



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Participation of the Middle Class of the Local Community in the Village Sustainable Development Goals Program in West Java, Indonesia

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This study examines the participation of the middle class of local communities in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) program of Villages in West Java Province, Indonesia, which aims to integrate sustainable development goals into policies and activities at the village level. Although the program has been running, the participation of citizens, especially the middle class, is still minimal. The research method uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through field research, participatory observations, literary research, and in-depth interviews with middle class members and related stakeholders. The key findings indicate that the middle class plays an active role in physical development and improving local capacity in resource management, with significant support for the sustainability of the SDGs programmes at the village level. The complexity of economic, social, and cultural factors has affected their participation, as well as its implications for achieving the goals of sustainable development. This research contributes to an in-depth understanding of the role of the middle class in the context of village development, with implications for the development of more inclusive and sustainable policies in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has implemented the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) programme as part of its global commitment to achieving sustainable development (Leal Filho et al., 2020). One of the important initiatives in the implementation of the SDGs in Indonesia is the Village SDGs Program. The implementation of the village SDGs is regulated in the Regulations of the Minister of Rural Development, Deserted Areas and Transmigration No. 21 of 2020 on the General Guidelines for Rural Development and the Empowerment of the Village Community. The regulations contain 18 targeted village development goals (SDGs) adapted from the global SDGs namely: villages without poverty, village without hunger, village healthy and prosperous, village education of quality, village women's involvement, village worthy of clean water and sanitation, village clean and renewable energy, village economic growth equal, village innovation and infrastructure, village unparalleled, village sustainable, village consumption and production responsible, village responsive to climate change, village caring for the marine environment, village care for the land environment, peaceful village

justice, partnership for village development, and village institutions dynamic culture and adaptative challenges.

Although the village SGDs program has been running for a long time, the participation of citizens in the program is still minimal. Data from a survey conducted by the Centre for Indonesia's Strategic Development Initiatives (CISDI) in July 2020 of 419 respondents aged 18 to 60 showed a significant gap between government and society at the root level. The majority of respondents stated that they were unaware of the SDGs, with 53 per cent of them finding them difficult to understand and limited to academics and social workers. In addition, an online survey in April 2019 of 53 respondents related to the government's constraints of the Civil Society Organization (CSO) in achieving the SDGs in Indonesia showed that many communities have not been engaged in the efforts to the SDGs. This low participation is due to various factors, such as a lack of socialization, a minimal public understanding of the importance of the SDGs, and restricted access to the information and resources needed to participate in the programmes.

The middle class is one of the key elements in the success of the MDGs by having better access to resources and information, as well as the ability to mobilize change at the local level (Chun et al., 2016). According to a Wiemann study (2015), middle-class participation in development programmes such as the SDGs can be a significant driver in achieving sustainable development goals because these groups have the potential to make substantial contributions in various aspects, including economic, social, and environmental. In some countries, the middle class plays a role in national development such as in Mozambique (Brooks, 2018), Nigeria (Ahonkhai et al., 2022), India (Baviskar & Ray, 2020), England (Crossick, 2021), and China (Dai & Menhas, 2020).

In Indonesia, one region with low participation rates is the West Java Province, which is actually one of the edges of the implementation of the SDGs in Indonesia. West Java has four SGDs centres that represent the largest number in Indonesia so it could be a potential success for the village SGD. However, although West Java has great potential to be a model for the implementation of the SDGs, public participation in the program is still low. Data from the BPN/Bappenas Indonesian Ministry (2023) show that citizen participation in West Java is still low at 38%. The majority of citizens' participation is also still clinging to the top down policy of the government that does not involve all lines of life especially the clans. It is ironic considering the importance of this province in achieving national SDGs targets. Therefore, research that photographs middle-class citizens' participation in the Village SDGs programmes, in the West Java region, becomes important in order to understand the factors that influence their involvement and identify strategies that can be used to increase participation.

Research on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in recent years has shown certain tendencies. First, the study of the post-COVID-19 pandemic SDGs, as done by Bose and Khan (2022), who studied the reporting of SDG by companies around the world, as well as the role of institutional factors at the country level. This study shows that SDG reporting is on the rise, despite differences between states with strong sustainability regulations and states that are more shareholder-oriented than stakeholders. In addition, Sharma et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of a circular economy approach in waste management systems to support the post-COVID-19 pandemic green recovery, which can help UN-SDG targets. Secondly, studies on the role of higher education institutions in supporting SDGs are growing. Kioupi and Voulvoulis (2020) developed an assessment framework to evaluate the contribution of educational programmes to sustainability, while Abad-Segura dan González-Zamar (2021) explored the global evolution of scientific production and research trends related to sustainable economic development in higher education institutions. Caputo et al. (2021) assessed sustainability reporting practices by higher education institutions and found that attention to social and environmental issues is increasing.

