

Helix Model in Gender-Based Tourism Development in Aceh Besar Regency, Aceh Province

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ABSTRACT

Aceh Besar Regency boasts diverse tourism potential, yet women's roles in tourism governance remain limited. This study aims to analyze gender-based tourism development in Aceh Besar Regency and to examine the interaction and collaboration model among actors using the helix model. The main issue raised is the high level of women's participation in community-based tourism activities, which has not been matched by equal involvement in decision-making and destination governance. This study used a

qualitative case study approach, drawing on in-depth interviews, field observations, and regional tourism policy documents. The results show that women play a dominant role in the tourism value chain, particularly in the culinary, homestay, and tourism MSME sectors, but still experience marginalization in institutional structures and strategic decision-making processes. The implementation of the pentahelix model in Aceh Besar involves the government, community, historians, business actors, and the media, but collaboration between actors tends to be hierarchical and procedural, with local government domination. The lack of integration of a gender perspective in collaborative governance results in women's empowerment being instrumental and not transformative. This study emphasizes the importance of institutionalizing a gender perspective within the pentahelix model to achieve inclusive and sustainable tourism.

Keywords: gender-based tourism; women empowerment; pentahelix; tourism governance.

A. Introduction

Tourism is one of the sectors focused on the SDGs targets and is a major contributor to foreign exchange earnings for developing countries (Li, Rambeli, et al., 2025). The tourism sector has experienced various development trends that can drive growth by creating new jobs (Shakya, 2015). In its development, tourism influences the socio-cultural structure and the role of local communities. Regulation of the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia No. 3 of 2018 states that tourism is a development tool, supported by the Special Allocation Fund for the tourism sector, which supports the development of national destinations. Furthermore, Regulation of the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Number 14 of 2016 also refers to pluralistic destination development plans, such as Rencana Induk Pembangunan Wisata Daerah (Regional Tourism Development Master Plan/ RIPPARDA), to strengthen the role of tourism in development. However, field implementation often reveals tensions between economic

growth and social justice. Therefore, the success of tourism development is determined not only by natural potential or tourist attractions, but also by the capacity for inclusive and sustainable governance that respects social diversity. A collaborative approach between actors such as the government, the private sector, academics, local communities, and the media is crucial to creating synergy in tourism management (Sadat & Nastia, 2023). This collaborative approach is known as the helix model concept, ranging from the triple helix to the pentahelix. It emphasizes the importance of multi-actor partnerships to maximize local potential and strengthen innovation in regional tourism development while balancing social and economic impacts. Furthermore, tourism can also be an instrument for women's empowerment if gender equality is integrated into its institutional structures and governance.

Although the helix model is often considered an effective approach to economic development dynamics, this research remains largely unintegrated into gender mainstreaming. Global tourism demonstrates that this sector often offers employment opportunities that can empower women to participate economically. However, in reality, gender gaps persist in tourism development, particularly in terms of access to managerial positions, strategic decision-making, and wage inequality between women and men (Saviano et al., 2019). The UNWTO states that globally, approximately 54% of the tourism workforce is women, with a high proportion in the informal sector and a low proportion in managerial positions (less than 30%) (Kabil et al., 2024). Data from the Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif Republik (2024) indicated that 54.22% to 54.45% of women are part of the tourism workforce, actively involved in supporting destination operations such as catering, managing small-scale accommodations, and engaging in service-based culture. However, women rarely hold strategic decision-making positions (Çivak & Bayraktoglu, 2023). The Governor of Aceh, through Aceh Governor Regulation Number 95 of 2019, has implemented gender mainstreaming, as stated in the

2023-2026 Regional Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming, as a guideline to enhance the effectiveness of PUG (Pengarus Utamaan Gender) or gender mainstreaming in development. However, the problem of gender inequality in the tourism sector does not lie in the lack of women's participation, but rather in the limitations of institutional determinants to the extent to which such participation is recognized and has an impact (Yuniningsih et al., 2025).

