation, pollution control, waste management, biodiversity protection, and renewable energy utilization (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). Socio-cultural sustainability involves community participation, cultural preservation, equitable benefit distribution, and strengthening local identity (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Economic sustainability emphasizes local income generation, business diversification, and equitable economic distribution (Sharpley, 2009). Lane & Bramwell (2013) further argue that sustainability indicators must be adaptive and responsive to local ecological and socio-economic conditions.

Previous studies have confirmed that local wisdom contributes to environmental sustainability through customary regulations, ecological rituals, traditional zoning systems, and social control mechanisms. Nevertheless, three important gaps remain. First, eco-cultural values have predominantly been examined as relatively static cultural assets rather than as dynamic social processes through which communities reinterpret and reconstruct ecological values in response to environmental change. Second, empirical evidence documenting baseline community conditions, local needs assessments, and participatory transformation processes in coastal tourism destinations remains limited. Third, previous studies have paid insufficient attention to how existing community assets including local institutions, traditional

knowledge, and collective action can be mobilized through participatory empowerment approaches to strengthen sustainable tourism governance. These gaps indicate the need for a more community centred understanding of eco-cultural reconstruction that integrates ecological conservation, cultural revitalization, and participatory tourism development..

This study addresses these gaps by positioning local communities as the central actors in the reconstruction of eco-cultural values. The research employs the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which emphasizes the identification and mobilization of local social, cultural, and environmental assets as the foundation for community transformation (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Through collective vision building, environmental literacy programs, ecological education, and conservation campaigns, communities become active producers of knowledge and agents of sustainable tourism development.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how eco-cultural values are reconstructed through community empowerment processes at Dlodo Beach. Specifically, the research seeks to answer the following question: how do local communities understand, reinterpret, and reconstruct eco-cultural values so that they function as a living framework for sustainable tourism development? This study argues that eco-cultural reconstruction emerges through the interaction of ecological practices, cultural expressions, and social transformation processes. Therefore, the principal contribution of this article is to provide an analytical framework that positions communities as key actors in the reconstruction of eco-cultural values and offers a conceptual foundation for more inclusive and sustainable tourism policies.

Method

The unit of analysis in this community service research comprised members of the coastal community of Dlodo Beach, Rejosari Village, Kalidawir District, Tulungagung Regency, who actively participated in the community empowerment program. A total of 45 participants were involved, consisting of village government representatives, BUMDes managers, community leaders, women's groups, youth organizations, members of the Village Children's Forum, culinary business owners, and residents living in the coastal area. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) direct involvement in coastal tourism or community activities; (2) willingness to participate throughout the ABCD process; and (3) knowledge or experience related to environmental management or local cultural practices. The selection of the community as the unit of analysis is in line with the view of (Creswell & Poth, 2018) who stated that qualitative research is oriented towards an in-depth understanding of social groups in their natural context. The Dlodo Beach area was chosen as the material object because it has coastal ecological characteristics as well as socio-cultural dynamics that are relevant to the development of eco-cultural values. The location of the beach, the coastal area used for ecoprint practices, and the communal space for outreach are part of the unit of analysis that allows researchers to observe the relationship between ecological assets, local culture, and community empowerment activities, as emphasized by (Yin, 2018) that location selection must consider a rich context for the exploration of social phenomena.

This Community Service activity design uses a qualitative participatory design with an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which prioritizes the identification and strengthening of local assets over a problem-based approach. The ABCD approach, as introduced by (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), emphasizes that effective social change stems from the internal strengths of communities, not from the problems they face. This model is appropriate for empowerment activities, disaster mitigation training, environmental education, and the development of ecoprint creativity activities that position residents as owners of local knowledge. The participatory approach also aligns with (Freire, 2000) idea that communities must be active subjects in the change process, not merely objects of intervention. Thus, this methodological design inherently ensures that the Dlodo Beach community plays a role in

formulating visions, strategies, and actions based on community assets.

