



Research Article

Youth Farmer Empowerment and Sustainable Livelihoods in Gayo Coffee Production: Institutional Strategies of KBQ Baburrayan Coffee Cooperative in Bener Meriah

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of the BQ Baburrayan Coffee Cooperative in empowering coffee farmers in Bener Meriah Regency, Aceh, particularly in promoting sustainable coffee farmer regeneration. Bener Meriah is Indonesia's largest arabica coffee production center, with a cultivated area of 34,524.41 hectares and an annual production of 26,420 tons. However, the sector faces a serious threat in the form of the aging farmers phenomenon, where the average age of coffee farmers reaches 55 years and only 15 percent of farmers are under 40 years old. This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach, conducted through in-depth interviews, field observations, and literature review. Analysis was carried out using Muhtarom's (2016) role theory, which encompasses three institutional functions: facilitator, motivator, and dynamizer. The findings reveal that BQ Baburrayan Cooperative has implemented all three roles through various empowerment programs, including: (1) as a facilitator, providing broader market access, laboratory quality testing, and reducing farmers' dependence on middlemen; (2) as a motivator, offering guidance and technical assistance to both senior farmers and young generations; and (3) as a dynamizer, conducting field mentoring, modern agricultural technology training, and production quality development. Nevertheless, these three roles have not yet functioned optimally due to persistent obstacles: low parental participation in encouraging children to pursue coffee farming, social stigma attached to the farming profession, and diminishing interest among young people given the wider array of career alternatives.

Keywords: BQ Baburrayan Cooperative, Coffee Farmer Empowerment, Farmer Regeneration, Aging Farmers, Bener Meriah

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Introduction

This study examines the role of the BQ Baburayyan Coffee Cooperative in empowering coffee farmers in Bener Meriah, a region that faces an urgent need for farmer regeneration. In practice, coffee farmers regard the BQ Baburayyan Cooperative as a crucial foundation in supporting their livelihoods in Bener Meriah. According to Law Number 25 of 1992, cooperatives specifically aim to enhance the welfare of their members and, more broadly, to promote community welfare and contribute to the development of the national economic system in order to realize a progressive, just, and prosperous society based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. The cooperative also functions as a facilitator for coffee farmers, and many community members hope that through this cooperative they can gain access to wider market networks and obtain better prices. Consequently, the BQ Baburayyan Cooperative serves as an intermediary between coffee farmers and the market (Munara, 2021).

Bener Meriah Regency is one of Indonesia's largest Arabica coffee production centers, with a cultivated area reaching 34,524.41 hectares and total production of 26,420 tons (Statistik, 2022). Gayo Arabica coffee is one of the major commercial commodities in the Gayo Highlands of Central Aceh. To date, Gayo Arabica accounts for approximately 40% of national Arabica coffee production annually. However, despite this significant potential, serious challenges threaten the sustainability of the local coffee industry, particularly the phenomenon of aging farmers, whereby most current coffee farmers belong to older generations. The average age of coffee farmers in the region is 55 years, with only 15% under the age of 40 (Statistik, 2022). This condition raises concerns regarding the regeneration of coffee farmers in Bener Meriah. Several factors contribute to this situation, including low farmer income, limited access to agricultural technology and innovation, and negative perceptions among younger generations toward farming as a profession (Insani & Rijanta, 2020). If this issue is not addressed promptly, it may lead to

declining coffee production and the loss of traditional knowledge and skills in coffee cultivation passed down through generations.

The primary challenge faced by the BQ Baburayyan Coffee Cooperative in Bener Meriah Regency is the low interest of young people in coffee farming (Mulyana et al., 2023). According to a survey conducted by the Bener Meriah Regency Agriculture Office, many young individuals perceive coffee farming as economically unpromising, viewing it as physically demanding and unattractive work. Consequently, most young people prefer formal employment over farming. In addition, many coffee farmers still lack mastery of agricultural technology, encounter difficulties in marketing their coffee, and face limited access to broader market networks (Ramadhan, 2022). Furthermore, younger generations increasingly avoid cultivating land and instead choose to migrate to urban areas in search of more secure employment opportunities. These conditions reduce their confidence in engaging directly in coffee farming activities (Wibowo, 2019).

