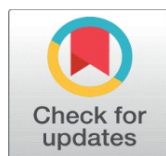


# PENGAMBA': ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION TO INDONESIA FISHING COMMUNITIES

Sofia <sup>1</sup>✉, Aryo Fajar Sunartomo <sup>1</sup>, Sri Subekti <sup>1</sup>✉

<sup>1</sup>Agricultural Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Jember, Indonesia



**Received** 27 November 2022

**Accepted** 29 December 2022

**Published** 13 January 2023

## Corresponding Author

Sofia, [sofia.faperta@unej.ac.id](mailto:sofia.faperta@unej.ac.id)

**DOI** [10.29121/granthaalayah.v10.i12.2022.4972](https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v10.i12.2022.4972)

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

**Copyright:** © 2022 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



## ABSTRACT

Pengamba' is an actor in fishing community that has important and strategic roles especially in the social and economic activities. This research conducted in June – September 2022 in Jember Regency with two objectives: 1) to identify the position, role, and contribution of pengamba' in the fishing community; 2) to identify the strategy used by pengamba' to face the bussiness competition with the other pengamba'. This research used descriptive and qualitative method. The result of the research shows that pengamba' has important role manifested in three forms of collaboration, namely collaboration in providing capital, collaboration in marketing, and collaboration in social activity. The most dominant role of pengamba' in fisherman's economic activity is in providing capital and marketing of fish. This condition causes the high dependency of fisherman to pengamba'. The main strategy to maintain and to develop their bussiness is providing good service to the fishermen as the main customers.

**Keywords:** Economic Activity, Fishing Community, Lending and Borrowing Money, Pengamba

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as an island country with a very large sea area, has potential economic resources, both in the form of mineral material and biological material. This huge potency of the sea gives the opportunities for Indonesian people to explore and exploit this natural resource in order to increase their welfare of life by working as fishermen. So that is why, the development of agriculture especially fishing sector has a strategic position in the national development policy.

Based on the socio-economic condition, most of the Indonesian fishermen are traditional fishermen with the simple and limited tools and equipments. The natural resource of the sea difficult to be controlled, the unpredictable of fish season, and the traditional and limited equipment cause the income of most fishermen relatively low and inconsistent, while the activities of exploration and exploitation of the fish

in the sea need the high operational cost. In addition, the operational cost has been becoming higher and higher after increasing the cost of gas or oil burner. The limited capital for most fishermen has supported them to borrow some money in order to maintain the survival of their family and their fishing activities. For getting some money, they do not like going to the bank, but they go to the individual money lender. The individual money lender in the fishing community in East Java is often known as *Pengamba'*.

*Pengamba'* is a Madurese term that comes from the word *amba'* meaning 'to borrow'. So, *pengamba'* means someone who lends money to the fishermen, while the word *amba'an* means a borrowed material and usually is in the form of money. The process of borrowing and lending money in the fishing community between fishermen and *pengamba'* is a common habit. This business collaboration has taken place for a long time and has become a kind of culture. As stated by a fisherman that the collaboration between fishermen and *pengamba'* is a kind of symbiotic relation meaning that they need and give benefit each other. The pattern of collaboration between *pengamba'* and fishermen is usually in terms of capital costs for going to sea, while the cooperation between ship owners and prospective captains and crew members is by way of recruitment and also the initiative of prospective crew members. The obligation of *pengamba'* is to provide finance for all the needs of fishermen, and are entitled to a fee of 5%. While the obligations of fishermen are to run and maintain the means of production and get the right to receive a share of the results of production Erfan (2015). Based on this description, it can be stated that *pengamba'* has an important role and a strategic position in the economy of fishing community.

Generally, Indonesian traditional fishermen have various limitation (limitation of tool and equipment, capital, technology, and skill), so that their income have been relatively low and inconsistent. As a result, the life of their family is relatively poor. Based on Kusnadi. (2000), one of the adaptation strategies done by fishermen families is to urge their wives to work in order to get the wage. They usually work as fresh fish traders, *terasi* makers, *pindang* makers, and other works related to the fishery sector.