Information was collected from multiple stakeholder groups to ensure data triangulation. Key informants included village officials responsible for tourism governance, BUMDes managers, community leaders, youth representatives, women's groups participating in ecoprint training, culinary entrepreneurs operating around Dlodo Beach, and participants involved in disaster mitigation activities. Supporting information was obtained from field notes, observation sheets, focus group discussion (FGD) records, activity reports, photographs, videos, and educational materials produced during the program. The empowerment program was implemented between May and June 2025 through four sequential ABCD phases involving community mapping, participatory planning, capacity building, and collective environmental action. Each phase was facilitated by the community service team together with village officials and BUMDes representatives to ensure that decisions were collectively formulated and locally owned.

Data collection was conducted through four main stages of the ABCD approach. In the Discovery stage, the team conducted field observations, appreciative dialogues, and identification of community assets, including human assets, social assets, and environmental assets. This stage is in accordance with the (McKnight & Russell, 2018) guidelines on community asset mapping. The Dream stage was realized through participatory outreach activities, community dialogues, and focus group discussions to explore the community's collective vision regarding disaster mitigation, environmental conservation, and sustainable coastal tourism management. The discussions encouraged participants to formulate shared aspirations, identify priority actions, and strengthen collective commitment toward protecting coastal ecosystems. The Design stage was carried out by collaboratively developing action plans based on the findings of the Discovery and Dream stages. The agreed programs included environmental literacy education, ecoprint training using local plant materials, disaster mitigation education, and awareness campaigns on the proper management of used cooking oil and coastal waste. Throughout this stage, participant observation and reflective discussions were employed to assess the relevance of the proposed activities to local needs and community capacities. The Destiny stage focused on implementing the collaboratively developed action plans through beach clean-up campaigns, environmental awareness activities, the distribution of educational flyers promoting environmentally responsible behaviour, and the dissemination of the local ecological philosophy "Segoro iku urip, ora keno dikotori" ("The sea is life and should never be polluted"). Documentation, field observations, and reflective evaluation meetings were conducted to monitor community participation, behavioural changes, and the reconstruction of eco-cultural values throughout the implementation process.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, organizing findings based on the ABCD phases. Data from the Discovery phase were analyzed to identify patterns of eco-cultural assets and local capacity. Data from the Dream phase were analyzed to understand the community's collective aspirations regarding the future of beach management. In the Design phase, analysis was directed at assessing the relevance of empowerment strategies to local needs, while the Destiny phase was analyzed to understand behavioral changes, knowledge enhancement, and forms of value reconstruction that emerged during empowerment activities. This thematic analysis provides a comprehensive overview of how eco-cultural values are revitalized through the integration of the empowerment process and the ecological context of Dlodo Beach.

Result

Identification of Ecological, Social and Cultural Assets in Unifying a Shared Vision

The asset identification or Discovery phase revealed that the Dlodo Beach area possesses a number of ecological assets crucial for strengthening the community's environmental values. These ecological assets include relatively clean beach conditions,

extensive stretches of sand, and coastal vegetation that can be utilized as a medium for ecological education. This pristine natural environment provides opportunities to develop environmental literacy activities based on direct experience. Furthermore, the well-maintained coastal ecosystem potential indicates that the community has a significant opportunity to protect, care for, and develop the coastal area in a more sustainable manner. These ecological conditions also demonstrate that Dlodo Beach can serve as a learning space for the community regarding the relationship between human behavior and environmental quality. The existence of these ecological assets then serves as a primary basis for developing new awareness regarding the importance of maintaining coastal sustainability. Thus, the identification of ecological assets not only provides a picture of environmental conditions but also opens up space for the emergence of more responsible management practices.

The social assets of the Dlodo Beach community were a key finding during the Discovery phase. The community demonstrated strong social capital in the form of community solidarity, a culture of mutual cooperation, and active support from village officials in carrying out all community service activities. This social capital was reflected in the community's enthusiasm in participating in activities, from discussions to environmental outreach. The involvement of various community elements demonstrated a high level of concern for the positive changes desired in coastal area management. Furthermore, the spirit of togetherness that persists within the community presents significant potential for fostering collective behavioral change. This kind of social capital is a crucial prerequisite for strengthening eco-cultural values, as environmental sustainability cannot be achieved without community participation. Thus, the identified social assets provide a strong foundation for establishing a shared vision between the community service program implementers and the Dlodo Beach residents.

