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**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THE HOME PALM SUGAR INDUSTRY
IN HARIANG VILLAGE, SOBANG DISTRICT, LEBAK REGENCY IN BANTEN
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ABSTRACT

Palm sugar is a home industry product that has been passed down from generation to generation in the Hariang village of Indonesia. Besides its unique characteristics, palm sugar is also an icon of an area, because not all regions have palm resources. Most of the palm sugar business actors, who are generally women, still have limitations, especially in product innovation. As a result, this home industry seems stagnant. Empowering women in the palm sugar home industry in Hariang village, Sobang District, Lebak Regency to develop the palm sugar home industry, strengthens the building of capacity of human resources. The objectives of this study were to (1) increase the capacity of palm sugar craftsmen in Hariang village, (2) increase business capacity in production and marketing management, (3) strengthen business group institutions (BGI) by utilizing infrastructure and production technology, to improve the product marketing function, and (4) develop an integrated home industry business system, with the support of local resources. The research was conducted at Hariang village, Sobang District, Lebak Regency in Banten Indonesia. The Miles and Huberman models for the analysis of qualitative data were adopted for this study from data collection, data reduction, data presentation to conclusion/verification. The realization of human resource competence strengthening activities is carried out by changing the mindset of women craftsmen through a broader network of participatory training by strengthening production management and marketing capabilities. The results of this study showed the need for the following from implementing the empowerment model (1) analyzing the needs of business groups, (2) creating training modules and conducting participatory business management training, (3) conducting technical guidance on production and marketing management, (4) strengthening institutions oriented towards the collective business community (socio-business), (5) benchmarking and partnership business, and (6) monitoring and evaluating the implementation and follow-up of assistance. In implementing the strategy to strengthen human resource capacity, women's business groups must be oriented towards producing premium quality home industry products capable of sustainable product innovation, in supporting business independence and building partnerships.

Key words: Empowerment, Farmer Group, Home industry, Palm Sugar, Product Innovation, Women.



INTRODUCTION

As a developing country, Indonesia is not spared from poverty and underdevelopment, which characterize developing countries with high population growth rates, high poverty rates, and high illiteracy from unequal access to education. The government of Indonesia has always tried to solve the problem. However, efforts by the government have not succeeded for lack of community involvement and participation in government-planned programs. The problem has always been attributed to poverty in Indonesia.

Poverty is a condition that generally describes a person, a household or community in a state of deprivation, especially in relation to the fulfillment of the most basic needs [1,2]. Poverty is a complex economic and social phenomenon because it is related not only to the problem of inability to meet the needs of daily life for lack of income, but also for its social, cultural, and political dimensions [3,4].

Judging from the level of income, poverty is characterized as absolute poverty or relative poverty [5]. A person is said to be in absolute poverty if his or her income is insufficient to meet the basic needs of life such as food, clothing, shelter, health and education. Relative poverty is a condition of barely being able to meet the basic needs of life, with income just above the poverty line in a relatively more affluent community. Meanwhile Nazara, [6] explains that lack of adequate education is the main factor that causes poverty.

Therefore, poverty is always associated with the inability of individuals to receive higher education, which is expensive, and thus lack of opportunities for economic and social growth and development. Although the Indonesian government has issued a policy for free education, the costs of books and school uniforms still remain expensive and the poor in society are unable to afford textbooks and school uniforms. Education has a role in poverty reduction in Indonesia. Therefore, it plays an important role in increasing the potential and abilities of the population in developing countries. Therefore, empowerment is an educational process aimed at individuals and groups in order to increase their abilities and capacities so that they are empowered both in knowledge and economics [7].

Chapter 3 of Law Number 20 of 2003 [8] concerning the national education system states the objectives of national education as follows. Education is carried out by empowering all components of society through participation in the implementation and control of the quality of educational services, ensuring that every citizen is independent, democratic and responsible and creates a society that is faithful, devout and has noble character, is healthy, independent, committed and creative. Empowerment is a non-formal educational process with an emphasis on solving



students' problems. Based on the above, Indonesia has a three-dimensional education system, namely formal, non-formal and informal education systems.

