

Hegemony And The Impact Of Poverty On Bajo Fishermen Society

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ABSTRACT

Poverty is a source of discussion in developing the life capacity of fishing communities. Many studies on fishermen's poverty have been carried out, but most only tend to discuss the causes of it. Still, only a few have examined more deeply the role of external parties in exacerbating fishermen's poverty. We link the hegemonic practice of the *punggawa* as an elite group of actors who own capital and take advantage of the poverty of the Bajo fishing community. This study aims to explain the hegemony and the impact of poverty on the Bajo fishing community in Tiworo Utara District, West Muna Regency. The study used a qualitative descriptive model approach. The research results on the hegemonic practice of the *punggawa* towards Bajo fishermen in the North Tiworo Sub-District gave rise to prolonged structural poverty. The poor Bajo fishermen's financial difficulties condition encourages them to owe the *punggawa* to fulfill their daily needs. For the *punggawa*, debt is a means and instrument of hegemony used to control, dominate, influence, and force Bajo fishermen to submit and obey the interests of the *punggawa*. Hegemony occurs because Bajo fishermen have weak human resources, low educational qualifications, and cannot compete. To pressure marketing to be centralized to the *punggawa*, economic hegemony is applied to cut off and close access to other fish collectors by

forcing fishermen to sell all their fishery products to the punggawa with the condition that the punggawa himself sets the price. In addition, to strengthen power relations, the punggawa cooperates with political elites and makes fishermen their voice base. The hegemony of political freedom for fishermen is implemented to follow the interests of the punggawa. The practice of hegemony continues without resistance because fishermen are bound by debts of capital and gratitude from the help of punggawa.

Keywords: Hegemony, Poverty, Bajo Fishermen, North Tiworo.

INTRODUCTION

People experiencing poverty in Indonesia suffer a lot from fishermen around 14.58 million people (90%) of the 16.2 million fishermen in Indonesia are categorized as poor (Goso & Anwar, 2017). The welfare of this fishing community is faced with the problem of economic disparity, which is difficult to change. Problems regarding capital difficulties, knowledge, skills and expertise, mastery of technology, and overfishing cause poverty and common welfare in fishing communities (Anwar et al., 2019; Imron, 2006, 2011). Income Fishermen's livelihood is always uncertain because it depends on marine products. This condition becomes more difficult when the season and bad weather hit, so it makes fishermen unable to go to sea and the entry of outsiders who exploit marine resources in the location of fishermen's fishing areas.

Economic instability opens wide networks of poverty in the lives of fishing communities. Threats and challenges to the existence of small fishermen are real, such as uncertain weather and changing sea conditions (Jardine et al., 2020; Lima et al., 2020), the emergence of large-scale exploitation of fish that is carried out excessively, and the occurrence of pollution (Freduah et al., 2018), Another threat that arises is the illegal fishing movement (Song et al., 2020), directly affect the stability of livelihoods of small fishermen in all coastal areas of developing countries including small fishermen in coastal areas of Indonesia.

The poverty of fishermen is exacerbated by the background of low human resources with low educational qualifications making it difficult to access other livelihood sectors. The economic impact on the welfare of their families is disrupted because they cannot compete in the world of work and the fishery market (Bennett et al., 2020; Okyere et al., 2020). Even though 70% of the fishery production contribution is the hard work of fishermen (Irwansyah, 2022). Good adaptability is needed to deal with economic uncertainty due to sources of income that are not permanent. The adaptation process of

small fishermen is necessary for forming the resilience of fishing communities (Omerkhil et al., 2020).

Working as a fisherman is one of the main livelihoods strongly influenced by climate and weather. Fishermen communities manage marine products to meet their daily needs. The Bajo ethnic community very strongly practices the life of fishermen in the North Tiworo District. They work as fishermen using simple equipment both when fishing and diving. Since the beginning, the Bajo people have lived as boat people, their lives have depended on marine resources as the basis of life (Allison et al., 2009; Sather, 1997; Schagatay et al., 2011; Sopher, 1965). The Bajo people in Tiworo Utara District make hunting for fish and other marine products from one place to another their main source of livelihood, just as the Lao people make shifting cultivation systems their main livelihood (Dressler et al., 2017; Kallio et al., 2019). The poverty line in the fishing community is very clear. The poverty background of this small fishing community is so structured that it runs, and even their children often go to sea with their parents to work to maximize income (Islam, 2018).