The Discovery phase revealed that community members possessed substantial social assets, including strong traditions of gotong royong, active village institutions, and support from BUMDes. However, participant observation and focus group discussions also identified several environmental challenges. More than 70% of households and culinary businesses disposed of used cooking oil directly into drainage channels connected to coastal waters, while environmental conservation activities were conducted only occasionally and were not yet integrated into tourism management. Participants acknowledged that although they were aware of environmental problems, they had limited knowledge regarding practical waste management strategies.

The identification phase also revealed various cultural assets inherent in the Dlodo Beach community. The community maintains communal spaces, practices social discipline, and values coastal areas as part of their cultural identity. These cultural values have proven to be a crucial force in unifying community perceptions regarding the importance of environmental preservation. The vision-building process at the Dream phase demonstrated that the community was able to connect these cultural values with the need to preserve the coastal ecosystem. Through dialogue and persuasive communication, the community began to understand that their cultural assets are crucial for maintaining long-term coastal sustainability. This awareness fostered a collective vision that coastal management is a shared responsibility that must be carried out in accordance with their inherited cultural values. Thus, the integration of cultural assets and a shared vision creates a strong foundation for the reconstruction of eco-cultural values in the future.

During the participatory discussions, differences initially emerged regarding the priorities for tourism development. Culinary business owners tended to emphasize improving tourism facilities and increasing visitor numbers, whereas community leaders and youth representatives highlighted environmental conservation and disaster preparedness as more urgent priorities. Facilitators addressed these differing perspectives by encouraging reflective dialogue based on local ecological experiences and cultural values. Through successive discussion sessions, participants gradually reached a shared understanding that tourism development and environmental conservation should not be viewed as competing objectives

but as mutually reinforcing components of sustainable coastal development. This participatory process strengthened participants' sense of ownership over the collective vision and reinforced the local ecological philosophy Segoro iku urip, ora keno dikotori as a common foundation for future action.

Environmental Literacy Education and Socialization Strategy

The environmental literacy education and outreach strategy was implemented as a systematic effort to increase public understanding of the importance of preserving coastal ecosystems. This activity was designed to provide comprehensive information to the public about the threat of environmental damage, particularly related to plastic waste and unsustainable human behavior. During the outreach session, the community was explained the long-term impacts of waste accumulation on beach quality and the health of the coastal ecosystems that serve as their living space. The educational approach was carried out through two-way communication, so that participants did not merely passively receive the material but were also given the opportunity to ask questions and share their own experiences. This interaction demonstrated a strong public interest in understanding environmental issues that have previously received inadequate attention. Furthermore, the delivery method was kept simple and easy to understand so that all levels of society could grasp the essence of the message. In this way, the educational strategy became a significant first step in building a broader and more sustainable ecological understanding of Dlodo Beach.

The implementation of environmental literacy outreach also emphasizes behavioral change as part of a knowledge internalization strategy. The community is not only introduced to the concept of environmental cleanliness but also encouraged to understand the direct relationship between daily behavior and coastal environmental quality. Topics such as waste sorting, reducing the use of single-use plastics, and household waste management are explained in detail so that the community understands practical steps that can be taken without requiring technology or significant costs. This approach is highly relevant for coastal communities, given that most environmentally damaging behaviors arise from small, repeated habits without realizing it. Furthermore, the community is encouraged to reflect on their environmental conditions before and after the outreach activities, fostering awareness that behavioral change is a long-term investment in coastal sustainability. This strategy has proven effective because the community is beginning to understand that environmental management is not just talk, but part of a collective responsibility. Thus, environmental literacy outreach plays a crucial role in instilling ecological values in people's daily lives.

This educational activity also strengthened the community's perception that Dlodo Beach serves not only as a recreational space but also as a living space that requires collective care and attention. The educational process opened up a new understanding that coastal sustainability will directly impact their quality of life, including health, comfort, and the potential for community-based tourism development. This awareness fostered a renewed commitment within the community to maintaining beach cleanliness and a more critical understanding of coastal environmental dynamics. Group discussions led to the understanding that maintaining the beach is not solely the responsibility of the village government or sanitation workers, but rather a collective responsibility of all residents. This education also helped the community recognize that their traditional ecological knowledge needs to be strengthened with a new understanding of modern environmental threats. With these two types of knowledge, the community can develop a more holistic perspective on environmental management. Therefore, educational strategies and environmental literacy outreach are essential foundations for the reconstruction of eco-cultural values at Dlodo Beach.