Third, there is a tendency in studying Big Data in the context of SDGs. Hassani et al. (2021) highlighted the impact of Big Data on sustainable development, while ElMassah and Mohieldin (2020) discussed how digital transformation can support localization and achievement of SDGs. Parmentola et al. (2022) explored the potential of blockchain in improving environmental sustainability, and Sætra (2021) proposed a framework to evaluate and reveal the ESG-related impact of artificial intelligence (AI) based on the SDGs.

However, there is a literature gap in research on the role of the social class, especially the middle class in the SDGs programmes. Similarly, in Indonesia, where SDGs studies are still focused on fisheries and marine resources, such as the Puspitawati et al. study (2022) which examines regulatory reform designs in fisheries cultivation as well as the urgency of legislative reforms and cross-sectoral participatory enforcement models. In addition, Hiratsuka et al. (2019) evaluated land and forest conservation initiatives through public participation in the Southern Kalimantan Province. Akbar et al. (2020) studied participatory processes in rural planning practices in Indonesia, with SDGs-based evaluation. Sumardjo et al. (2023) investigated social transformation in peri-urban communities towards food sustainability and achievement of SDGs in the era of disruption. Abidin & Prasetyani (2021) studied the empowerment model of women farmers to support the SDGs, focusing on empowering patterns in the agricultural sector. Dariah et al. (2019) explored the framework for sustainable development planning through strategic planning approaches involving various stakeholders. Mazdalifah et al. (2024) researched media literacy and ICT skills in increasing women's participation towards SDGs in plantation communities. Nurbaiti & Bambang (2018) researched public participation in clean water and community-based sanitation programmes in rural areas. Finally, Azahari et al. (2024) studied the role of gender in palm coconut plantation villages for the achievement of the SDGs, highlighting women's role in livelihood security and their participation in civil society development.

Most research focuses on participatory initiatives in specific sectors such as fishing, agriculture, and forest conservation, but none specifically explores public participation in more holistic Village SDGs programmes. Therefore, this research has a novelty in some aspects. The geographical focus on West Java will specifically examine the participation of the local middle class in the village SDGs program, providing a more contextual and specific understanding of the region. The emphasis on the middle class of local communities will explore the role and involvement of the middle classes, which often get less attention in the study of community participation, but have great potential in supporting the success of the SDGs program. (Levy, 1996). The holistic approach to the Village SDGs programme will integrate the various aspects of community participation in the context of the Village SGs program in a holistic manner, covering the understanding, engagement, and contribution of the community in achieving the goals of sustainable development.

Thus, the study aims to explore the participation of the middle class of local communities in the Village SDGs programme in the West Java Province. The research aims at identifying factors that influence middle class involvement in the programme, as well as exploring strategies that can be used to enhance their participation. By highlighting the role and contribution of middle classes, the research contributes to a deeper insight into the dynamics of public participation in achieving the goals of sustainable development, and offers practical and contextual recommendations for policymakers to improve the effectiveness of the Village SGs program in the region. The middle class plays an important role in supporting the economic, social, and environmental aspects of the Village SDGs in Indonesia. They have better access to resources and information, as well as the ability to mobilize change at the local level, as has been demonstrated in some case studies in other countries. (Ahonkhai et al., 2022; Brooks, 2018; Chun et al., 2016). Nevertheless, their participation is still hampered by factors such as internal busy and social media influence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the processes of community engagement that derives from social interaction is community participation (Gui et al., 2022). Public participation refers to a variety of concepts and frameworks that explain how and why individuals or groups in society participate in development activities or social programmes. According to Arnstein (1969) public participation can be seen from a wide spectrum, ranging from non-participation to citizen power.

Meanwhile, according to Cohen dan Uphof (1977), participation refers to the contribution and active role of the community in various development programmes that cover the stages of planning, implementation, use of results, and evaluation. However, public participation in development also often encounters barriers such as lack of information and awareness, mistrust of the authorities or organizations organizing the programmes, and limited resources such as time and funds. Cultural barriers, such as social norms that restrict the participation of certain groups, for example women, also play a significant role.

According to Bowen (2021), classes are those that are able to meet the hierarchy of needs of Abraham Maslow, namely: self-actualization, appreciation, affection, sense of security, and physiological needs. Meanwhile, according to Verba et al., (1996), the middle class tends to participate more in development activities and social programmes than the other economic classes.

Table 1: Production per Capitan middle class according to ADB

Asia Development Bank (ADB)	
Category	Per Capita Output (in USD)
Lower - Middle Class	US\$ 2-4
Middle - Middle Class	US\$ 4-10
Upper - Middle Class	US\$ 10-20

Source: (Andrianjaka & Riana, 2017)

Table 2: Middle Class Per Capita Expenditure according to BCG

Boston Consulting Group (BCG)	
Category	Monthly Withdrawal in Rupiah (IDR)
Poor Middle	< IDR 1,000,000
Aspirant Middle	IDR 1,000,000 – IDR 1,500,000
Emerging Middle	IDR 1,500,000 – IDR 2,000,000
Middle	IDR 2,000,000 – IDR 3,000,000
Upper Middle	IDR 3,000,000 – IDR 5,000,000
Tributary	IDR 5,000,000 – IDR 7,500,000
Elite	> IDR 7,500,000

Source: (Rastogi et al., 2013)

Table 1 of the Asia Development Bank (ADB) and Table 2 of the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) provide a different overview of the classification and per capita expenditure for the middle class.