As stated, before that the activity of exploration and exploitation of the sea by including the process of lending and borrowing money between the fishermen and *pengamba'* in the fishermen community has become a common habit. The dependence of fishermen to *pengamba'* has increased when the *paceklik* season happens. The *paceklik* season for fishermen is the season when sea waves and wind intensity are high so that storms can occur. In Indonesia, this condition generally occurs from December to February but it is currently difficult to predict due to extreme climate change globally. In this season, the fishermen cannot go to sea for fishing because there is no fish in the sea. If they go for fishing, they will get nothing. The limitation of their income in this season and their family life need that should be fulfilled make them borrowing money to *pengamba'*. As the borrower of *pengamba'*'s money, of course they have some duties for the money owner, i.e. they must sell the fish they have got to *pengamba'* with the special price decided by *pengamba'*. As stated by Bohle (1992) in Kusnadi. (2001) that the *pengamba'* is also as market makers. According to Sunartomo (2006), *pengamba'* can include in the four function of fishing development, i.e., the financial function, the production function, the marketing function, and the social function.

The Regency of Jember especially the District of Puger has a high potency of sea fishing, so most of the people here have become fishermen. The high number of fishermen in this area gives the opportunity for the capital owner, especially money

to open bussiness activity, sush as pengamba'. This bussiness is interesting to work on not only for male but also female. On the basis of the discription, The aims of this research is to get detail description about the existence of *pengamba'* in the fishing community with the specification as follows: 1) to identify the position, role, and contribution of *pengamba'* in the fishing community; 2) to identify the strategy used by *pengamba'* to face the bussiness competition with the other *pengamba'*.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted on June – September 2022 in the District of Puger, Regency of Jember, East Java Province by using descriptive and qualitative methode. The methode of descriptive was used to make the detail description about the fact found in the field, while the qualitative methode was used to identify in detail about the finding in the field. The methode of sampling used the snow bowling technique by utilizing key informan and supporting informan. The key informan is *pengamba'* themselves, while the supporting informan is the fishermen, including the shore boss, the sea boss, and the employee of the sea and shore boss, that has become the customer of *pengamba'*. The research used the primary and the secondary data. The collected data was analyzed by using, simple statistic and descriptive analysis. Finally, the qualitative analysis was used to explore and explain the finding in the field.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. GENERAL DISCRPTION OF FISHING COMMUNITY AND *PENGAMBA'* IN JEMBER REGENCY

Jember Regency is one of the regencies in East Java Province which geographically faces the Indian Ocean so that it has a large potential for marine fisheries. There are 4 centers for fishing locations, namely District of Puger, Ambulu, Gumukmas and Kencong. These four locations are centers of fishing settlements with the center in Puger District. Based on the Jember Regency in Figures 2022, the number of fishermen households in Jember Regency at the year of 2021 is 12,366 with the some types of boats used including 208 large boats, 102 medium boats, 2,425 outboard motor boats, and 84 boats without motors. Tools for catching fish also vary, including Gill nets 1,820 pieces, Parawe 217 pieces, Payang 208 pieces, Tramel net 122 pieces and other fishing gear as many as 452 pieces. These big number of fishermen household and their boats support the development of *pengamba'* and their business of lending money.

Reality in the field shows that the *pengamba'* is a kind of profession or job existing in the informal sector. As a profession in the informal sector, the existing of *pengamba'* can not be identified legally in the government office, such as the village office or the district office. So that is why, it is difficult to know the exact number of *pengamba'*, especially for the researher coming from the outer of fishing community. In addition, the proffession of *pengamba'* for some people is often as the side job, not as the main job. Based on the information from some informen, I can get the estimation of the number of *pengamba'* in one district that is the District of Puger. There are about 25 *pengamba'*, coming from two villages, 17 *pengamba'* from the Village of Puger Kulon and 8 *pengamba'* from the Village of Puger Wetan. These 25 *pengamba'* are included in the big *pengamba'* because their customer are the shore boss and the sea boss. This number is not the exact number because the little *pengamba'* is difficult to be identified since their customers are the fishermen's labour that are often known as *pandhiga*.

Based on the results of data analysis, the pattern of fishermen's cooperative relationship with *pengamba'* has existed since the 1980s. In the initial phase, the job of being a *pengamba'* was unprestigious job and was considered an unpromising job, even the process of borrowing by fishermen was carried out at the *pengamba'* house in the afternoon. The *pengamba'* system has been growing since the motorization of the fishing float in Jember in the year of 1990s. Gradually, the job of being a *pengamba'* is a job that has been looked up to by fishermen because *pengamba'* is considered a person who is able to provide capital. Fishermen need additional capital to purchase boat assets, engines and fishing gear. Until now most of the fishermen use the pattern of cooperation with the perceived *pengamba'*.

