

# Strategic Human Resource Development for Sustainable Village Based Tourism: Insights from Mekarwangi, Lembang, Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

Village-based tourism is increasingly viewed as a sustainable development strategy that integrates economic, cultural, and social aspects. However, human resource (HR) development in the context of tourism villages is often not implemented strategically. This study aims to explore HR development practices and strategies in the community-based tourism sector in Mekarwangi Village, Lembang. The main focus is directed at the relationship between local competence, collaboration between stakeholders, and institutional capacity. The research method used is a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design. A total of 12 informants, including tourism village managers, local business actors, village officials, and Pokdarwis members, were interviewed in depth using semi-structured techniques. The results of the study indicate that HR development is still informal and unstructured, with a striking competency gap. Collaboration between actors is not optimal, and institutional capacity does not fully support community potential. These findings emphasize the importance of a strategic HR development approach, based on local needs, and supported by collaborative governance. This study expands the theoretical scope of the concept Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD) in a local context and provides practical implications for the formulation of training policies and community empowerment in the rural tourism sector.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Village-based tourism has become one of the main pillars of sustainable development in Indonesia. In addition to providing economic contributions to local communities, this sector also plays an important role in preserving

culture, strengthening community identity, and protecting the natural environment. The government, through various programs such as Tourism Villages, actively encourages potential villages to develop their tourism sector independently and sustainably.

Mekarwangi Village, located in Lembang District, West Bandung Regency, West Java, is one of the villages that has begun to develop its tourism potential significantly. This village is known for its natural beauty and various local tourism businesses, such as community cafes, small inns, and open nature attractions. Despite its great potential, Mekarwangi Village faces various challenges in tourism management, especially related to the readiness of human resources (HR).

Data from the Lembang District BPS in Figures 2020 shows that the majority of the population of Mekarwangi Village has an education level of up to elementary and junior high school, with a number reaching thousands of people, while higher education levels such as diplomas and bachelor's degrees are still relatively low. This condition indicates a competency gap that can hinder professional and sustainable tourism management. The following is the distribution of education levels of the population of Mekarwangi Village in 2020 (Lembang District BPS, 2021)

**Table 1. Educatuon Level of The population Mekarwangi Village**

Level of education	Population (People)
Didn't Finish Elementary School	231
Graduated from elementary school	1.748
Graduated from junior high school	549
Graduated from high school	483
Finished D-1	13
Complete D-2	15
Complete D-3	27
End of S-1	224
End of S-2	47
End of S-3	48
Total	3.385

Source: Secondary data, 2025

In addition, the level of reading literacy in rural communities is also a challenge. Data from UNESCO (2020) shows that the level of reading literacy in rural communities in Indonesia is still around 60-70 percent, lower than in urban areas. This also has an impact on digital literacy, where Databoks Indonesia (2023) noted that only 49.8% of rural communities have high digital literacy, which can hinder the use of technology in promoting and managing tourist destinations in the current digital era.

Mekarwangi Village, located in the Lembang area, West Java, is one of the villages that has experienced rapid development in the tourism sector. Various businesses such as local cafes, community-based accommodation, and natural recreation attractions are growing rapidly. However, this progress has not been balanced with adequate human resource capacity. Access to formal training and skills certification is still very limited, while the managerial and digital competencies of village tourism actors are still low. These obstacles have the potential to reduce the quality of service and competitiveness of Mekarwangi Village in the competitive tourism market.

Furthermore, social character and community leadership patterns also influence the effectiveness of human resource development. Until now, there has been no human resource development model that is truly in accordance with local values and the needs of the local community. This condition emphasizes the need for in-depth studies to formulate strategic human resource development strategies that are also sensitive to the cultural context of the village.

In academic studies, Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD) is a key factor in increasing the competitiveness of the tourism sector, especially in rural areas. However, most studies are still macro and general, while specific contexts such as Mekarwangi Village have not been studied in depth. In fact, effective human resource development must consider local characteristics, cultural values, and unique community leadership patterns that cannot be generalized.

Several previous studies, such as Kusumawardhani et al. (2023), showed that a local needs-based and participatory HR development approach was effective in Sukajadi Tourism Village post-pandemic. However, there is not much evidence that similar strategies can be successfully implemented in villages with different characteristics and challenges such as Mekarwangi. In addition, Pratiwi et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of collaboration between village governments, business actors, and communities in creating inclusive and adaptive HR governance.

Based on this background, this study focuses on the practice of human resource development in the tourism sector of Mekarwangi Village, identifying existing competency gaps, and formulating human resource development strategies that are contextual and responsive to local needs. By using a qualitative case study approach, this study is expected to explore empirical insights into the social and institutional dynamics that influence human resource development at the village level.

