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Sustaining Productive Asset-Based Community Empowerment: Supporting and Inhibiting Factor of the Sedekah Cerdas Program in Indonesia

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Abstract

Community empowerment programs based on productive assets have gained attention as an alternative approach to achieving sustainable economic development. However, the sustainability of such programs remains challenging because it depends not only on asset provision but also on institutional, social, and governance mechanisms. This study aims to analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program, a productive asset-based community empowerment initiative implemented through a revolving goat asset mechanism. This study employed a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving 10 informants consisting of program managers, donors, beneficiaries, village government representatives, and community leaders. Data were analyzed using triangulation, technical triangulation, and member checking. The findings reveal that program sustainability is supported by institutional capacity, social capital, donor and community participation, program governance, and productive asset management. Meanwhile, sustainability challenges include changes in institutional priorities, limited human resources, reduced monitoring intensity, the COVID-19 pandemic, and livestock management risks. This study concludes that sustainable productive asset-based empowerment requires integrated institutional, social, and managerial systems to maintain long-term community benefits.

Keywords

Community Empowerment, Productive Assets, Program Sustainability, Revolving Asset Mechanism, Social Capital.

1. Introduction

Community empowerment has become a strategic approach to promoting sustainable rural development by strengthening local capacities, participation, and self-reliance. Contemporary empowerment initiatives no longer emphasize short-term economic assistance but also prioritize the establishment of institutional systems and social mechanisms that enable communities to sustain development outcomes independently (Binns & Nel, 1999; Chapin III et al., 2016). Consequently, the effectiveness of empowerment programs is increasingly assessed based on their long-term sustainability rather than temporary economic improvements (Mehra, 1997; Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024).

One increasingly adopted strategy is productive asset-based community empowerment, in which assistance is provided as income-generating assets instead of consumptive aid. Productive assets create continuous economic opportunities while fostering community ownership, participation, and collective responsibility in resource management. Previous studies by Rakodi (1999), Widiartanto et al. (2022), and Hosnaidah et al. (2023) have shown that productive asset utilization contributes to improved household welfare, stronger local economic resilience, and enhanced social capital. However, many empowerment initiatives fail to sustain their impacts because of limited institutional capacity, inadequate mentoring, weak governance, and changing socioeconomic conditions. These findings by Astawa et al. (2022), Sari (2025), and Kaseng (2025) suggest that sustainable empowerment depends not only on the provision of productive assets but also on the institutional and social systems that support their long-term management.

The Sedekah Cerdas (Smart Alms) Program developed by LPK Matahari Abadi Jaya Indonesia (LPK MAJI) represents an example of productive philanthropic empowerment that applies a revolving asset mechanism (Sabila & Saptutyningsih, 2020). Voluntary donations collected from interns and alumni working in Japan are distributed as productive assets, primarily breeding goats, to households in Ngargoharjo Village, Giritontro District, Wonogiri Regency. Unlike conventional charitable assistance, beneficiaries are required to transfer offspring to new participants, allowing program benefits to expand continuously without depending entirely on additional donations. Program documentation indicates that during 2015–2019, the number of breeding goats increased from 16 to 91, beneficiaries expanded from 10 to 74 households, and program coverage grew from one to five hamlets, demonstrating consistent program development, as illustrated in Figure 1. The documented growth indicates that the revolving asset mechanism has successfully expanded productive assets and beneficiary coverage while strengthening collaboration among donors, program managers, village authorities, and community members. These achievements demonstrate the potential of productive asset-based philanthropy to support sustainable community empowerment beyond short-term economic assistance.

