

## 'Kaombo Ohusii' as a Means of Development Communication: Uncovering Widow Forest Management Practices in Buton District, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the management of the Widow Forest (Kaombo Ohusii) in Takimpo Village, Buton Regency, as an example of local community participation in sustainable natural resource management. The research highlights the role of gendered forest management, particularly the involvement of widows, and the function of development communication in integrating local wisdom into environmental governance. This study aims to analyze how the Sarano Kampo customary institution, led by Parabela, shapes forest management strategies and how the philosophy of *pobhinci-bhinciki kuli*, emphasizing mutual respect and responsibility, influences conservation practices. A qualitative approach was employed, using in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis to explore the social and environmental dimensions of forest governance. Findings show that the Sarano Kampo institution enforces customary regulations, including a rotation system and strict resource use restrictions, ensuring sustainability. The involvement of widows and impoverished women in forest maintenance is not merely symbolic but represents a deliberate effort toward equity in resource distribution. However, participation levels vary across community groups, necessitating efforts to enhance inclusivity. This research underscores the significance of integrating cultural values, gender inclusivity, and communication strategies into sustainable resource management. By bridging local wisdom with broader sustainability goals, this study provides insights for strengthening community-driven conservation efforts.

**Keywords:** *Cultural values, community participation, forest management, local wisdom, sustainable resource management.*

### INTRODUCTION

Local wisdom represents the accumulated knowledge, beliefs, and practices that have been passed down through generations, shaping the way communities interact with their environment (Pudjiastuti et al., 2021). As an integral part of cultural heritage, these practices embody the identity of a community and play a vital role in guiding their daily lives (Giglietto et al., 2022). Particularly in rural areas, where traditions remain strong, local wisdom offers valuable insights into sustainable living (Wahyuni et al., 2024). This cultural heritage is not just a reflection of past practices but is actively employed in contemporary resource management, ensuring the long-term sustainability of natural ecosystems.

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The principles of sustainability, deeply rooted in local wisdom, emphasize the harmonious relationship between humans and nature (Siradjuddin, 2019). Across various cultures, these principles have been instrumental in maintaining ecological balance (Qodim, 2023). For example, in many indigenous communities, the belief in the sacredness of nature fosters a sense of responsibility towards preserving natural resources (Alifa, 2023). Such beliefs encourage practices that protect the environment from overexploitation, ensuring that natural resources are available for future generations (Emina, 2021). The incorporation of these values into daily life illustrates how local wisdom can serve as a framework for sustainable natural resource management (Abas et al., 2022a). One significant example of local wisdom in practice is the management of the Janda Forest, or 'Kaombo Ohusii,' in Buton District, Southeast Sulawesi. This customary forest is managed by a specific group within the community women, particularly widows and economically disadvantaged women. The Kaombo Ohusii is not merely a forest; it is a manifestation of the cultural values and social structures that govern the community. This forest management practice is a testament to the deep connection between cultural beliefs and environmental stewardship, showcasing how local wisdom is applied to maintain ecological integrity (Nelson & Shilling, 2018).

Research has demonstrated the critical role that local wisdom plays in environmental conservation. Studies, such as those conducted by Mardan and Ramadhan (2022), have highlighted how the principles embedded in local wisdom contribute to sustainable natural resource management. These studies, which employed qualitative approaches through in-depth interviews and participatory observations, underscore the importance of traditional knowledge systems in ensuring the sustainability of natural resources. By adhering to time-honored practices, communities like those in Buton District are able to manage their natural resources in a way that supports both environmental and human well-being. Kaombo Ohusii is a unique example where the intersection of gender, culture, and environment is particularly evident. The management of this forest by women, especially widows, underscores the central role of women in the sustainable management of natural resources. This practice reflects the gendered division of labor and the specific knowledge that women bring to resource management. The involvement of women in the management of Kaombo Ohusii is not only a cultural tradition but also a strategic approach to ensuring food security and environmental sustainability in the region (Manginsela et al., 2021). Research by Mardan and Ramadhan (2022) emphasized that women's involvement in traditional forest management is critical to maintaining the sustainability of forest resources and ensuring food security for local communities.

