

Village Head Leadership in the Implementation of the Carved Furniture Community Empowerment Program in Mulyoharjo Village in 2024

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the leadership role of the Village Head in community empowerment programs in Mulyoharjo Village, Jepara Subdistrict, Jepara Regency, which is known as the centre of the carved furniture industry. The method used is a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through interviews and documentation. The results showed that the leadership of the Head of Mulyoharjo Village, which is democratic and participatory, has a significant influence in increasing the capacity and independence of the community, especially through the furniture industry empowerment program. The program includes training in carving skills, business management, digital marketing, and the use of appropriate technology. Although the implementation of the program has gone well, there are still challenges such as the low participation of the younger generation and limited facilities. Overall, the leadership of the Mulyoharjo Village Head contributes to strengthening local potential through a collaborative approach oriented towards sustainable development.

Keywords: Carved Furniture, Community Empowerment, Leadership, Local Government, Village Head.

1. Introduction

The leadership of the village head plays an important role as a government leader at the lowest level who is in direct contact with the community. In carrying out its functions, the leadership of the village head determines the success of various village programmes, including in managing local potential such as the furniture industry. With visionary and responsive leadership, the village head can formulate policies, establish cooperation with various parties, and encourage the active participation of the community, especially youth, in productive economic activities. Effective leadership is key in creating coordination and involvement of all elements of the community in village development. Leadership is a relationship that exists within a leader who is able to influence others to work consciously in achieving goals (Terry et al., 1985). In this context, leadership involves not only mobilising individuals, but also controlling groups to work in a coordinated manner towards set goals.

The ability of the village head to unite the vision and mission with the expectations of the community is very important in creating synergy between leaders and the community. This is in line with the opinion of Ardiyansyah and Wijaya (2024) stated that government performance is highly dependent on the activities of the apparatus as members of the organisation, which in the village context means village officials and the community itself. The



vision and mission of the village head will not be effective if it is not communicated and agreed upon by elements of the community, because its implementation requires collective support, including from the youth as one of the main drivers of village development.

Community participation, especially the younger generation, is an important factor in realising the vision of sustainable village development (Yessie & Indriawati, 2024). Village youth have a strategic role as agents of change who can encourage innovation, mobilise community groups, and bridge communication between the village government and residents. With the involvement of youth in the planning and implementation of village programmes in the economic, social and environmental fields, the vision and mission of the village will not only be a formal document, but also a collective spirit that is carried out together.

Hence, the ability of the village head to align his vision and mission with the aspirations of the community, as well as to open the widest possible space for youth participation, are important indicators of successful village leadership. Without such synergy, village empowerment and development programmes tend to be top-down and less sustainable. The direction of village development policy is largely determined by the leadership of the village head. The village government is tasked with managing the administration under the leadership of the village head, who is supported by the village secretary and other village officials. The village head is the main organiser and responsible for governance, development, and community affairs. The village head also exercises rights, authorities, and responsibilities (Azhar & Setiawan, 2024).

The village head in Mulyoharjo plays a key role in managing the potential of his area. Mulyoharjo, as a village rich in wood processing skills, has a great opportunity to develop a furniture industry. However, the village head's goal of improving the village economy is often at odds with the expectations of the community, who want to fulfil their daily needs. Therefore, a leadership style is needed that is able to harmonise these differences, so that organisational goals and individual needs can be achieved simultaneously.

Furniture in Mulyoharjo has shown rapid development. In Mulyoharjo village. There are 144 carving industries, but each industry only has 3-4 youth involved on average. In fact, the total number of youth in the village reached 3,622 people in 2021. The lack of youth interest in carving is due to the rapid industrialisation of factories in Jepara. This has made them prefer to work as factory labourers with minimum wage rather than carvers whose income is uncertain, so they cannot utilise their existing skills and traditions to produce competitive furniture products. As a result, local skills and traditions that should be an important asset in producing competitive furniture products are not optimally utilised by the younger generation.