Figure 1. Development of the Sedekah Cerdas Program (2015–2019)

Despite these promising outcomes, the determinants of long-term program sustainability remain insufficiently understood. Existing studies on community empowerment have primarily focused on the implementation of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, productive asset utilization, social capital, community participation, or the economic impacts of empowerment programs (Ward, 2023; Wajdi et al., 2024; Ma'rifah & Nuphanudin, 2025). Only limited research has comprehensively examined how institutional capacity, program governance, community participation, social capital, and productive asset management interact to sustain empowerment programs over time, particularly within productive philanthropic initiatives employing revolving asset mechanisms (Mathie & Cunningham, 2005; Chen et al., 2025). As a result, the mechanisms explaining why some productive asset-based programs remain sustainable while others gradually decline are still inadequately explored.

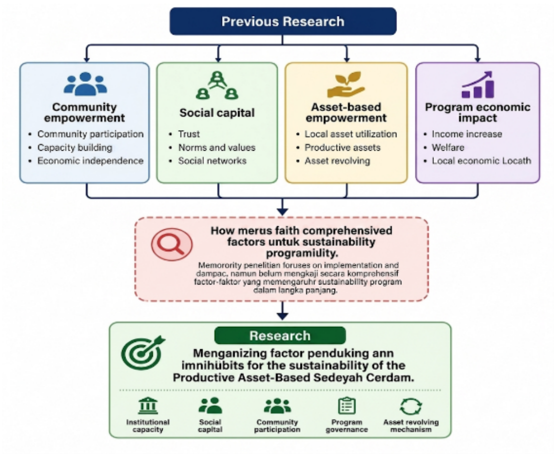

Figure 2. Research Gap

To address this gap in Figure 2, this study develops an integrated perspective by combining five key dimensions institutional capacity, social capital, community participation, program governance, and productive asset management into a single sustainability framework. The novelty of this study lies in shifting the analytical focus from program implementation and economic outcomes toward the mechanisms that determine the sustainability of productive asset-based community empowerment. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the supporting and constraining factors affecting the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program in Ngargoharjo Village, Giritontro District, Wonogiri Regency, and to propose a conceptual sustainability model that can serve as a reference for designing sustainable productive asset-based community empowerment programs.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Asset-Based Community Empowerment

Community empowerment is a process aimed at enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to identify, manage, and develop their own potential to improve their well-being independently. According to Hennink et al. (2012) and Ahmad and Abu Talib (2015), community empowerment extends beyond increasing economic capacity by strengthening social and institutional capacities while encouraging active participation in the development process. Likewise, Laverack (2006) and Singh and Agarwal (2024) argue that empowerment seeks to expand community access to resources, opportunities, knowledge, and skills, enabling people to make informed decisions and determine their own future. Within this perspective, empowerment emphasizes the development of local capabilities that enable communities to become active actors rather than passive recipients of development initiatives, thereby fostering greater self-reliance and long-term resilience.

Over time, the empowerment paradigm has shifted from a needs-based approach toward an asset-based approach. The needs-based approach primarily emphasizes community deficiencies and tends to generate programs that focus on external assistance. In contrast, the asset-based approach recognizes communities as development actors possessing valuable local resources, capacities, and social networks that can be mobilized to achieve sustainable development (Chinyowa et al., 2017; Reddy & Barbalat, 2022). This perspective has become increasingly relevant in community economic empowerment because it promotes the productive utilization of existing assets to generate long-term benefits while strengthening community ownership and participation. In the context of this study, productive assets such as goats function not only as income-generating resources but also as empowerment instruments that foster economic independence through a revolving asset mechanism, allowing program benefits to be continuously transferred and expanded within the community.

2.2. Asset-Based Community Development

The ABCD approach, introduced by McKnight and Kretzmann (1993), is a community empowerment framework that positions local assets as the primary foundation for sustainable development. Unlike the needs-based approach, which focuses on community deficiencies, ABCD recognizes that every community possesses valuable resources that can be mobilized to improve collective well-being. These assets include human resources, social capital, local organizations, community leadership, and economic and environmental resources. Accordingly, communities are viewed as the principal actors in the development process, capable of identifying local strengths and creating sustainable change through collective action. Mathie and Cunningham (2003) further argued that successful empowerment depends not only on the availability of assets but also on the community's ability to strengthen local institutions, establish collaborative relationships, and foster collective ownership. Similarly, Harrison et al. (2019) emphasized that effective ABCD implementation requires active community participation, strong local leadership, and sound governance to ensure long-term program sustainability.