The direction of non-formal education focuses on strengthening the skills and abilities of students to develop their potential. Self-potential development is essentially the development of behavior where counseling plays a role. As a non-formal education, agricultural extension is an effort that builds society in an educative persuasive manner. With extension education, the main actors and business actors are willing and able to help organize themselves in accessing agricultural and market information, technology, capital, and other resources. The goal is to improve the quality of life [9,10,11]. The essence of counseling in non-formal education involves at least five elements: (1) the learning process, (2) the subjects who learn, (3) the development of self and group awareness, and capacity, (4) management of resources to improve living standards, and (5) implementation of sustainable principles in terms of social, economic, and the implementation of environmental sustainability functions [10]. In its activities, counseling is also empowerment, with the purpose to make the community self-sufficient with the potential to solve local pertinent problems to meet their needs without depending on outsiders, both the government and non-governmental organizations [12,13].

The purpose of women's empowerment is diverse, including: (1) education improvement, (2) accessibility improvements, (3) action repair, (4) institutional improvements, (5) business improvement, (6) revenue improvement, (7) environmental improvement, (8) life improvement and (9) community improvement [14].

Empowerment Steps

The following are a three-step approach to empowerment:

Planning

Planning is a systematic effort that describes how to arrange a series of actions to be carried out to meet the goals of the organization/institution. In the planning stage, every activity to be carried out is carefully planned so that the implementation runs efficiently and effectively to achieve goals based on expectations. There are several considerations for developing community empowerment programs, which include: (1) target groups, (2) community empowerment materials, (3) Learning Resources, and (4) method [15]. In line with this concept, community empowerment is carried out to strengthen capabilities, not including new concepts, but regarding how people are able to sustain habits and ethical standards that boost profitability [16].



Implementation

The implementation of empowerment must be carefully planned and directed to run smoothly according to expectations and goals. Generally, there are two main points in organizing community empowerment activities, which are the operational preparation stage, and the activity implementation stage [15].

The implementation phase comprises the (1) dissemination of information to the intended audience/residents to acquire knowledge about arranging events, (2) designation of the venue for conducting events and diverse auxiliary amenities for events, (3) arrangement of comprehensive resources/instructional materials that aid the process of empowerment. Meanwhile, the execution phase of the event pertains to the development of empowerment objectives, and the allotment of time for the entire event execution.

Evaluation

The evaluation process of an activity can be complex, depending on the activity, which will determine the procedures and techniques. The evaluation process must be sequential and inquiry in nature [17]. Evaluation is identifying the success or failure of a planned activity or goal by assessing and judging worth. With this evaluation, also comes the identification of any strengths and weaknesses that exist, the advantages to be maintained and deficiencies to correct to promote growth [18].

The Concept of Women's Empowerment

In patriarchal cultures, women fall into the second group of citizens. In this group, a woman's role in both the social and economic world is determined primarily by the strength of her husband's role, and they must be content with what their husbands give them. As a result, women always surrender to the customary rules that shackle them. In addition to having low education, due to family economic reasons, the Javanese society places women only in the role as wives. This makes many women hesitant to continue with their education to a higher level. Along with the increasing needs of the family, an income generated by the husband that is deemed as insufficient to meet daily family needs, forces the wife to work to help her husband earn a living [19,20].

Shifting the role of women in the public sphere (outside the household), allowing them to work outside the home, predisposes them to obstacles, in addition to their low self-capacity [21]. Women also tend to act based on emotions, which further serves as an obstacle to their public role development [19]. Empowerment of women is expected to help them to overcome those problems. Women empowerment is a systematic and planned effort to create equity and justice in their family and community life. Women's empowerment takes the form of out-of-



school or non-formal education so that women have the ability, needed skills and job training, to carry out their roles in society [22]. Women's empowerment is an effort to improve the status and role of women in nation-building, as well as increasing the quality of the role and independence of women's organizations [23].