This issue is inseparable from the importance of the village head's leadership role in maintaining the sustainability of the carving industry. The village head has a strategic position as the main driver in the implementation of community empowerment programmes, including in overcoming the problem of artisan regeneration, strengthening business institutions, and improving the quality and competitiveness of furniture products. Strong, responsive, and visionary leadership is needed to build collective awareness, expand market access, and encourage innovation in the carving industry sector.

With effective leadership, the Mulyoharjo furniture centre can not only be a source of income for the community, but also support sustainable economic growth and improve the quality of life of the local community. The village head must be able to formulate inclusive policies, encourage collaboration between entrepreneurs, communities, and the government, and ensure that all programmes run can provide maximum benefits for all parties.

Based on the phenomenon described, a gap exists between expectations and reality. Both the community and the government want the carving centre to be maintained to this day, but this is not the case. The furniture centre in Mulyoharjo Village, Jepara Subdistrict, Jepara Regency has experienced a decline due to various factors, including changes in the work orientation of youth who prefer to work for a fixed salary, lack of interest in the culture of carving, and not optimal use of technology in the current digital era. Youth involvement is very important in preserving the carving culture. For this reason, the researcher is interested in further examining the role of youth in the art of carving with the research title Village Head Leadership in the Implementation of the Meuble Empowerment Programme in Mulyoharjo Village 2024.

2. Theoretical Foundation

2.1. Leadership

Leadership broadly means exerting influence for the betterment of a group or culture, inspiring the actions of followers to achieve goals, and defining organisational objectives (Rivai, 2016). In addition, it also influences how members of a group or organisation perceive and respond to events, formulate strategies to achieve goals, work together as a team, and gain support and cooperation from people outside the group. One definition of leadership is the art of guiding and shaping the way a group carries out its daily tasks (Herlina et al., 2021). The author will define leadership so that readers can better understand the concept. The word 'leader' which has the prefix "pe" and suffix 'an' to indicate the nature of a leader is the root of the word. Leadership is a determining factor in the success or failure of a group or organisation in society in achieving its goals. The art of influencing others to direct their willingness, ability, and effort to achieve the leader's goals is what is meant by the definition of leadership.

Further, leadership is the ability of a leader to influence others, namely those who are led or followers (Soekanto, 2014). Although other experts have constructed the concept of leadership with various explanations, but essentially the purpose and intent are the same. One of them, according to Kartono (1994) regarding Ardway Tead's statement in his book *The Art of Leadership* that Leadership is the activity of influencing others to work together to achieve the desired goals. Leadership is a person's ability to direct or influence other people or communities that are different from each other towards certain goals (Tanjung & Ishak, 2003). Based on statements from experts, it can be concluded that leadership is a trait that must be possessed by a leader, which in its application has consequences for the leader, including: making decisions firmly and correctly, daring to bear their own risks, daring to accept their own responsibilities.

2.2. Empowerment

Empowerment as outlined by Mardikanto and Soebiato (2017) is basically the process of utilising the power or potential of the community as the main capital to improve their own lives. In this concept, empowerment rejects any interference or engineering from outside parties that can actually weaken the independence of the community. In essence, empowerment is the effort of the community itself to rise up and improve its welfare, either with or without external assistance. The word 'power' in empowerment means strength, ability, or potential. Therefore, the essence of empowerment is to maximise the power that already exists within the community. Power can also be defined as the ability of a person or group to influence others to do something, even though it may not be in accordance with that person's wishes. In the context of empowerment, power is not used to suppress, but rather to

mobilise and build community independence. Stages of Community Empowerment Empowerment (Suharto, 2009) is a gradual process that takes time to achieve.

The Community Empowerment Process, or "*pemberdayaan*" in Bahasa, comes from the word "*daya*," which means 'power.' If translated into English, "empowerment" refers to the provision of strength or power to weak groups who do not have the strength or power to live independently, especially to meet basic life needs such as health, education, shelter, clothing, and food (Wardhani et al., 2025).