Comparison of the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender Empowerment Index (GDI) in Aceh Regency/City

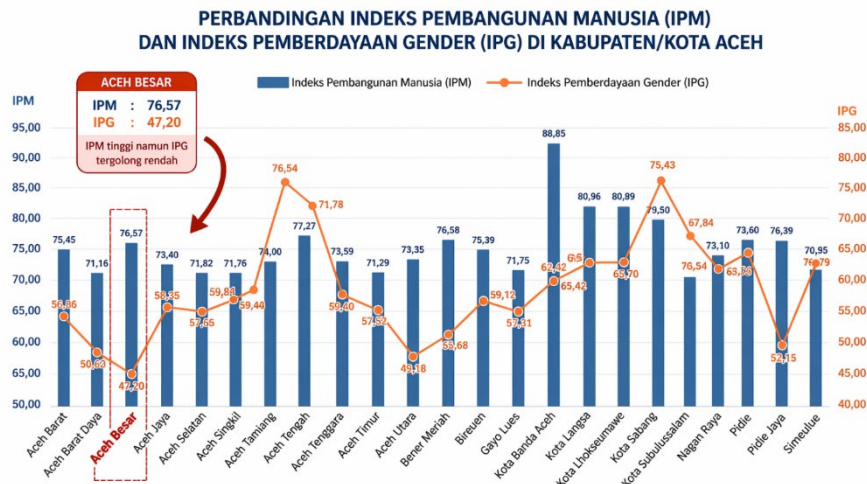


Figure 1: Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Empowerment Index (IPG) data in Aceh Regency/City 2025

Based on Figure 1, Aceh Besar Regency experiences a wide gap between human development and gender empowerment. Compared with other regions, such as Sabang City, it also shows a relative balance between the Human Development Index (HDI) (79.50) and the Gender Equality Index (GDI) (75.43) (BPS Provinsi Aceh, 2026). This indicates that development growth is not automatically followed by increased gender equality. The low GDI in Aceh Besar is a crucial issue in the context of the development of the tourism sector, particularly community-based tourism. Aceh Besar

Regency, a region with significant tourism potential encompassing coastal areas, local culture, and rich religious values, yet its social dynamics are influenced by strong social and religious norms. Acehese society, including Aceh Besar, women are often placed in domestic or informal roles, while leadership positions and strategic roles are still dominated by men (Iskandar, 2022). The phenomenon of the feminization of poverty occurring in Aceh Besar shows that women experience lower economic burdens and access to resources than men, although statistical data often does not reflect the reality of their experiences (MUSDAWATI, 2024). This condition shows that women in Aceh Besar face a double challenge: in addition to obstacles to economic and social participation, they also face cultural structures that limit their involvement in public spaces and decision-making.

Research in Aceh shows that women are often under-recognized in formal roles, such as female religious leaders, even though their contributions have increased over time (Zainuddin, 2017). Even within families and coastal communities in Greater Aceh, women play a crucial role in family health and household management, but still face significant challenges in accessing resources and opportunities to develop their professional potential (Dahlan et al., 2024). This reflects the reality that gender bias remains a serious challenge in various aspects of regional development, including in the tourism sector. Furthermore, the empowerment of women in Neuheun Village, Aceh Besar Regency, revealed that the allocation of village funds for women's empowerment programs is relatively low. Women's aspirations are often under prioritized, leading to their specific needs being excluded from planning and budgeting. This aligns with findings that, in general, the implementation of gender budgeting in Aceh has not been effective (Mirdatillah, 2020). In tourism, gender equality is not only about providing employment opportunities for women, but also about ensuring that women have equal access to strategic participation opportunities in planning, destination management, marketing, service innovation, and decision-making at the community and institutional

levels. International literature demonstrates the urgency of the tourism sector's opportunity to promote gender inclusivity through community-based tourism approaches, thereby changing discriminatory social norms and increasing women's economic participation. However, this remains highly dependent on local social structures and institutional support (Araújo-Vila et al., 2021).

Although numerous studies have highlighted the relationship between tourism and gender, few have combined the helix model with gender analysis to understand the dynamics of multi-actor collaboration in local tourism development. The traditional helix model emphasizes the roles of government, the private sector, and academia as the core of collaboration (Sadat & Nastia, 2023). For example, efforts to expand women's participation in tourism decision-making networks are often hampered by traditional norms governing women's roles in the public sphere. In Acehnese society, women's leadership remains a sensitive issue, often perceived as inconsistent with traditional values or certain social interpretations. This phenomenon has limited opportunities for women in formal and informal positions within tourism-related organizations.

