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## COMMUNITY READINESS IN SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEQUIRAKA TOURISM AREA IN MUNICIPALITY OF VIQUEQUE, TIMOR-LESTE

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### ABSTRACT

#### KEYWORDS

Community Readiness,  
Development Tourism  
Area, Lequiraka

The wealth of nature, diversity of culture, and value of history possessed by Timor-Leste are essential potential triggers for developing the tourism sector. The provision of infrastructure in the tourism area, improvement of historical buildings, and promotion of the wealth of natural as well as cultural abroad have been carried out by the government to attract visitors to be able to visit Timor-Leste. The main target of the development of the tourism sector is increasing income and community's welfare. One of the places used to promote destination tourism is Lequiraka. The purpose of this study is to assess the readiness of the people of Ossorua Village to support the development of the Lequiraka tourism area. The study was conducted in the village of Ossorua for two months, from September to October 2021. The data collection method was a preliminary survey and interviews with thirty people from the communities of Ossorua Village. The data analysis using the Likert analysis scale 1-5 to determine the readiness of the Ossorua village community to support the development of the tourism area and then described descriptively. Community have a moderate level of education (43%), involvement in the development activities of the development area is considered good. The community's readiness is considered good because it is seen from the level of education, community involvement, and participation is very supportive of the development of the tourism area.

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### INTRODUCTION

The sector of tourism is one of the sectors that have an essential in contributing to state revenue. Tourism in various countries such as Thailand, Singapore, Fiji, the Philippines, Maldives, Hawaii, and others depends on foreign exchange from tourist visits (Pitana & Gayatri, 2005). The existence of tourism development is expected that the development of other sectors will increase and support one another. Yoeti (2000) argues that tourism is expected to be a determining factor and contributor in gradually managing or developing other sectors' development. According to Smith (1988) in (Pitana & Gayatri, 2005), an area used as a tourist destination must provide transportation, travel services, accommodation, food services, activities and attractions (recreation/culture/entertainment), retail goods.

Timor-Leste is a new country in Southeast Asia to be formed in 2002 (Constitution RDTL, 2002). It is located in the eastern part of Indonesia and the north of Australia (Martins, 2017). The development of the tourism sector in Timor-Leste is currently experiencing an increase.

Data from Timor-Leste tourism statistics show that the level of tourist visits increased in 2018 by 74,661 people compared to 2014, which was only 59,811 people (General Directorate of Statistics, 2019). This is because Timor-Leste has a variety of potentials that can be used as a tourist attraction, such as biodiversity, community culture, its inherent history, and historical buildings. According to (Barreto & Giantari, 2015), the potential resources owned by forests, land, and sea are assets that must be optimally utilized to benefit development through the tourism sector. Tourism promotion and infrastructure development and infrastructure in several tourism areas have been built by the government to attract tourists. Next (Pereira, 2017) stated that the development of the tourism sector, especially ecotourism, has been built in Beloi village, Atauro island, and is expected to increase people's income through tourism. As for opinion by (Soares, 2012), the Ministry of Tourism has built several existing tourist attractions to attract local and foreign tourists. Some of the places built consisted; construction of the COM coastal area in Lautem, Selo kraik in Aileu, mota bendera waterfall in Ermera, Marobo hot spring in Bobonaro, and Lequiraka nature cave in Municipal Viqueque.

One of the tourist attractions that will be developed in Timor-Leste is the Lequiraka tourism area. This tourism area is located in Ossorua Village, precisely 17 km from Viqueque Municipality. Viqueque is one of the Municipalities in Timor-Leste, located at the eastern of the country of Timor-Leste. Viqueque is one of the municipalities whose development is relatively low compared to other municipalities in Timor-Leste. According to da (da Cruz, 2015), Municipal viqueque is one of the municipalities with a low economic level because the regional development is relatively low. In addition, this municipality will also later become a national development target because it will be used as a supply base area in the 2010-2030 strategic development plan (Government of Republic of Timor-Leste, 2011). With this development, it is hoped that all sectors will support each other, especially the tourism sector, because it makes it easier for visitors to carry out tourist activities to tourist destinations. According to the opinion of (Betteng, 2019), a tourism destination is an area or place where tourists can enjoy various experiences while traveling.