Home industry is an activity that does not require a high level of education because home activities focus on practical skills that are easy to learn and apply in daily life [4, 24]. The palm sugar home industry is an industry run by family members with standards consistent with industrial character [25]. The cottage industry is a craft industry that processes raw materials into finished goods in the form of palm sugar, which is beneficial to the palm sugar home industry.

The development of a home industry is a means of strengthening national culture that can be passed down from generation to generation in a very elegant way, taught and used as a benchmark for one's maturity. Developing creativity by women for the home industry encourages rural women to work to access and increase income [26]. Therefore, the home industry palm sugar has added value, which makes it very easy to calculate the value of buying and selling to gain profit and increase income, supporting the world of tourism in introducing sugar as a component of tourism in a particular area [27,28].

The existence of a palm sugar home industry in Hariang Village, Sobang District, Lebak Regency is a home industry whose existence has been carried out for generations and is able to reduce poverty. The village is known as "Kampoeng Gula Lebak," where there are many home industries that produce sugar. One of the well-known home industries in the area is Palm Sugar. The types of sugar that are produced are shell sugar, ants' sugar, and liquid sugar. The participation of women from the surrounding community was very enthusiastic about the existence of this home industry, where they work as sugar craftsmen. Women's participation in the palm sugar home industry empowerment program is very enthusiastic, because apart from gaining knowledge and skills about palm sugar innovation, they also get an increase in income of between 54-74% per crafter [27,29].

Women use the salaries they earn to meet the daily needs of their families, for families to have a sense of fulfillment. On the other hand, home industry owners also can draw on the enthusiasm of residents who want to work in the sugar industry. They carry out these activities consciously. Therefore, the important context of women's empowerment is to raise awareness among women to promote their involvement in public activities [30]. Women participation in the sugar industry also means women must be part of every decision-making process in the industry.



MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach in data collection. The aim of this research is to describe the empowerment process, supporting factors and inhibiting factors for women's empowerment, in this case housewives from poor families who are members of a group of palm sugar home industry craftsmen in Hariang Village, Sobang District, Lebak Regency.

The data collection method used is a structured interview technique using questionnaires, observation and documentation of observations, and documentation, to obtain data in a study. This interview was conducted with craftsmen who are members of the palm sugar joint business group, home industry owners, one companion, community leaders as key informants and administrators of the Hariang women's farmer group.

Objects of observation include empowerment activity programs, environmental conditions, facilities and infrastructure in the palm sugar home industry. Meanwhile, documentation includes photos of home sugar industry activities.

Validating research data using triangulation techniques, there are two triangulation techniques, namely examining the degree of confidence in research data findings and examining the degree of confidence from various data sources. Research data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model was carried out until this research was completed with stages including data collection, data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing/verification

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research are discussed in a broader topic, namely planning, implementation, evaluation, supporting and inhibiting factors for empowering women in the palm sugar industry. Based on the results of interviews, observations and documentation of the subjects and informants involved, the results regarding the empowerment of women in the household sugar industry in Hariang Village, Sobang District, Lebak Regency are as follows:

Planning for Women's Empowerment through Palm Sugar home industry

Empowerment is a non-formal education program. The empowerment in Hariang Village, Sobang District, Lebak Regency is done through the sugar home industry, one of the largest home industries capable of absorbing many female workers. Palm sugar is one of the products from the home industry in Indonesia, which includes the production of coconut sugar, ant sugar and sugar liquid [31].

The establishment of the palm sugar home industry in Hariang village was more driven by the availability of natural resources in the form of sufficient stands of



palm trees and the ability of human resources to process palm sap into palm sugar, although still in a simple way because it was passed down from generation to generation from their parents.

The palm sugar home industry managed by women is still not able to develop properly due to several factors, including poor economic conditions, weak innovation and lack of education, which is generally only at elementary school level, making Hariang Village women limited in their knowledge and skills as well as just making sugar.