Another challenge in regenerating coffee farmers in Bener Meriah Regency relates to the limited knowledge and skills among younger generations. Most young people have insufficient exposure to good coffee cultivation practices and lack a comprehensive understanding of farm management. As noted earlier, many also prefer to leave rural areas rather than engage in coffee farming, further weakening their confidence to pursue agricultural livelihoods (Wibowo, 2019). In addressing these regeneration issues, agricultural cooperatives play a vital role. One cooperative actively involved in this effort is the Baburayyan Cooperative (BQ Baburayyan), which seeks to attract young people and encourage their participation in the coffee plantation sector.

Based on the issues outlined above, this article explores in greater depth the strategies implemented by the BQ Baburayyan Coffee Cooperative through farmer empowerment to promote sustainable coffee farmer regeneration, analyzed using role theory. It is expected that the knowledge and skills of senior farmers can be

transferred to younger generations (Millennials and Generation Z), while simultaneously increasing the attractiveness of the coffee agricultural sector among these groups. Ultimately, this effort aims to foster the emergence of skilled and competitive young coffee farmer groups.

Literature Review

The study by Arvianti et al. (2019), which examines the phenomenon of farmer aging and the decline of young agricultural labour and its implications for agricultural development policy, documents the national trend of aging farmers in Indonesia. Susilowati identifies seven factors contributing to young people's reluctance to engage in farming, including the low social prestige of the farming profession, unstable income, and limited land ownership. The strength of this article lies in its robust national dataset and cross-country comparative analysis. However, its limitation is that it focuses on agriculture in general without addressing coffee as a specific commodity. Its relevance to this study is substantial, as Susilowati's findings explain the macro-level context of aging farmers occurring in Bener Meriah, where the average age of coffee farmers reaches 55 years and only 15 percent are under 40 years old (Arvianti et., 2019).

In line with this, Arvianti et al. (2019) map the crisis of young farmers in Indonesia and identify three dominant contributing factors: (1) low income, (2) insufficiently supportive policies, and (3) limited access to technology and capital. Their recommendations include demonstrating agriculture's economic potential, technological modernization, and improving access for young farmers. The strength of this study lies in its systematic analytical framework and concrete recommendations, while its limitation is its purely descriptive nature without primary field data. Its relevance is relatively high, as this three-factor framework directly explains the barriers faced by the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative in attracting young generations (Arvianti et., 2019).

Similarly, Saleh et al. (2021) find that regeneration barriers are multidimensional, encompassing structural factors (land and capital), socio-cultural factors (stigma), and economic factors (non-competitive income). Their most important finding highlights the role of family as a determining factor: many senior farmers actively encourage their children not to become farmers, having personally experienced the economic uncertainty associated with the profession (Saleh et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, Vanilia et al. (2023), in their study *Coffee Farmers' Decisions to Join Cooperatives and Its Impact on Coffee Farming Performance in Indonesia*, demonstrate that cooperative membership improves farmers' bargaining power, access to inputs and outputs, and value addition of coffee products. Despite these benefits, the level of coffee farmer participation in cooperatives in Indonesia remains low. The strength of this research lies in its sophisticated methodological approach using large-scale national data. However, its limitation is its highly quantitative nature, which does not explain field-level processes. Its relevance lies in providing national empirical justification for BQ Baburayan's efforts to expand membership, including attracting young farmers (Vanilia et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the study by Salwa et al. (2025) confirms the existence of a gap between farmers' parental expectations—preferring their children to work in formal sectors—and the agricultural sector's need for regeneration. This phenomenon is consistently observed across regions regardless of commodity type. The strength of this study is its mixed-method approach, which produces rich findings, while its limitation is its restricted scope to a single village with agroecological conditions different from Bener Meriah. Its relevance lies in reinforcing field findings regarding the low involvement of parents in encouraging coffee farmer regeneration (Salwa et al., 2025).