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate the contribution of the ABCD approach to strengthening community capacity and promoting sustainable development. Bela et al. (2024) found that ABCD encourages community innovation through the participatory utilization of local assets, while Najamudin and Al Fajar (2024) reported that the approach supports sustainable development by optimizing local resources through community empowerment. However, previous studies have primarily examined the implementation of ABCD and its effects on community welfare, with relatively limited attention given to the factors that sustain productive asset-based empowerment programs, particularly those employing a revolving asset mechanism. Therefore, this study adopts the ABCD approach as the primary theoretical perspective to explain the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program by examining the institutional and social factors that influence its long-term continuity.

2.3. Sustainability of Empowerment Program

Program sustainability refers to the ability of a program to maintain its benefits, processes, and outcomes so that it continues to generate positive impacts over the long term. According to Scheirer and Dearing (2011), sustainability is determined by multiple factors, including organizational capacity, leadership, community support, funding, and the organization's ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Similarly, Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone (1998) argue that sustainability should be assessed not only by the continuation of program activities but also by the organization's capacity to preserve program benefits for the target community. In the context of community empowerment, sustainability is closely associated with institutional capacity, which enables organizations to establish effective governance, strengthen coordination, and improve accountability in program implementation (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). In addition, social capital, reflected in trust, social norms, and networks, provides the foundation for collaboration among stakeholders and contributes significantly to maintaining long-term program sustainability (Woolcock, 1998).

Beyond institutional and social dimensions, the sustainability of community empowerment programs also depends on active community participation and effective program governance (Haldane et al., 2019). According to Mansuri and Rao (2013), participation throughout the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation strengthens community ownership and commitment, thereby increasing the likelihood that program activities and outcomes will be maintained over time. Likewise, transparent and accountable governance fosters trust among stakeholders, particularly donors, program managers, and beneficiaries, which is essential for sustaining collaborative initiatives. In this study, the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program is conceptualized as the result of the interaction among five interrelated dimensions: institutional capacity, social capital, community participation, program governance, and productive asset management through a revolving asset mechanism. These dimensions constitute the analytical framework for identifying the supporting and constraining factors that influence the long-term sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program.

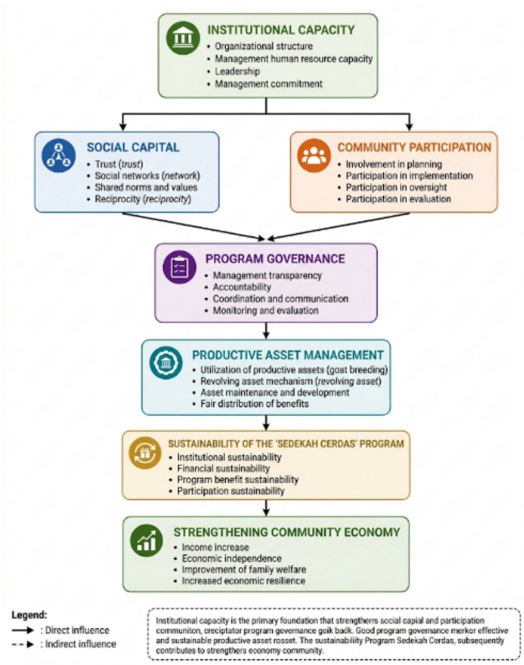

Figure 3. Conceptual Framework

Based on the synthesis of the theoretical and empirical literature, this study develops a conceptual framework in Figure 3 that positions institutional capacity as the fundamental driver of the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program. Institutional capacity is expected to strengthen program governance, foster social capital, enhance community participation, and optimize productive asset management through a revolving asset mechanism. The interaction among these dimensions determines the program's ability to sustain its economic and social benefits over time. Accordingly, this conceptual framework in Figure 3 provides the analytical basis for identifying the supporting and constraining factors affecting the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program. It serves as the foundation for developing the conceptual sustainability model.

3. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the factors influencing the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program as a productive asset-based community empowerment initiative. A case study approach was selected because the research focused on a single program with unique characteristics, allowing an in-depth examination of the processes, interactions, and contextual factors shaping program sustainability. The study was conducted in Ngargoharjo Village, Giritontro District, Wonogiri Regency, Central Java, which was purposively selected as the main implementation site of the program and provided a relevant context for analyzing a revolving asset-based empowerment model. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement and knowledge of the program, followed by snowball sampling to identify additional relevant participants. The informants consisted of program managers, productive asset donors, beneficiary households involved in the revolving mechanism, village government representatives, and community leaders supporting program activities.

A total of 10 informants participated in this study and were selected through purposive and snowball sampling based on their direct involvement and knowledge of the Sedekah Cerdas Program. The participants consisted of one program manager (PP-1), three donors who were interns and alumni of LPK MAJI in Japan (DO1–DO3), four beneficiary households (PM1–PM4), one village government representative (VG-1), and one community leader (CL-1). The program manager provided comprehensive information regarding program planning, implementation, productive asset management, governance, mentoring, monitoring, evaluation, and sustainability strategies. Donors contributed insights into their motivations, funding mechanisms, and perceptions of program sustainability. Beneficiaries shared their experiences in managing productive assets, implementing the revolving asset mechanism, and the program's economic and social impacts. Meanwhile, the village government representative provided information on local government support, program implementation, and the socioeconomic conditions of the community, while the community leader offered perspectives on community participation, social capital, and factors influencing the long-term sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation to obtain comprehensive information on the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program. Semi-structured interviews explored institutional capacity, social capital, community participation, program governance, productive asset management, and the factors influencing program sustainability. Observations were conducted to examine program implementation and the condition of productive assets in the field, while documentation, including program reports, activity photographs, and administrative records, was used to complement and verify the collected data.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2013), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, with these stages performed iteratively throughout the research process as illustrated in Figure 4. To enhance the credibility of the findings, source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking were employed. Source triangulation compared information from program managers, donors, beneficiaries, village government representatives, and community leaders, whereas method triangulation integrated interview, observation, and documentation findings. Member checking was subsequently conducted with key informants to validate the researchers' interpretations and ensure consistency with participants' experiences.

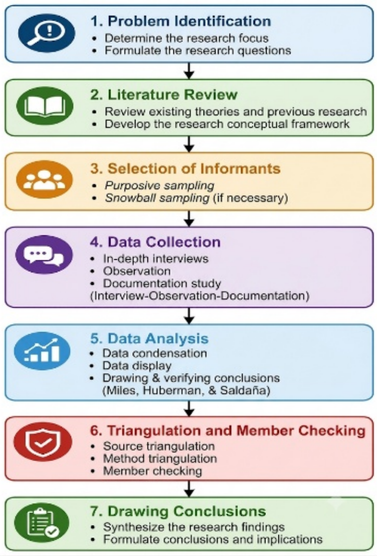

Figure 4. Research Flow

4. Results

4.1. Supporting Factors for the Sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program

The Sedekah Cerdas (Smart Alms) Program is a productive asset-based community empowerment initiative established by the extended family of LPK Matahari Abadi Jaya Indonesia (LPK MAJI) in response to concerns among interns and alumni working in Japan regarding the economic conditions of communities in Ngargoharjo Village, Giritontro District, Wonogiri Regency. Unlike conventional social assistance that primarily provides consumptive support, the program distributes breeding goats as productive assets to enhance household income and promote long-term economic self-reliance through voluntary donations collected from interns and alumni and managed by program administrators for asset procurement and distribution, thereby also creating economic opportunities for local livestock breeders. A distinctive feature of the program is its revolving asset mechanism, whereby goat offspring are transferred to new beneficiary households according to program regulations, enabling a single productive asset to generate recurring benefits and expand beneficiary coverage without relying solely on additional donations. By integrating productive asset management, community participation, and shared responsibility, the program creates a sustainable empowerment system that continuously circulates economic and social benefits within the community (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; Ascarya et al., 2022), as illustrated in Figure 5.