Development communication and media are essential in integrating local wisdom into sustainable development (Yetti, 2024). They facilitate stakeholder dialogue, ensuring community voices are considered in decision-making. Traditional media, such as oral storytelling and community meetings, preserve indigenous knowledge, while digital platforms expand its reach and policy relevance (Foyet & Louis, 2023). Effective communication fosters culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable policies. Open dialogue enhances community participation, balancing economic, social, cultural, and environmental priorities (Rahmadi et al., 2022). In Kaombo Ohusii, development communication connects local forest management with global sustainability goals. Effective strategies align traditional practices with national and international frameworks while respecting community values. This study examines how local wisdom and communication contribute to sustainability, particularly through the role of widows in forest management. Despite their significance, gendered

practices and communication's role in integrating local knowledge into broader development remain underexplored. By analyzing social, cultural, and environmental dynamics, this research highlights the importance of effective communication in preserving traditional practices and fostering sustainable resource management.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Local wisdom has long guided sustainable natural resource management, reflecting the deep connection between culture and ecology (Mulyadi et al., 2022). In forest management, it ensures resource conservation, biodiversity protection, and spiritual values. Beyond preservation, local wisdom sustains the ecological, economic, social, and cultural functions of forests, shielding them from external threats while reinforcing environmental stewardship (Munafi et al., 2022).

Empirical studies have repeatedly demonstrated the positive impact of local wisdom on the sustainability of indigenous forests. For example, research conducted by Ferry and Ramadhani (2021) highlights how local wisdom has been instrumental in preserving the ecological balance within indigenous forests. Similarly, Nurlidiawati and Ramadayanti (2021) provide evidence from South Sulawesi, Indonesia, showing how local community practices, such as the 'Kalumantan' concept of customary forests, have played a crucial role in maintaining forest sustainability and protecting these vital resources from overexploitation. The effectiveness of these practices is not isolated to one region; a research by Abas et al. (2022b) supports similar findings on a global scale, illustrating how local wisdom has consistently proven effective in maintaining ecosystem sustainability through diverse forest management systems.

Local wisdom guides natural resource management through sustainable practices, such as shifting cultivation, forest conservation rules, and eco-friendly rituals (Wardhani et al., 2023). In Indonesia, customary regulations prevent excessive forest exploitation, as seen in the Baduy community's ban on chemical agriculture to preserve soil fertility (Arifiani et al., 2019). In Buton, Kaombo Ohusii forest management by widows and disadvantaged women exemplifies sustainability. They regulate resource use based on necessity and implement replanting systems, ensuring ecological balance while enhancing women's social and economic resilience.

However, while local wisdom is undeniably powerful, achieving sustainable development requires more than traditional practices alone. It necessitates integrating local knowledge with modern approaches and effective communication among various stakeholders (Adade Williams et al., 2020; Nordin et al., 2015; Rizal & Nordin, 2022). Fischer's (2017) research in Nepal underscores this point by emphasizing the importance of participatory communication. Such communication allows for the blending of traditional knowledge with modern resource management techniques, thereby creating solutions that are not only more holistic but also more contextually relevant. Through open dialogue and the exchange of ideas, development processes can better accommodate cultural values and local practices, ensuring that the solutions are both effective and sustainable.

This idea is further supported by a research conducted by He et al. (2020) in the mountainous regions of China. The research confirms that effective development communication can significantly enhance the exchange of knowledge between local communities and external parties. Moreover, it can foster active participation from the community in managing natural resources, which is crucial for sustainable outcomes. These

findings align with research by Fisher et al. (2020), who, in their research of the Amazon forest, highlighted the critical importance of authentic communication and respect for traditional knowledge in sustainable forest management. Together, these studies illustrate that the combination of local wisdom with participatory development communication can lead to a more profound and enduring harmony between humans and nature.