The level of community participation and readiness in developing a tourist destination is urgently needed. This is because the community is the leading actor in tourism development. According to (Sugiharto, Delita, & Sidauruk, 2018), the success of community-based tourism is primarily determined by the readiness of the community to be directly involved. The community is not only the object of tourism development, but the community also has a strategic role as a determinant of the direction of tourism development. However, so far, the tourism sector has only prioritized the profit aspect without building local communities around tourist attractions. People's lives also have a selling point in this sector by introducing its history and cultural diversity. (Kurniati, Meidiana, & Wicaksono, 2015) argue that several indicators affect the community's readiness regarding the plan of development activities, namely knowledge, skills, physique, and will of the community. In other words, the high readiness of the community is influenced by high knowledge, good skills, a healthy physical will, and the strongness of the community. In addition, one of the most important things is to use critical leaders or influential people to speak to the community as a form of motivation for the community to participate in activities.

A tourist destination area is considered developing if its community participates and is directly involved in the development process. Therefore, the community needs to be included in every process. The support of the government and non-governmental institutions is urgently needed in this regard. In addition, the potential and natural beauty possessed by this area have not been fully supported by the availability of tourism facilities and infrastructure for tourism

development, lack of promotion, and lack of ability or skills from the community (Regional Responder, September 2021, Personal communication). Suppose the development of this tourism area is developed optimally, providing opportunities for residents to improve their economic life. In that case, it can also help increase the income of other village communities because of the availability of jobs.

Furthermore, the data and information needed to develop this tourist destination are still limited because there is no research conducted at that location. So with this research, it is hoped that it can provide valuable data, information, and input for all parties in developing this tourist destination for the better. Based on some of the things mentioned above, the purpose of this study is to assess the community's readiness to support the development of lequiraka tourist destinations.

## METHOD RESEARCH

The research was conducted in Oссорua Village, Ossonu sub-district, Municipality of Viqueque, Timor-Leste for two months, from September to October 2021. The tools and instruments used in this research are stationery, cameras for documentation, voice recording devices, GPS (Global Positioning System), and the guidelines for the interview.

The data of the research were taken through the initial survey, interviews, and literature studies. The researcher made preliminary observations to collect preliminary data in supporting research information due to the lack of unavailability of data at this research site. The literature study was carried out by looking for various relevant research related to the research carried out and obtaining initial information on tourism development. Some literature studies include journals, theses, tourists' visit reports, and documents of the tourism development plan.

Interview was conducted with the person in charge of the tourism area and 30 people Oссорua Villagers. Collection of data on the readiness of community used the guidelines of interview. The goal was to find the information about the obstacles that were faced, level of visitors' visits, and the plan of tourism areas development.

The determination of respondents was selected by using purposive sampling with criteria; community who settled in the village of Oссорua who lived around the location of research or along the road to the area of tourism with an age range of 18-70 years of age. Another criteria is the people who got benefit directly or indirectly from the development of lequiraka destinations. The data of research were analyzed by using Likert scale analysis of 1-5 with scoring consisting of 5 categories, namely Very ready (VR) = 5, Ready (R) = 4, uncertain (U) = 3, Not ready (NR) = 2, Very unprepared (VU) = 1. The results of the analyzed data were then described descriptively (Anonim, 2021).