Implementing the helix model in the context of gender inclusivity requires reconstructing relationships between actors so that they not only pursue economic goals but also consider aspects of social justice and equitable benefit sharing. The role of local governments in establishing policies that guarantee equal access for women to training, business credit, and involvement in tourism planning forums is an important initial step. Furthermore, the private sector, especially tourism industry players such as homestay managers, tour guides, and micro-enterprises, can adopt management practices that support gender inclusivity, for example, through entrepreneurship training programs for women. Academics and higher education institutions also play a role in providing evidence-based research and targeted policy recommendations to support gender mainstreaming.

Furthermore, local community and media elements can strengthen gender equality advocacy by highlighting the success stories of women entrepreneurs in tourism and shifting public perceptions to value women's roles in the sector. Integrating community and media elements is a crucial step in the quadruple helix or pentahelix model, which expands collaborative networks beyond the traditional three core actors. By expanding the space for more inclusive dialogue between actors, the helix model can serve not only as a coordination tool but also as a mechanism for social transformation that promotes gender equality in tourism development (Araújo-Vila et al., 2021; Sadat & Nastia, 2023). While the tourism sector can have positive long-term impacts on gender equality, for example, through job creation and improving women's economic status, its effectiveness still depends heavily on the local context and supportive policies. Research shows that effective women's involvement in tourism development can strengthen their social and economic position, but if local norms and regulatory structures are not taken into account, these opportunities can be hampered or even reinforce existing inequalities (Araújo-Vila et al., 2021).

The statements above indicate that research on community-based tourism development and women's empowerment has been extensively studied but remains fragmented and under-integrated. Studies on women's empowerment in tourism tend to focus on microeconomic activities and the informal sector, without positioning women as strategic actors in decision-making (Sopar et al., 2023). On the other hand, research on community-based tourism development emphasizes institutional aspects, local potential, and general community participation, but lacks an in-depth analysis of gender equality (Wulandari et al., 2025). This situation also occurs in Aceh Besar Regency, which has significant natural and cultural tourism potential, but instead shows a gap between human development and gender empowerment. Previous research has not integrated a gender perspective with a collaborative approach between actors in tourism development. Therefore, this research

will not only focus on gender-based tourism development and women's empowerment but will also link them to collaboration among development actors in Aceh Besar Regency.

Based on background above, this study aims to analyze gender-based tourism development in Aceh Besar Regency using the helix model. By combining gender analysis with the helix model, this study not only describes the empirical conditions of tourism development in Aceh Besar but also provides a critical analysis of the helix model's effectiveness in promoting gender-inclusive tourism governance through a qualitative case-study-based approach. The qualitative study analyzed experiences, perceptions, and social relationships related to gender positions and roles in the tourism sector. The analysis was conducted by integrating gender perspectives and the helix model.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with 20 purposively selected informants, consisting of local government officials, destination managers, tourism business actors, members of Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Tourism Awareness Groups/ Pokdarwis), women's MSMEs, academics, and local communities. The interviews were supported by data from policy documents, tourism program reports, and limited observations of destination management activities. The case study approach was deemed appropriate because it allows for a contextual and holistic analysis of tourism development practices in Aceh Besar, taking into account local social, cultural, and institutional characteristics.

B. Discussion

1. Gender-Based Tourism Development in Aceh Besar Regency

In tourism development, men and women hold different positions, roles, and levels of access, despite the relatively high level of community participation in the tourism sector in Aceh Besar Regency. Women are actively involved in the management of traditional culinary arts, homestays, and other tourism activities,

while men generally dominate sectors that overlap with the formal public sphere, such as institutional leadership, destination management, and relations with government and external businesses. The high level of women's participation in the tourism sector does not yet reflect gender equality. Despite being important actors in tourism activities, women still face disparities in access, roles, and decision-making compared to men. Women's involvement is generally concentrated in informal, low-wage, and household-based jobs, while strategic and managerial positions remain male-dominated. In Aceh Besar Regency, this situation is exacerbated by limited access to capital, low institutional recognition, and social norms that limit women's roles in the public sphere.

The development of tourism in Aceh Besar Regency demonstrates that women are the backbone of tourism, yet they remain marginalized from strategic decision-making. Women's involvement in the management of traditional culinary arts, homestays, and community tourism activities demonstrates a significant contribution to economic development and the preservation of local culture. However, these roles tend to be positioned as extensions of household chores, rather than as strategically valuable economic and managerial work. As a result, women's contributions are recognized functionally but not translated into political or institutional legitimacy within management structures. This lack of clarity about women's work reinforces their marginalization from decision-making spaces, despite their critical operational roles for the success of destinations (Köse & Ayhün, 2022). This situation suggests that although women play a dominant role in tourism-based economic activities such as culinary arts, homestays, and tourism services, their participation in destination management institutions is limited and non-strategic (Hidayati et al., 2024). This implies that women's participation in tourism in Aceh Besar remains asymmetrical and does not yet reflect substantive empowerment.