In exploring the management practices of the Janda Forest (Kaombo Ohusii) in Buton District, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, this research aims to deepen our understanding of the interplay between local wisdom and development communication in achieving sustainable natural resource management. This research is grounded in the Development Participation theory, which posits that the active involvement of local communities is essential in the development process, including in the management of natural resources (Besette, 2021). According to this theory, the participation of local communities ensures that development programs are aligned with the specific needs, values, and contexts of these communities (Servaes et al., 2005). In the specific case of the Janda Forest, this theory provides a useful framework for analyzing how local communities especially marginalized groups such as widows and poor women are involved in decision-making processes and in the practical aspects of forest management based on local wisdom.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To thoroughly investigate the management practices of the Widow's Forest (Kaombo Ohusii) in Buton Regency, particularly through the dual lenses of local wisdom and development communication, this research adopts an ethnographic approach as recommended by scholars such as Berkes (2017) and Hirsch (2020). The ethnographic method is particularly well-suited for this research as it enables researchers to delve deeply into the lived experiences, cultural practices, and the underlying values that guide natural resource management within the community. This approach is not just about observing actions but about understanding the cultural context and meanings that drive these practices. The research employed a multifaceted data collection strategy to capture a comprehensive view of the Widow's Forest management.

By engaging directly with community members, the study seeks to uncover the nuanced relationships between individuals and their environment, which are often overlooked in conventional quantitative research methods. This engagement facilitates a richer understanding of how local customs, beliefs, and knowledge systems shape the management of natural resources. For instance, the practices of forest conservation and resource allocation are often grounded in local traditions that prioritize sustainability and community welfare, which are essential for the long-term viability of the forest ecosystem. Furthermore, the integration of participant observation within this ethnographic framework allows for the collection of real-time data on community interactions and decision-making processes. This not only enriches the findings but also provides insights into the effectiveness of development communication strategies used within the community. By exploring how information is shared and understood among different stakeholders, the research aims to highlight the role of communication in fostering collaboration and consensus in resource management.

### *Research Sample*

The research sample consists of 11 informants, including traditional leaders (Parabela), widows, poor women, traditional officials, community leaders, government representatives from Buton Regency, and members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in managing the Kaombo Ohusii forest. The decision to select 11 informants was intentional, as it ensures a broad representation of the different perspectives within the community. These individuals were chosen through purposive sampling, focusing on those with relevant experience and direct involvement in forest management. The number 11 is considered sufficient to capture the diversity of roles and socio-economic backgrounds while also reflecting the social and cultural dynamics of the community. This selection enables a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing forest management practices by involving stakeholders from various backgrounds, thereby enriching the research data and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The number of informants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, where additional participants would no longer provide significant new insights. This number is adequate for an ethnographic study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of community perspectives without compromising analytical depth. Moreover, the selected informants are key stakeholders with direct experience in forest management, ensuring a range of perspectives is represented. Previous ethnographic studies with similar scopes have also employed comparable sample sizes to generate meaningful qualitative findings (Thelwall & Nevill, 2021).

### *Research Instrument*

This research is a qualitative study using an ethnographic approach as recommended by Liao et al. (2021) and Sarmiento Barletti (2022). This approach allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of the perspectives, practices, and cultural values related to local wisdom-based natural resource management. In this study, various data collection methods are employed to enrich the understanding of the phenomenon being studied. First, participant observation, which enables researchers to be directly involved in the activities of Widow Forest management, observing the practices carried out, as well as interactions between local communities and other parties involved in natural resource management. This method follows the ethnographic framework described by Fetterman (2014), in which researchers not only observe but also participate in daily activities, allowing them to capture social norms and cultural values that may not be revealed through other methods.

Second, in-depth interviews are conducted with various parties involved in the management of Widow Forest, including managers and local communities. These interviews use an open-ended question format adapted from Creswell and Poth's (2016) qualitative interview techniques, allowing participants to explain their experiences and perspectives in depth. The focus of these interviews is to explore the cultural values underpinning forest management, the development communication practices used, as well as the challenges and opportunities that arise in efforts to preserve local wisdom. This research is also complemented by a document study, which involves a systematic analysis of official reports, regulatory frameworks, and historical records relevant to the management of Widow Forest. This document study provides historical and regulatory context that strengthens the understanding of existing practices and complements the data obtained through observations and interviews (Flick, 2022). The document study includes official government reports, local

regulations on forest management, customary laws, NGO reports on conservation programs, and historical records related to the Kaombo Ohusii forest. These documents are analyzed using qualitative content analysis, where key themes, patterns, and discourses relevant to local wisdom and development communication are identified. The analysis process follows an iterative approach, cross-referencing findings from interviews and observations to ensure consistency and triangulation (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024).