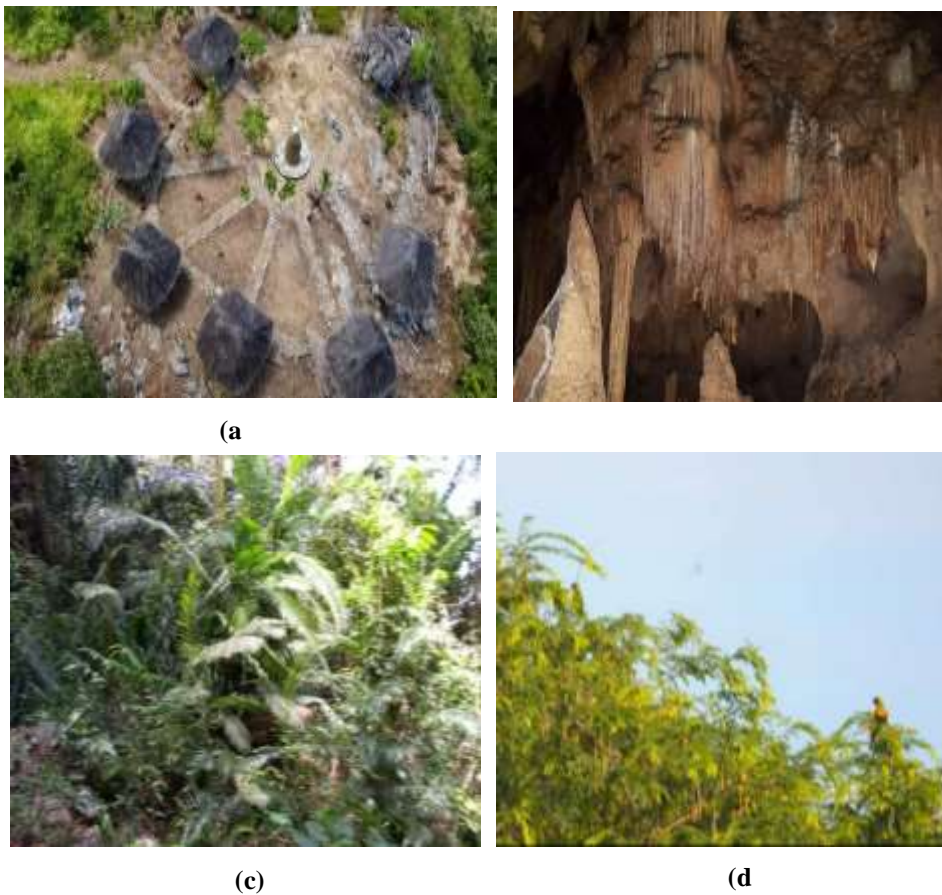
## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The general condition of Tourism Area

Administratively, the destination of Lequiraka ecotourism is located in Watulawa, Oссорua Village, Ossonu sub-district, Viqueque Municipality of Timor-Leste. The area of this destination is at an altitude of 568 meters above sea surface. It is geographically located between 126°39'56" longitude and 08°58'59" latitude, with the width of area of 4.92 km<sup>2</sup>. The distance from Viqueque Regency to the tourism area is 28 km with a travel time is for less more than 45 minutes. The livelihood of community around of the area is farmers. The dominant age is currently settling is between 31-60 years of age; as much as 50% of the

population, meanwhile the people of 16 to 30 years of age are mostly living in the city to continue their education and work.