The theoretical framework applied in this study draws on organizational role theory proposed by Muhtarom (2016). According to Muhtarom, the role of an

institution in society can be classified into three main functions: facilitator, motivator, and dynamizer. These three roles are interrelated and serve as key indicators for assessing the effectiveness of an institution in performing its functions within the community.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. The qualitative method was selected because the research aims to understand and analyze existing data in depth. The qualitative research process involves several essential stages, including formulating research questions, collecting specific data, analyzing the data, and interpreting the findings (Kaharuddin, 2021). The qualitative approach enables researchers to explore the sustainability of Gayo coffee in efforts to empower young coffee farmers in Bener Meriah (Santoso, 2022).

The types and sources of data used consist of a combination of primary data obtained through observation and in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders, and secondary data collected from literature reviews, books, and websites related to the scope of this study. This research applies non-probability sampling using a purposive sampling technique. Through this approach, the study is expected to generate a holistic and in-depth understanding of the role of the BQ Baburrayan Coffee Cooperative in sustainable coffee farmer empowerment in Bener Meriah Regency (Yustia Putri, 2017).

Results and Discussion

The Baitul Qiradh (BQ) Baburrayan Cooperative, established on October 21, 2002 under Legal Registration No. 62.01/233/BH/X/2002, is one of the leading coffee cooperatives in Bener Meriah Regency, Aceh. The presence of this cooperative has become a primary support system for coffee farmers in addressing various challenges, particularly the phenomenon of aging farmers that threatens the

sustainability of Gayo Arabica coffee production. This phenomenon is not limited to Bener Meriah but represents a longstanding national issue that has increasingly endangered Indonesia's agricultural sector.

Based on data from Badan Pusat Statistik in the 2023 Agricultural Census, the number of individual agricultural business units in Indonesia reached 29.36 million, dominated by Generation X farmers (aged 43-58 years), who account for 42.39 percent of the total farming population. This condition indicates that Indonesia's agricultural sector is increasingly controlled by older generations.

Arvianti et al. (2019), in their study *The Crisis of Young Farmers in Indonesia*, explicitly argue that the issue of young farmer decline must be urgently addressed to prevent threats to national food security. Their findings reveal a continuous decrease in youth participation in agriculture due to several factors, including low wages or income levels, insufficiently supportive policies, and limited access to technology, self-development opportunities, and capital (Arvianti et., 2019).

These findings are consistent with conditions in Bener Meriah, where the average age of coffee farmers reaches 55 years and only 15 percent are under 40 years old. In response to this challenge, the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative implements three core institutional roles as formulated by Muhtarom (2016), namely serving as a facilitator, motivator, and dynamizer.

The Role of the Cooperative as a Facilitator

The facilitator role refers to an institutional function in which organizations sponsor various empowerment programs to build community capacity. As facilitators, institutions assist beneficiaries in navigating transitional situations or pressures. Specific strategies to achieve these objectives include fostering hope, reducing resistance and ambivalence, recognizing and managing emotions, identifying and utilizing personal strengths and social assets, simplifying problem-solving processes, and maintaining focus on goals and objectives. In Bener Meriah

Regency, coffee farmers frequently face constraints in accessing broader markets, resulting in continued dependence on middlemen. Consequently, farmers often receive only limited profits. In response to these conditions, the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative serves as a facilitator by providing a platform and assistance for coffee farmers in marketing their harvests. This role extends beyond market facilitation to raising farmers' awareness of their capacity to innovate and add value to their products.

The facilitator role represents the most directly perceived institutional function among farmers. Based on field findings, the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative has conducted laboratory testing to ensure coffee quality, provided production guidance, and supported farmers in establishing profitable transactions through wider market access, thereby contributing to improvements in farmers' economic conditions. Increased income is expected to enhance youth interest in coffee farming, as younger generations may no longer perceive farming as an unpromising occupation. This condition encourages youth engagement in coffee agriculture by presenting coffee farming as a viable livelihood opportunity, thereby creating momentum for farmer regeneration. These efforts align with previous studies emphasizing the importance of cooperatives' facilitator roles in empowering coffee farmers. Kansrini et al. (2020) found that cooperative roles as business partners, training providers, marketing facilitators, capital facilitators, and motivators have a statistically significant effect on coffee farmer empowerment. Although the magnitude of influence was categorized as moderate (52.9 percent), the study confirms that strengthening cooperative institutions is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving optimal empowerment of coffee farmers (Kansrini et al., 2020).