According to the ADB, the middle classes are divided into three categories based on per-capita spending in USD, with the Lower-Middle Class having spending between US\$ 2 to US\$ 4, the Middle-Class between US \$ 4 to US \$ 10, and the Upper-Mittle Class between US dollars 10 to US dollars 20 (Andrianjaka & Riana, 2017). On the other hand, the BCG classifies the middle-class on the basis of monthly expenditures in Rupee (IDR), with categories such as the Poor Middle who have spending less than Rs 1,000,000 per month, up to with the Elite spending more than Rs 7.500.000 per month. These differences reflect variations in approaches to measurement and classification of the middle class, which can affect the economic and social analysis carried out by governments and related organizations in developing policies for development and resource distribution in an inclusive manner. (Rastogi et al., 2013).

The middle class plays a crucial role in sustainable development, especially in the context of the SDGs in Indonesia. Factors such as effective persuasion strategies, as found by Snyder et al. as well as leadership that utilizes the assets and policies of the city to encourage public participation, such as in the 'Clear the Air Challenge' campaign in Salt Lake City Johnston et al. (2013), have proven to drive positive collective action. Social media also plays an important role in reducing digital gaps and facilitating collaboration on development issues, as illustrated by Ali (2011) and Gaál et al. (2015). Existing social systems, such as *gotong royong* values that are integrated into ecosystem management, also provide a strong foundation for public participation in sustainable development efforts, as discussed by Ives and Kendal (2014) as well as Grootaert and Van Bastelaer (2002).

Philanthropy, both from companies and citizens, has a significant impact in supporting sustainable development initiatives. Research by Yu Yu (2020) shows that the contribution of corporate philanthropy not only improves the corporate image but also supports economic growth. In addition, citizen participation in local philanthropy, as emphasized by Thomson (2021) and Sciortino (2017), has an important role in supporting local policies and governance, as well as promoting village development and SDGs initiatives. Literacy factors among the middle class, which improve access to education and information, also strengthen their ability to participate in development initiatives, as found by Chun et al. (2016) and Power et al. (2003). The socio-economic transformation in China, studied by Lin (2015), affirms that education is the key to social mobility for the middle class, while the 'parentocracy' ideology, as analyzed by Barrett DeWiele & Edgerton (2016), illustrates how the middle classes manage their children's education to maximize their chances of life, reflecting the reality of social inequality in today's educational context.

However, there are some challenges to overcome so that the middle class can maximize its contribution to the SDGs. Factors hindering the participation of villagers in development activities include time and resource constraints due to population migration to cities, as studied by Mansuri and Rao (2012) and Au and Henderson (2006). The study highlights that the success of local participation depends heavily on the ability to integrate citizens' schedules and needs with development programmes. Bartik (2020) stressed the importance of local economic development policies to create jobs in the areas of origin, reducing the need for migration to cities. In addition, the impact of digital, social media use on adolescents, as studied by Bozzola et al. (2022) and Roberts and Marchais (2018), also leads to social isolation and a decrease in participation in community activities in the village, given that adolescents are more likely to spend time on digital entertainment than participating in traditional group activities.

By strengthening the role of the middle class in sustainable development, it can increase the capacity to the SDGs targets more effectively. An inclusive and community-based approach, as advocated by Akbar et al. (2020) in the context of public participation in village development planning, is key to ensuring that middle-class contributions not only have a positive impact economically but also socially and environmentally.

METHOD

The study adopted a qualitative approach to investigating the participation of the middle class of local communities in the Village SDGs program in the West Java Province, Indonesia. This approach was chosen because it provided flexibility to deepen participants' perceptions, motivations, and experiences, as well as to capture the complexities and social contexts that affect their involvement in sustainable development programmes (Lune & Berg, 2017).

To gather field data, research was carried out through field research in two selected villages, namely Kadugede Village in Kuningan District and Kebonpedes Village in Sukabumi District, West Java, Indonesia. Both villages were chosen for their achievements in the implementation of the nationally recognised villages SDGs by 2023 (Aulia, 2023). The field research process runs from March 1st to May 3rd 2024, involving participatory observations and field records to gain a direct understanding of the implementation of the program as well as public interaction with the SDGs initiatives.

