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Beyond Digital Platforms: The A'rera' Tradition As An Indigenous Sharing Economy For Household Food Security In Selayar Islands

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Abstract

This study investigates the A'rera' tradition as an indigenous form of sharing economy that supports household food security in the Selayar Islands, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. While contemporary sharing economy studies often emphasize digital platforms and market-based exchanges, this research highlights a community-based practice rooted in local wisdom, reciprocity, solidarity, and collective responsibility. The study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences and social meanings attached to A'rera'. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation involving community members in Bonea Makmur Village, Bontomanai District. The findings show that A'rera' functions as a traditional mechanism of resource sharing in which community members exchange labor, time, skills, and personal tools without monetary compensation. This practice reduces labor costs, accelerates agricultural and social work, strengthens kinship ties, and reinforces collective resilience. The involvement of younger participants also indicates the continuing relevance of A'rera' amid social change and modernization. The study concludes that A'rera' is not merely a form of mutual assistance, but a locally embedded economic institution that contributes to household food security and rural social sustainability. This research offers a non-digital perspective on the

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sharing economy and provides empirical insight into how local cultural practices can serve as sustainable models for community-based economic cooperation.

Keywords: Indigenous sharing economy, local wisdom, A'rera', household food security.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of modern economic life has reshaped social relations within local communities. Economic activities are no longer limited to the production, exchange, and consumption of goods (Devi et al., 2023; Sosial et al., 2022). They also involve collective participation, shared resources, and community-based cooperation. In this context, the concept of the sharing economy has gained increasing scholarly attention because it emphasizes the use of labor, time, skills, and assets for mutual benefit (Kusumawardhani & Putri, 2011). However, most contemporary studies on the sharing economy focus on digital platforms, market transactions, and technology-driven services. This focus often overlooks traditional community practices that have long applied sharing economy principles without relying on digital systems(Dewantara & Noer, 2024).

One important example of a traditional sharing economy can be found in the A'rera' tradition in the Selayar Islands, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. A'rera' refers to a local practice of mutual assistance in which community members work together without monetary compensation. This tradition is commonly practiced in agricultural activities, land clearing, fence construction, wood transportation, and other social tasks. The practice operates through mutual agreement, social trust, and collective responsibility among community members. In the research manuscript, A'rera' is described as a form of cooperation that involves the sharing of labor, time, and privately owned tools for collective purposes(Rasyid et al., 2014).

The A'rera' tradition is closely related to household food security. In rural communities, agricultural production often requires substantial labor, time, and financial resources. Through A'rera', community members can reduce labor costs and complete agricultural work more efficiently. This collective practice helps households prepare farmland, support food production, and maintain access to food resources. Therefore, A'rera' should not be understood only as a cultural tradition. It also functions as a local economic mechanism that supports the resilience and sustainability of rural households(Rasyid et al., 2014).

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Beyond its economic function, A'rera' reflects the strength of social capital within the community. Trust, solidarity, reciprocity, and collective responsibility serve as the foundation of this tradition. The participation of younger community members also shows that A'rera' remains socially relevant despite modernization and changing lifestyles (Indriani et al., 2024; Nafis et al., 2025). This point is important because many rural communities now face the gradual decline of mutual assistance due to individualism, migration, and market-oriented economic behavior (Arief et al., 2022; Aulia Dewanti et al., 2023; Sriwijaya et al., 2025). Studying A'rera' provides an opportunity to understand how local wisdom can preserve social cohesion while also supporting household economic stability(Habel Nain Samongilailai & Aldrin Budi Utomo, 2024).

Based on these considerations, research on A'rera' is important because it offers a different perspective on the sharing economy. Rather than viewing the sharing economy only as a digital or platform-based phenomenon, this study positions it as a socio-economic practice rooted in local culture. Using a phenomenological approach, the study seeks to explore the meaning, lived experiences, and social functions of A'rera' among the people of Bonea Makmur Village, Bontomanai District, Selayar Islands. This research is expected to enrich academic discussions on the sharing economy, local wisdom, social capital, and household food security in rural Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sharing Economy

The sharing economy is an economic concept that emphasizes the shared use of resources, including goods, services, labor, time, skills, and assets owned by individuals or groups. In modern literature, this concept is often associated with collaborative consumption, which allows individuals to access resources without fully owning them. Belk (2014) argues that sharing is not a new phenomenon in human life, although collaborative consumption and the sharing economy have expanded rapidly in the internet era.

Existing studies on the sharing economy have largely focused on digital platforms, such as ride sharing, accommodation sharing, secondhand goods exchange, and app-based services. However, this perspective becomes limited when the sharing economy is understood only as a technology-based economic activity. Acquier, Daudigeos, and Pinkse (2017) explain that the sharing economy includes access-based, platform-based, and community-based economic practices.