The awareness stage is crucial because at this stage the community can understand the benefits of community empowerment. Community empowerment occurs in three stages (Sulistiyani, 2004) namely:

1. The first stage is to raise awareness and form a mindset that recognises the need to improve one's own skills or abilities. Thus, empowered people must realise that their circumstances must be changed in order to thrive. The purpose of one's life, awareness of the state of the world, and awareness of the need to change circumstances for a better future. When a person understands the importance of self-improvement, it enables him/her to achieve the goal of empowerment through behaviour change.
2. The process of transforming and enhancing people's capacity through the development of knowledge, abilities, and skills belongs to the second stage. This enables people to acquire the basic capabilities needed to be actively involved in development activities.
3. Improving intellectual abilities and mastering skills is the third stage. The goal of empowerment at this stage is to continuously develop the acquired skills. Ultimately, this development will lead to self-reliance.

As a process, empowerment focuses on increasing community participation, while empowerment as an outcome focuses on economic improvement and access to economic resources. Empowerment can improve the ability of any individual or group. Thus, they have the ability to fulfil their basic needs to increase their income and obtain the goods and services they need and can participate in development processes that can affect their lives (Marhaeni et al., 2019).

The village head has a major influence on the empowerment process. To encourage the development of independent, creative and creative village communities in all aspects of life, empowerment of village communities is very important. The level of community engagement, which is the main driver of village governance, will certainly be influenced by the capacity of village leaders in empowering the local community (Kushadajani & Permana, 2020).

2.3. Community Participation in the Carved Furniture Industry

Participation according to Fithriadi, et al in (Sugandi, 2011) is the core of the development approach by involving the community directly as an interactive process on an ongoing basis. Community participation according to Parwoto in (Irene, 2011) is the participation of the community in the development and implementation of policies or programmes. Community participation is the active involvement of citizens in the process of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating development programmes or activities that affect their lives. This participation is not only limited to physical presence, but also includes decision-making, resource contribution, and control over development outcomes. Community participation in this case focuses on supporting the running of the meuble carving industry programme. In this case, the community is given knowledge about meuble carving expertise by means of socialisation and training which is carried out in stages with the aim that the community has the expertise to open a business independently.

3. Methods

In this study, the authors used descriptive qualitative research as the basis of research with the aim of providing a factual description of the object under study, namely those related to the leadership of the village head in implementing the meuble empowerment programme in Mulyoharjo Village, Jepara District. The types of data collected in this study are grouped into Primary data and Secondary data. Primary data is information collected through interviews with the village head. While secondary data is information collected from sources related to this research and from library publications, especially from various literatures. Interviews and questionnaires were used to obtain both primary and secondary data. Qualitative descriptive data analysis, which involves a complete explanation of the findings of the research object without making comparisons, was the data analysis technique used.

4. Results and Discussion

Mulyoharjo Village is located in Jepara Sub-district, Jepara Regency, and is known as one of the centres of the furniture industry, especially carving crafts. Based on village data, there are more than 140 business units spread across the village. Most of them are furniture businesses, but the involvement of the younger generation in this industry is still very low. This is an important background in examining the leadership role of the village head in empowerment programmes.

The Village Head has a central role in the development of the village area. Therefore, the Village Head and his/her team are responsible for the implementation of governance and development, which means that the progress or decline of village development is highly dependent on the performance of the Village Head in encouraging community participation. Village development, as stipulated in Article 3 of Permendagri No. 114/2014 on Village Development Guidelines, includes village administration, development implementation, community development, and community empowerment.

In an interview with the Head of Mulyoharjo Village, he stated that,

“Development in Mulyoharjo Village has increased, through empowerment is one way to improve the welfare of the community” (Interview with Jupriyono as the Village Head, on 27 May 2025).

Although the conditions of the community are complex and the professions of its citizens are diverse, the role of the Mulyoharjo Village Head remains very important. The Head of Mulyoharjo Village is committed to overseeing empowerment wisely and improving services to the community, as well as opening up space for community aspirations for the betterment of the village.

The village head further said that :

“The village has a heterogeneous population, which is a challenge in governance and development. As a village government, we can organise a programme, while its implementation depends on the village funds we have” (Interview with Jupriyono as the Village Head, on 27 May 2025).

For non-physical development, especially in increasing community self-help in the field of entrepreneurship, Mulyoharjo Village has great potential in this sector, which is one of the

livelihoods. However, many young people in the village are influenced by outside labour rather than owning their own business and are reluctant to do manual labour.