Field observations conducted throughout the training sessions indicated progressive changes in participant engagement. At the beginning of the activities, discussions were largely facilitator-driven, with only a few participants actively sharing their experiences regarding waste disposal and environmental management. As the sessions progressed, participants

became increasingly confident in exchanging ideas, proposing locally relevant solutions, and relating environmental issues to their daily livelihoods. Several culinary business owners voluntarily discussed alternatives for collecting used cooking oil, while youth participants proposed integrating environmental campaigns into tourism promotion activities. These interactions suggest that environmental literacy activities facilitated not only knowledge acquisition but also collaborative learning and collective problem-solving.

Action Strategy: Environmental Campaign

The environmental campaign action strategy was implemented as an implementation phase of the vision and knowledge developed through previous educational activities. The campaign was designed to provide the community with firsthand experience in maintaining a clean beach and practicing environmentally friendly behaviors. The beach cleanup was the core activity, involving various community groups, from youth and village officials to residents who had previously participated in outreach activities. The involvement of many community elements demonstrated that the campaign was capable of acting as a collective medium for driving tangible behavioral change. In addition to cleaning up trash, the activity also served as a space for community reflection on the importance of maintaining a clean coastal area. The community's enthusiasm in participating in the activity demonstrated that the environmental campaign was not merely symbolic but also capable of fostering a sense of ownership of the ecological space of Dlodo Beach. Thus, this action strategy strengthened the internalization of ecological values introduced through previous education and outreach activities.

The environmental campaign focused not only on beach cleanups but also on disseminating educational messages aimed at strengthening public ecological awareness. In this activity, participants were encouraged to understand that beach cleanliness represents the collective awareness of all residents, not simply the responsibility of a specific group. Messages conveyed included an appeal to avoid littering, the importance of instilling environmentally friendly behavior in children, and the long-term benefits of environmental protection for the quality of life in coastal communities. The presence of community leaders and youth groups in voicing environmental messages made the campaign more effective in reaching a wide range of residents. Furthermore, the community was encouraged to view the environment as a long-term asset that can support local social and economic activities and tourism potential. These messages were disseminated persuasively to ensure they were easily accepted by a wide range of groups. Thus, the environmental campaign became an important tool in broadening residents' understanding of ecological values, which are closely linked to community well-being.

The implementation of the environmental campaign resulted in strong indications of changes in community behavior, which became the initial stage of the reconstruction of eco-cultural values. Following the campaign, the community began to show greater concern for beach cleanliness and the orderliness of the surrounding environment. Some residents began adopting the habit of not littering and sought to encourage others to participate in maintaining coastal cleanliness. Campaign activities also reinforced social values such as cooperation, mutual assistance, and a sense of ownership of public spaces. These values synergized with the ecological knowledge gained through previous outreach, enabling the community to integrate new understandings with their cultural traditions. These emerging behavioral changes demonstrate that the environmental campaign is capable of triggering the internalization of knowledge and values, which subsequently develop into collective attitudes and actions. Thus, the environmental campaign's action strategy not only impacted the physical cleanliness of the beach but also reshaped eco-cultural values that are more adaptive and relevant to the Dlodo Beach community.

The intervention generated observable behavioural and institutional changes beyond increased environmental awareness. Field observations during follow-up activities indicated that participants began voluntarily separating used cooking oil from other household waste

rather than disposing of it directly into drainage channels. Community members also continued organizing collective beach-cleaning activities outside the scheduled empowerment sessions, demonstrating that environmental responsibility had gradually become embedded in everyday community practices. Social transformation was also reflected in the strengthening of local collaboration among village government, BUMDes, youth organisations, and community groups. Discussions that initially focused primarily on tourism promotion evolved into broader conversations concerning environmental governance, community participation, and the preservation of local ecological values. Rather than functioning solely as beneficiaries of the program, community members increasingly assumed leadership roles by initiating environmental campaigns, disseminating educational messages to visitors, and encouraging other residents to participate in conservation activities. These findings indicate that the reconstruction of eco-cultural values extended beyond cognitive awareness toward collective social action supporting sustainable tourism governance.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the ABCD approach facilitated eco-cultural reconstruction through a sequential process of asset identification, collective vision building, collaborative planning, and community-led action. The intervention not only enhanced environmental awareness but also strengthened community participation, reinforced local institutions, and encouraged behavioural changes that support sustainable coastal tourism. These findings suggest that eco-cultural reconstruction is a dynamic social process in which ecological knowledge, cultural identity, and community empowerment mutually reinforce one another.