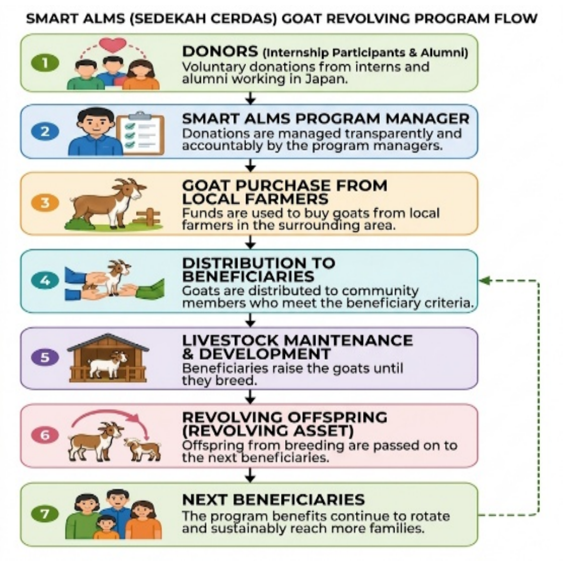

Figure 5. Mechanism of the Sedekah Cerdas Program

Based on Table 1, the Sedekah Cerdas Program demonstrated consistent progress between 2015 and 2019. During this period, 91 breeding goats were distributed to 74 beneficiary households across five hamlets in Ngargoharjo Village, generating approximately 135 offspring that were transferred to new beneficiaries through the revolving asset mechanism. These developments indicate that productive asset-based management effectively expanded economic and social benefits when supported by program governance, institutional capacity, and stakeholder participation. However, after 2019, program implementation declined as LPK MAJI shifted its priorities following the COVID-19 pandemic toward education and employment training programs in Japan. This transition reduced resources for mentoring, monitoring, and donor engagement, highlighting the importance of examining supporting and inhibiting factors affecting program sustainability (Scheirer & Dearing, 2011).

Table 1. Development of the Sedekah Cerdas Program

Indicator	Program Start (2015)	2019
Number of breeding goats	16 animals	91 animals
Number of goat offspring	–	±135 animals
Number of beneficiaries	10 families	74 families
Program implementation area	1 hamlet	5 hamlets

The findings show that the interaction of institutional, social, and management dimensions shapes the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program. Four main supporting factors were identified: institutional capacity, social capital, donor and community participation, and program governance through productive asset management. These factors function as an integrated system in which institutional capacity enables structured management, social capital strengthens trust and collaboration, participation ensures resource continuity, and governance supports productive asset utilization. This finding aligns with empowerment concepts proposed by Zimmerman (2000) and Mathie and Cunningham (2003), which emphasize organizational capacity, collective participation, and community ownership as foundations of sustainable development. Institutional capacity was reflected through coordinated donation collection, asset procurement, beneficiary selection, monitoring, and reporting systems. Transparency and accountability strengthened donor trust, supporting the arguments of Emerson and Nabatchi

(2015) regarding governance and coordination capacity, as well as Scheirer and Dearing (2011) regarding institutional foundations for sustainable empowerment.