The Village Head of Mulyoharjo, has established cooperation with the community to improve welfare, which also relates to non-physical development, namely the empowerment of meuble. The village head and his officials try to influence the community to improve welfare, so that the community can feel the benefits in the economic and welfare fields. These benefits include increased knowledge, mastery of technology, skills, creativity, and expansion of communication networks between residents.

4.1. Leadership of Mulyoharjo Village Head in Meuble Empowerment

Leadership broadly means exerting influence for the betterment of a group or culture, inspiring the actions of followers to achieve goals, and determining organisational objectives (Rivai, 2016). It also influences the way members of a group or organisation perceive and respond to events, formulate strategies to achieve goals, work together as a team, and gain support and cooperation from people outside the group.



Figure 1. Mulyoharjo Village Head leading the meuble carving community empowerment programme

Source: Mulyoharjo Village Documentation Archive

One definition of leadership is influencing others, this strong influence is translated by Jupriyono as the Head of Mulyoharjo Village. Mulyoharjo Village Head has a strong determination to advance Mulyoharjo Village through innovation, especially in the field of technology and digitalisation, Village Head Jupriyono stated that:

"Villages should not only rely on old ways. The community must advance and be able to use technology, consider technology as a necessity. If we cannot use technology, then we will be left behind, including in the furniture sector, perhaps by selling goods through online stores" (interview with Jupriyono as the Village Head, on 27 May 2025).

This is done with the aim of achieving progress and usefulness. This vision was communicated on several occasions, such as interviews and media coverage, where he emphasised the need for digitalisation as a necessity and not an option.

The leadership of the head of Mulyoharjo Village plays an important role in empowering the furniture industry through various programmes that support the community. The provision of skills training, access to raw materials, and product promotion, all of which aim to improve the quality and competitiveness of the furniture industry. Thus, the village head contributes to the improvement of the community's economic welfare through the

development of this industry. The village head of Mulyoharjo also plays a role in establishing partnerships with local furniture craftsmen to create a wider marketing network. Through this collaboration, the furniture products produced can be marketed not only at the local level, but also to larger markets, including nearby cities. In addition, village heads can facilitate access to information regarding the latest design trends and technologies in the furniture industry, so that artisans can adapt and innovate according to market demands. Programmes designed to improve the community's skills and knowledge in furniture production can also help create higher-quality, more competitive products.

In simple terms, the leadership of the Mulyoharjo Village Head is in accordance with the type of democratic leadership (Rivai, 2016), which states that democratic leadership is directed, dynamic, and participatory leadership. This type of decision-making leadership highly values discussion. The Village Head can carry out his duties, authorities, and responsibilities, improve community welfare, develop human resource potential, and develop community income. In an interview, the village head said,

“The decisions I make are never one-sided or favourable to one party, I as the village head try to listen to the aspirations of the community and then if there is a program, it must be discussed with the management board” (interview with Jupriyono as the Village Head, on 27 May 2025)

In other words, empowerment is achieved by accommodating and channeling the aspirations of the community and exploring the use of the potential of existing resources to improve development.



Figure 2. Mulyoharjo Village Head leads a meeting of the meuble carving community empowerment program with the village secretary (*carik*) and staff
Source: Mulyoharjo Village Documentation Archive

The leadership of the head of Mulyoharjo Village in Community Empowerment includes the following:

1. Encouraging the regeneration of craftsmen through carving skills training in this case the head of Mulyoharjo Village makes youth the main target in the meuble empowerment programme.

2. Establishing partnerships with outside, in this case Mulyoharjo Village provides facilities for entrepreneurs to join the organisation of meuble entrepreneurs outside Mulyoharjo Village.
3. Facilitating production and promotion space for local furniture entrepreneurs.
In empowering meuble, the village head has provided material regarding online sales.