In addition, interviews are used as a technique to gather in-depth data from various stakeholders, including district government, village heads, other village entities, village SDGs programme implementers, private elements, and villagers from the middle class. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain a diverse perspective on the factors affecting participation in the rural SDGs programmes especially for the middle class as well as to understand their practical experience in contributing to the goals of sustainable development. Literature research data collection is also carried out as part of the methodology, focusing on the search and analysis of documents from academic journals, state reports, village documents, and national and international survey reports. This approach aims to deepen the theoretical and empirical understanding of the factors affecting public participation in the SDGs programmes, as well as to highlight best practices and lessons learned from the implementation of similar programmes in a variety of contexts.

Data analysis is carried out by organizing and presenting collected data using data restatement and data display techniques, such as tables, graphs, and descriptive narratives (Miles & Huberman, 2013). Data interpretation is done by applying the Miles and Hubermann analysis model to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between data, thus generating a deep understanding of the dynamics of middle class participation in achieving sustainable development goals through the Village SDGs program in the West Java Province.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. SDGs implementation in West Java, Indonesia

The West Java Province is located on the island of Java, with an area of 37,087.92 km². The province borders the Java Sea, the Indian Ocean, the DKI province of Jakarta, the Banten province, and the Central Java province. Administratively, West Java is divided into 18 districts and 9 towns. The topography is varied: the southern part consists of steep mountains (9,5%), the central part has a sloping slope (36.48%), and the northern part is a vast plain (54.02%). (Localise SDGs Indonesia, 2023).

The population of West Java Province is projected to reach 49.935.858 by 2020, with a population growth rate of 1.49%. Bogor District has the largest population, while Banjar City has the smallest population. The average population density was 1,412 people/km², and the population dependency ratio was 46.57%. In 2019, Gross Regional Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 5.07% to Rs. 1.491.705.81 billion, with the processing industry as the main contributor. Per capita income reached Rs. 43,092 million, while Regional Real Income (PAD) continued to increase from 2015 to 2019, with PAD 2019 reaching Rs. 19.759.78 billion (Localise SDGs Indonesia, 2023).

In the implementation of the SDGs, the West Java Province has established four SDG centres, namely at Padjadjaran University (UNPAD), Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB), Bandung Institute of

Technology (ITB), and Telkom University, as well as has the Secretariat of SDG under the Government and Social Cultural Affairs of the Bappeda Province of West Java.

So far, sustainable development (SDGs) in West Java has been a success. That success is seen in the increasing elements of life. Citing data from the Localise SDGs Indonesia (2023), the poverty rate in West Java has fallen from 7.45% in 2018 to 6.91% in 2019, but has risen again to 7.88% in March 2020. The Gini ratio also increased to 0.403 in 2020 from 0.402 in 2019, indicating an increase in social disparity. The percentage of uninsured citizens rose from 3.21% in 2019 to 3.63% in 2020. The literacy rate for the population aged 15 and over rose from 98.48% in 2018 to 98.53% in 2019 and 98.63% in 2020.

In addition, the Human Development Index (HDI) rose from 71.30 in 2018 to 72.03 in 2019 and 72.09 in 2020. Households with access to clean drinking water increased from 72.38% in 2019 to 75.44% in 2020, while houses with adequate sanitation rose from 69.64% to 71.40% in the same period. Babies receiving exclusive breastfeeding increased from 71.11% in 2019 to 76.11% by 2020. The manufacturing industry's contribution to the regional gross domestic product (GDP) dropped slightly from 42.82% in the first quarter of 2019 to 42.47% in the second quarter. The total length of the road in West Java in 2018 reached 23.528.11 km, with 13.085.16 km of which in good condition.

The success of the SDGs programme in West Java is also reflected in the implementation of the village SDG, which has integrated the principles of sustainable development into local policy planning and implementation. The programme covers a range of initiatives, ranging from improved access to health and education services to sustainable infrastructure development. For example, programs to improve access to clean water and decent sanitation have had a significant positive impact, with a significant increase in the percentage of households having access to decent drinking water and sanitation in recent years. In addition, efforts to improve literacy and access to education have contributed significantly to the improvement of the Human Development Index (HDI) in the province.

Nevertheless, the challenges remain, such as the lowest level of public participation in the SDGs, especially for those in the middle class. Strategic steps to address these challenges are needed by strengthening social protection programmes and optimizing the distribution of available resources. Support must also be carried out with active public involvement as well as good coordination between local governments, the private sector, and international institutions. Thus, efforts to the SDGs targets in West Java can take place in a sustainable and inclusive manner, integrating the various parties in support of sustainable development in the region.

2. Middle class participation in rural SDGs

The two regions that became the model for the development of SDGs in West Java are Kadugede Village, Kuningan District and Kebonpedes Village, Sukabumi District. In Kadugede Village, Kuningan District, the total population is 2,207, with 671 of them classified as middle class. This classification is based on monthly income that includes the Emerging Middle (Rp 1,500,000 – Rp 2,000,000) and the Middle (Rp 2,000,000 – Rp 3,000,000) according to a study by the Boston Consulting Group. (BCG). Of the 671 middle-class inhabitants of the village of Kadugede, 450 are male and 221 are female. Their jobs are varied, including farmer, civil officer, military, Police, entrepreneurs, and private officials.