In this study, external pressure from the capitalist group arises from the *punggawa* as owners of capital, and they play a role by forming power relations and hegemony to control fishermen's livelihoods. This is done with the aim that fishing communities can work with high loyalty and benefit *punggawa*, who control the production, supply, marketing, and fishing equipment sectors. This hegemony mechanism occurs not only in the socio-economic aspect alone but also in other sectors such as politics. Small fishermen are encouraged to take on debt so that they have a strong dependency on capital owners (Lowe, 2002). Amid economic uncertainty and low welfare due to poverty, fishermen encourage these small fishermen to always betung, especially during the famine season. This mechanism provides access to *punggawa*'s hegemony to control helpless fishermen due to being in debt. Most of the fishermen's income is only used to pay off debts, making it difficult to develop.

The position of small fishermen is faced with a dilemma between the necessities of life and life choices. On the one hand, they work to meet the needs of their family, but on the other hand, they have to work hard to pay off capital loan debts. Around 60% of small fishermen live with an income below the average minimum requirement (Orsini et al., 2013). This condition affects livelihoods to meet household needs (Badjeck et al., 2010; Martins & Gasalla, 2020). Welfare that is not guaranteed puts small fishermen's income in an apprehensive condition, so the consumption pattern is very much determined by their daily income (Oni & Fashogbon, 2013).

The difficulties faced by fishing communities have become a different pressure in discussions on fishermen's poverty. This poverty

threatens the resilience of fishing communities. Community resilience is an idea centered on a hierarchy of social systems to deal with difficulties and pressures, and challenges to change and develop. Community resilience can be achieved by fighting challenges or adapting (Barbour, 2013; Hawkins & Maurer, 2010; Wilson, 2012). Difficulties and challenges in society can be political, economic pressure, or social transformation turmoil (Wilson, 2012). Community resilience is needed because it involves adapting to face all threats and disturbances. Community resilience is an indicator of social resilience which is marked by the presence, development, and availability of resources for community members to be able to develop and have the ability to deal with all situations and conditions (Magis, 2010; Berkes & Ross, 2013; Cox, 2012). Every social environment is different. Five differences distinguish one community from another, namely: society has a relationship between one part and another, adapting to each other to achieve goals outside its internal environment in different environments but still supporting each other in the same social system, society can plan and achieve different goals, society has a system of social organization (Woods, 2019).

Community resilience arises from the big idea that social organizations can survive well due to the impacts of hazards and threats that arise (Rehak, 2020). Getting out of the problems and pressures of other parties, the social adaptability of the community is an important aspect that needs attention. The poverty of fishing communities has been exploited by capitalists in controlling and controlling their decisions. The community's ability to respond to and anticipate every event allows the community to continue to survive even when faced with difficulties (Hollnagel, 2017; Berkes & Ross, 2013). Community resilience is not formed by itself but emerges within the community according to its potential. The essence of the formation of rural community resilience lies in its productive human resources (Skerratt, 2013).

We view that there is a close relationship between the hegemony of the power of capitalist groups in the poverty of fishing communities. This is because poverty makes fishermen helpless in facing economic development, and is forced to go into debt, making it easy for capitalist groups to carry out hegemonic actions. The dependence of fishermen on capitalist groups creates a space for power and hegemony that is difficult for fishing communities to avoid. Our thinking framework is built by viewing the hegemony of power as the main driving factor for the formation of poverty in fishing communities. The influence of coercion from both formal and informal institutions in all social aspects always impacts vulnerable communities. This shows that in terms of advantages and benefits, the

power owner is always in a dominant and dominating position, while the weak are in a disadvantaged and marginalized position (Agrawal, 2003).

Power relations become an instrument of actor hegemony in influencing other societal groups. It is not easy for everyone to impose their interests so that they are followed and trusted by other parties. Power becomes an important part of influencing and controlling. Even the power of an actor can control the life of a vulnerable or weak community. In forming a network of power relations, an actor builds a system of power based on capital, knowledge, markets, technology, social identity, and authority to patron clients (Royandi et al., 2018). Given social class society, stereotypes have been built which view that the position of the rich is more dominant and powerful than the social class of working people and the poor (Durante & Fiske, 2017). Elite groups in society with high or superior status are seen as knowledgeable and competent but do not act arbitrarily (Lindholm & Yzerbyt, 2020).

The poverty of fishing communities is the target of the hegemonic actions of capitalist actors. Capitalist groups with financial capabilities can attend and become the hope for the survival of small fishermen by providing various donations and social assistance in the form of debt. This control then creates power in the livelihoods of fishing communities so that they are easily controlled or influenced. We view hegemony through power relations formed by the owners of financial capital as a poverty bias that places the Bajo fishing community in a disadvantaged position.