Social capital also played an important role in maintaining program sustainability through trust, shared norms, and networks among managers, donors, beneficiaries, village government, and community leaders. Donor confidence and beneficiary commitment to maintaining livestock were strengthened by the revolving asset mechanism, demonstrating that social capital functions as a collective resource supporting cooperation and resilience (Woolcock, 1998). This finding is consistent with ABCD perspectives, which highlight social networks as important community assets for sustaining collective action (Ennis & West, 2010). Furthermore, participation from donors, beneficiaries, and local stakeholders strengthened program legitimacy and implementation, supporting the principles of ABCD proposed by McKnight and Kretzmann (1993) and Harrison et al. (2019), as well as findings from Bela et al. (2024) and Najamudin and Al Fajar (2024) that emphasize the role of participation and local resource utilization in sustainable empowerment.

Program governance and productive asset management further strengthened sustainability through transparent procedures, beneficiary selection, and the revolving asset mechanism, which enabled benefits to expand beyond initial recipients. Unlike consumptive assistance, productive assets generate recurring social and economic benefits by allowing livestock offspring to be distributed to subsequent beneficiaries. This mechanism reflects productive asset utilization principles, where assets are managed to create long-term benefits (Ascarya et al., 2022; Ascarya et al., 2023). The sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program results from the integration of institutional capacity, social capital, community participation, program governance, and productive asset management, forming an empowerment system capable of maintaining and expanding community benefits over time, as illustrated in Figure 6.

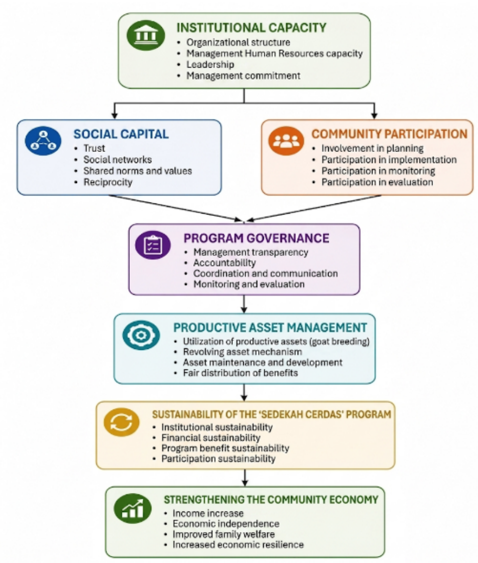

Figure 6. Supporting Factors for the Sustainability

Although the Sedekah Cerdas Program demonstrated positive development during 2015–2019, the findings indicate that program sustainability declined after 2019 due to the interaction of several internal and external challenges rather than a single factor. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation analysis, five main inhibiting factors were identified: changes in institutional priorities, limited human resources, reduced monitoring and mentoring intensity, the COVID-19 pandemic, and risks associated with productive asset management. These findings indicate that the sustainability of empowerment programs depends not only on successful implementation but also on organizational capacity to maintain resources, commitment, and adaptability in responding to changing conditions (Scheirer & Dearing, 2011). The main challenge was the shift in institutional priorities within LPK Matahari Abadi Jaya Indonesia after the COVID-19 pandemic, as increased demand for education and job training programs related to employment opportunities in Japan required greater organizational attention and resources. Consequently, the capacity for managing the Sedekah Cerdas Program decreased, resulting in reduced mentoring, monitoring, field coordination, and routine evaluation activities. This condition demonstrates that institutional capacity and organizational commitment are critical elements in sustaining community empowerment programs (Shediac-Rizkallah & Bone, 1998).

The COVID-19 pandemic further affected program continuity by limiting mobility, direct communication, field monitoring, and stakeholder coordination, particularly with donors among LPK MAJI alumni working in Japan. Reduced stakeholder interaction weakened social mechanisms that previously supported program sustainability, as social networks and collective engagement are important resources in asset-based community empowerment (Ennis & West, 2010). In addition, productive asset management challenges, including livestock health problems, feed availability, and beneficiaries' capacity to manage goats, affected the revolving asset process because some livestock could not be transferred to subsequent beneficiaries as planned. However, these challenges did not eliminate program benefits but highlighted the need for stronger monitoring systems, capacity building, and risk mitigation strategies. This finding aligns with the principles of productive asset-based empowerment, which emphasize that sustainable asset utilization requires continuous community involvement and institutional support (Ascarya et al., 2022). Therefore, strengthening institutional adaptation, stakeholder engagement, and productive asset management strategies remains essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program (Scheirer & Dearing, 2011). The main challenges and limiting factors identified in this study, including restricted stakeholder interaction, monitoring limitations, livestock management issues, and beneficiaries' capacity constraints, are presented in Figure 7, illustrating the factors inhibiting the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program.