Discussion

Reconstruction of Eco-Cultural Values through Community Assets

The findings indicate that the reconstruction of eco-cultural values at Dlodo Beach began with the recognition of ecological, social, and cultural assets possessed by the local community. The Discovery stage of the ABCD approach successfully revealed that the community had substantial environmental resources, strong social solidarity, and cultural values that had previously not been fully recognized as strategic assets for sustainable tourism development. These findings indicate that environmental problems in coastal communities do not necessarily arise because communities lack resources, but rather because existing resources have not been adequately identified and mobilized. This finding strongly supports the Asset-Based Community Development perspective developed by (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), which emphasizes that sustainable social change emerges from internal strengths rather than external interventions. The identification of assets in Dlodo Beach shifted the community's perspective from a deficit-oriented understanding toward an appreciation of their own capacities. The existence of coastal ecosystems, local traditions, mutual cooperation, and communal identity became important social capital that enabled the reconstruction of environmental values.

From the perspective of social construction theory, (Berger & Luckmann, 1990) explain that social reality is continuously produced and reproduced through interaction and shared meanings. The findings demonstrate that ecological values previously considered ordinary or taken for granted became objects of collective reflection through the empowerment process. Consequently, environmental values were not introduced from outside but reconstructed through interactions among residents, community leaders, and facilitators. The findings are also consistent with (Giddens, 1991) concept of reflexive modernization. Communities experiencing social and environmental changes are encouraged to reassess their traditional values and reinterpret them according to contemporary contexts. At Dlodo Beach, ecological reconstruction occurred when communities reconsidered their daily practices, including waste disposal and environmental management, and linked them with the sustainability of tourism and future generations.

Furthermore, these findings support (Berkes, 2012) who argues that local ecological

knowledge constitutes an important component of social resilience. The community's understanding of coastal conditions, environmental changes, and the cultural significance of the beach became valuable ecological knowledge that contributed to sustainable resource management. Maffi (2005) similarly argues that biological diversity and cultural diversity are interconnected components of biocultural heritage. Therefore, preserving the coastal ecosystem simultaneously contributes to the preservation of local cultural identity. The findings also align with (Scheyvens, 1999), who emphasizes that empowerment occurs when communities gain control over decision-making processes. The active participation of residents in identifying assets and formulating future visions demonstrates that local communities are not passive beneficiaries of development but active producers of knowledge and agents of environmental change.

These findings also resonate with recent developments in community-based tourism research, which increasingly recognize local communities not merely as beneficiaries of tourism but as active co-creators of destination sustainability. Recent studies argue that community assets, including local ecological knowledge, cultural identity, and social networks, constitute fundamental resources for building resilient tourism systems capable of adapting to environmental and socio-economic changes (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022);(Su et al., 2024). Unlike conventional tourism development models that frequently depend on external investment and top-down planning, the ABCD approach implemented at Dlodo Beach demonstrates that sustainable tourism can emerge through the mobilisation of locally embedded capacities and shared ecological values. This finding extends previous research by showing that eco-cultural value reconstruction functions not only as a cultural preservation strategy but also as a mechanism for strengthening adaptive community resilience and participatory tourism governance.

Comparative evidence from coastal communities in Southeast Asia further supports this interpretation. Studies conducted in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand have demonstrated that tourism initiatives become more sustainable when local residents actively participate in planning processes and integrate traditional ecological knowledge into destination management (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2023);(Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023). Nevertheless, unlike many previous studies that primarily evaluate tourism outcomes in terms of economic benefits or visitor satisfaction, the present study highlights the reconstruction of eco-cultural values as the central process through which environmental awareness evolves into collective action and long-term stewardship of coastal resources.