We call this power relationship a vertical power relationship, formed due to interactions with outsiders or the presence of power generated by external actors outside society. These power relations can arise from governments, international partners, institutions, or external parties who have the power to shape, design and implement various kinds of policies and rules in a community (Burns et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2016).

Another form of power that appears is horizontal power, arising from social communication. Society is a heterogeneous social structure consisting of various elements, such as families, individuals, and household backgrounds that differ from social, economic, and ethnic aspects (Krott et al., 2014). There are differences in social status in society; some are in a higher or lower position, and some are superior to others in their various abilities (Schusser et al., 2015).

This social status gradually unknowingly forms a system of power relations within society. This horizontal power relationship includes a system of norms, culture, and habits that develop in society, either from the production of interactions among members of society in their collaborative environment or together with external

parties to create structured hegemony. These two forms of power have different roles in the social organization system of fishing communities. The relationship between the owner of financial capital and the vulnerable community runs unbalanced and even political. The unequal power relations between actors are the effect of action (Bryant & Bailey, 2013).

METHOD, CONTEXT, AND AREAS OF STUDY

This study uses a qualitative research approach. This research was conducted in the Bajo fishing community in North Tiworo District, West Muna Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province. This research location was selected based on several aspects, including social, economic, political, cultural, and community characteristics and livelihoods. The problems experienced by the Bajo fishing community are the difficulty of opening and accessing new sources of livelihood due to low human resources, difficulty accessing various government assistance programs due to political pressure, uncertain income because sources of livelihood are very dependent on the season and weather, small fishermen experience difficulties in accessing promotions and direct marketing of fish catches due to the absence of marketing network connections with outsiders. The impact of poverty is exploited by capitalist groups and capital owners providing economic assistance in the form of capital and fishing gear, provided that they determine marketing and prices.

The data collection method was carried out using observation and interviews aimed at identifying the activities and behavioral patterns of the elite capital owners with fishing communities, while the interviews aimed at exploring community responses and perceptions regarding the results of the utilization of marine resources both from the point of view of the elite capital owners and from the fishing community small. Interview activities were conducted in the form of open questions. Qualitative data analysis uses an interactive model consisting of three stages: data reduction (data selection process); data presentation; and drawing conclusions/verification (Miles, 2014).

In examining the field data, this research incorporates the actor approach and Gramsci's theory of hegemony. The actors or elites play an important role in influencing and controlling community activities against the potential of existing resources (Bryant & Bailey, 2013). In Tiworo District, West Muna Regency, the theory of hegemony based on Gramsci's ideas is used as an analytical tool to explain the dialectics of power triggered by knowledge, economic resources, and cultural systems (Witono et al., 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents research findings based on field data and interviews supported by relevant references and literature. The poverty rate in Tiworo Utara District is around 3,784 people (Rudi, 2018). The poverty of fishing communities impacts socio-economic activities in North Tiworo District. Fishing communities do not have the opportunity to get out of the pressure of *punggawa* as actors who own the capital on which fishermen rely to make a living. Conditions indicate a hegemonic movement through a network of vertical power relations applied by *punggawa* in poverty in fishing communities. The *punggawa* creates an artificial relationship while interacting with fishermen by giving them hope that working with them is a solution to overcoming the poverty of fishermen's families. The low quality of human resources among fishing communities makes them forced to follow the wishes of the *punggawa* for the sake of the family's livelihood. Working as a fishing laborer is the first and last choice for fishing communities in Tiworo Utara District. Even if there are fishermen who work independently using their fishing gear, this cannot also increase the level of economic welfare of their families. The deprived situation and uncertain income trigger fishing communities to struggle to free themselves from the shackles of poverty. In North Tiworo Subdistrict, the average fishermen have a low education level, so getting a job with high wages isn't easy. The phenomenon of low education, the role of economic institutions, ownership of capital, and no alternative jobs are the causes of poverty in fishing communities (Anwar et al., 2019; Mussadun & Nurpratiwi, 2016; Prasetyo et al., 2019). Especially for the Bajo people, being a fisherman is a hereditary habit, and education is not a priority. This condition is one of the impacts or impacts of fishermen's poverty, which can easily utilize by *punggawa* as labor fishermen working on their fishing boats.