### **3.2. THE POSITION, ROLE, AND CONTRIBUTION OF *PENGAMBA'* IN THE FISHING COMMUNITY**

Based on the history of *pengamba'* development, at the first time, *pengamba'* is a fresh fish trader or agroindustry business of the fish. The relation between the fishermen and *pengamba'* is the selling and buying relation between the fishermen as a seller and the *pengamba'* as a buyer. In line with the development of business in the fishing area and the life need of fishermen and *pengamba'*, the relation between the fishermen and *pengamba'* has become more complex. The *pengamba'* does not only buy the fresh fish from the fishermen, but also lend money to fishermen in order to provide the operational cost to explore the fish in the sea. Furthermore, the relation between the fishermen and *pengamba'* in Puger has developed not only in economic activity but also in social activity. When the fishermen has an accident in the sea, *pengamba'* acts as philanthropist giving the financial help to the fishermen. When the fishermen has made a marriage party to his daughter or his son, *pengamba'* must give the financial help to them. When the Special Day, such as *Lebaran Idul Fitri* or New Year has come, *pengamba'* must give bonus to them. Based on this event and happening, it can be said that the collaboration between the fishermen and the *pengamba'* includes three relations, i.e. 1) relation in finance or credit, 2) relation in marketing, and 3) relation in social activity. These three forms of relation or collaboration have taken place continually, so that is why it is difficult to replace the role of *pengamba'* in the fishermen community with other institution including government institution, such as the government bank. Furthermore these three forms of collaboration will be explained in detail.

#### **3.2.1. COLLABORATION IN FINANCE**

The collaboration in finance or credit, the position of *pengamba'* is as the capital owner that lends some money to the fishermen including to the sea boss, the shore boss, and the fishermen's labour. As the capital owner, of course the position of *pengamba'* is higher than the fishermen. The capital borrowed from *pengamba'* is usually used to buy working equipments or working facilities, such as a ship, a fishing net, and also to give the help for operational cost in the sea. The condition of fish season that is always changeable in Puger area and the inconsistency faced by the fishermen in the sea make the fishermen's income low and uncertain too. Although they have low income, they must fulfill their family need for the sake of their survival. The unempowerment condition of the fishermen in economy make the operational activity and the survival of their family depending on *pengamba'*. As a capital owner, of course they have bargaining power higher than the fishermen. It can be seen in deciding the number of the finance that can be borrowed by the

fishermen. In this case, *Pengamba'* can provide credit or loans with high loan amounts, however the maximum loan amount is equal to the business assets owned by fisherman. Agreement does not make in written letter, but it makes based on trust that obliges fishermen to sell their catch fish to *pengamba'* as a consequence of agreement bond [Muhartono. \(2018\)](#).

In the credit sector, there are three kinds of customer of *pengamba'*, i.e. the fishermen, the fresh fish traders and the other less *pengamba'*. For the fishermen, they must pay the fee as the compensation of their credit to *pengamba'* as the creditor when they have succeed in producing the fish, but if they have not succeed in producing the fish, they must not pay the fee. When their credit has not been paid, they must always pay the fee as the compensation of their credit to the *pengamba'* when they can produce the fish. For the fish traders and the other less *pengamba'*, there is certain rules, i.e. the debtor must not pay the fee, but the debtor must sell the fish they have got to the creditor (*pengamba'*). In this case, it seems that there is close relation between *pengamba'* and the fish traders, and between *pengamba'* and the other *pengamba'*. This close relationship makes the role of *pengamba'* in the marketing of the fish in the fishermen community is very dominant.

### 3.2.2. COLLABORATION IN FISH MARKETING

The collaboration in marketing fish between the *pengamba'* and the fishermen, as the consequence of the collaboration in finance that has been made by the fishermen dan the *pengamba'*. In the research location, it seems that the collaboration in marketing has benefit each other. From the fishermen side, they can sell the fish easily without feeling any inconsistent market, while *pengamba'* always buys the fishermen's fish in cash though it is in large number. From the side of *pengamba'*, this collaboration in marketing can maintain the continuity of the fish as the raw material of their agroindustry business.