#### *Data Collection Method*

This approach allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of the perspectives, practices, and cultural values related to local wisdom-based natural resource management. This research employs various approaches to data collection to ensure comprehensive coverage of the subject matter.

First, participant observation is conducted, where researchers are directly involved in the activities of Widow Forest management. Through this method, researchers can observe the practices being carried out as well as interactions between local communities and other parties involved in natural resource management. Direct involvement enables researchers to capture dynamics that might be overlooked through other methods (Fetterman, 2019).

Second, in-depth interviews will be conducted with the management of the Widow Forest. These interviews utilize an open-ended question format that allows participants to freely express their experiences and perspectives related to forest management. This approach aims to explore the cultural values underpinning management practices and the challenges faced in preserving local wisdom (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Third, document studies will be conducted through a systematic analysis of official reports, regulatory frameworks, and historical records relevant to the management of Widow Forest. This analysis provides important historical and regulatory context to understand existing practices and complements the data obtained through observations and interviews (Flick, 2022).

#### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis follows an inductive approach, where key themes and patterns are identified as they emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process includes coding, categorizing data into meaningful groups, and interpreting findings to uncover deeper meanings related to local wisdom-based forest management. The inductive nature ensures that conclusions are closely aligned with the realities of community members (Moon, 2019). This thematic analysis allows for a flexible and detailed exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions, ensuring that diverse voices are represented.

To enhance validity and reliability, a triangulation strategy is employed, utilizing multiple data collection methods and sources to verify the consistency of findings (Flick, 2022). This comprehensive approach, alongside the inclusion of diverse stakeholder perspectives, adds depth to the analysis (Donovan & Sanders, 2005). Moreover, member checking is utilized, where preliminary findings are shared with participants for their feedback, thus ensuring that interpretations accurately reflect their views. By integrating various data sources and incorporating participant validation, the research strengthens its credibility and contributes to a more robust understanding of the community dynamics surrounding Kaombo Ohusii.

## RESULTS

### *Kaombo Ohusii and Efforts to Save The Environment*

Takimpo Village in Pasarwajo Sub-district is a place that consistently preserves its customary forest area, with the Kaombo area divided into several parts, each tailored to its specific function. The management of the Kaombo area is entrusted entirely to the sara (customary institution), led by a customary official known as the parabela, with other customary officials under his supervision. The local community believes that their welfare, safety, and livelihood are closely linked to the parabela's leadership abilities. In fulfilling his role, the parabela is guided by the Buton people's philosophy of 'pobhinci-bhinciki kuli,' which literally means two people pinching themselves; if it hurts to pinch oneself, it should also be painful to pinch others. This philosophy reflects the principles of empathy and social justice that underpin the sustainable management of natural resources within this customary community.

This value system has been further articulated into four specific behavioral guidelines: pomae-maeaka (mutual respect among community members), po maa masiaka (mutual love), popia-piara (mutual care), and poangka-angkata (mutual elevation). These guidelines shape and govern social interactions within the community, influencing relationships between leaders and community members, interactions among community members, and the community's relationship with nature. By adhering to these values, the Buton people effectively embody their responsibility to safeguard natural resource wealth within their environment, including the preservation of the Kaombo customary forest, through a framework of local wisdom.

The term Kaombo Forest refers to a protected forest, with Kaombo in the Buton language meaning "something that is protected." For the Takimpo community, the Kaombo Forest represents a vital resource that is meticulously protected and valued due to its rich array of resources essential for community needs. Additionally, the Takimpo people hold a belief that the forest is under the guardianship of their ancestors. They believe that any damage to the forest could provoke the ancestors' anger. This indigenous belief system fosters a robust understanding of the importance of adhering to customary and moral codes, which extend beyond forest management and conservation to encompass all aspects of their lives. Observations from this research indicate that the Takimpo people strictly adhere to and respect the customary regulations established by their leaders, reflecting their deep commitment to maintaining both environmental and cultural integrity.