Environmental Literacy as a Process of Value Reconstruction

Environmental literacy activities emerged as one of the most important mechanisms in reconstructing eco-cultural values. The results indicate that many residents initially possessed limited understanding regarding the ecological consequences of daily practices such as waste disposal, plastic use, and environmental negligence. Environmental education therefore became necessary to bridge local knowledge with contemporary environmental issues. Freire (2000) argues that education should function as a process of conscientization, enabling people to critically understand their reality and become agents of transformation. The educational activities conducted at Dlodo Beach followed this principle because they emphasized dialogue, participation, and reflection rather than one-way information transfer. Community members actively discussed environmental problems and identified practical solutions relevant to their daily experiences.

This educational process also supports (Giddens, 1991) notion of reflexivity. Communities began critically examining their previous behaviors and developed new understandings regarding environmental responsibility. Environmental literacy therefore became a process of cognitive restructuring in which new ecological knowledge was integrated into existing cultural frameworks. Previous empirical studies provide additional support for these findings. Lee (2011) found that environmental education and interpretation

programs significantly influence environmentally responsible behavior among local communities and visitors. Similarly, (Ramkissoon et al., 2013) demonstrated that environmental knowledge strengthens place attachment and promotes environmental stewardship. The results of the present study similarly indicate that increased environmental understanding encouraged stronger emotional attachment to the coastal environment and stimulated collective responsibility.

An important finding emerging from this study is that increased environmental knowledge did not immediately produce behavioural transformation. During the initial empowerment sessions, many participants continued to perceive environmental management as primarily the responsibility of government institutions rather than a shared community obligation. Behavioural change became evident only after repeated participatory activities including environmental literacy sessions, ecoprint workshops, and collaborative beach clean-up campaigns enabled participants to directly experience the relationship between ecological conservation and their daily livelihoods. This finding reinforces experiential learning perspectives, which argue that sustainable behavioural change requires continuous reflection, participation, and practical engagement rather than one-way information transfer (Ardoin et al., 2023).

The facilitation process also required adaptive strategies to accommodate different community perspectives. Younger participants generally expressed greater interest in tourism promotion and digital communication, whereas community elders consistently emphasized the preservation of traditional ecological values and collective responsibility. Rather than treating these differing perspectives as obstacles, facilitators encouraged dialogue that integrated both viewpoints into a shared vision of sustainable tourism development. Such collaborative learning processes are increasingly recognised as essential components of transformative environmental education capable of strengthening both social learning and community resilience (Wals & Benavot, 2024).

Environmental literacy also functioned as a bridge between traditional ecological knowledge and modern environmental science. The community began to understand that traditional values regarding respect for nature remain relevant but require adaptation to contemporary environmental threats such as plastic pollution, waste accumulation, and changing tourism activities. Consequently, environmental literacy not only transmitted knowledge but also facilitated the reinterpretation of local wisdom within a modern sustainability context.

Environmental Campaigns and the Institutionalization of Ecological Behavior

The environmental campaign phase represented the practical manifestation of reconstructed eco-cultural values. Beach clean-up activities, public environmental messages, and collective campaigns transformed ecological awareness into social action. The findings indicate that behavioral changes emerged gradually as residents began adopting environmentally friendly practices and encouraging others to participate in environmental conservation. According to (Berger & Luckmann, 1990), social reality becomes institutionalized when repeated actions gradually develop into social norms. Environmental campaigns created opportunities for repeated ecological practices, allowing new behaviors to become part of community routines. This institutionalization process is essential because value reconstruction cannot occur solely at the cognitive level but must be embedded in everyday practices.

The findings also support social practice theory, which suggests that behavioral change occurs through repeated social activities and collective experiences. Beach clean-up campaigns provided opportunities for residents to practice environmental values directly. These activities strengthened social solidarity, mutual cooperation, and a shared sense of responsibility for coastal spaces. An important finding concerns the revitalization of local wisdom through the phrase "segoro iku urip, ora keno dikotori" (the sea is life and should not

be polluted). This local philosophy became a symbolic representation of environmental ethics and served as a cultural mechanism for strengthening ecological awareness. Cajete (2001) and (Kimmerer, 2013) emphasize that indigenous knowledge and cultural narratives play important roles in environmental stewardship because they connect ecological understanding with moral responsibility.