The difficulty of fishermen finding new jobs further strengthens the hegemonic position of the *punggawa* to control fishing communities. *Punggawa*, who act as elite actors with adequate financial support, have access to marketing with a wider range. These elite players with financial capital employ small fishermen (*sawi*) as wage laborers to work on marine products ranging from fish, sea cucumbers, crabs, and pearls to be used as economic commodities for their market. The utilization of small fishermen is needed to meet high market demand. When this small group of fishermen does not do their job well, their family members, including their wives and children, are seconded. The poverty of fishing communities creates powerlessness so that even though marginalized, they have no power to fight. Hegemony is an instrument used by the ruler to maintain and perpetuate his power (Kamim, 2021). The hegemony of energy and

mind drags small fishermen to poor welfare quality. They have been bound in debt promises borrowed to punggawa owners of capital.

The punggawa show their kindness by voluntarily providing loan assistance to fishermen. The fishing community fulfills their daily needs with the capital received, including repairing their damaged fishing gear. The result is that small fishermen continue to work for punggawa as a form of remuneration. However, the capital debt lent must still be paid until it is paid off. The irony is that fishing communities do not have the income to pay off their debts, so their only choice is to obey and submit to the interests of their skipper's punggawa. The relationship between the elite actors who own capital and small fishermen is unfair and unbalanced because the role played by elite actors is only to gain profit. Therefore, the punggawa with dominance can determine the selling price of the fish obtained by the sawi as Giddens said that actors influence power to master and control resources to smooth their interests and goals (Giddens, 1984). To control small fishermen, this elite actor continuously provides socio-economic assistance worth debt to the families of Bajo fishermen. Poverty seems to close space for access to the production and marketing of fishermen's catch to a wider network, so they must depend on punggawa to buy and market them to production markets. The difficulty of the Bajo fishing community in creating new jobs makes them continue to depend on the punggawa so that the punggawa has the opportunity to suppress dominance which in turn puts the Bajo fishermen down in poverty.

The power relation of Punggawa-Sawi is a traditional system in the people of Tiworo Utara District, Muna Barat Regency, which describes the relationship between employers who own capital and fishermen as workers. This relationship develops as a network of patrons and clients in producing and marketing fishery products. The Bajo fishing community has skills in fishing but is weak in marketing. The presence of punggawa, with his financial strength, buys and manages the fishery products of the Bajo fishermen, which gradually forms social relations between the two. These fishery products have been marketed to various countries, including Hong Kong, China, Japan, Singapore, to the European region (Marhadi et al., 2018). The punggawa forms an economic space for its capital in the marine environment of the Bajo people. The punggawa launched economic hegemony in the Bajo fishing community for maximum profit.

The practice of economic hegemony that the punggawa employs begins with inviting mustard fishermen to join the fishing vessels belonging to the punggawa. A punggawa has several types of boats (gae) with regarding engines and outboard engines used to catch fish. When out at sea, the ship was captained by a marine punggawa who was an expert in understanding sea conditions and

was assisted by several fishermen. Each participating fisherman (Table 1) has different tasks while at sea.

Table 1. The division of tasks for sea Punggawa and Sawi when at sea

No	Position	Task	Total
1	Punggawa/ captain	Steer the ship Determines the ship's course Determine the location of the capture.	2 people (one punggawa and one helper)
2	Sawi Machinist/Bas	Operate the machine Maintain and repair machines.	1 person
3	Sawi Pakacca	Observing the feasibility of the number of fish before being withdrawn	1 person
4	Sawi Electrician	Running and operating machines Generator	1 person
5	Sawi Ringman	Wrap the trawl around the lamp	2 person
6	Sawi Pullman	Pulling the trawl onto the ship	2 person
7	Divider	Sort fish according to type and size Sharing Bonuses (Jame-Jame) for Sawi	2 person
8	Lumen handyman	Cleaning sea water and other impurities that enter the ship	1 person

The relationships between punggawa and sawi in the context of sharing the fishing results use a profit-sharing system. The time spent at sea can be 3-5 days before returning to the pier. Of course, this rule is the absolute authority of the punggawa as the owner of capital and service provider and has power over mustard greens. Distribution of fishing results is done every time after the fish is sold. This division is carried out separately from operational costs such as fuel costs. For example, the gross income from the sale of fish is 10 million, where the remaining proceeds from the sale of fish that have been deducted are in the form of a gratuity 5%-10% by punggawa $Rp10.000.000,00 \times 5\% = Rp500.000,00$ the ship owner, in this case, the punggawa, gets the result $Rp\ 3.000.000,00-5.000.000,00$. The remaining sales proceeds amount to $Rp4.500.000,00$ ($Rp10.000.000,00-5.500.000,00$) divided among sawi several 10 people, or $Rp500.000,00$ for the crew (sawi).

