

EMPOWERMENT MODEL OF WOMEN FARMER GROUPS IN IMPROVING THE COMMUNITY ECONOMY IN KLATEN REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

The conceptual construction of the empowerment process places several stages of empowerment which are now influenced by the concept of social capital and the perspective of local economic development. This has generated interest in research that focuses on the steps to empower local communities, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors of the empowerment process. This research was conducted at the Women's Farmer Group (KWT) Mekar Indah, Balerante Village, Klaten Regency, and used a qualitative approach combined with a fishbone diagram to produce a community empowerment model construction in local economic development. This study shows that the empowerment steps are carried out in 3 (three) stages, namely enabling by forming women's farmer groups. Empowering is done by empowering farmer groups to be able to meet their food needs, and increase financial income. Meanwhile, protecting is carried out with government support, compliance with common rules and social norms, as well as maintaining good relations within the network with members and with external parties. The empowerment process is also supported by the existence of social capital that is maintained together. The empowerment process also produces development potential that leads to the achievement of local economic development that utilizes natural resources and product commodities, as well as the support of the context of the institutional system and good governance.

KEYWORDS:

local empowerment, social capital, local economic development

INTRODUCTION

Implementation of development places the community as the object of development and the recipient of all government programs as a provider of capital. At least that's what it appears at first glance. The new paradigm (empowerment) is now positioning local communities and institutions in the main position, as initiating, managing and enjoying development, in addition to the influence of views of social capital and the formation of local economic regions. Meanwhile, the government is more of a facilitator (catalyst) opening a conducive space for the growth of initiatives and community participation as well as local institutions which are strengthened by the issuance and enactment of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages. These developments and paradigm shifts have provided a new atmosphere for the practice of village development in various regions in Indonesia, including in Balerante Village, Klaten Regency.

In the context of empowering rural communities, this paradigm emphasizes process goals (Sedarmayanti, 2013; & Adi, 2003), where the goal orientation is in processes that seek community integration and capacity building to solve problems cooperatively on the basis of willingness and ability to help oneself according to the principle democratic. This orientation grows

with economic independence which gives strength to the community (Hamid, 2018), or builds capacity by developing economic potential in increasing productivity by utilizing human capabilities and the availability of surrounding natural resources (Kartasasmita, 1996).

Empowerment is an effort to increase this capacity to produce added economic value that is beneficial both internally and externally. This understanding grows with the view of the Directorate General of Community and Village Empowerment (2008: 126) which states, that village community empowerment is an effort to create increased capacity of village communities, both individually and in groups in solving various problems related to efforts to improve quality of life, independence, and well-being.

In this context, village communities, especially in Balerante Village, Klaten Regency, do not only act as recipients of empowerment programs, but as executors of various empowerment programs provided by the government. However, in the general practice of empowering rural communities in Klaten District, several problems have been demonstrated, including the lack of a structured concept of empowering rural communities, weak research and development regarding the potential of village communities, and not yet optimal empowering rural communities (RPJMD Klaten District, 2016-2021). Nevertheless, Balerante Village can be used as an example, where this village has an independent local institutional entity called the Women Farmers Group (KWT) named "KWT Mekar Indah" which provides potential development gaps. The local institution provides an explanation from a conceptual point of view of empowerment as a process-goal-oriented capacity building mechanism that emphasizes the community and local village institutions as the main actors.

Based on this phenomenon, a framework for village community empowerment models is needed that can solve the root causes of the problems that are being faced so far. Kartasasmita, 1996; & Mardikanto & Soebiato, 2013) conceptually sort out the stages of the empowerment process into 3 (three) stages of the process, including enabling, empowering, and protecting. The study of the empowerment process at all of these stages also found the content of social capital and the content of the formation of a growing local economy from the point of view of local economic regional development (LERD) (Coffey & Polese, 1984; Warner, 2001; Pisani, et.al., 2017; & Rokhim, et.al., 2017).