Table 3: Total middle class population in Kadugede Village

Gender	Total Population
Man	450

Woman	221
Total	671

Meanwhile, in the village of Kebonpedes, the total population was 1,821 people, with 625 of whom belonged to the middle class under the same category. Of these, 511 were men and 114 were women. As in Kadugede Village, the middle class in Kebonpedes Village also works as farmer, civil officer, military, police, entrepreneurs, and private officials (Desa Kebonpedes, 2023).

Table 4. Number of middle class population in Kebonpedes Village

Gender	Total Population
Man	511
Woman	114
Total	625

Source: Village of Kebondedes, 2023.

The income used as the basis for the categorization of the middle class, namely the Emerging Middle and Middle, indicates that the majority of middle classes residents in the Kadugede Village and Kebonpedes Village have relatively good economic stability. With an income of between Rs. 1,500,000 and Rs. 3,000,000 per month, they are able to meet basic needs and have a little more financial availability compared to low-income groups.

In the village of Kadugede, men belonging to the middle class amounted to 450 people, mostly working as farmer, civil officer, military, police, entrepreneurs, and private employees. Meanwhile, women belonged to middle class as much as 221 people, who also contributed to the economy of the village through various professions similar to men. In the village of Kebonpedes, there are 511 middle-class men with a variety of jobs including farmer, civil officer, military, police, entrepreneurs, and private employees. The number of middle class women in this village is 114 people, who are also engaged in jobs that help stabilize the family's economy (Desa Kadugede, 2023).

With the significant number of middle-class residents in both villages, their participation in the Village SDGs program becomes crucial. The middle class with a fixed and relatively stable income is expected to be the driving force in sustainable village development. Their active involvement in various village activities can improve the effectiveness of the programmes and encourage wider participation from other communities. In this context, the middle class acts not only as a beneficiary, but also as an agent of change that can lead villages towards achieving sustainable development goals.

In his participation in the village SDGs, the middle class in both villages was very active. Based on the results of searches through interviews obtained that the participation rate of the middle class in the SDGs is very high. These are outlined in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 5. Middle class participation level in the village SDGs program in Kadugede Village

Activity	Middle Class Participation (%)	General Public Participation (%)	Participation of Other Groups (%)
Program Planning	75	50	60
Program Implementation	80	55	65
Monitoring and Evaluation	70	45	55
Training and Workshops	85	60	70

Socialization and Education	90	65	75
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Source: Research Results, 2024.

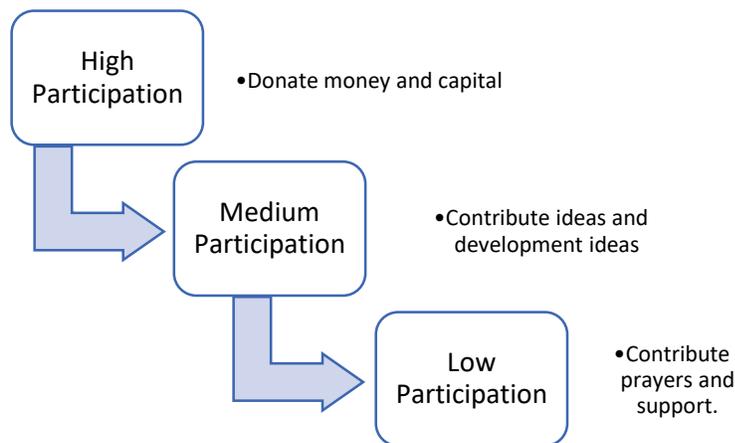
Table 6. Level of middle class participation in the village SDGs program in Kebonpedes Village

Activity	Middle Class Participation (%)	General Public Participation (%)	Participation of Other Groups (%)
Program Planning	70	55	65
Program Implementation	75	60	70
Monitoring and Evaluation	65	50	60
Training and Workshops	80	65	75
Socialization and Education	85	70	80

Source: Research Results, 2024.

The research results show that the level of middle classes participation in the Village SDGs program in Kadugede Village and Kebonpedes Village is high compared to the participation of the general public and other groups. In Kadugede, the participation of the middle class in program planning reached 75%, program execution 80%, monitoring and evaluation 70%, training and workshops 85%, and socialization and education 90%. Meanwhile, in Kebonpedes, middle class participation in programme planning was 70%, program implementation was 75%, surveillance and assessment were 65%, training, workshops were 80%, socialisation and education were 85%. Comparison of participation rates showed that the middle classes had a higher participation rate in all activities of the SDGs than the general public and other groups. It shows that the middle class is more active and engaged in various aspects of the program, from planning to socialization and education. This high participation can be attributed to better access to the information, resources, and opportunities that the middle class has.

Furthermore, these types of citizen participation in the village SDGs are through several levels ranging from the lowest level to the higher level.