The lack of women's involvement in institutional structures and decision-making forums is not an

individual problem but an indicator of weak gender-inclusive governance. Local tourism institutional structures continue to reproduce power relations that position men as strategic actors and women as implementers. Thus, women's participation is partial and fragmented, leaving them unable to influence policy direction, resource allocation, or development. This situation demonstrates that participation without structural representation is insufficient to generate substantial empowerment. Basically, women's empowerment in the tourism sector cannot be defined simply as increasing labor participation or household income. This approach tends to ignore the power dimension that is at the heart of gender empowerment. Women are considered empowered when they have access to resources, positions in decision-making, and control over the distribution of development benefits. Without these three aspects, women's participation risks becoming a new form of exploitation disguised as a narrative of inclusivity. Thus, women's empowerment is a structural issue, not simply a matter of individual capacity or work ethic.

Furthermore, women also have limited access to capital, low institutional support, and social norms that limit their role in public spaces (Hernández-González & Espeso-Molinero, 2025; Silalahi et al., 2025). This limited capital limits women's ability to develop their businesses and improve their economic bargaining position, while the lack of institutional recognition means their contributions are not recorded in formal tourism management mechanisms (Mulyasari & Maizida, 2024). Social norms then serve as a cultural justification for this condition, as if women's absence from strategic spaces is a natural consequence, rather than a result of social construction and policy. Without serious intervention at the policy and institutional levels, women's significant role will diminish. Within the tourism chain in Aceh Besar Regency, their role will continue as supporters, without leading to a transformation of positions or power.

This situation suggests that the main problem lies not in low female participation but rather in the lack of

governance mechanisms that enable women to transform from operational implementers to strategic actors. When women are involved only as implementers, without space in decision-making, empowerment tends to be symbolic and does not result in sustainable positional change. Several studies on sustainable tourism show that women's involvement in governance can strengthen social sustainability and community cohesion. However, the effectiveness of this role is heavily influenced by local contexts, including social norms, customary structures, and power configurations among actors (Dehankar & Das, 2024). Without institutional mechanisms that explicitly open women's access to leadership and decision-making, their involvement tends to be temporary and vulnerable to marginalization, especially when policies or actors change (Li, Wang, et al., 2025). Thus, sustainable tourism requires more than encouraging women's participation; it also requires governance that addresses structural inequalities in power distribution. These efforts can be achieved by strengthening women's leadership capacity, such as through mentoring programs, network development, and training that address the gender barriers and social pressures women in strategic positions face (Jones & Marlier, 2022; Su-Keene, 2016).

The findings of this study have important implications for tourism policy. Policies that fail to institutionalize a gender perspective can reproduce social inequality, even when disguised as a narrative of empowerment (Heuwinkel, 2024). Therefore, policies are needed to ensure women's involvement at all stages of tourism development, from planning and implementation to evaluation, through support for cross-sector collaboration.

This study confirms that the outcomes of collaborative governance are not neutral but are influenced by gender relations within institutional structures and collaborative practices between actors. Therefore, integrating a gender perspective within the pentahelix model is crucial for critically examining who benefits and who is marginalized in tourism development.

This approach positions tourism not only as an instrument of economic growth but also as a space for transformation toward more equitable and sustainable gender relations.

Within the framework of gender empowerment, women's empowerment cannot be measured solely by increased labor participation or economic contribution. Empowerment also encompasses access to resources, critical awareness, involvement in decision-making, and control over development outcomes. Therefore, empowerment is a structural process that requires changes in governance and institutional systems, not simply increased individual capacity. Without changes in the distribution of power and decision-making mechanisms, women's participation risks only reinforcing labor exploitation under the guise of inclusivity (Köse & Ayhün, 2022).