Referring to the development of the empowerment paradigm, as well as the constraints of empirical problems that are currently being faced in the process of developing community capabilities towards independence, a framework model for village community empowerment is needed. The study, which then produced a village community empowerment model, combined the framework for the stages of empowerment, as well as the concepts of social capital and LERD in one integrated framework. This study focuses on two things, namely the empowerment steps carried out by the Tai Wanita Mekar Indah Group in Balerante Village, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the success of the group's empowerment process. This study was conducted using a qualitative approach to the Mekar Indah Women Farmers Group in Balerante Village as the main data source, and data collection was carried out by interviews, observation, and document review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empowerment as a Community Development Process

Empowerment as a process emphasizes the point of view of process goals, namely the orientation of goals in processes that seek community integration and capacity building to solve problems cooperatively on the basis of willingness and ability to help oneself (independently) according to democratic principles (Seradmayanti, 2013; & Adi, 2003). This includes increasing access for the weak in achieving better, more independent socio-economic-cultural conditions with better quality welfare (Budimanta, 20013; & Suharto, 2005). From a process point of view, Kartasasmita (1996) emphasized that the community empowerment process is an important concern that can be developed from the human and natural resources around it, as well as support that strengthens the implementation of empowerment in order to bring about independence in building the economy and increasing welfare. In the study of village community empowerment, at least the empowerment process can be examined in 3 (three) stages, including enabling, empowering, and protecting (Mardikanto & Soebianto, 2013; & Kartasasmita, 2003). Enabling is a part of empowerment that examines the creation of an atmosphere/climate that allows the potential for the development of community capabilities. Empowering is intended to strengthen the potential or power possessed by the community, while protecting emphasizes more on protecting and taking sides with the weak as a basic trait. This context not only forms a community that is dependent, but also maintains sustainability and accompanies every community development as a target for empowerment.

Social Capital

Social capital or literally known as social capital is part of the features of social relations that contribute to the community's ability to work together and achieve the stated goals. Social capital is also considered as a form of institution, relationship as well as a norm that refers to the availability of social trust, norms of rules and networks that are used to solve a common problem (Worldbank, 1999; & Civic Practices Network, 2000). Putman et.al. (1993: 166-168) describe social capital as "features of social organization such as trust, social norms and networks that can increase the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action...". Trust, social norms, and networks are features of social capital in the context of empowering or capacity building efforts. These entities are believed to live in the social ecosystem of society and process in every development effort (development) from even the lowest area.

In the context of the process, the possibility of involving social capital in empowerment efforts may occur, where Wildred Warner (2001) generalizes the social capital framework from various perspectives and produces several elements of content, including vertical social capital and support from government and non-government institutions. Vertical social capital contains a hierarchy of patron-client and group relationships which are fragmented on institutional elements between individuals or groups with the government (including control, maintenance, relationship features, nature, form of institutional role. Meanwhile, the role of government support and non-government institutions is more about support features, training, collaboration initiatives, access to capital, regulation, structure, integration, service base and management, as well as the influence of changes in institutional systems/social capital networks.

Local Economic Regional Development (LERD)

The concept of local economic regional development (LERD) is broadly defined as a particular form of regional development, where endogenous factors occupy a central (main) position (Coffey & Polese, 1984). This concept was introduced by Coffey & Polese for its conceptual blurring of

choice in the wider context of regional policies. Coffey & Polese's LERD concept framework (1984) places the model in the stages of local economic development which contains 4 stages, including, 1) the emergence of local entrepreneurship, 2) the take-off stage, 3) expansion outside the region, and 4) the achievement of a regional economic structure that based on local initiatives and locally created competitive advantages. The model framework is currently undergoing developments that bring LERD and social capital together in a conceptual fabric as proposed by Pisani, et.al 15 + 1 dimension, et.al. (2017: 201-226). The above conceptualization then developed, where in Indonesia the LERD model framework was developed at a more applicable conceptual level with adjustments to local characteristics carried out by Rokhim, et.al. (2017). The Indonesian LERD Framework prepared by Rokhim, et.al. (2017) consists of institutional factors, availability of natural resources, infrastructure and technology, social capital and financial capital, as well as local government support which are not much different from the dimensional framework proposed by Pisani et.al. (2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Overview of the Mekar Indah Women Farmer Group, Balerante Village, Klaten District

The Mekar Indah Women Farmers Group is located in Balerante Village, Kemalang District, Klaten Regency. The location of the village is on the slopes of Mount Merapi, where the average community livelihood is sand mining which is carried out by men, while women/women in the area are on average working as laborers or farmers in the fields.