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From a consumer behavior perspective, participation in the sharing economy is shaped by several motivations. Hamari, Sjöklint, and Ukkonen (2016) found that collaborative consumption is influenced by sustainability, enjoyment, and economic benefits. This means that individuals are not motivated only by financial gain, but also by social values, positive experiences, and awareness of more efficient resource use. Based on this view, the sharing economy emphasizes access, collaboration, resource efficiency, and social relationships. In local communities, this concept can appear through mutual assistance, collective work, and the use of private assets for common purposes. This framework is relevant for understanding local traditions such as A'rera' as a form of indigenous sharing economy that grows from local wisdom rather than digital platforms (Frenken & Schor, 2017).

The A'rera' Tradition

The A'rera' tradition is a practice of community cooperation among the people of the Selayar Islands, particularly in Bonea Makmur Village, Bontomanai District, South Sulawesi. A'rera' involves mutual assistance without monetary compensation in agricultural and community-based activities. In the research paper, A'rera' is described as a collective activity that includes clearing land, building bamboo fences or “todo’,” preparing planting plots, cutting wood, and transporting wood. Socially, A'rera' reflects the values of trust, solidarity, kinship, and shared responsibility. Community members participate not because of formal employment relationships, but out of a collective awareness to help one another. This practice demonstrates that economic relationships within local communities are not always based on monetary transactions. Instead, economic relationships can be built through reciprocity, social norms, and community bonds(Rasyid et al., 2014).

Economically, A'rera' plays a role in reducing labor costs and speeding up the completion of heavy work. When community members share their labor, time, and personal tools, the household burden is lightened. In the research paper, the use of personal tools such as a power saw by one member demonstrates the practice of sharing assets for the common good. This reinforces A'rera's position as a form of community-based sharing economy. A'rera' is also linked to family food security. In rural communities, food production heavily depends on the availability of land, labor, and social support. A'rera' helps families complete agricultural work more efficiently, thereby improving the food production process. Thus, A'rera' functions not only as a cultural tradition but also as a socio-economic mechanism that supports household sustainability

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RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological design. This approach was selected because the study focuses on understanding the meanings, lived experiences, and social practices of community members in maintaining the A'rera' tradition. Phenomenology was used to explore how the community interprets A'rera' as a form of cooperation, sharing economy, and social mechanism that supports household food security. The research was conducted in Bonea Makmur Village, Bontomanai District, Selayar Islands, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. This location was selected purposively because the local community still practices A'rera' in social life and agricultural activities. The research manuscript identifies this area as a community with strong traditions of cooperation and collective social engagement.

The data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation involving community members who participated in the A'rera' tradition. Secondary data were collected from books, journal articles, academic documents, and other scholarly sources related to the sharing economy, local wisdom, social capital, phenomenology, and household food security. The informants were selected using purposive sampling. This technique was used because the informants were chosen based on their knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the A'rera' tradition. The informants included community leaders, active participants in A'rera', farmers, families involved in A'rera' activities, and young community members. In the research manuscript, the informants consisted of five individuals with different roles, including a main community figure, a landowner, a participant who used personal work equipment, and members who assisted in transporting wood.

Data were collected through three main techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted to obtain information about the meaning of A'rera', its forms of implementation, the social values underlying the practice, and its role in supporting household food security. Second, field observations were conducted to directly examine the practice of A'rera' in community activities. Third, documentation was used to complement the data through photographs, field notes, and other relevant supporting materials. The primary research instrument was the researcher. The researcher served as the main instrument in collecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data. To ensure a focused data collection process, the researcher used an interview guide, an observation sheet, and field notes. The interview guide was developed based on the main research focus, including the meaning of A'rera', sharing economy practices, local wisdom values, community

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participation, and its contribution to household food security.The data were analyzed thematically through several stages. The first stage was data reduction, which involved selecting and organizing data relevant to the research focus. The second stage was categorization, in which the data were grouped into major themes, such as social solidarity, shared use of resources, reduction of labor costs, youth participation, and household food security. The third stage was data interpretation, which involved interpreting the meaning of the findings based on the informants' experiences and the theoretical framework of the study. The final stage was drawing inductive conclusions based on patterns that emerged from the field data.

Data trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and informant confirmation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from different informants with different roles in the A'rera' tradition. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. Informant confirmation was used to ensure that the researcher's interpretation reflected the experiences and meanings intended by the community.

Ethically, this study considered informed consent, data confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Informants received an explanation of the research objectives before the interviews were conducted. The data were used only for academic purposes. The researcher also maintained cultural sensitivity to ensure that the research process did not disrupt the social practices of the local community.

DISCUSSION

1. Profile of Research Informants

This study involved five informants who had direct experience with the A'rera' tradition in Bonea Makmur Village, Bontomanai District, Selayar Islands. The informants included Saharuddin, the main figure in A'rera' and landowner; Alang Budikusuma, an A'rera' participant who used his personal chainsaw; Patta Ali, a participant who helped transport wood; and Rafli and Wahid, young community members who participated in A'rera' activities. The diversity of age and roles shows that A'rera' is not practiced only by older community members, but also involves younger generations.