2. The Pentahelix model in gender-based tourism development in Aceh Besar Regency

The helix model theory is an approach to development that emphasizes collaboration between key actors to drive innovation and sustainable development. This concept, initially known as the triple helix, evolved into the quadruple helix and then expanded into the pentahelix. This study found that the gender-based tourism development model identified is the pentahelix model. The pentahelix model is a multi-stakeholder collaboration model involving five stakeholders: government, academia, business, society, and the media. The pentahelix model provides a framework for understanding tourism development through the interactions of various actors. This model started from the assumptions that sustainable needs synergy can be developed among government, academics, business actors, society, and media. Every actor has different roles; however, they complement each other. The application of the helix model in tourism development shows that the effectiveness of collaboration is not determined by the number of actors involved, but rather by the clarity of role division, intensity of coordination,

and the sustainability of collaborative relationships between actors. Within this framework, the government acts as a regulator and facilitator, the community as the main actor in development, academics as providers of knowledge and assistance, the private sector as a driver of economic activity, and the media as a means of promotion and building public legitimacy (Hidayati et al., 2023).

In tourism development, the pentahelix model aims to create sustainable synergy (Hardianto et al., 2019). Furthermore, this model is also relevant for addressing gender-based tourism, as it encourages inclusive practices and equal opportunities for women in the industry (Ikhtiangung & Radyanto, 2020). This approach also emphasizes that the success of tourism development is determined not by a single actor, but by integrated collaboration between government, academia, business, communities, and the media. Through this model, innovation, institutional strengthening, marketing, and community empowerment can occur simultaneously and support each other. However, implementing the helix model often faces challenges including unequal roles among actors, lack of coordination, and suboptimal involvement of communities and academics in field practice (Hawkins et al., 2022). This condition also occurs in Aceh Besar Regency, where the Dinas Pariwisata, Pemuda, dan Olahraga (Tourism, Youth, and Sports Office/ Disparpora) dominates strategic tourism decisions through planning and budgeting, while Pokdarwis manage field operations, and Badan Usaha Milik Desa (village-owned enterprise/ BUMDes) handle local economic enterprises.

The development of tourism in Aceh Besar Regency, five main actors are involved in synergy: local governments such as Dinas Pariwisata dan Kebudayaan (Culture and Tourism Office/ Disbudpar), the Tourism, Youth and Sports Office (Disparpora), and village governments are responsible as regulators by providing infrastructure, sharia regulations, and tourism journalism training; academics from the State Islamic

University (UIN) Ar-Raniry contribute research, regulatory concepts, and evidence-based HR training for sustainable innovation; business/private actors manage sharia homestays, halal culinary, and souvenir MSMEs to boost the local economy despite being hampered by access to capital; communities through.

Private homestay entrepreneurs in Lubuk Sukon Tourism Village, Aceh Besar Regency, who are involved in the halal tourism pentahelix, include the owners of Balai Putroe Phang Homestay and Mida Homestay, the main accommodations for tourists, as well as individuals such as Putri Aprila Balqis, who manages traditional Acehnese house-based accommodation, Eka Homestay, Husnaini's Putra Homestay, Nilawati MJ's Nasyifa Homestay, and Linda Murni's Linda Homestay. They provide sharia-compliant accommodations at around Rp100, 000 per night, collaborate with Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Tourism Awareness Groups/ Pokdarwis) to offer Wet-Wet Gampong (village exploration) tourism packages, and support the village's post-2019 revitalization, which led to its inclusion in the top 75 of ADWI 2023. Fahry Purnama is also cited as a key activist who encouraged the village youth to rebrand this homestay to support a sustainable local economy.

Pokdarwis plays an accelerator role in guiding homestay services and conservation of Acehnese sharia culture post-revitalization in 2019. Local estimates based on festivals and service reports indicate at least 10-20 Pokdarwis spread across 23 sub-districts of Aceh Besar Regency, focusing on halal tourism, Lampuuk beach, and sharia culture, although BPS or Disparpora Aceh Besar Regency data as of 2025 have not been released. Some of the identified groups include the Lubuk Sukon Tourism Group in Ingin Jaya District, the main driver of the Wet Wet Gampong halal tourism program; the Gunung Pandan Asri Tourism Group, which manages the Lampu'uk area; and groups in the Nusa tourism village that focus on sharia culture. These groups are active in the pentahelix, collaborating for ADWI 2023, such as Lubuk Sukon's top 75 ranking, and festivals like Woe Bak Asai. An explicit list requires access to internal

agency data or to Jaringan Desa Wisata (Tourism Village Network/ Jadesta), Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy's data platform for exact totals.