The Janda Forest (Kaombo Ohusii) operates under a distinct set of management rules. Only widows and elderly poor women are granted the freedom to harvest and market the forest's produce. For individuals outside these categories, obtaining permission from the Parabela is required, and several adat-imposed conditions must be met. One specific condition is that if the forest products are collected by individuals who are neither widows nor poor women, these products cannot be sold and may only be used for personal consumption. The surrounding communities demonstrate a strong understanding of and respect for these management practices. They acknowledge Parabela's role as the key policymaker and authority in their area, reflecting a high level of communal respect and adherence to the established regulations. This structured approach underscores the community's commitment to maintaining traditional values and sustainable resource management practices.

The community in Takimpo Village demonstrates considerable wisdom in managing the Widow's Forest (Kaombo Ohusii). Although the forest's accessibility has expanded beyond its original restriction to widows alone, the community continues to uphold meticulous practices in the treatment of forest products. The Takimpo community considers various factors to ensure that their environmental actions, particularly regarding the forest, are guided by a profound sense of responsibility. They maintain an acute awareness of the forest's critical role as a vital source of life. Additionally, the community's belief in the sacredness of the Kaombo area is a key factor in their unwavering commitment to local wisdom. This adherence to traditional values underscores the community's dedication to sustainable forest management and environmental stewardship.

In managing Kaombo Ohusii, a specific pattern has been established and consistently implemented within the Takimpo Village community. Management activities are typically carried out during the annual traditional feast, which occurs around November or December. Multiple motives drive this management approach, including the perspective that wise stewardship of the forest area will ensure their survival in both the present and future, benefiting their descendants. The Kaombo area is recognized as containing abundant resources that have long sustained the community's livelihood. Furthermore, the integration of cultural practices into forest management reinforces the community's commitment to preserving the ecological balance, ensuring that the natural wealth of the Kaombo forest is protected for future generations. This holistic approach underscores the community's deep understanding of the interdependence between cultural heritage and sustainable natural resource management.

The Kaombo Ohusii area is rich in various forest products that are utilized by the community, including bamboo, rattan, large timber, honey, and other resources. The community follows a practice of taking only what is necessary and always seeks permission from the customary leader before harvesting. This approach reflects their commitment to environmental conservation, aiming to ensure the sustainability of these resources for future generations. All matters related to the Widow's Forest are communicated transparently to the customary authorities, demonstrating the community's adherence to traditional protocols. In addition to environmental considerations, the community places significant respect on sacred customs, which are regarded with greater reverence and fear than secular laws. This deep respect for sacred traditions plays a crucial role in their approach to forest management, reinforcing their dedication to preserving both the environment and cultural heritage.

When there are people who want to process forest products such as large trees, they cannot just take them. The processing involves all elements of the community because, before logging is carried out, certain rituals are conducted. Based on information from several informants in this research, it is very rare to cut down such large trees, considering their enormous function for environmental sustainability. The community always waits for direction from the Parabela when carrying out activities in the Kaombo Ohusii area. This is what makes the management of this area run very well. One thing that strengthens their trust is the real conditions that they have felt when maintaining and processing forest products properly. They live a comfortable life, which they believe is a blessing from their ancestors who lived in the Kaombo area, including Kaombo Ohusii. This belief is not only deeply rooted in one or two people, but the entire community in Takimpo Village has held on to this belief.



### *The Central Role of Customary Institutions in the Management of Kaombo Ohusii*

The management of Kaombo Ohusii customary land by the Takimpo community is guided and directed by a customary institution that has been organized within the community. By them, the customary institution is commonly called 'Sarano Kampo' (Village Custom). This customary institution then formulates all policies in all matters in the community because this customary institution is directly appointed by the Regent and gets an official decree. The function of customary institutions is very important for the Takimpo community. The customary institution itself functions to regulate all matters related to community life, such as marriage, determining the time of planting, starting planting, harvesting, as well as related to the issue of managing Kaombo Customary Land.