The role of *pengamba'* in the marketing process is very important because the fish is the commodity that is easily to be broken. The fish that cannot be sold for about 6 hours makes the quality of the fish becoming worse and worse. Of course, this fish condition will influence the price of the fish that will be lower than the price before. The condition of collaboration in marketing urgens the relation between *pengamba'* and the fishermen has become very close and important. It is different form the fishermen that have not collaboration in marketing with *pengamba'*. They must sell their fish by themselves to the other traders or agroindustries. These traders and agroindustry owners often pay not in cash or gradually. The process of merketing has become more difficult conducted by fishermen when the fish season has been coming. The increasing of the fish production will influence the fish price to be lower especially for independent fishermen. They cannot sell their fish in the other place because of the limitation of equipment and access.

When the fishermen will go back to the shore, as the fish marketer of her customers, the *pengamba'* will always wait for the fishermen in the fish hourbour. When the fishermen have come at the fish harbour, the transaction of between *pengamba'* and fishermen takes place. The *pengamba'* will buy all of the fish they have got in cash. In this process, the fee that has become the right of *pengamba'* must be counted and be paid as the same time as the *pengamba'* pay the fish. The number of fee depends on the price of the fish in the market.

It has been said before that the role of *pengamba'* is very dominant in the marketing process. The domination of *pengamba'* in the marketing process causes the limitation of the fishermen's access to fish marketing out of the *pengamba'*



especially for the independent fishermen. The close relation between *pengamba'* and the fish traders can protect this market area from the outer traders that can influence the market power. The *pengamba'* and the traders can create the price (price maker) through their power in the market. The dependency of fishermen on the *pengamba'* is difficult to break because fishermen has been given a working capital loan. The implications of borrowing the capital is that fishermen have to sell their catch to the *pengamba'* who provide capital. Fishermen who have a degree of dependency high financial will choose to market catches of fish to the financier or "pengambe' [Ningsih \(2011\)](#).

### 3.2.3. COLLABORATION INI SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Fishermen is a high risk and uncertain job. As the actor in the fishing area, the relation between *pengamba'* and the fishermen is very close and needs each other. The feeling of the same fate as the fishing people that their life depends on the sea make their relation becoming closer and closer. This social relation can be seen in their daily life, such as visiting each other and helping each other. The *pengamba'* usually gives the help or the gift to the fishermen in the form of money when the fishermen have an accident or when they have a family party because economically *pengamba'* is better than fishermen. When Special Day, such as *Lebaran Day*, *pengamba'* always gives gift or bonus to the fishermen in the form of money, bread, costume, and others as the form of thankfulness for their collaboration .

Based on the above description, it can be said that these three collaboration tend to be patron-customer in which *pengamba'* as a patron, while fishermen as a customer or client. Both of them need each other in maintaining their survival and bussiness. In this case, fishermen often call *pengamba'* as '*reng sogih*' (rich people). By their ability to give credit and to take sympathy from the fishermen, *pengamba'* has a high place in the hurt of the fishermen, especial their customers.

It has been said before that the role of *pengamba'* in making life of the economy of fishermen community is very important. In the economic activity, there are two kinds of important role conducted by *pengamba'*, i.e. providing capaital and helping marketing of the fish.

### 3.2.4. PROVIDING CAPITAL

In maintaining the survival of fishermen activities, the availability of capital is very important. The formal finance institutions, such as the bank, both government bank and private bank are not interested to lend the capital to the fishermen because of the high inconsistent risk of fishermen's activities. While the fishermen do not like going to the bank because of the complicated procedure and requirement. This condition urgens the *pengamba'* to be the finance institution providing the capital for fishermen. The fishermen themselves feel happy by the existence of *pengamba'* in their community.

The fact in the real life shows that the major fishermen in Puger have credit to *pengamba'*. The result of Faizin's research [Faizin \(2006\)](#) shows that the dominant factors making the fishermen to take the credit to *pengamba'* are the simple procedure in borrowing and the easy process in marketing; while supporting factor are the good services from *pengamba'*, the existence of commitment of *pengamba'* to give the credit, the high inconsistent risk, and the complicated procedure in borrowing money in the bank.

### 3.2.5. HELPING IN MARKETING

As stated before that the marketing activity is an important thing in the fishermen's business because the fish is the commodity easy to be broken. The limitation of the capital and access to market, and also the limitation of ability in processing fish make the fishermen depending on the *pengamba'* in the marketing activity. In addition, *pengamba'* also has high commitment to the fishermen, so *pengamba'* always buys all of the fish in cash. By the speed and cash marketing, the fishermen feels that the high uncertain risk has become lower and lower. On the contrary, the independent fishermen selling their fish to the fish traders or agroindustry owner, they will be paid in credit and not on time so that they still have inconsistent risk.