Figure 7. Factors Inhibiting the Sustainability

4.2. Conceptual Model of Sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program

The research findings indicate that the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program is not determined by a single factor but by the interaction of interconnected factors that form a productive asset-based community empowerment system. Based on interviews, observations, documentation, and theoretical synthesis, this study developed a Conceptual Model of Sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program, which explains the relationship between institutional capacity, social capital, community participation, program governance, and productive asset management. The model positions institutional capacity as the fundamental factor supporting sustainability through leadership, organizational structure, coordination, and management commitment. Strong institutional capacity enables the establishment of transparent and accountable governance, which strengthens donor and community trust. Furthermore, institutional capacity supports the development of social capital through trust, networks, shared norms, and reciprocal relationships among managers, donors, and beneficiaries (Santoso et al., 2021).

The interaction between institutional capacity, social capital, and community participation forms effective program governance. Social capital encourages voluntary donor participation from LPK MAJI interns and alumni, while community participation is reflected through active involvement in maintaining productive assets and implementing the revolving asset mechanism (Rahman et al., 2022). Effective governance ensures transparency in donation management, beneficiary selection, asset distribution, reporting, and monitoring processes. This governance system strengthens productive asset management, allowing the revolving asset mechanism to continue operating and enabling program benefits to expand to subsequent beneficiaries. As illustrated in Figure 8, productive asset management contributes to program sustainability through institutional continuity, continued stakeholder participation, sustained economic benefits, and strengthened community economic empowerment.

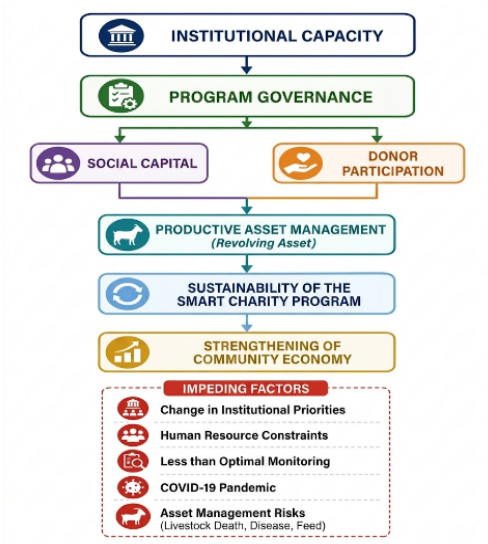

Figure 8. Sustainability Model

The conceptual model developed in this study extends the ABCD perspective proposed by McKnight and Kretzmann (1993). While previous ABCD studies emphasize the identification and utilization of local assets as the foundation of empowerment, this study demonstrates that the sustainability of productive asset-based programs depends not only on asset availability but also on institutional capacity, social capital, community participation, and effective governance. This finding reinforces the view that sustainable empowerment requires the integration of organizational, social, and managerial dimensions to optimize productive assets for community welfare (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; Harrison et al., 2019). Furthermore, this model complements the sustainability framework proposed by Scheirer and Dearing (2011), which highlights the importance of organizational capacity, resources, stakeholder support, and adaptability in maintaining long-term program benefits. Therefore, the sustainability model of the Sedekah Cerdas Program provides a conceptual reference for community organizations, philanthropic institutions, and policymakers in designing empowerment programs that generate continuous social and economic impacts.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program is shaped by the interaction between institutional, social, and managerial factors rather than by the availability of productive assets alone. This finding suggests that productive assets function as an empowerment instrument only when supported by an organizational system capable of managing, maintaining, and expanding their benefits. Therefore, the sustainability of community empowerment programs requires a shift in perspective from asset provision toward the development of institutional capacity and collective management mechanisms. This finding strengthens the argument of Scheirer and Dearing (2011) that program sustainability depends on an organization's ability to maintain resources, leadership, support systems, and adaptability to changing conditions.

