



The Role of Women in Village Development in Dusun 001 Pasar Pedati Village, Pondok Kelapa Sub-District, Bengkulu Tengah Regency

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ABSTRACT

This community service project aims to enhance the role of women in village development, particularly in Dusun 001, Pasar Pedati Village, Pondok Kelapa Sub-district, Central Bengkulu Regency. The program stems from the awareness of women's contributions to non-physical development such as family economy and education, as well as underutilized local potential. Through observation, interviews, and group discussions, the project identified key issues faced by local women, including limited distribution access for MSME products, lack of digital literacy, and high rates of early marriage. The outcomes include recommendations for training programs, digital media utilization, and scholarship information sharing. This activity is expected to be the starting point for sustainable, locally-based women empowerment

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Village Development, Community Participation, Msmes, Digital Literacy

INTRODUCTION

Pasar Pedati Village, located in Pondok Kelapa Sub-district, Bengkulu Tengah Regency, is an area with distinctive social dynamics. Dusun 001, as part of the village, shows the characteristics of a semi-rural community where most of the population depends on agriculture and micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) activities. The demographic profile of the community is dominated by women of productive age who have a dual role, namely as household managers as well as additional income earners.

However, despite their high spirit and potential, women in this hamlet still face various structural and cultural challenges. Problems that often arise include limited access to information technology, lack of distribution of local products, and lack of training in digital-based business development. The phenomenon of early marriage and low participation in higher education are also significant social problems. Data from the Central Bengkulu Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2020 shows that more than 40% of women of productive age in similar villages have not completed upper secondary education. This has a direct impact on their adaptability to changing times, especially in the utilisation of technology (BPS Bengkulu Tengah, 2020).

In addition, the dominance of patriarchal culture in the village environment also limits women's space in the public sphere. Many potential women have yet to realise their abilities due to social norms that are still conservative towards gender roles (Syaldi, 2015). Previous empowerment activities have been carried out, both by local governments and higher

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education institutions. One example is the skills training programme organised by the Bengkulu Province Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Office, which includes training in sewing and snack food production. However, most of these trainings have not touched on the aspect of digital technology utilisation in depth.

A study by Pratiwi et al. (2019) conducted in Tegalombo Village, Central Java, showed that an approach that synergised digital education and entrepreneurship training had a significant impact on increasing women's income. They were able to use social media and e-commerce to expand the market for local products independently. Unfortunately, the results of these activities have not been widely adapted in the Central Bengkulu region, especially in Dusun 001. The lack of synergy between research results and implementation in the field is one of the causes of the transfer of appropriate technology (Rahmatunnisa, 2016).

Another unresolved issue is the absence of a system for documenting local knowledge that can be passed on or improved. For example, local food processing innovations such as drinks from herbal plants are still done traditionally and do not have production or packaging standards that are suitable for a wider market. Community service activities carried out by the Faculty of Social Sciences, Dehasen University Bengkulu try to fill this gap. This activity does not only rely on knowledge transfer, but also aims to build critical awareness of the community through participatory and dialogical approaches.

One of the methods used in this activity is Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving local women activists and farmer women groups. This method has proven effective in identifying the real needs of the community and bridging communication between residents and the service team (Mulyana, 2007). This activity also proposes a digital-based approach, namely training in the use of social media as a means of product promotion. The use of simple technology such as smart phones and WhatsApp and Facebook applications is an entry point for digital literacy that is contextualised and not burdensome for participants.

The presence of a progressive female dusun head, Mrs Sumini, is a strategic factor in strengthening the women's community. Her leadership facilitated the formation of a women farmer group (KWT) and expanded local co-operation networks. Such inclusive gender-based leadership is crucial in encouraging women's active participation in development (UN Women, 2020). However, there is still a lot of untapped potential. For example, the management of agricultural waste such as palm fronds and coconut waste has not been utilised as an additional resource that can be processed into creative and environmentally friendly products. Appropriate technologies such as simple chopping machines or solar dryers are not yet available and have not been introduced to the community.

In addition, the distribution system for local MSME products is still very limited. There is no extensive marketing network or strategic partnerships with third parties, such as digital cooperatives or marketplace platforms that can accommodate local products in a sustainable manner. Digital financial literacy is also an aspect that has not been taken seriously. In fact, the ability to manage finances digitally can increase the economic independence and resilience of rural women's households (OJK, 2021).