The question then is, why should women be empowered? Women, especially rural women, face many problems, including lack of access to education and finance, as well as other socio-economic factors [32]. Empowering women through the palm sugar home industry is one way to solve the problems faced by women, where the target is women in the home industry to escape disability and poverty. [33,34].

Planning for women's empowerment in this home industry has several aspects, which include activity objectives, target identification, funding and membership [28]. Planning is a joint activity involving other people and/or through other people as individuals or as groups [35], based on complete information, to determine general goals and specific objectives of the out-of-school education program, as well as a series and process of activities to achieve program objectives.

The aim of empowering women through the palm sugar home industry is to improve the family economy and establish independence for women. To be independent is not to depend on anyone for support or assistance for the family [36,37]. The broader concept of independence is the emergence of connectivity between individuals, in supporting the capacity of both individuals and groups, even further is society [19]. The purpose of this empowerment is to try to reduce the level of inequality and poverty in Hariang Village.

Through involvement, a woman in the palm sugar home industry, can actualize the skills they can use productively in the palm sugar to make an earning. According to Saleh K [37], the role of home industries in the economic system, in addition to creating employment opportunities, is also to increase household income and welfare.

The target group for this empowerment is women. where in general women are very vulnerable to the economic system due to their weak skills and abilities. In the empowerment process, educational background is not a big problem, because one does not require a higher level of education to work in the palm sugar industry. Sources of funds are very important in the implementation of empowerment activities. Each activity cannot be separated from the budget to run smoothly. The



source of funds for the empowerment program is purely personal, coming from the owner of the palm sugar home industry.

The method and process of empowerment must be well planned. As previously stated [38, 39], the planning stage is the stage that forms the basis for the implementation of the action. Training is carried out by involving training participants in identifying shared learning needs, determining training schedules, determining training venues, and determining learning media and methods.

The application of the method of empowering women through the palm sugar home industry is like making palm sugar. Sugar making activities include the process of filtering, cooking, thickening, cooling and printing according to what is desired, whether making coconut sugar or ant sugar.

Filtering is done using a 40 mm filter size to separate the impurities in the sap. Cooking is done by using fire in a furnace with a sleeve made of woven bamboo so that the sap does not overflow when boiling until the solution thickens, which is then allowed to cool down, either mashed by squeezing or mashed using a mixer.

The process of women empowerment includes allowing time off for women to attend to urgent matters and being free to request for salary whenever needed. This is what makes home industry workers comfortable and unfettered to grow and develop in the empowerment process.

Implementation of Women's Empowerment through palm sugar home industry

The implementation of women's empowerment activities through the Palm Sugar home industry includes the time and place of activity, assistance and cooperation partners. Implementation of time in this activity is daily, but sometimes the sugar artisans are unable to do so daily. Home industry owners do not set strict rules for participants or sugar artisans. So, this is not a burden for sugar craftsmen.

The palm sugar industry is a home industry where the production location is the same domicile as a place of business. The term home industry or business at home refers to utilizing a residence that is also a place of business, be it a service business, office or trade [19, 40]. Initially, the palm sugar industry only produced sugar at home, but with time, factories were built to process palm sugar production as orders increased.

The implementation of women's empowerment is very important to aid acquisition. Support from the local government and other parties is needed for business development [41]. The community also produces high-quality palm sugar with encouragement and support from all parties.



Support in the form of assistance from the Department of Industry and Trade is very helpful in the development of the palm sugar home industry. For example, assistance with training activities, trademark facilities, facilities halal certificates, facilities licensing (FL), and participation in district events like Lebak's birthday. The agency will notify the owner of the palm sugar home industry to display the sugar exhibition [39].

Cooperation is also carried out by Joint business group palm sugar with outside parties, which aims to develop the home industry. This collaboration will expand the marketing of Palm Sugar. It has been proven that many local government employees in Lebak Regency use sugar from palm sugar for their daily needs. In addition to government employees, many private employees order palm sugar as souvenirs by residents. Many people in Indonesia consume palm sugar daily. Palm sugar is preferred because of its color and texture, because of its low sucrose content, which makes it more comfortable to consume. For home industry owners it can absorb labor, especially households that need work to earn income [39, 41].