In the context of market access, Kamari (2023), in a study of the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative in Wih Nareh Village, Central Aceh, reveals that the Gayo Highlands constitute one of Indonesia's major coffee-producing regions and rank

as the fourth-largest exporter of coffee beans globally. This condition positions the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative strategically as an intermediary between farmers and global markets. When the cooperative effectively performs its facilitator role through quality assurance and expanded market access, farmers are no longer fully dependent on middlemen, resulting in a significant increase in their income. This improvement in farmers' earnings, in turn, directly influences interest in coffee farmer regeneration (Kamari, 2023).

Furthermore, in a coffee agribusiness value chain analysis conducted by Hanifa et al. (2026), it is noted that various partnership models and cooperative strengthening initiatives have proven effective in improving marketing efficiency, product quality, and farmers' income. These findings reinforce the argument that the facilitator role of the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative particularly in marketing and quality assurance indirectly encourages younger generations to engage in coffee farming by creating more promising economic prospects (Hanifa et al., 2026).

The Role of the Cooperative as a Motivator

The motivator role in empowerment programs requires support and encouragement from close social networks and surrounding institutions. Empowerment-based institutions are expected to assist communities throughout the implementation of planned empowerment activities. Fundamentally, coffee farmers must be provided with motivation and encouragement to actively participate in empowerment programs. In Bener Meriah Regency, coffee farmers often rely on external assistance to meet their daily needs. As a result, farmers remain highly dependent on farmer groups in carrying out coffee production activities. Based on interviews conducted by the researcher, the motivator role encompasses providing encouragement and support to farmers to actively engage in empowerment initiatives. The Koperasi Baitul Qiradh Baburrayan has undertaken plantation visits, delivered technical guidance, and promoted farmer

self-reliance in production processes. However, as acknowledged by the cooperative itself, motivational efforts tend to be ineffective if they are not accompanied by active participation from parents or senior farmers in encouraging younger generations. Without intergenerational support, institutional motivation alone is insufficient to stimulate youth engagement in coffee farming. This finding highlights that farmer regeneration requires not only organizational encouragement but also strong family-based motivation to foster sustainable participation among younger cohorts.

This constraint is further reinforced by the findings of Saleh et al. (2021) in their article *The Difficulty of Farmer Regeneration among Young Generations*. The study, conducted collaboratively by Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia and Universitas Indonesia, analyzes why many farmers' children decide not to pursue farming as a livelihood. The results indicate that encouragement from within farming families particularly from parents plays a decisive role in shaping young people's decisions to enter the agricultural sector. When parents themselves perceive farming as an unpromising profession and direct their children toward more "prestigious" occupations, motivational efforts from external institutions such as cooperatives become significantly less effective (Saleh et al., 2021).

This issue is further reinforced by the study of Arvianti et al. (2019), which identifies several factors contributing to the declining interest of young labor in the agricultural sector, including the low prestige associated with agriculture, high occupational risks, the lack of income stability and continuity, and changing youth perceptions in the modern era. Furthermore. Within the context of economically driven motivation Arvianti et al. (2019) assert that the key determinant of farmer regeneration is not merely moral encouragement, but economic certainty. Young generations are only likely to be motivated to engage in coffee farming when they observe tangible evidence that the profession can provide competitive income relative to formal urban employment. This explains why the BQ Baburrayan

Cooperative must integrate its motivator role with the successful implementation of its facilitator role—by first improving the income and welfare of senior farmers—so that younger generations are naturally encouraged to continue the farming tradition (Arvianti et., 2019).

In addition, the study conducted by Kusumah (2022) further emphasizes that farmer regeneration efforts based on motivational approaches must be supported by: (1) the development of modern agriculture utilizing digital technologies, (2) government policy support in the form of incentives, and (3) early vocational education in agriculture. Without these three components, motivational initiatives implemented by cooperatives are unlikely to generate long-term impacts on the regeneration of young coffee farmers (Kusumah, 2022).

The Role of the Cooperative as a Dynamizer

The dynamizer role refers to an institutional function that is directly involved in monitoring and encouraging communities to actively participate in empowerment opportunities. In its dynamic capacity, the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative continuously strives to develop coffee farmers by guiding and accompanying them through participatory empowerment processes. Senior coffee farmers inevitably face limitations in knowledge and skills, particularly in today's technology-driven agricultural environment. Many are also less responsive to technological advancements in farming practices, even though modern agriculture increasingly integrates technology from planting to harvesting stages, including efforts to maintain coffee quality under unstable or changing climatic conditions.