Table 1. Respondents' Responses on Satisfaction with the Leadership Performance of the Mulyoharjo Village Head in the Meuble Empowerment Programme

No	Response	Number of Respondents
1	Dissatisfied	2
2	Satisfied	13
Number of Respondents		15

Source: Personal Questionnaire Data

Based on the table 1 above, there were 2 respondents who were dissatisfied with the leadership performance of the head of Mulyoharjo Village, one of the two respondents said through an interview,

"I am not satisfied because the village head conducted this programme in a lack of preparation and seemed rushed or hurried, gak kabeh dikon kerjo ngukir (not everyone is told to work as an engraver). I am already comfortable working in a factory" (Interview with Ahmad, 27 May 2025).

There were 13 respondents who claimed to be satisfied with the leadership performance of the head of Mulyoharjo Village, one of the thirteen respondents said that,

"I like this programme because previously I was not an expert in selling online because I usually only used Facebook, then I was taught to create a shopee account, now I'm pretty good at getting orders from there" (interview with Arif, on 27 May 2025).

4.2. Mulyoharjo Village Meuble Community Empowerment

Based on empowerment theory Mardikanto and Soebiato (2017) empowerment is basically a process of utilising the power or potential possessed by the community as the main capital to improve their own lives, by rejecting domination or dependence on outside interference that can weaken independence. In line with this, Suharto (2009) asserts that 'power' in the context of empowerment is not the power to suppress, but to mobilise and build community independence. This concept is very relevant to the empowerment activities carried out by the Head of Mulyoharjo Village, which focus on efforts to explore and develop the potential of the village community, especially in the field of furniture. The village head does not necessarily rely on external assistance to dominate, but rather facilitates the empowerment process from within the community itself through skills training, counselling, and the utilisation of appropriate technology.

The activities carried out by the Head of Mulyoharjo Village empower the existing community for the common good, such as training in various ways of carving and training in marketing. The efforts of the Village Head in empowering the community for non-physical development in Mulyoharjo Village. The role of the village head in empowering the community for the benefit of village development has gone well.

Based on the results of the author's interview with the Head of Mulyoharjo Village, he stated that:

“I empower the community by bringing in a carving expert from here whose furniture is already in the warehouse to teach new models and practice them to improve carving results” (interview with Jupriyono as the Village Head, on 27 May 2025).

Appropriate technology is also used to help craftsmen and can improve carving results, such as automatic wood cutting machines that make cutting easier. As in the field of creativity development such as in sales by way of counselling the use of online buying and selling sites. Meuble empowerment has been going well but still experiencing challenges so that it has not been running optimally. Meuble empowerment with training conducted for three times. The details of the activities are as follows.

Table 2. Three types of Furniture Training in Mulyoharjo Village

Training Type	Materials Taught	Objectives/Output
How to Carve	Basic knowledge and advanced techniques in woodcarving Engraving techniques from simple to complex	Able to create attractive and high quality designs
Business Management	Business planning Financial management Cost control	Running a professional and sustainable furniture business
Marketing	Business development strategy The importance of branding Market segmentation Promotion techniques Market trends and consumer preferences	Able to market products effectively and in accordance with market needs

Source: Interview with Village Head

The meuble empowerment programme above is in line with the stages of empowerment Sulistiyani (2004) which includes three stages, namely awareness, capacity building, and independence development, the activities carried out by the Head of Mulyoharjo Village can be directly linked.

Table 3. Three Stages of Mulyoharjo Village Meuble Empowerment

Stage	Activities/Efforts	Objective /Output
1. Awareness	- The village head's initiative to bring in carving experts	- People gain new knowledge - Increased awareness of the need for change for a better future
2. Capacity Building	- Carving technique training - Business management training - Marketing training	- Community members have technical skills - Able to manage the business professionally - Understand the market well
3. Development of Independence	- Use of appropriate technology (automatic wood cutting machine) - Utilisation of digital platforms for marketing	- Increased work efficiency - Furniture products can be marketed more widely through online buying and selling sites

Source: Interview with Village Head

However, the results of the interview show that this empowerment process still faces several challenges so that its implementation is not optimal, this is in line with the interview with the head of Mulyoharjo village.

“After this community empowerment, there may be obstacles such as business capital because those who participate in this empowerment, on average, are not big businesses, there are also those who do not have a business for those who do not have it, they only sell it to craftsmen, maybe after this the village plan can collaborate with banks to make it easier to provide loans through KUR banks so that they have a business” (interview with Jupriyono as the Village Head, on 27 May 2025).