The role of institutional capacity identified in this study demonstrates that strong organizational foundations are essential for transforming productive assets into sustainable community benefits. The findings indicate that leadership commitment, coordination mechanisms, and accountability practices become important elements in maintaining stakeholder trust and program continuity. This finding expands previous studies on community empowerment, which often emphasize asset utilization as the main driver of development. In contrast, this study shows that assets require institutional arrangements to ensure that benefits can continue beyond the initial implementation phase. This perspective is consistent with Emerson and Nabatchi (2015), who emphasized that institutional capacity enables organizations to establish effective governance, coordination, and accountability within collaborative initiatives.

Furthermore, this study highlights that social capital plays a strategic role in connecting institutional capacity with community participation. Trust, reciprocal relationships, and social networks among managers, donors, and beneficiaries support the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program. This finding indicates that empowerment programs are not only economic mechanisms but also social systems built through collective commitment. The result supports Woolcock (1998), who explained that social capital functions as a collective resource that strengthens cooperation and development processes. It also aligns with Ennis and West (2010), who argued that social networks are important resources in ABCD because they facilitate collective action and strengthen community capacity.

The findings also contribute to the development of the ABCD perspective by demonstrating that community empowerment based on productive assets requires more than identifying local resources. The sustainability of such programs depends on how communities and organizations manage relationships, participation, and governance around these assets. Previous ABCD studies have emphasized the importance of community ownership and local asset utilization (Mathie et al., 2017; Harrison et al., 2019). This study extends this perspective by showing that productive asset-based empowerment requires a sustainability mechanism, such as the revolving asset system, which enables benefits to continue circulating among community members. Thus, the research provides empirical evidence that ABCD principles can be strengthened through institutional and governance dimensions.

In addition, the findings reveal that program sustainability is vulnerable when institutional adaptation is limited. Changes in organizational priorities, reduced mentoring intensity, and external disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate that empowerment programs require continuous adjustment to maintain their effectiveness. This finding supports Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone (1998), who stated that sustainability is not merely the continuation of activities but the ability of organizations to preserve program benefits despite environmental changes. Therefore, the sustainability of productive asset-based empowerment programs depends on the integration of institutional capacity, social capital, participation, governance, and adaptive management. The conceptual model developed in this study contributes by explaining how these factors interact to maintain long-term community empowerment outcomes.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that the sustainability of the Sedekah Cerdas Program is determined by the interaction of institutional capacity, social capital, donor and community participation, program governance, and productive asset management through a revolving asset mechanism. The findings show that productive assets alone are insufficient to ensure long-term empowerment outcomes; rather, sustainability depends on the ability of organizations to build effective management systems, maintain stakeholder trust, encourage collective participation, and adapt to internal and external changes. The conceptual model developed in this study implies that productive asset-based empowerment programs should prioritize institutional strengthening and collaborative governance, rather than focusing only on asset distribution. This model provides practical implications for community organizations, philanthropic institutions, and policymakers in designing sustainable empowerment programs.

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses on a single case study, namely the Sedekah Cerdas Program in Ngargoharjo Village, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other empowerment programs with different characteristics. Second, the qualitative approach provides an in-depth understanding of program sustainability but does not quantitatively measure the relative influence of each identified factor. Future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across different productive asset-based empowerment programs and develop quantitative models to examine the relationship between institutional capacity, social capital, participation, governance, and program sustainability. Further studies may also explore the long-term economic impact of revolving asset mechanisms on household welfare and community resilience.

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