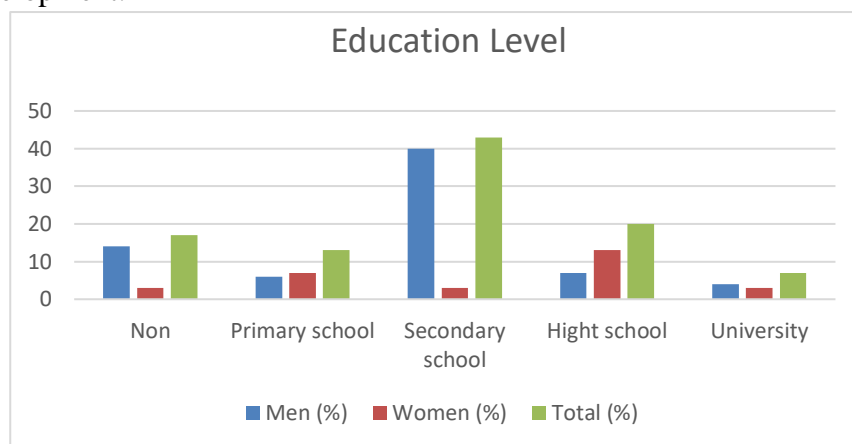
The area of Lequiraka tourism has several attractions. The attractions are the natural cave, Labalou historical place, and several types of plants and wildlife, among of them: parrots (*Loriini*), *turtledove* and wild chicken (*Gallus gallus*). Dominant plants are growing in the area of tourism Lequiraka are palms and bamboo.



**Figure 1**  
**The appearance of Tourism Area (a) Labalou Historical Place. (b) Lequiraka Natural Cave. (c) Groups of palm plants that grow dominantly in tourism area (d) Parrot. One of the animals species that found in tourism area**

### Community Readiness in Supporting Activities of Tourism Area Development

The readiness of community of Ossorua Village takes an essential role in the process of developing of regional destination. The aspects are assessed from readiness of community are level of education, ability, and participation of community in developing of regional activity. The participations of community comprise planning, managing, as well as the evaluating of tourism development.



**Figure 2**  
**Community Education Level**  
Source: Primary data analysis

The level of education is taken by the community of Ossorua Village consist of Elementary School, Junior High School, Senior High School, and University. A part of community have never studied at school or not completing the Elementary School education. Chart 1 above shows that the citizens take in secondary school who occupy the highest percentage (43%) compared with those university level (7%). So that it shows that the majority of ossorua villagers have a moderate level of education. Currently, community feel that education is very important because with education people can change the level of life to be more feasible. Education is one of the important factors of development supporting because it assesses the readiness and availability of human resources. This matter is supported by the opinion of (Arida, 2017) that the level of community's education is very influential in assessing the level of readiness or ability of the community about its capacity for development.

The majority of people (55%) agreed with the establishment of a destination area. With the existence of this tourism area, it is hoped that the village community can get results from the development of the area both directly and indirectly. Since the start of the development process of the area, the community has also been involved. Until now, people indirectly feel that they get benefits from the results of the development of the tourism area because the community's agricultural products can be sold, such as fruits and others around the area. Community agricultural products can also be used as processed, such as chips and other snacks, and sold around the area or elsewhere. The community stated that it has the opportunity to earn additional income from tourist activities. The head of the hamlet also conveyed that the people of the Sub-village of Watulawa who live around the Lequiraka tourism area and along the road to the tourist attraction, are free to sell their agricultural products to visitors. In addition, he also added that many tourists from various places visited this tourism area so that they could



sell agricultural products to the community and people could benefit from their business. According to him, the level of tourist visits is decreasing compared to the beginning of the region's establishment. Therefore, his party is trying to prepare a way to attract tourists. One of them is the improvement of facilities and infrastructure that plan ways such as providing information and improving the facilities needed in the tourism area.

The community considers infrastructure development, road access, and lighting/electricity excellent (48%), but clean water is still inadequate. With the development of this sector, it is hoped that it can support other sectors, especially in developing the Lequiraka tourism destination, so that the surrounding community can take advantage of it to get their income. The development of Lequiraka tourist destinations is used by the people of Ossorua village and by the people of other villages such as Waguia and Loihuno Villages to increase their economic income. According to what was stated by Damanik (2006) in (Pangastuti, 2016) that the surrounding community, especially indigenous people who live in tourism areas, is one of the key players in tourism, so the readiness of the community to be involved in the development of ecotourism is essential.