Local media outlets such as LPPL Panglima, Polem Radio (104.0 FM), Radio Mora Aceh (91.5 FM), Radio Serambi Indonesia in Ingin Jaya, TVRI Jantho, TVRI Lhoong, and official digital platforms like Instagram and YouTube promote destinations through news broadcasts, video content, and social media. The media's role has proven crucial in strengthening women's social legitimacy in the tourism sector. As media outlets began highlighting women's practices, experiences, and successes in tourism management, public perceptions of women's capacity as development actors shifted. However, without governance changes, the impact of this empowerment tends to be temporary. Furthermore, the lack of optimal communication and specific regulations necessitates a socialization strategy, sharia-compliant standard operating procedures (SOPs), and ongoing collaboration.

The pentahelix model offers a framework for useful analyticsto read development as a collaborative process involving lots actors with interests, power sources, and different capacities. Assumptions basically are that sustainable development can be achieved through domination, one actor, especially the country, but through synergy between government, academics, business actors, society, and media. However, the assumption is normative. This is often problematic infield practice. Collaboration is often understood in a procedural, limited sense, with actors present in a formal forum, without equal roles and powers. As a result, pentahelix is at risk reduced of becoming policy jargon instead of a tool for analysis critical to the relationship between actors' development.

This condition confirms that structural problems in empowering women in the tourism sector can be reduced to an issue of the participation quantity. Focus on numbers involvement precisely covers more fundamental problems: how power relations in

governance are built and reproduced. When women are placed solely as power operational homestay managers, MSME actors, or implementer activity participants without access to the decision-making process, then participation is instrumental rather than transformative. Thus, women's involvement only functions as a social legitimacy for tourism programs, not as a means of redistribution power. As a result, empowerment stops at symbolic policy and is unable to shift women's position in the institutional structure of tourism destination.

Furthermore, the absence governance mechanisms are shown to fail in institutional in recognizing women's contribution as actors in strategic development sustainable. Various studies on tourist sustainability show that when women are involved in planning, management, and evaluation of the destination, this results in strengthened social cohesion, increased community cohesion, greater local accountability, and sensitivity to the needs of vulnerable groups. However, the findings are often not translated into in arrangement concrete institutions, such as quota leadership, decision-making forum equal decision, or mechanism binding representation. Without intervention at the governance level, the contribution of women will continue to be reduced to work in domestic and informal sectors that support tourism, but will not be recognized as strategic sources. This is not just a technical negligence, but rather a reflection of structural bias that maintains the status quo in management destination.

However, in Aceh Besar Regency, the implementation of the pentahelix tourism model shows significant inequality and clear inter-actor. Tourism, Youth and Sports Office (Disparpora) of Aceh Besar Regency plays control a dominant role in determining the direction development through authority planning, budgeting, and prioritizing programs. Meanwhile, Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Tourism Awareness Groups/ Pokdarwis) is placed as the operational manager at the destination level, responsible for answering question on cleanliness, service, tourism, and activities daily. Village-owned enterprises (BUMDes) play a role in managing

local business units but often depend on scheme projects and directions from the government area. This pattern shows that the distribution role is more naturally hierarchical than collaborative.

Inequality has a direct impact on the quality of tourism. When the government dominates decision-making, other actors, including the community and local businesses, tend to serve as policy implementers rather than not partners in the formulation and direction development. Academics and the media, which in the Pentahelix framework should play a role as providers of critical knowledge and as a supervisory public, are often marginalized or involved only symbolically. This condition shows that the main challenge in Aceh Besar Regency is the absence of an actor, rather than a weakness in the mechanism for equal and deliberative collaboration. Without an overhaul on the relationship power inter-factor, the pentahelix model will only beautify design policy without truly changing practice development tourism at the local level.

However, collaboration is not always equal. Governance studies collaboratively show that power relationship between parties determines who has influence in the decision-making process. In context tourism, inequality of power can cause women to be marginalized from strategic space, even though they become the main contributors in tourism practice. In the Aceh Besar Regency, the government's role in developing tourism is still dominated by a top-down approach that emphasizes infrastructure development and destination promotion. Academics contribute through research and training, but involvement is often temporary and project-based. The actor of business tends to be profit-oriented, while the public guards against illegitimacy, cultural erosion, and customs erosion. Local media plays a greater role in promoting a destination than the social dynamics behind it. The absence of a gender perspective among each pentahelix actor fragments the ongoing effort to empower women.