Figure 1. Mekar Indah Women Farmers Group, Balerante Village and its Institutional Network

The initial establishment of KWT Mekar Indah was initiated by PKK RT 09 mothers, who then over time received support from local and international non-governmental organizations, as well as the local local government. This group consists of 18 women who were established on March 19 2017.

This group is engaged in the cultivation and marketing of healthy vegetables, with the vision of "Making Farmer Groups a forum for accommodating community aspirations for the achievement of community welfare, as well as missions 1) To empower communities to make productive use of less productive land; 2) Building productive rural areas and optimizing natural resources; 3) Welfare of women farmers and group members; and 4) To provide learning for the next generation so they can be creative and innovative.

Mekar Indah Women Farmer Group Empowerment Steps in Balerante Village, Klaten Regency

In the context of empowerment, conceptually, there are 3 stages of empowering an individual or a local (community) group, including enabling as the stage of forming, empowering, and protecting. The field data shown by the local institution clearly illustrates and explains the three conceptual stages. This research also constructs the flow of each step from enabling to protecting.

Enabling

Community empowerment in Balerante Village is generally carried out with various programs, one of which is empowering women whose average status is as wives. The husband's average livelihood is working as a sand miner, because the demographic location that is close to and lives along the slopes of Mount Merapi is the cause of this phenomenon. Fertile and wide enough land to be used as planting land, as well as the availability of natural fertilizer sources is one aspect of the adequacy of natural resource potential, in addition to initiatives that grow from within the environment of women/women interaction in the area. Each of the information conveyed by the resource person narrated the enabling phase of empowering the women farmer group.

Interview 1 results:

"Our initiative is also supported by BWI non-governmental organizations and others. Here are the women who are active, and spearheaded by Mrs. X, we together form the KWT Mekar Indah group in this village."

Interview 2 results:

"Women wishing to have activities, wanting to learn how to cultivate the land and grow their own crops, meeting their daily consumption needs and getting additional income, we discussed all of this at the beginning."

Interview 3 results:

"Concerns over the many circulating commodities come from other regions. after many cultivation experiments were carried out, the initiation to form farmer groups appeared, and the feeling of reluctance became an aspect of interest for members to join the group."

The findings also show that the initiation of the formation of the women's farmer group was driven by the support of an outside non-governmental organization called BWI, connections of agricultural practitioners from other regions, kinship and interpersonal closeness. This enabling phase was also supported by the village government which later strengthened the Mekar Indah women's farmer group as a local institution that was structured and had clear objectives. The goals of these local institutions include for mothers to have profitable daily activities, fulfill their daily needs, generate additional income and become a source of savings. Field findings also show that not all plant commodities can be cultivated, as evidenced by experiments and comparative studies with several similar farmer groups in other areas of failed crop cultivation, which eventually resulted in the production of vegetable and horticultural crops.

Empowering

Field data on empowering shows that there is a follow-up that runs almost simultaneously with the enabling phase. This was caused by the initial initiation which was carried out independently, until later this brought interest from various institutions, both formal and non-formal. The empowerment of women in this group is shown by the learning process in various places, training

and mentoring, as well as trials of cultivating food crops using polybag media to planting on large areas (group gardens).

The empowering phase of empowering women farmer groups also includes production mechanisms, utilization of cultivation results and marketing of production products. This was explained rigidly by the informants as follows from the results of the interviews.

Interview 1 results:

"We learn how to grow crops, fertilize, and nurseries, conduct comparative studies with farmer groups in other areas, attend training in non-governmental organizations, and provide assistance."

Interview 2 results:

"We grow vegetables, chilies, tomatoes and others. At first, we practiced using polybag media, until now we plant it in group gardens and in each house."