Evaluation of Women's Empowerment through the palm sugar home industry
Evaluation is done to improve industry activity. The empowerment of women through the palm sugar home industry also requires evaluation. Evaluation to establish whether the empowering activities have been effective and efficient as planned and expected. Otherwise, if evaluation yields negative outcomes with detrimental effects, it is phased out [42].

The palm sugar home industry is evaluated and assessed by the business actors, the Department of Industry and Trade, palm sugar business actors and home industry players. Through this evaluation activity, various things can be reviewed, especially the quality of taste and shape that attracts consumers, evaluating the quality, shape and type of sugar currently in great demand and liked by customers.

Supporting and inhibiting factors of women's empowerment through palm sugar home industry

Supporting factors for women's empowerment in the palm sugar home industry are all things that facilitate the process of women's empowerment. Several factors strengthen empowerment, including available qualified human resources, economic factors, environmental support, facilities and infrastructure, flexible activity times and support from related agencies (Industry, Trade, and MSME Services) of Lebak Regency.

The human resources involved in the palm sugar industry are artisans who are used to carrying out palm sugar crafts but are weak in knowledge and capacity for renewable innovation. Therefore, they need learning in the form of empowerment.



This empowerment activity is problem-solving in nature. For example, by practicing a cooling method that is appropriate to the nature and type of sugar produced.

Strengthening the capacity and ability of women in managing and developing the palm sugar home industry, especially in seeking product innovation and developing market potential, is part of empowerment, and at the end of the activity it is hoped that the participants and managers of the palm sugar home industry will be better and able to develop along with technological developments [42,43].

The economic factors play an important role in the empowerment process, most palm sugar craftsmen take part in the process, and activity participants earn income or salaries in addition to gaining new knowledge and skills. According to Hans Moenir in [33] said that a person's income is in line with his knowledge. Therefore, income is what a person receives in return for services, energy, or thoughts devoted to other people or organizational bodies in the form of money for a certain period of time. The profession of making palm sugar (shell sugar) has largely been abandoned. Apart from its less attractive form, it also requires more time and energy and is not more efficient because the skills sacrificed are not commensurate with the income earned as a craftsman [31, 41, 44].

Palm sugar, with new innovations in both shape and taste, is increasingly in demand by consumers, with a market share that continues to grow. The ingredients used for palm sugar are relatively the same as Javanese sugar, with a touch of technology in both shape (granular) and taste (variance), which is more economically efficient, and the processing process is even relatively more practical.

The supporting facilities and infrastructure that palm sugar artisans need is in good condition, such as a population of palm stems that are still productive and product prices are competitive. Meanwhile, the inhibiting factors in women's empowerment activities in the palm sugar home industry are unstable weather conditions, a hot work environment close to the fire, the relatively old age of the craftsmen, and the low regeneration of craftsmen. Most palm sugar artisans in empowerment locations are old and have a relatively low level of knowledge, which is one of the obstacles to women's empowerment.

CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The process of empowering women through the palm sugar home industry in Hariang Village, Sobang District, Lebak Regency, Banten Indonesia, was able to improve the welfare of craftsmen in accordance with the purpose of empowerment. Empowering women through the palm sugar industry is not only a source of income and business opportunities, but also allows preserving native regional culture, making competitive palm sugar, and dominating the sugar market share.



Sugar owners or entrepreneurs have implemented occupational safety and health principles for sugar artisans, especially during the burning phase, because inhaled smoke is unsuitable for health. To maintain the price and quality of palm sugar at a more comprehensive market level, not only at the local level but also outside the region, cooperation between palm sugar home industry players in Lebak needs to occur, either in the form of associations, partnerships, or joint business groups.

There is need for further training and guidance from the local government for young people (productive age) in the area so that they can preserve the original regional culture and be able to make palm sugar, who will later become the successors of palm sugar craftsmen.

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