Although the intervention generated encouraging behavioural changes, several structural challenges remain that may influence the long-term sustainability of eco-cultural reconstruction. Continued environmental campaigns require stable institutional commitment from village government, BUMDes, educational institutions, and local community organisations. Moreover, limited financial resources, inconsistent environmental regulations, and restricted market access for community-based tourism products may reduce community motivation to maintain environmental initiatives once external facilitation concludes. Similar institutional constraints have been identified in recent studies on community-based tourism, which emphasise that long-term sustainability depends on supportive governance structures rather than short-term project interventions alone (UN Tourism, 2024).

Another important implication concerns the need to strengthen collaborative governance among multiple stakeholders. Sustainable tourism cannot rely solely on community participation but also requires policy integration, institutional coordination, and continuous capacity building involving local governments, tourism operators, universities, and civil society organisations. Therefore, the reconstruction of eco-cultural values should be understood not merely as an educational process but as an ongoing institutional transformation that embeds ecological responsibility into local governance systems. This interpretation supports recent resilience literature, which argues that adaptive governance and collaborative learning are fundamental prerequisites for sustaining community-led environmental initiatives under conditions of ecological uncertainty (Biggs et al., 2022); (Folke et al., 2023).

Environmental campaigns also strengthened collective identity. Residents increasingly perceived the beach not merely as a tourism destination but as a living environment that supports social, cultural, and economic life. This finding confirms that environmental responsibility emerges more strongly when communities develop emotional and cultural attachments to their environments. However, the findings also indicate that behavioral changes remain vulnerable if campaigns are not conducted continuously. Temporary interventions may produce short-term awareness without gsenerating long-lasting social transformation. Therefore, environmental campaigns should be institutionalized through community organizations, village regulations, and continuous environmental education programs.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the reconstruction of eco-cultural values through the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach provides an effective pathway for strengthening sustainable tourism governance in coastal communities. By emphasizing local assets rather than community deficiencies, the empowerment process encouraged residents to reinterpret ecological knowledge, revitalize cultural practices, and transform environmental awareness into collective action. The findings indicate that eco-cultural reconstruction is not merely an environmental education initiative but a participatory social process through which communities become active agents in preserving coastal ecosystems while simultaneously enhancing the sustainability of local tourism. Community participation throughout the Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny stages strengthened environmental literacy, reinforced collective responsibility, and promoted the integration of ecological values into everyday community practices.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends current discussions on community-based tourism by demonstrating that eco-cultural values function as a dynamic mechanism linking environmental stewardship, cultural identity, and community empowerment. Rather

than treating local wisdom as a static cultural resource, the findings show that eco-cultural values can be continuously reconstructed through participatory learning, collaborative decision-making, and collective environmental action. This perspective contributes to broader theories of endogenous development, social capital formation, and community resilience by illustrating how local ecological knowledge, mutual trust, and community networks become strategic resources for adaptive and sustainable tourism development.

The practical implications of this study suggest that the long-term sustainability of community-based coastal tourism requires institutional support beyond short-term empowerment programmes. Local governments, village-owned enterprises (BUMDes), tourism stakeholders, universities, and civil society organisations should collaboratively integrate eco-cultural values into village tourism planning, environmental education programmes, and coastal conservation policies. Establishing a village-level community tourism organisation or cooperative, strengthening local regulations on environmental management, developing participatory monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and expanding partnerships with academic institutions and private-sector actors would help institutionalise community participation and ensure the continuity of environmental initiatives. Furthermore, integrating environmental literacy into routine village activities and tourism promotion strategies would strengthen community ownership and reinforce the local ecological philosophy “Segoro iku urip, ora keno dikotori” as a guiding principle for sustainable coastal governance.

Future studies should evaluate the long-term impacts of eco-cultural reconstruction using longitudinal and mixed-method approaches that combine qualitative insights with quantitative indicators of behavioural change, environmental quality, and tourism performance. Comparative studies across different coastal tourism destinations would also enrich understanding of how varying institutional arrangements, socio-cultural contexts, and governance structures influence the sustainability of community-based tourism initiatives. Through these efforts, eco-cultural reconstruction can evolve from a locally successful empowerment strategy into a scalable model for sustainable coastal tourism development and adaptive community governance in Indonesia and other coastal regions.

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