### 3.3. STRATEGY OF *PENGAMBA'* IN FACING THE BUSINESS COMPETITION

The profession of *pengamba'* is as an informal sector, so that everyone can do this profession without specialized requirement. As an open profession, of course there are many people interested in this finance business. In addition, the income of the *pengamba'* every year is very high, so that the number of *pengamba'* has become higher and higher while the number of fishermen tends to be permanent, even to decrease.

In doing the business activity, of course *pengamba'* has competitors in order to get the customer. To solve this problem, *pengamba'* has special strategy in order to get the sympathy from the fishermen. This strategy in the research location is known as '*ngopenen*'. '*Ngopenen*' is Madurese term meaning 'good services'. By giving good services to the fishermen, *pengamba'* will get the sympathy from the fishermen. Some forms of good services includes the easiness in giving credit, the speedy in giving the help when the fishermen have the problem, such as accident in the sea, the the speedy in giving the donation for public facilities and for ritual ceremony, and also giving credit for the sake of individual and family need.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

*Pengamba'* has an important role in the fishermen community in Jember Regency, East Java, Indonesia. There are three kinds of relationship between *pengamba'* and fishermen, i.e. collaboration in finance, collaboration in fish marketing, and collaboration in social activities. These three relationship have taken place continually, and give benefit each other, so that is why the existence of *pengamba'* cannot be replaced with other institutions, including government institutions.

The role of *pengamba'* in supporting the economic activity of fishermen community is very important. In the economic activity, there are two kinds of important role conducted by *pengamba'*, i.e. providing capital and helping in marketing of the fish. To maintain the business, *pengamba'* has special strategy in order to get the sympathy from the fishermen that is known as '*ngopenen*' meaning 'giving good services'. By giving good services to the fishermen, *pengamba'* will get the sympathy from the fishermen so that their business of lending money will be sustainable.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

## REFERENCES

- Amady, E. I., and Rawa, M. (2015). *Tauke and Budaya Hutang: perubahan Sosial-Budaya pada Masyarakat Desa*. AG Litera dan PADI Institute. Yogyakarta, Indonésie.
- Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Jember. (2022). *Kabupaten Jember Dalam Angka 2022*. Badan Pusat Statistik. Jember, Indonésie.
- Erfan, J. (2015). *Peran Pengambek Sebagai Lembaga Keuangan Informal Dalam Sistem Perikanan Tangkap (Studi Kasus Kemitraan Pembiayaan Nelayan Sekoci Di Sendang Biru Kabupaten Malang)*. Skripsi, University Of Muhammadiyah Malang.
- Faizin, A. (2006). *Faktor-Faktor yang Mempengaruhi Keputusan Masyarakat Nelayan Bekerjasama dengan Pengamba*. Skripsi. Fakultas Pertanian Univesitas Jember.
- Kusnadi. (2000). *Nelayan: Strategi Adaptasi dan Jaringan Sosial*. Humaniora Utama Press.
- Kusnadi. (2001). *Pengamba: Kaum wanita fenomenal*. Humaniora Utama Press.
- Muhartono, Rizky, and Nurlaili. (2018). Debt As A Binding Relationship Between Fishers And "Pengambe". In J. Sosek (Ed.) *KP Vol, The Jember Regency, East Java Province*, 13(2), 239-248.
- Ningsih, D. A. (2011). *Pengaruh Ikatan Patron-Klien Terhadap Perilaku Nelayan Dalam Pemasaran Hasil Tangkapan (Kasus: Desa Tanjung Pasir, Kecamatan Teluknaga, Kabupaten Tangerang, Provinsi Banten)*. (Skripsi Tidak Diterbitkan). Departemen Sains Komunikasi Dan Pengembangan Masyarakat. Fakultas Ekologi Manusia. Institut Pertanian Bogor.
- Sunartomo, A. F. (2006). *Kajian Pola Komunikasi Nelayan-Pengamba' Pada Komunitas Pesisir Pantai (Studi Kasus Di Kawasan Jember)*. (Tesis S2 Tidak Diterbitkan). Program Pasca Sarjana Universitas Sebelas Maret.