C. Conclusion

This research shows that gender-based tourism development in Aceh Besar Regency is still suboptimal. On the one hand, women have a high level of participation and play a key role in the local tourism value chain, particularly in the traditional culinary sector, sharia homestays, tourism MSMEs, and culture-based services. This women's involvement is the foundation for sustainable tourism development and simultaneously maintains the social and cultural legitimacy of tourism in Aceh Besar Regency. However, this high level of involvement is not directly proportional to the increase in women's strategic positions in institutional structures and decision-making. This imbalance is not caused by women's limited capacity, but rather by the design of tourism governance, which is not gender inclusive and still places men as the primary decision-makers. Therefore, the main problem in gender-based tourism development in Aceh Besar does not lie in the quantity of women's participation, but rather in the absence of institutional mechanisms that enable women to transform from operational actors to strategic actors in tourism development. This tourism development then fosters interaction and collaboration among various actors, namely the pentahelix model. The pentahelix model shows that, normatively, Aceh Besar Regency has involved five main actors in tourism development: the government, academics, business actors, the community, and the media. The local government, particularly the Tourism, Youth, and Sports Office (Disparpora) and the Tourism and Culture Office (Disbudpar), plays a dominant role as a regulator and determiner of development direction through its planning and budgeting authority. Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Tourism Awareness Groups/ Pokdarwis) and local communities function as operational managers of destinations, while village-owned enterprises (BUMDes) and private businesses manage tourism economic activities. Academics contribute through research and training, while the media promotes and shapes the destination's image. However, research findings indicate that the interaction patterns among actors in the pentahelix are

hierarchical rather than substantively collaborative. Collaboration occurs more procedurally and project-based, with an unequal distribution of roles and power. The dominance of local government in strategic decision-making has led other actors, including the community, academics, and the media, to function primarily as implementers or supporters of policy rather than equal partners in the deliberative process. The pentahelix model in Aceh Besar Regency primarily serves as an administrative framework rather than a critical, reflective, and collaborative governance mechanism. This research also confirms that the outcomes of pentahelix governance are gendered. The lack of integration of gender perspectives into each actor's roles has resulted in fragmented, unsustainable efforts to empower women. While women are actively involved in the community and business sectors, they are virtually unrepresented among decision-making actors. Consequently, pentahelix collaboration has not been able to correct structural inequalities and, in fact, risks reproducing gender bias in tourism development. Thus, gender-based tourism development in Aceh Besar Regency is still in its early stages, marked by normative recognition of women's roles, but not yet accompanied by governance transformation and a more equitable distribution of power.

Recommendation

Based on these findings and analyses, this study recommends the following strategic steps. First, institutionalizing a gender perspective in regional tourism governance needs to be a policy priority. The Aceh Besar Regency Government needs to ensure that the principle of gender equality extends beyond empowerment narratives and is translated into binding rules, such as mechanisms for women's representation in destination management bodies, tourism planning forums, and cross-sector decision-making structures. Without this institutionalization, women's participation will remain symbolic and fail to affect the power redistribution. Second, reorienting the pentahelix model from a hierarchical to a deliberative approach is urgent. Regional

governments need to shift from dominant actors to facilitators of equal collaboration. This can be achieved by creating space for meaningful dialogue among stakeholders, clarifying capacity-based role allocations, and establishing sustainable coordination mechanisms rather than short-term projects. Within this framework, academics and the media need greater space as critical actors, rather than simply as supporters of policy legitimacy. Fourth, integrating of gender perspectives into the roles of each pentahelix actor must be systematic. Academics are encouraged to produce not only technocratic research but also critical analyses of power relations and the impact of policies on women. Local media need to expand their role beyond destination promotion to social oversight, highlighting the dynamics of inequality and good practices in women's empowerment. Meanwhile, business actors and village-owned enterprises (BUMDes) need to be facilitated to be more inclusive in accessing capital and making business decisions. Fifth, gender-based tourism development in Aceh Besar should be positioned as a long-term social transformation agenda, not merely an economic strategy or halal tourism branding. Therefore, evaluation of tourism success should not be measured solely by the number of visits or revenue, but also by the extent to which tourism development can reduce gender inequality, expand space for women's leadership, and create fairer, more sustainable governance. By implementing these recommendations, the pentahelix model will not only serve as a framework for administrative collaboration but can also develop into an instrument for transforming gender-based tourism governance in Aceh Besar Regency.

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