This shows that empowerment is a continuous process that requires assistance and strengthening in various aspects, both from the technical side, market access, and local policy support. Overall, the efforts made by the Head of Mulyoharjo Village are in line with the concepts and stages of community empowerment, which are oriented towards exploring local potential and building independence gradually and sustainably.

4.3. Community Participation

The empowerment process actively involves the community. In Mulyoharjo Village, this involvement is not only symbolic, but is actually realised from the planning stage to programme implementation. The Head of Mulyoharjo Village invites the community to participate in providing input, proposing ideas, and being directly involved in the implementation of activities in the field. This aims to foster a sense of ownership and collective responsibility among villagers. As stated by the Head of Mulyoharjo Village:

“For development programmes, the community must definitely be involved, starting from planning and implementation. In order for the community to ngeroso duweni lah (foster a sense of belonging), feel that it belongs to them too and be ready to take care of it together, maintain it together. In essence, the community is involved so that they have a sense of responsibility for the development and facilities that have been built in this village.” (Interview with Jupriyono as the Village Head, on 27 May 2025).

This statement shows that community involvement is not just about being present, but is part of an effort to build awareness and participation of residents as subjects of development.

This active involvement is a crucial factor in achieving sustainable development goals, especially in the context of community empowerment of carving furniture in Mulyoharjo village. By being directly involved in the process, the community not only becomes the beneficiaries, but also the managers and custodians of the development results. The village head emphasised that this approach is important so that residents are not passive, but rather truly understand the value of any training, facilities, or activities implemented.

One of the villagers interviewed stated that they feel more valued and motivated when they are directly involved. One community member said,

“I feel included in the village programme, I initially thought that this programme would not be possible because the village head at that time only asked for suggestions without any continuation, but this programme was formed, I was invited to participate in proposing activities, and finally saw the results. I learned a new carving model like a gardenan outside” (interview with Arif, on 27 May 2025).

This proves that active community involvement contributes to increased social care, awareness of shared responsibility, and even strengthens relationships between residents in collective work. Thus, the participatory strategy implemented by the Mulyoharjo Village Government has proven effective in strengthening the foundation of community-based development.

Through community involvement from the initial planning stage to implementation, the village head ensures that the community also assumes responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the constructed facilities, rather than just receiving the keys.

4.4. Challenges Faced by the Village Head in Implementing Furniture Empowerment in Mulyoharjo Village, Jepara

A. Human Resources

Human resources (HR) are an important factor influencing the effectiveness of the village head's leadership. The quality of human resources, such as the level of education, skills, experience, and the community's spirit of gotong royong, determines the success or failure of the meubel empowerment programme. The village head needs to be able to mobilise and guide the community to be actively involved in empowerment activities.

B. Facilities and Infrastructure

The availability of facilities and infrastructure is also a supporting factor in the implementation of empowerment programmes. Facilities such as training centres, production tools, and marketing facilities will greatly assist the development of the meubel business in the village. The leadership of the village head is assessed by his ability to utilise and develop existing infrastructure to support the success of the programme.

5. Conclusions

The leadership of the Head of Mulyoharjo Village plays an important role in the implementation of community empowerment programmes, particularly in the village's signature furniture sector. With more than 140 furniture business units, the village has great potential, but it has not been fully optimised due to the low participation of the younger generation and limited facilities. The Head of Mulyoharjo Village demonstrates a democratic leadership style that is participatory, open to the aspirations of the community, and actively collaborates and designs empowerment programmes based on local potential. These efforts have been able to increase community capacity, foster independence, and encourage creativity in product development.

The implementation of this empowerment still faces challenges, especially in the aspects of regenerating young labour, market access, and uneven infrastructure support. This shows that empowerment is a long-term process that requires synergy between the village government and the community. Overall, the leadership of the Mulyoharjo Village Head is proven to significantly contribute to the strengthening of local potential through empowerment strategies based on participation, innovation, and collaboration. This corresponds to leadership and empowerment theories that emphasise the importance of community awareness, capacity building, and independence in village development.

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