Community involvement in the development activities of the destination area is considered good. The community states that as many as 34% are involved in regional development activities. In terms of support, the community disagrees that management and government assistance, both material or non-material, to build their business in tourism increase their income. People feel that in building a business, they need capital, but they have not received funds or assistance from any part of organization. So far, they have only used their money to open culinary along the way, such as the cost of opening a restaurant around the destination area or the typical culinary of the village community. According to (Tolkach, King, & Pearlman, 2012) that to advancing communities based tourism in Timor-Leste, founded challenges, some of which are as follows: 1) Lack of access to vocational education and training; 2) Limited management skills and knowledge of community, 3) Lack of ongoing support for CBT, short-term project orientation applicable; 4) Lack of financial support opportunities, as more than 30% of the population lives below the poverty line, and the financial credit system is still developing; 5) Lack of physical infrastructure and unsatisfactory conditions (roads, electricity, and telecommunications); 6) Intra-community conflict due to jealousy; 7) Conflicts of land use priorities between agriculture, industry, recreation, and nature conservation.

The community feels ready in terms of service quality because they have the ability to master information about the destination area. This area is near the community residents, and during the construction process, the community is involved in the development process. The level of community communication is categorized as good because the people of Ossorua Village can communicate in several languages, like Tetum dan Makasa'e. Some people can still be spoken Portuguese and Indonesian. A large part of the population of Timor Lest, who lives in the eastern part, has five dominant languages: Makasae, Tetum, Uaimu'a, Nauety, and Kairui (Klinken & Williams, 2015).

In terms of empowerment, the community agrees that developing Lequiraka destinations can help empower the surrounding community, especially young women, housewives, and out-of-school youth. The community is willing to improve the quality of its services, in this case, it is ready to participate in empowerment activities for the community if the government provides, especially empowerment in tourism from tourism symmetry. So far, the community has not received training in tourism organized governments. Need capacity-building training and empowerment from the government for managers, tourist guides, and the community,

especially housewives and young women. Mrs. Celeste stated that the people of Ossorua Village, especially housewives and young women, have not received training on services in the field of tourism. Mr. Leopoldo conveyed that his party and several people involved in protecting this area have not received training from the government. The community can be involved in counseling and arousing community concern

The addition of tourist attractions, such as community culinary, handicrafts, and traditional dances, needs to be developed or exposed to be an attraction for tourists. The culinary of these communities include Tukir and katupa. Currently, the community still provides culinary in tourism areas in small quantities because the number of visitors who visit the area is still low.. The community can also be empowered as a guide (tour guide), souvenir craftsman, transportation services, and food and beverage providers for visitors (Taghulih, Kumenaung, & Tumangkeng, 2019); (Pangastuti, 2016).

The increase in quantity will be adjusted to the number of tourist visits. The addition of signposts and danger signs will be carried out. Likewise, with facilities and infrastructure, repairs to damaged facilities and infrastructure will add to the less. Ready to work together to help maintain security and provide comfort for visitors who visit the tourism area.

Most people strongly agree to assist the government in providing clean water in tourism areas. This matter also applies to environmental sanitation because the availability of clean water and sanitation is one of the essential points in tourism development. Based on information from the tourism area manager, his party has tried to ask for support from the government to provide clean water in the tourism area, but until now, it has not received a response. Report from The Water Supply and Sanitation Investment Project that (WSSIP) will support the Government of Timor-Leste to improve water supply and sanitation (WSS) in three cities; such as Lospalos, Viqueque and Same by drawing on experiences and lessons learned from the ADB Second District Capitals Water Supply Project (Asia Development Bank, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

The people's readiness plays an essential role in developing regional destinations in the future. The majority of the community have a moderate level of education. The community's readiness is considered good because it is seen from the level of education, community involvement, and participation is very supportive of the development of the tourism area. The community stated they would participate and contribute to developing tourism areas. People feel disposed to improve their skills and quality of service and be friendly to visitors. Maintain the safety and comfort of visitors and be ready to participate in maintaining existing facilities and infrastructure in the destination area.

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