As a dynamizer, the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative actively conducts field assistance, monitors production processes, provides training in pruning techniques and mechanized planting systems, and offers guidance on coffee quality standards in accordance with market demand. This approach represents a concrete manifestation of the dynamizer function, which not only motivates farmers but also

directly engages in empowerment activities. The importance of technical assistance and training aligns with the findings of (Kansrini et al., 2020). who emphasize that cooperatives must be capable of disseminating information on coffee farming, supporting marketing efforts, and providing training to farmers. Their study further indicates that informal training delivered through direct farm visits effectively enhances coffee farmers' capacity in Mandailing Natal, a condition comparable to that observed in Bener Meriah.

From the perspective of technology utilization, Kusumah (2022) stresses that the development of modern agriculture through technological innovation is a key strategy for attracting young generations. The BQ Baburrayan Cooperative's initiatives in training farmers to use machinery for pruning and planting therefore represent an appropriate step in fulfilling its dynamizer role. Nevertheless, technology adoption must be further expanded to reach Millennials and Generation Z, who are highly familiar with digital technologies (Kusumah, 2022).

In relation to climate change challenges affecting coffee production, local government efforts to establish drying facilities (*dry houses*) illustrate a form of synergy between cooperatives and government that warrants further development. (Arvianti et., 2019)assert that agro-industrial development and agricultural infrastructure support constitute essential policy components for encouraging young labor to enter the agricultural sector. This implies that the dynamizer role of the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative should be strengthened through policy advocacy at the local government level, including efforts to promote the provision of more modern and user-friendly production facilities for young farmers.

Constraints Faced by the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative in Implementing Farmer Empowerment

The efforts undertaken by the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative to perform its roles as facilitator, motivator, and dynamizer have been initiated and implemented.

However, these roles have not yet been optimized, as they require active participation from farmers and parents to enable effective coffee farmer regeneration. This condition does not fully align with the role theory proposed by Muhtarom, which emphasizes the integration of facilitator, motivator, and dynamizer functions, due to persistent constraints in their implementation. These constraints are reflected in the limited compliance of community members with cooperative regulations, such as restrictions on the use of chemical pesticides on coffee plants. Furthermore, the participation of coffee farmers and parents in encouraging younger generations to sustain coffee farming remains relatively low, as many do not wish their children to experience the same livelihood conditions. In addition, youth interest in agriculture is still limited, with many farmers' children preferring to pursue education in occupations perceived as more prestigious such as medicine rather than becoming farmers.

Moreover, the availability of alternative career paths that are considered more attractive discourages young people from engaging in agriculture, resulting in diminished motivation to continue farming traditions. Social stigma surrounding farming as a less prestigious profession further exacerbates this issue. Consequently, even parents who are farmers themselves often discourage their children from following similar paths, believing that farming offers limited economic prospects. Despite these challenges, the BQ Baburrayan Cooperative continues to provide assistance, guidance, and mentoring as part of its empowerment initiatives. The cooperative consistently seeks to attract young people to agriculture while offering encouragement and technical support to coffee farmers and parents to improve coffee production quality and profitability. These efforts are expected to enhance economic returns for farming households, thereby increasing the attractiveness of coffee farming for younger generations by demonstrating that agricultural livelihoods can remain economically viable.

Conclusion

The BQ Baburrayan Cooperative has implemented its roles as facilitator, motivator, and dynamizer in empowering coffee farmers in Bener Meriah Regency. As a facilitator, the cooperative assists farmers in accessing broader markets and ensures coffee quality, thereby contributing to increased farmer income. As a motivator, the cooperative provides technical guidance and encouragement to farmers; however, these efforts have not been fully effective, as many parents do not support their children's engagement in coffee farming. As a dynamizer, the cooperative conducts field assistance and training in modern agricultural technologies. Overall, these three roles have not yet been optimally realized due to persistent social stigma toward the farming profession, low interest among younger generations, and limited support from farming families themselves.

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