The theoretical contribution of this study is expected to enrich the SHRD literature in the context of rural tourism with a collaborative approach and based on local values. Practically, the results of this study are expected to be a reference for policy makers, tourism village managers, and training institutions in designing effective and sustainable HR interventions. By strengthening the synergy between the government, community, and business actors, Mekarwangi Village and similar villages can optimize their tourism potential in an inclusive and sustainable manner.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

While Mekarwangi Village has experienced rapid growth in its tourism sector, including local cafes, community-based accommodations, and natural recreational attractions, these advancements have not been matched by adequate HR capacity development. Access to formal training and professional certification remains limited, while managerial and digital competencies among village tourism actors are still low. These barriers potentially reduce the quality of services and Mekarwangi Village's competitiveness in the tourism market.

Furthermore, social dynamics and community leadership patterns influence the effectiveness of HR development. To date, no HR development model has fully aligned with the local values and specific needs of the community. This situation underscores the necessity of a comprehensive study to formulate strategic HR development approaches that are both culturally sensitive and locally relevant.

In academic discourse, Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD) is a critical factor in enhancing the competitiveness of the tourism sector, especially in rural areas. However, most studies adopt a macro and generalized perspective, with little in-depth focus on specific contexts like Mekarwangi Village. Effective HR development must consider the unique characteristics, cultural values, and community leadership patterns that cannot be generalized.

Previous studies, such as Kusumawardhani et al. (2023), demonstrate that localized and participatory HR development approaches have proven effective in Sukajadi Tourism Village in the post-pandemic era. However, there is limited evidence that similar strategies can succeed in villages with distinct characteristics and challenges, such as Mekarwangi. Additionally, Pratiwi et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of collaboration among village governments, business actors, and communities in creating inclusive and adaptive HR governance.

Based on this background, the present study focuses on HR development practices in the Mekarwangi Village tourism sector, identifying existing competency gaps, and formulating HR development strategies that are contextual and responsive to local needs. By employing a qualitative case study approach, this research seeks to uncover empirical insights into the social and institutional dynamics influencing HR development at the village level.

Theoretical contributions from this study are expected to enrich the literature on SHRD in the context of rural tourism, adopting a collaborative approach grounded in local values. Practically, the findings aim to provide guidance for policymakers, tourism village managers, and training institutions in designing effective and sustainable HR interventions. Strengthening synergies among governments, communities, and business actors will enable Mekarwangi Village and similar villages to optimize their tourism potential inclusively and sustainably.

### 3. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design to explore the strategy of human resource development (HRD) in village tourism in Mekarwangi Village, Lembang, West Java. This approach was chosen to explore the meaning and social dynamics in depth in the context of community-based tourism.

The research subjects consisted of 12 informants selected purposively, including tourism village managers, local business actors, village officials, and members of tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis). The main data collection technique was semi-structured in-depth interviews that were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The interview instrument was prepared based on the theoretical framework of Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD) and human capital, and its validity has been tested by experts in the field of tourism and HR. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis by following the stages of Braun and Clarke (2006), starting from data introduction to compiling the narrative of the results. Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation and member checking to ensure the appropriateness of the interpretation with the informant's experience. The study was conducted from February to April 2025 by paying attention to ethical aspects such as informed consent and data confidentiality. This study has limitations in geographical scope and number of informants, but the results provide a contextual understanding that is relevant to the development of sustainable village tourism HR.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore human resource (HR) development strategies in the context of community-based tourism in Mekarwangi Village, Lembang, West Java. Through a qualitative approach and thematic analysis of in-depth interview data from 12 key informants, five main themes were found that became the foundation for understanding the dynamics of HR development in tourism villages, namely: unstructured HR development, competency gaps with industry needs, weak collaboration between stakeholders, community potential that has not been optimally facilitated, and limited institutional and infrastructure support.

To guide the discussion, four main theoretical concepts are used, presented in Table 1 below:

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**Table 2. Conceptual Framework of Human Resource Development in the Context of Tourism Villages**

Theoretical Concept	Conceptual Meaning	Reference
Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD)	Human resource development integrated with long-term development strategies	Garavan et al. (1995)
Human Capital	The accumulation of knowledge, skills and experience that shapes individual productivity	Becker (1993)
Local Competence	The gap between the needs of the tourism industry market and the capabilities of local communities	Baum (2006)
Collaborative Governance	Collaboration between various actors in planning and implementing human resource development	Ansell & Gash (2008); Kusumawardhani et al. (2023)

Source: Adapted from Garavan et al. (1995); Becker (1993); Baum (2006); Ansell & Gash (2008); Kusumawardhani et al. (2023).

##### 1. Unstructured and informal human resource development

Human resource development in Mekarwangi Village is still largely done informally. The learning process occurs more through direct experience, without a systematic training curriculum guide or competency evaluation. One village manager said that training from the agency is not routine, so residents "learn more from direct practice in the field." This shows that the approach has not been adopted Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD) as developed



by Garavan et al. (1995), which emphasizes the importance of long-term training planning integrated with the village development vision.