Source: Research results, 2024.

Figure 1: Types of middle classes participation in Rural SDGs

The types of citizen participation in the village SDGs program vary from low to high. In Kadugede Village, middle-class participation in the two main aspects of the Village SDGs, namely the construction of clean water and sanitation facilities and the development of village infrastructure, makes a significant contribution to achieving the goals of sustainable development.

In an effort to clean water and sanitation, Kadugede Village focuses on the construction of decent toilets for citizens who do not have such facilities. The middle classes participation in the program is divided into three levels: High Participation, Medium Participation and Low Participation. Some middle-class citizens with high participation rates donate money and capital to build decent toilets for their underprivileged neighbors. They not only provide funding, but also ensure that the construction meets good health and hygiene standards. Moreover, the middle class with a medium level of participation plays an active role by contributing ideas and ideas related to the design and location of the construction of sanitation facilities. They participate in village meetings, providing valuable input that helps optimize the use of funds and resources. At a low level of participation, some middle-class citizens donate prayer and moral support to those directly involved in the development project. Although this involvement is not material, it gives the project enthusiasm and motivation.

"Many middle-class citizens do not receive government assistance like the Hope Family Program (PKH) but they are able to live independently and play an active role in helping to build the village. "They contribute both financially and innovative ideas, which are very helpful in the realization of various village projects."(Maman Abdurohman, Head of Kadugede Village, Interview, March 7, 2024).

The active involvement of the middle class in the village SDGs program in Kadugede shows that public participation does not depend solely on government assistance. Citizens who have financial independence can be the driving force in village development, ensuring that each project runs smoothly and achieves its goals. (Snyder et al., 2009). This participation not only accelerates development, but also increases the sense of community and social responsibility among the villagers.

While in Kebonpedes Village, the construction and improvement of village access roads is another focus of the village SDGs. Middle-class citizens participate in the program through various types of participation. At a high level of participation, middle-class citizens donate money and capital to the construction of village roads. This aid allows the villages to buy high-quality materials and pay for skilled farmer. At a medium level of participation, they contribute by providing ideas and ideas on road repairs and construction. These ideas include the selection of durable materials and efficient construction methods. Prayer and enthusiasm support is also provided by the middle class at low participation rates, which helps raise morality and motivation for workers and the parties involved in the project.

"The contribution of middle-class citizens is enormous in the road construction project in our village. They are often the backbone of various development activities. Citizens who have the financial capacity provide substantial funding assistance, while others participate by providing creative ideas and innovative solutions to improve village roads and bridges. Even the moral support and prayer of those who cannot contribute materially remains very valuable to us." (Asep Mahmudin, Head of Kebonpedes Village, Interview, March 7, 2024).

Therefore, the head of Kebonpedes village, Asep Mahmudin, appreciated the active role of the middle class in building the village independently. According to him, the middle class in Kebonpedes has an important role to play in ensuring the success of the development projects. Their participation not only accelerates the development process, but also increases the sense of community and social

responsibility among the villagers. Asep Mahmudin stressed that with solidarity and active participation, the goal of sustainable development can be achieved, so that the quality of life of all villagers improves. Significant contributions from middle-class citizens, both in the form of funding aid and creative ideas, are the backbone of various development activities in the village. The moral support of citizens who cannot contribute materially is also valuable and helps ensure the success of projects under way.

Research results in Kadugede Village and Kebonpedes Village show that middle-class participation in the Village SDGs program has a significant contribution to achieving the goals of sustainable development. These findings are in line with the various concepts and frameworks that explain public participation in development, as expressed by Gui et al. (2022). Public participation can be seen as a process of community engagement that derives from social interaction, which covers various levels of contribution ranging from non-participation to citizen power, as described by Arnstein (1969).

Thus, the results of this study show that the participation of the middle class in the village SDGs programmes in Kadugede and Kebonpedes is very important and has a significant impact on achieving the goals of sustainable development. Support from some literature also reinforces these findings, suggesting that with active and inclusive participation, the middle class can be the driving force in sustainable village development.

3. Factors influencing participation

Factors affecting the participation of the middle class in the village SDGs program in Kadugede and Kebonpedes are influenced by various drivers and inhibitors. The results of the research indicate six driving factors: the persuasion factor of the village apparatus, the social media factor, the inherent social system factor, protection value factor among fellow citizens, philanthropy factor, and literacy factor. In the villages of Kadugede and Kebonpedes, West Java, the persuasion factor of the village apparatus, especially the village heads and cadres, played a crucial role in increasing public participation in development activities. Research by Snyder et al. (2009), suggests that effective persuasion strategies can motivate collective action and increase participation in social activities. Moreover, the approach of Johnston et al. (2013) on effective leadership that uses city assets and partnerships to encourage participation, as in the 'Clear the Air Challenge' in Salt Lake City, is relevant to the strategies used in the two villages. Burgess (2016) and Robinson et al. (2014), also highlighted the importance of persuasion techniques and effective leadership models in mobilizing public participation, which were applied similarly in Kadugede and Kebonpedes to promote sustainable development through active community participation.