2. The Meaning of A'rera' as a Mutual Assistance Tradition

The interview findings show that community members interpret A'rera' as a long-standing tradition of mutual assistance. Saharuddin described A'rera' as a culture of

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helping one another, especially when heavy work needs to be completed. This finding indicates that A'rera' is not merely a collective work activity. It is also a social inheritance that shapes relationships among community members.

The main meaning found in the informants' experiences is togetherness. Community members participate in A'rera' not because of formal obligation, but because of social awareness and collective responsibility. In this context, A'rera' becomes a social space that strengthens care, solidarity, and shared responsibility.

3. A'rera' as a Local Wisdom-Based Sharing Economy Practice

The findings indicate that A'rera' reflects a local wisdom-based sharing economy practice. Community members share labor, time, skills, and work tools to complete collective tasks. This can be seen in the use of Alang Budikusuma's personal chainsaw to support the wood-cutting process. The tool was used for collective purposes without a formal rental system or monetary payment.

This practice demonstrates that A'rera' contains strong sharing economy characteristics. The community does not only share physical labor. It also shares productive assets. This pattern shows that the sharing economy does not always depend on digital platforms. In local communities, sharing economy principles can operate through cooperation, trust, and social reciprocity.

4. The Role of A'rera' in Reducing Workload and Labor Costs

The interviews show that A'rera' helps reduce the community's workload. Tasks that are difficult to complete individually become easier and faster when performed collectively. Informants stated that working together makes land-related tasks lighter, more efficient, and more manageable.

A'rera' also helps reduce labor costs. Saharuddin stated that A'rera' provides major benefits because community members can help one another without spending significant money on labor. This finding shows that A'rera' functions as an informal economic mechanism that helps rural households manage limited production costs.

5. The Contribution of A'rera' to Household Food Security

A'rera' contributes to household food security by supporting agricultural activities. In rural communities, tasks such as land clearing, field preparation, wood cutting, and material transportation require substantial labor. A'rera' helps accelerate these tasks so that households can carry out food production activities more effectively.

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This finding shows that A'rera' has both social and economic value. Through shared labor and shared tools, households can reduce production expenses. This condition supports household capacity to maintain food availability, access, and sustainability.

6. A'rera' as a Strengthener of Social Solidarity

The findings also show that A'rera' strengthens social solidarity within the community. Patta Ali stated that cooperation in A'rera' is important because it keeps community members united and caring for one another. This statement shows that A'rera' plays an important role in maintaining social relations among villagers.

This solidarity is formed through direct interaction during collective work. Community members do not only complete physical tasks. They also build social closeness. Therefore, A'rera' serves as a social mechanism that maintains community cohesion, strengthens kinship relations, and preserves the value of mutual assistance.

7. Youth Participation in Preserving A'rera'

The involvement of Rafli and Wahid shows that younger generations still play a role in sustaining the A'rera' tradition. Rafli stated that he participated because work in the field became easier and faster when done together. He also viewed A'rera' as a way to learn cooperation and preserve the culture of helping one another in the village. Wahid expressed hope that young people would continue to participate so that A'rera' would not disappear.

This finding indicates that A'rera' remains relevant amid social change. Youth participation is an important factor in maintaining the continuity of this tradition. Without younger community members, A'rera' may weaken due to modernization, lifestyle changes, and the decline of mutual assistance practices in everyday life.

8. Summary of Findings

Research Theme	Empirical Indication	Meaning of the Finding
Meaning of A'rera'	Informants define A'rera' as a culture of mutual assistance	A'rera' functions as a social identity of the community
Local sharing economy	Community members share labor, time, and personal tools	A'rera' represents a non-digital sharing economy

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Work efficiency	Heavy work becomes lighter and faster	A'rera' reduces the community's workload
Cost reduction	Community members do not need to spend much on labor	A'rera' supports household economic resilience
Household food security	Agricultural work can be completed more efficiently	A'rera' supports sustainable food production
Social solidarity	Community members become more united and caring	A'rera' strengthens social cohesion
Cultural preservation	Young people still participate in A'rera'	A'rera' has potential for continuity

Overall, the findings show that A'rera' is a socio-economic practice with multiple functions. It strengthens social solidarity while helping households manage economic needs. A'rera' also demonstrates that sharing economy principles have long existed in local communities through cooperation, trust, reciprocity, and collective responsibility.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the A'rera' tradition represents an indigenous form of sharing economy rooted in local wisdom, social solidarity, and collective responsibility. The practice enables community members to share labor, time, skills, and personal tools without monetary compensation. The findings show that A'rera' helps reduce workload, lower labor costs, and support agricultural activities in Bonea Makmur Village. These functions contribute to household food security by strengthening access to productive resources and improving the efficiency of rural work.

A'rera' also plays an important social role. It strengthens trust, kinship, mutual assistance, and community cohesion. The involvement of younger participants indicates that this tradition still has potential for continuity amid modernization. Overall, A'rera' is not merely a cultural tradition. It is a sustainable community-based economic practice that expands the concept of the sharing economy beyond digital platforms and market-based transactions.

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