Interview 3 results:

"We cultivate the land and cultivate our own crops together and take turns using simple tools. We already have our own nursery and organic fertilizer installation."

Interview 4 results:

"We no longer buy some vegetables, because they are readily available. The rest we sell when harvesting together beside us for family consumption."

The results of observations in the field show that empowering is not only carried out in the process of product production and marketing. Empowering as a process also shows the existence of institutional networks and connectivity based on mutual trust between internal and external groups, formal rules within the internal groups, as well as the acculturation of traditional and modern farming methods. This is shown by the use of Pranoto Mongso in determining the time of planting and processing with today's modern farming science.

Protecting

The last phase in the mechanism of the empowerment process is protecting. Within Protect there are several aspects that grow with the understanding of protecting, maintaining and maintaining the continuity and survival of the existence of farmer groups as well as the empowerment itself. Field findings in the protecting phase are demonstrated by the continuous learning process from members, mentoring, funding arrangements, compliance with shared regulatory norms, maintaining product quality and good relations in the product marketing mechanism, as well as support from the government and other external institutions.

Each aspect in the protecting phase was explained rigidly by each resource person.

Interview 1 results:

"We continue to learn from failure in almost all production processes, especially during the initial formation and empowerment. Because, we believe this group will continue to grow, we also continue to maintain the quality of our plant products by still maintaining the use of natural

fertilizers that are here. We also continue to receive assistance, even though we are independent, we are still in good contact to ask questions when we encounter problems."

Interview 2 results:

"We compile incoming and outgoing financial books, and also have regular contributions for members for funding. We also apply financial sanctions for members who cannot participate in activities at certain times, which we then use again for group continuity and empowerment."

Interview 3 results:

"Relationships with non-governmental organizations and assistants, both from the LPP (sub-district government) are still maintained today. We value and respect this as a shared commitment. So far the relationship between members and collectors (buyers) has not had any problems.

Interview 4 results:

"We are also supported by the village government by providing approval for our farmer groups, providing support for agricultural equipment and being given the freedom to carry out these activities. Although the source of funding comes from members, we also receive external sources, such as the provision of funding support from one of the national banks which members receive as a form of support. We appreciate that."

According to observations, Protecting in the empowerment of women's farmer groups also shows several aspects, such as adherence of members to mutually agreed norms, and mutual trust and respect among members. The protection and maintenance of these local institutions is also demonstrated by financial sanctions for members who cannot participate in routine activities due to certain constraints, as well as holding regular meetings to discuss the development of activities, various experiences and constraints, and finding solutions to solve problems together.

In this phase, the process of maintaining the continuity of existence is also carried out by maintaining good institutional relations with non-governmental organizations and assistants (both from the government and other regional individual/farmer groups), maintaining product quality and maintaining good relations with collectors (product collectors). In addition to this, the field findings show the development of empowerment, which is shown by the addition/expansion of aquaculture products, namely livestock farming and freshwater fisheries which now have their own cultivation sites. In addition, the expansion also leads to the production of finished materials (processed food products) which have already begun to be produced. The development and expansion also demonstrates efforts to use information technology (IT) networks in the marketing process.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for the Empowerment of Women Farmer Groups in Balerante Village, Klaten Regency

The process of empowering women in the Mekar Indah women's farmer group, Balerante Village, is not always easy. In the empowerment process, there were still some obstacles, although there was not a little support which later strengthened the existence of this local institution so that it was able to survive to this day. This is an important point, given the changes in national conditions that have just been hit by the spread of the Covid-19 Virus and changes to New Normal conditions.

This condition is inevitably one of the obstacles to the continuity and sustainability of the empowerment of the Mekar Indah Women's Farmers Group.