The persuasion factor of the village apparatus, with its curious and collaborative leadership strategy, is very effective in increasing public participation. This approach, supported by the above research, suggests that public participation can be enhanced through appropriate persuasion strategies, effective leadership, and collaboration between the village apparatus and the community. In the villages of Kadugede and Kebonpedes, persuasion factors have succeeded in encouraging people to participate actively in social and development activities, which in turn contribute to achieving the goals of sustainable development.

Second, the social media factor. Social media has become an important element in modern life, including in villages. Direct and practical social media, like WhatsApp, serves as a communication tool that connects villagers and promotes village development activities. For example, when Kadugede Village builds toilets and clean water connections, one citizen uses social media to invite other citizens to participate. The presence of social media is becoming crucial to supporting the successful implementation of the SDGs in the villages.

In Kadugede and Kebonpedes villages, West Java, social media, like WhatsApp, has proven to be an effective tool in coordinating and mobilizing communities to participate in development projects. It is in line with Ali's research (2011) highlighting the role of social media in closing global digital gaps and facilitating collective discussion and action at levels previously unattainable. A study by Gaál et al. (2015) showed that social media enables knowledge sharing and collaboration among individuals, while a study by Bharati et al. (2015) confirmed its positive impact on knowledge management and the quality of organizational knowledge through the use of social capital. In the context of these villages, the use of social media strengthens communication, increases public participation, and promotes cooperation in the pursuit of sustainable development goals.

Thirdly, inherent social system factors. Inherently social systems, like *gotong royong* values, are vital elements in societies that serve to bind each other and support the completion of environmental work without reward. This system enables the implementation of the village's SDGs program to run effectively, as people are used to working together and helping each other in completing various tasks and projects.

In Kadugede and Kebonpedes villages, social values, especially *gotong royong*, play a central role in influencing public participation in village development activities. Research by Ives and Kendal (2014) highlights that social values such as *gotong royong* influence public perceptions, attitudes, and behaviour towards ecosystem management and conservation, which can increase acceptance of management activities. Moreover, the Thomas study (2020) shows that projects rooted in existing social systems, such as *gotong royong*, tend to be more successful in mobilizing public participation because they are able to adapt to community dynamics. The social capital formed through the practice of *gotong royong* has also been shown to facilitate the provision of goods and services as well as support poverty reduction and rural development, as affirmed by Grootaert and Van Bastelaer (2002). Thus, *gotong royong* practices in these two villages not only strengthen social cooperation, but also enhance the success and sustainability of the effective implementation of the SDGs programmes.

Fourth, the value factor of protection among citizens. The value factor for protection between citizens serves to protect the community from the aspects of security, comfort, and order. The systems found in Kadugede Village and Kebonpedes Village are Environmental Security Systems (*Siskamling*). *Siskamling* involves every family who provides their representation to guard the neighborhood in groups at night from 18:00 to 5:00 PM. This system helps to protect public and private assets from interference and threats from outside, as well as strengthening social bonds between citizens.

In social development, a sense of closeness among citizens becomes important in society as a feature of social cohesion. A study by Cheung et al. (2014) found that factors such as work-family conflict and medical costs became significant predictors in the level of social closeness between citizens in different communities, with Thailand showing the highest and Taiwan the lower. The *Siskamling* system in Kadugede Village and Kebonpedes Village reflects the values of protection that support social cohesion by involving citizens in environmental security. This approach not only protects against external threats, but also strengthens a sense of community and shared responsibility among villagers, in line with findings about the importance of social factors in building closeness among citizens as highlighted by the study of Cheung et al.

Fifth, the philanthropic factor. The philanthropic factor in the participation of villagers especially of the middle class has a strong basis on Islamic religious beliefs, which encourages them to give inputs and sadakah. This form of philanthropy is carried out daily, weekly, and monthly, with the aim of gaining ease in personal and social affairs. In some discussions, philanthropic factors contribute to improving the corporate image and economic performance (Yu, 2020). At the village level like Kadugede and Kebonpedes, philanthropy by citizens based on religious values such as infak and sadakah also plays an important role in

supporting village development and strengthening social cohesion (Sciortino, 2017). Studies show that philanthropic practices can serve as an important mechanism in supporting sustainable development, influencing local policies, and improving the overall well-being of communities (Thomson, 2021).

Sixth, literacy factor. This factor is the main driving force in which growing awareness of the surrounding citizens, especially those initiated by indigenous figures, religious figures, and public figures. They encourage citizens to preserve customs and positive habits that are inherent in culture. The public figures give an understanding that environmental protection is essential in everyday life. For example, the construction of clean water toilets in the village of Kadugede serves to keep the environment clean. There are also other examples of help from the youth of the village to help the poor as a manifestation of citizens' concern and efforts to avoid poverty in the village.