The customary institutions governing the Takimpo community include several key figures. At the helm is the customary head, Parabela, who is supported by several aides: Wati and Pocuno Limbo. Additionally, religious figures play significant roles, including Moji, who is responsible for reciting ritual prayers during village traditional ceremonies; Khatibi, who holds a similar rank to Moji and can substitute for him in his absence; and Mukimu, who serves as the priest's assistant. Among these roles, Wati and Pocuno Limbo are particularly crucial in the management of the forest, with Wati assisting Parabela and Pocuno Limbo aiding the traditional leaders. All customary officials collaborate closely to ensure the welfare and benefit of their community members, reflecting a coordinated approach to both traditional governance and environmental stewardship.

The Parabela is the representative of the community when he is needed by the local formal authorities. His leadership can be seen in his ability to gather and mobilize his community. If he gives an order, the community obeys it because this is related to the culture and beliefs of the local community that have been going on for a long time. The community believes that the success of an activity they undertake is determined by who the Parabela is at the time. This shows that the security and prosperity of the village are highly dependent on the kabarakati (blessings) or magic possessed by the incumbent Parabela. Therefore, the figure of Parabela is considered very meritorious in the Buton community as well as in the Takimpo community to this day.

From his role as a customary leader and holder of all policies in the community, the Parabela also plays a role in managing the Kaombo customary forest. His role is to protect and supervise the customary forest from violations and abuses committed by the community that could threaten the sustainability of the customary forest. If there is a violation by the community, it will be reported to the customary institution, and the Parabela will also impose sanctions based on the approval of the community and all local customary officials. Additionally, the Parabela functions as a mediator in resolving conflicts related to forest use, ensuring that customary policies are implemented fairly and consistently to maintain the integrity of the ecosystem and the well-being of the community.

### DISCUSSION

The management of the Widow's Forest (Kaombo Ohusii) in Takimpo Village, Buton Regency, serves as a prime example of local community participation in sustainable natural resource management. This practice is aligned with Development Participation Theory, which emphasizes the active involvement of local communities in decision-making and policy implementation related to their natural resources (Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019). The customary institution 'Sarano Kampo' plays a vital role in regulating various aspects of life and

natural resource management, demonstrating the community's deep involvement in all facets of forest management. This level of participation not only enhances the community's autonomy but also ensures that decisions reflect cultural values and local ecological needs, thereby promoting comprehensive environmental sustainability. This is consistent with research conducted by Lamichhane and Poudyal (2019), which highlights that the management of *Shorea robusta* forests in Nepal faces significant challenges. The study emphasizes the need for improvements in the forest management system to better meet user demands and support economic sustainability, similar to the importance of scientific management for social and ecological sustainability in local communities.

Customary institutions act as platforms for community engagement in forest management decisions. This is supported by Hickey (2004), who asserts that local community participation in natural resource management can lead to long-term sustainability and equitable benefit distribution. The Takimpo community's effective application of participatory principles is evident in their management practices, where both customary officials and community members collaborate to ensure responsible resource use. This active engagement not only enhances the quality of decisions but also nurtures a sense of ownership and responsibility towards environmental sustainability.

Parabela, the customary leader, plays a vital role in governing Kaombo Ohusii. His leadership is deeply respected, with the community believing that their welfare and success hinge on his capabilities. This reflects a shared responsibility for natural resource stewardship, as emphasized by Mansuri and Rao (2012). The strong communal respect for Parabela reinforces the governance structure, ensuring adherence to sustainable practices that align with the community's cultural identity.

The Takimpo community's philosophy of 'pobhinci-bhinciki kuli' underpins their development communication strategies, emphasizing the interconnectedness of individual actions and their impacts on others and the environment. This philosophy manifests in values such as mutual respect, compassion, and nurturing, which not only inform social interactions but also shape their environmental relationships. This effective use of development communication integrates cultural values, strengthening social cohesion and fostering active participation in environmental management, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of customary policies and local ecosystem sustainability. In line with the findings of Remling and Veitayaki (2016), community-based approaches can significantly help improve the management and use of resources while encouraging active participation from communities to address environmental challenges. By using effective development communication, cultural values can be integrated, which in turn strengthens social relationships within the community. This can also enhance the effectiveness of customary policies and the sustainability of local ecosystems.