Other obstacles in the process of empowering these farmer groups are weather changes and uncertain seasons, attacks by pests such as monkeys and insects, disturbances from domestic animals which are still difficult to overcome to this day. The demographic location near the slopes of an active volcanic mountain, market access which is still localistic, the lack of membership, regeneration problems, and education level problems are also obstacles for empowering these farmer groups. The results of these observations are confirmed in the following interview results:

Interview 1 results:

"Kendall is always there in every activity and effort. Among them are the production process, environmental conditions and climate change which are now uncertain, as well as pest attacks. Right now we have a hard time figuring out what times and plants are traditionally suitable, so we're currently making a lot of use of current science.

Interview 2 results:

The recent spread of the Covid-19 virus has also temporarily suspended routine activities, because we must comply with health protocols. Another obstacle is also the number and regeneration of membership, in addition to the level of education.

The process of empowering farmer groups did not only encounter a number of obstacles, but also support from various parties.

Interview 2 results:

"Our activities also receive a lot of support from various parties, such as assistance from BWI, from local local leaders, and the local government. Non-governmental organizations carry and disseminate information on our whereabouts, we appreciate this and it is very helpful. The support also varied, ranging from farming knowledge and techniques, seeds, equipment, to funding."

According to observations, this empowerment is also supported by several social aspects, such as kinship/kinship ties between regions, good relations that exist between figures/practitioners and non-governmental organizations, especially in the agricultural sector. Support is also shown by routine supervision and monitoring carried out by the local government to find out and share ideas and ideas with farmer groups, collect data on developments and constraints. It is hoped that this support will become material for the development of women farmer group empowerment programs and empowerment programs on a broader scope in the future.

Discussion

Empowerment Model in Improving the Economy of Village Communities

Community empowerment in general is carried out with the enabling, empowering and protecting phases which have been observed in the Mekar Indah Women's Farmer Group in Balerante Village which have shown several important aspects, which also show aspects of support and constraints throughout the process of empowering local communities. Analysis of the data resulted in an interpretation that the community empowerment that was taking place in Balerante Village did not only contain conventionally known aspects of empowerment. The process of

empowering local communities includes social capital support and mechanisms for local economic development as a direction for the development of sustainable local community empowerment programs.

The aspect of empowerment which incidentally is carried out by local women/women is one of the characteristics, in addition to the use of traditional knowledge which is acculturated with modern knowledge. Mutual trust, mutual respect between members, as well as a network of relationships which then forms a local institutional pattern are also important points. Formal and informal institutional support shown by local government support, as well as assistance by various non-governmental organizations both nationally and internationally are also examples and potential aspects for the development of a local economic development perspective.

Conceptually, the 3 phases of empowerment (enabling, empowering, and protecting) Kartasasmita, 2003; & Mardikanto, 2013) as the basis for the process of empowering communities to have a continuous process with a conceptual framework of 4 (four) stages of local economic development (Coffey & Polese, 1984; Pisani, et.al., 2017; Rokhim, et.al., 2017). The independence shown by the Mekar Indah women's farmer group, as well as the direction and potential for development that it shows show the ability or capacity of these local institutions in the emergence of local entrepreneurship, the take-off stage, and local initiatives and the competitive advantage of the local commodities they produce. Even though the expansion and achievement of local economic structures still require improvement and more efforts, the sustainability of this local empowerment shows significant development potential.

This is inseparable from the support of formal and non-governmental organizations, the efforts and initiatives of internal members of the group, mutual trust, and a basis for implementation that adheres to joint arrangements that have been maintained to date. The relationship between these dimensional aspects forms a construction of social capital, in which the construction and climate shape and development of the local economy can be well formed. The construction can be illustrated in a table, as follows:

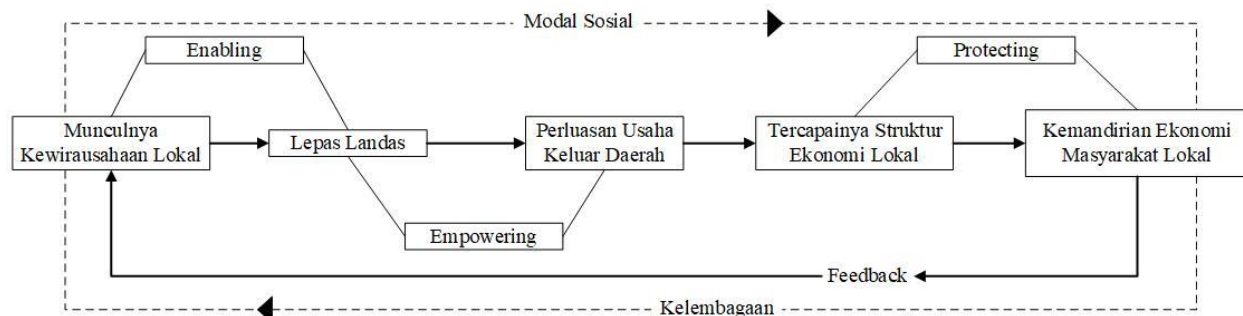


Figure 3. Community Empowerment Model in Building Local Economy

The empowerment of local communities, the social capital that is in the process, as well as the process of empowerment that leads to the formation of the local economy is described in the construction chart above. Empowerment mechanisms and local economic development have similarities in conceptual construction, where renewal results in slices where the empowerment process leads to the achievement of local economic development. This is inseparable from the availability of natural resources, production processes and product results; system relationships

and context within group institutions, and governance; and social capital that goes hand in hand with the process of enabling, empowering and protecting so that local economic development can be achieved properly. Thus, local economic development cannot be achieved if the empowerment process is not supported by the availability of adequate natural resources, where governance and institutions are not supported by local social capital.

The model framework contains several aspects that merge into one series of processes. The emergence of local businesses includes processes of enabling, empowering and protecting the beginning. Initial local economic development requires the availability of natural resources as a source of production, the interest and motivation of members, the role of external actor support, mentoring and training, and the legitimacy of empowerment institutions. The take-off phase is the stage of local economic development which includes empowering and protecting processes. In this process, mentoring and training continues to help improve the knowledge and abilities of the community. This also includes providing support for facilities, infrastructure, and funding. The process of taking off and expanding the business shown by the existence of promotion, marketing, buying and selling transactions, and distribution of products is carried out to maintain the continuity and sustainability of community empowerment.

The process of taking off and expanding the business requires support from socio-cultural aspects as capital that can strengthen interactions and institutional relations between empowering institutions and external actors. The process and the support of social capital can shape the conducive conditions and local economic climate. The formation of these conditions also requires the support and commitment of actors both at the internal and external levels of the institution. In addition, the active role of local government is an important aspect, especially in establishing and maintaining the connectivity of local economic development networks, becoming institutional catalysts and facilitators, as well as those who control and legitimize community empowerment efforts.

Efforts to protect and stabilize these conditions are important aspects, so that the goal of forming a local economic structure and independence from community empowerment can be achieved. In addition, protecting is also beneficial for stability, sustainability and sustainability of empowerment, so that local economic development can return and form various other forms of business that are localistic in nature. The process of economic development by empowering the community is not only a one-way process, but rather a continuous cycle of processes, becoming a condition where the climate and stability of the community's economy are more independent and more empowered.

CONCLUSION

Research on local community empowerment, where the Mekar Indah Village Women Farmers Group as a research field shows that community empowerment is carried out by empowering women (women) as executors, managers, and beneficiaries of empowerment programs. The field study found that empowerment steps were carried out in 3 (three) stages, namely enabling by forming women farmer groups. Empowering is done by empowering farmer groups to be able to meet food needs, and increase financial income. While protecting is done with government support, compliance with shared rules and social norms, and maintaining good relations in networking circles with members and with external parties. The empowerment process is also

supported by social capital that is maintained together. The empowerment process also generates development potential that leads to the achievement of local economic development that utilizes natural resources and product commodities, as well as supports the context of an institutional system and good governance.

Limitation

Research that examines the process of empowering Women Farmers Groups in Balerante Village is still far from perfect. This research has limitations, such as limited time, and the scope of empowerment is focused on one group. The development potential for achieving local economic development has gaps for future research continuity, especially regarding aspects of local commodity product development, institutional development and local institutional governance in the context of the topic of the same empowerment.

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