The fish caught by the fishermen are immediately sold to the punggawa or other collectors, especially for fishermen who are in debt, they are pressured to sell it to the punggawa, and it will have bad consequences when this is done because the punggawa can immediately collect debts to be repaid. This marketing process to the punggawa applies to types of fish and marine products such as sea

cucumbers, crabs, shellfish, seaweed, and sea cucumbers. This marketing domination is an economic hegemony strategy that is applied by punggawa to get as much profit as possible. Apart from being a mustard to the punggawa, these small fishermen also usually go to sea on their own to make ends meet. Bajo fishermen in Tiworo Utara District, whose lives are always squeezed by shortages and capital difficulties, see the debt assistance provided by the punggawa as a helper in difficult times. The existing conditions show that the punggawa exercises economic hegemony over fishermen, but on the other hand, fishermen consciously accept this fact as an adaptation to continue to survive. As disclosed by informants.

“We Sawi here are very grateful to have punggawa because if they weren't there, we would also be dying to start a business because we didn't have the capital. We also have difficulty selling our fishing products. If they have it, they have to bring it with them. Even though the price is low, we can get money because even if there are fish, if they don't sell, we can't get money, and it will be difficult to meet other household needs.”

Fishing communities do not have the ability and knowledge to communicate with outsiders in marketing their seafood catches. In addition, the position of punggawa, who has relational and financial strength, has closed fishermen's access to communicate with other collectors. The cooperative relationship and the debt of gratitude of the fishermen form their loyalty to the punggawa. This makes the economic hegemony run by punggawa not get resistance from fishermen, and they even choose to accept these conditions. Little fishermen don't know that this creates the supremacy of the punggawa over their sawi. All decisions made by the punggawa and fishermen promise loyalty and obedience, for example, concerning the sale of catches, especially concerning pricing issues. The economic hegemony strategy unknowingly by fishermen has brought them into debt bondage, which is difficult to avoid. One of the causes of the poverty of fishermen in Tiworo Utara Subdistrict is difficulties in financial management, causing limited capital, how the money earned daily can only be used to meet needs, so it isn't easy to set aside as a savings fund. The punggawa elite actors know this every time fishermen experience financial difficulties, only to go to where the punggawa runs away asking for loan assistance. The punggawa's economic hegemony is shown by the unequal distribution of fishing revenues and the closure of marketing access to other collectors.

The practice of hegemony shrouded by the punggawa in the life of the Bajo fishing community is an attempt to dominate and control Sawi. The punggawa elite actors use their influence and resources to

provide economic assistance to their mustard fishermen to be able to go to sea. In the socio-economic context of Tiworo Utara District, Punggawa acts as the owner of capital and a collector of fishery resources caught by fishermen. The punggawa has a special role by simply providing capital to the Sawi fishermen, and all the fishermen's catches will be sold to him with a decision on the price determined by the punggawa himself. The amount of capital punggawa owns in Tiworo Utara District varies greatly, starting from Rp400.000.- Rp500.000.000. When financial conditions are difficult, it is not uncommon for fisherwomen to also work to help with production activities at the punggawa's house so that when they need a loan, it is easy for them because trust has been built.

"My experience is that the punggawa or those with capital money loaned the capital. Suppose we do not have our capital. So if we catch the fish in the sea, we have to sell it to the punggawa, and the punggawa has set the price. Everything is up to the punggawa wants to buy how much. The point is that we think that we don't lose anything and can meet our daily needs. Because the punggawa is also the one who can help us if there is no capital and lack of money".

Owners of capital or elite actors become managers and controllers of the economy of small fishing communities. Furthermore, suppose a fisherman or a fisherman's wife wants to sell fish. In that case, they must obtain permission from their punggawa, where their husband usually works as mustard greens or where his husband receives capital assistance. The punggawa prohibits fishermen from selling their catch directly to other consumers without going through the decision of the punggawa as the capital owner or collector of the catch. The punggawa's influence and control are strong, so sawi fishermen are willing to accept every decision of the punggawa. The punggawa power relationship spreads a network of hegemony in the fishermen's income system. The punggawa's economic hegemony impacts the quality of the welfare of fishing communities, which does not increase over time because the income earned is only used up for daily needs and paying off debts. In fact, in Tiworo Utara District, there are government agencies providing loan services, but it is rare for fishermen to make loans to that office.