Moreover, the philosophy of 'pobhinci-bhinciki kuli' serves as a foundational principle for decision-making, with its implementation evident in practices such as rotation systems and restrictions on resource use, demonstrating a profound understanding of the ecosystem's long-term implications. This illustrates that effective development communication encompasses more than information dissemination; it involves reinforcing values that promote sustainable behavior. Additionally, this approach fosters inclusivity and social justice, engaging individuals across social strata in activities that support communal well-being.

The active participation of vulnerable groups, particularly widows and impoverished women, in forest management further exemplifies social equity efforts. These women are empowered to collect and utilize forest products sustainably, guided by Parabela's direction. This inclusive approach ensures that resource management aligns with broader environmental sustainability objectives, embodying a commitment to both ecological preservation and social justice (Mansuri & Rao, 2012).

Customary institutional structures' involvement in managing Kaombo Ohusii highlights the significance of adapting and integrating local values within development strategies. These institutions facilitate communication between communities and policymakers, ensuring decisions reflect community needs. This aligns with findings by Girma et al. (2023), which indicate that community participation in forest management varies among different groups based on factors such as gender, age, and economic status. This underscores the necessity for inclusive strategies that engage all community members in decision-making processes.

However, it is important to note that participation in the management of the Widow's Forest is limited primarily to widows and poor women, while others can only gather forest products for personal use with Parabela's permission. This disparity indicates that the level of participation varies across community groups, necessitating targeted efforts to broaden participation in natural resource management. Thus, future initiatives must account for community diversity, ensuring equitable opportunities for all groups to engage in decision-making processes. In summary, the Kaombo Ohusii forest management in Takimpo Village illustrates the effective application of participation and development communication theories. This model not only aids in conserving natural resources but also fosters a stronger, more equitable community.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, this research draws several key conclusions about the management practices of the Janda Forest (Kaombo Ohusii) in Takimpo Village, Buton Regency. The management of this forest exemplifies a robust model of local community participation in sustainable natural resource management. Central to this model is the customary institution 'Sarano Kampo,' which plays a pivotal role in overseeing various aspects of life and natural resource use within the community. This institution's involvement underscores the significant depth of community engagement in forest management practices. The guiding philosophy of 'pobhinci-bhinciki kuli' serves as a practical framework for decision-making and actions that directly affect environmental management. This philosophy is integral to fostering inclusivity and social justice, as it ensures that the needs and rights of all community members are considered in the management processes. The integration of such local values into development strategies highlights the importance of adapting traditional practices to contemporary environmental challenges.

Furthermore, the active role of customary institutions in the management of Kaombo Ohusii demonstrates how local values and traditional knowledge can be harmoniously integrated with modern development approaches. These institutions facilitate effective communication and negotiation between community members and policymakers, ensuring that decisions are reflective of local needs and expectations. This approach not only enhances the sustainability of natural resource management but also strengthens the socio-cultural fabric of the community. The research also highlights that while the management practices

observed in Kaombo Ohusii serve as a valuable case research, there are limitations regarding the generalizability of these findings. The research focuses specifically on the context of Janda Forest management in Takimpo Village, which may not be directly applicable to other regions with differing social, cultural, and environmental characteristics. Therefore, the findings may not universally apply to other contexts, and caution should be exercised when extrapolating these results to different settings.

To address these limitations, further research is recommended to explore additional factors that influence community participation, such as gender, age, economic status, and resource accessibility. By delving deeper into these aspects, researchers can develop targeted strategies that foster a more inclusive environment for community engagement in natural resource management. Additionally, to support the sustainability and replicability of community-based natural resource management practices, it is essential to document and disseminate the lessons learned and best practices derived from this research. Collaborations with research institutions, community organizations, and other stakeholders can facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences, allowing successful practices to be adapted and applied in other relevant contexts. This approach not only contributes to the preservation of natural resources but also promotes the development of stronger, more equitable communities across diverse settings.

#### BIODATA

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