"We are taking the initiative of collecting aid from the citizens who are able to give every week to the orphans in this village. This is what we have been doing for a long time and has helped ease their burden." (Akang, Head of Youth Organization, Interview, April 5, 2024).

The middle class generally has better access to education and information, enabling them to have wider knowledge of issues of sustainable development and to participate actively in relevant initiatives. (Chun et al., 2016; Power et al., 2003). Higher education helps the middle class acquire the skills needed to support development programmes (Barrett DeWiele & Edgerton, 2016). For example, rapid economic growth in China has transformed the social landscape with the emergence of a new middle class that uses education as a means to enhance social mobility and economic success. (Lin, 2015). Education also plays a key role in encouraging the middle class to engage in the education of their children proactively. In Kadugede Village, the role of the middle class with a high educational literacy is becoming crucial in supporting the SDGs initiatives, both through a deeper understanding of development issues and through a real contribution to infrastructure development and social assistance. Meanwhile, some factors inhibiting the implementation of SDG in the village have two factors: first, the people's busy working in the city, and second, due to the impact of social media or digital media.

First, many citizens are busy working with the way to go to the city so they lack time to participate mainly in the activities of *Siskamling* and *gotong royong* internal development. For example, referring to the confession of a Kebonpedes citizen. Asep, 35, works in Sukabumi City as a private employee. His occupation made him rarely participate in social activities in his village. He has difficulty dividing time between working and engaging in social activities. (Asep, Worker, Interview March 15, 2024).

The issue of job migration has become a barrier to development in some countries. Research in China shows that restricting rural-to-city migration can reduce participation in village development activities (Au & Henderson, 2006). Bartik (2020) suggested that local economic development policies could create jobs in the areas of origin of citizens, reduce the need to migrate to cities and increase participation in community activities. In this context, it is important to manage migration and develop policies that support local economic development to increase public participation in village development.

Secondly, the other impediment is the digital impact that leads to lifestyle changes, especially among teenagers who tend to move their lifestyles ahead of fun and games, both of which lead to more people living alone and avoiding participation or group activities in the village.

Social media is always a boomerang. Besides being useful to life, it also preserves the potential for damage. The use of social media by children and adolescents, as studied by Bozzola et al. (2022), has shown various risks such as social isolation and decreased participation in community activities, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic that increased the use of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Although social media in online communication and learning, excessive use

can have a negative impact on adolescent mental health, reducing direct interaction and participation in *gotong royong* and *Siskamling* activities in the villages. Meanwhile, Roberts and Marchais (2018) highlighted that while social media provides access to critical information such as violence, distortion and manipulation of information can reduce data representativity and public participation in collective activities. It shows the importance of managing the impact of social media on community participation at the village level, where dependence on digital technology can divert attention from more direct and real social involvement.

Therefore, the factors driving middle class participation in the SDGs program in the villages of Kadugede and Kebonpedes, West Java, must be managed effectively by all relevant parties. By identifying and leveraging factors such as the persuasion of the village apparatus, effective social media, inherent social systems, values of protection among fellow citizens, religious-based philanthropy practices, and increased educational literacy, can help reduce barriers such as job migration and the negative impact of social media. Good management of these factors can optimize the active participation of the middle class in village development, as well as ensure the continuity of the SDGs programme implementation in its entirety. Thus, collaboration between local governments, communities, and other stakeholders becomes crucial to achieving the goals of sustainable development at the local level.

CONCLUSION

This research has found that the middle class has varying levels of participation, with most of them taking an active role in infrastructure programmes such as the provision of clean water and the development of road infrastructure, through two examples of cases in Kadugede Village and Kebonpedes, West Java. This participation is influenced by economic, social, and confidence in the long-term benefits of these programmes. The middle class also makes a significant contribution in providing specific human resources and expertise to support the sustainability of these programmes at the local level.

The results show that middle class participation in the village SDGs programmes not only contributes to physical development, but also to increased local capacity in managing and maintaining development outcomes. With the active participation of the middle class, there is a potential to increase the independence of local communities in addressing the challenges of sustainable development.

This research has a novelty that lies in a particular focus on the role of the middle class in the context of the Village SDGs programmes, which have rarely been studied in depth before. This research provides in-depth insight into how middle classes can play a role as agents of change in achieving sustainable development goals at the local level, as well as the factors affecting their participation.

However, the research also has a major limitation on the geographical coverage that is limited to West Java, so the findings cannot be directly published throughout Indonesia. Furthermore, the use of qualitative methodologies limits the generalization of these findings widely. For further research, it is recommended to broaden the geographical coverage as well as to consider a combined approach of quality and quantity to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of middle classes participation in sustainable development programmes. Although, this research has made significant contributions in deepening the understanding of the role of the middle class in supporting sustainable development agendas at the village level, as well as providing the basis for advanced research in a broader and diverse context.

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