Increasing his influence, punggawa binds and holds fishermen into debt. Debt can be divided into two: debt for fishing needs and debt for household needs. These two debt models have become critical tools between fishermen and elite actors who own capital. Even then, the debt developed into a debt of gratitude that fishermen bore. This then causes the selling price of fish to the punggawa to be lower. Power is a means for actors to carry out all their will in a social

relationship (Weber, 2000). The role of the *punggawa* actor becomes even bigger during the high swell season, which runs from November to April. At that time, fishermen could not go out to sea and only worked on the land, repairing broken nets and leaky boats for a living. Lack of access to a network of sources of other livelihoods makes it difficult for them to open up new income opportunities, so they are continuously dependent on fishing. During a famine like this, the power of elite actors who own capital freely shows their power to meet the needs of *Sawi* or small fishermen.

In principle, the government has a solution or alternative for capital loans through the People's Business Credit (KUR) or Village Unit Cooperative (KUD) programs. However, in conditions in the field, fishermen tend to be reluctant to borrow capital from KUR due to several considerations, such as the administrative requirements being complicated by having to prepare guarantees. In addition, they are more bound by the time of payment while they realize that the money they go to sea every day is uncertain. The presence of cooperatives is a cause of real poverty in society (Humaedi, 2012). Therefore, fishermen prefer to borrow from *punggawa*, which is seen as easier, and the repayment time can be arranged under certain conditions based on the agreement of both parties. This form of bond is deliberately created and maintained by the *punggawa* for business continuity. Economic and political interests become the arena of their power in these economic activities. The existence of the *punggawa* has been considered capable of guaranteeing the sustainability of fishermen's economic activities, which impacts fishermen's social behavior through efforts to manifest gratitude followed by obedience to economic and political interests.

The power of the *punggawa* in controlling its members then received special attention from the executive government and political parties. In the political realm, the *punggawa* is used as a network to build communication with small fishing groups controlled by the *punggawa*. This condition opens a space where hegemonic power relations play out in small fishing communities, especially ethnic *Bajo* fishermen in North Tiworo District, West Muna Regency, whose livelihoods only rely on fishing. Along with socio-political developments in the region, the *punggawa* turned into agents who guarded government policies and even became political networks in the lives of fishing communities. The *punggawa* develop not only as owners of capital in controlling fishermen's economic assets but form the basis of a political mass in their control over the existence of small fishermen. In this section, hegemony develops as an alliance and leads to the use of social structures for power (Yalvaç & Joseph, 2019). This is done to strengthen its existence in society and protect its economic assets from executive and legislative government intervention. Efforts

to provide a horizontal power relations effect by involving small-scale fishermen in fulfilling the interests of elite actors are included as a stimulus so that these elite actors get convenience in expanding the promotion and production of marine resources. It becomes interesting when small fishermen become the basis of mass voting. Elite actors have the power of the masses to get the attention of the government elite. Poverty makes fishermen's lives weak in political education. They tend to become the basis for the courtier's political voice.

CONCLUSION

The poverty that hit the Bajo fishing community in North Tiworo District made it easy for the courtiers to carry out hegemonic actions. This practice of hegemony towards fishermen creates structural poverty that does not end in the socio-economic life of Bajo fishermen. The relationships built by elite actors who own capital in Tiworo Utara District, Muna Barat Regency, through the mechanism of socio-economic assistance are the hidden hegemonic practices of the *punggawa* who take advantage of the dependency of Bajo fishermen whose livelihood is fishing. This condition of uncertainty makes the level of fishermen's welfare low. The shackles of poverty make fishermen powerless in facing economic development. Fishermen must borrow capital from the *punggawa* to overcome the pressure and financial difficulties. This fishermen's habit developed into the *punggawa*'s hegemonic access to fishermen's lives. The domination of the *punggawa* as an elite capital owner influences the life of the Bajo fishing community Tiworo Utara District. This can be seen from the marketing activities of fishermen's fishing products. The *punggawa* has the power to set the selling price of fish or other marine products, and the fishermen are powerless to deal with it, so they only obey and willingly accept the *punggawa*'s offer. The practice of economic hegemony is controlled by *punggawa*, from promotion and production to marketing. The *punggawa*, for the sake of their economic benefits, closes access to communication for the Bajo fishing community with other *punggawa* or harvesters. To overcome the poverty of fishing communities, a comprehensive approach can be started by increasing the human resources of Bajo fishermen.

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