## **2. Competency Gap to Industry Needs**

Rural communities face a skills gap compared to the demands of the contemporary tourism industry. The need for skills in guest service, digital business management, and foreign language skills are still not evenly met. One homestay manager complained that they “need training in guest management and online systems, but the internet here is sometimes slow.” This finding reflects the importance of human capital as described by Becker (1993), where the accumulation of knowledge and skills is a key factor in increasing village productivity and competitiveness.

## **3. Weak Collaboration between Stakeholders**

Collaboration between key actors in the village, including the village government, tourism awareness groups, and local business actors, has not been structured. One member of Pokdarwis expressed the desire that they be involved from the planning stage, not just as training participants. This condition shows that the principle has not been implemented Collaborative Governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008), namely a governance model that emphasizes joint decision-making, equal dialogue, and cross-sector coordination. The absence of regular communication forums and cross-actor cooperation mechanisms has resulted in collaborative potential not being optimally developed.

## **4. Potential of Local Communities that have not been optimally facilitated**

The young generation in Mekarwangi shows high enthusiasm to be involved in tourism development, especially in the field of digital promotion and cultural attractions. However, there is no formal space or program that supports their involvement in a sustainable manner. A local actor stated that “many young people are interested in helping, as long as they are given space.” This situation emphasizes the importance of implementing a collaborative approach. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) which places local communities as the main actors in tourism development (Scheyvens, 1999). Unfortunately, the institutional support needed to encourage citizen innovation is still very limited.

## **5. Limited Institutional and Infrastructure Support**

Another obstacle that is consistently found is the limitations in the institutional aspects and infrastructure supporting training. Access to the internet, learning spaces, and capacity building budgets are still very limited. The village government expressed its support for human resource

development, but admitted that “budget-wise, we are limited and need external partners.” This situation weakens the institutional foundation for running training sustainably and has a direct impact on the low quality of tourism services in the village.

The five findings above indicate that human resource development in Mekarwangi Village has not been carried out in a strategic and sustainable framework. Although there is high community potential, especially among young people, limitations in institutional aspects, technical competence, and coordination between stakeholders are still the main obstacles. Thus, an integrative approach is needed that not only emphasizes technical training, but also builds a capacity development ecosystem based on collaboration and participation.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that human resource (HR) development in the context of community-based tourism in Mekarwangi Village still faces quite complex and multidimensional challenges. The HR development process in this village is mostly carried out informally, without any structured, systematic, or long-term needs-based training planning. This condition is contrary to the principle Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD) which emphasizes the importance of integration between individual capacity development, collective learning, and institutional strengthening.

The competency gap is a central issue that limits the ability of rural communities to meet the demands of modern tourism. Lack of technical and digital skills, minimal mastery of foreign languages, and weak managerial skills have hampered the competitiveness of tourist destinations. On the other hand, the potential of communities, especially the younger generation, is very large, but has not received adequate institutional space and support. Limitations in terms of cross-actor collaboration and weak training infrastructure and digital connectivity have worsened the situation.

Overall, this study confirms that human resource development in tourist villages is not sufficient through a short-term technical training approach. A more strategic, contextual, and participatory framework is needed, involving various stakeholders in the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. In addition, strengthening collaborative governance is key to encouraging the sustainability of human resource development programs, so



that tourist villages such as Mekarwangi can manage their tourism potential independently, innovatively, and sustainably.

Based on the results of this study, there are several recommendations that can be followed up by the village government, local business actors, and external stakeholders:

1. Building a Competency Map Based Training System

The village government needs to prepare a map of HR competencies that can be used as a reference in designing relevant, measurable, and sustainable training programs. Training does not only focus on technical skills, but also includes soft skills, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship.

2. Developing Collaborative Forums Between Actors

It is necessary to establish a coordination forum involving village governments, tourism awareness groups, business actors, academics, and external partners to align the vision and HR development programs. This forum can also be a participatory forum in designing tourism village policies.

3. Improving Access to Technology and Supporting Infrastructure

Efforts to improve digital infrastructure, such as providing stable internet and community-based training spaces, need to be a priority in strengthening local capacity. Support from the private sector and higher education institutions is essential in making this happen.

4. Promoting Inclusive and Community-Based Policies

Village governments are expected to formulate regulations that encourage active participation of young people and women in tourism activities, as well as provide innovation space that supports the development of local potential.

5. Engaging Universities as Strategic Partners

Long-term collaboration with academic institutions can contribute to applied research, training curriculum development, and technical and institutional assistance.

The implementation of these recommendations is expected to strengthen the foundation of human resource development in similar tourist villages, thereby improving the quality of services, expanding local economic

opportunities, and supporting the achievement of sustainable development goals in the rural tourism sector.

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