Increasing access to educational scholarships such as KIP Lecture is also an important agenda in this service. Education about registration channels, administrative requirements, and scholarship benefits is delivered directly to open residents' insights into opportunities to continue higher education. This activity is expected to be an alternative approach model that combines local values with adaptive technology. Thus, community empowerment is not just a slogan, but actually responds to local needs and conditions.

Overall, this activity aims to address problems that have not been addressed comprehensively so far: digital limitations, lack of local product innovation, and weak distribution networks. This effort is expected to be the starting point towards a more sustainable and independent empowerment of village women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of women in village development can be understood through the lens of gender and development theory (GAD), which emphasizes the importance of including both men and women equally in development processes. According to GAD, women are not merely recipients of development aid but are active agents whose contributions are vital to the social and economic progress of rural communities. This perspective challenges traditional development models that often overlook women's roles in decision-making and leadership at the grassroots level.

In addition, the theory of community development supports the idea that sustainable development is only achievable when all members of the community, regardless of gender, are engaged in participatory planning and implementation. Women's involvement in areas such as education, health, economy, and local governance is considered essential in fostering inclusive development.

Furthermore, the empowerment theory also plays a central role in understanding women's participation in development. It focuses on enhancing women's capacity, confidence, and access to resources and decision-making power. Empowerment is both a process and an outcome that enables women to transform their lives and the communities they live in.

These theoretical perspectives collectively provide a foundation for analyzing how women in Dusun 001 Pasar Pedati contribute to village development and the extent to which their roles are recognized, supported, and institutionalized.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The methods used in this community service activity are systematically designed to be able to lead to the achievement of the main objective, namely increasing the role of women in village development through local-based empowerment and digital literacy. The approach used is a participatory-collaborative approach with a combination of field observations, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, hands-on training, and social advocacy facilitation.

Activities began with the identification and problem mapping stage, which was carried out through field observations and interviews with local community leaders, especially the Head of the Hamlet and active women's groups such as KWT (Kelompok Wanita Tani). This process was carried out to gain an initial understanding of the actual conditions, local potential, and obstacles faced by the community, especially women.

The second stage is activity planning. Based on the results of the initial identification, the team developed the main theme of the activity, namely 'The Role of Women in Village Development'. At this stage, the preparation of materials, selection of delivery methods in accordance with the characteristics of the participants, and technical coordination with village officials to determine the location and schedule of implementation were carried out.

The third stage is the implementation of service activities, which includes the delivery of educational materials related to gender, development, and digital technology, as well as active discussions with participants on strategic issues such as local product distribution, access to education, and social challenges in the midst of the digital era. In this session, potential exploration and the development of a follow-up plan with the community were also conducted. The fourth stage was the evaluation of the activity, which was carried out qualitatively by observing the participants' participation, responses.

RESULTS

The community service activities carried out in Dusun 001 Pasar Pedati Village showed a number of achievements that were not only technical, but also had a social and cultural impact on residents, especially women. One of the most prominent results is the increased awareness of the community on the importance of women's role in village development. This can be seen from the high participation of participants in discussion sessions, who were previously reluctant to speak in public forums but now show the courage to express their opinions, criticise the situation, and even propose concrete solutions.

The presentation of material on development and women's empowerment in the digital era has opened a new space of understanding. Women in this hamlet began to understand that they are not just 'helping' development, but are actually central actors who are able to influence the direction of local policies, especially in the fields of household economy and children's education. This awareness emerged along with discussions on how their activities - such as managing MSMEs, caring for children, and organising farmer groups - are a form of real contribution to non-physical development.

During the activity, the service team managed to identify various local potentials that have not been optimally utilised. These included processing ginger into instant powder, utilising palm fronds for crafts, and producing food from local ingredients such as pisang kepok. The community themselves realised that these activities had been carried out traditionally without a strong market orientation. This fact opens up great opportunities for simple technology-based interventions, such as training on product packaging and the use of social media as a marketing channel.

Through discussions and field observations, the team also got a clear picture of the structural problems faced by the community. Among these are limited access to product distribution outside the village, the absence of business legality such as P-IRT licences, and a lack of understanding of the use of digital tools. Other challenges revealed were the high rate of early marriage and the low participation of teenagers in productive activities, largely due to gadget dependency and lack of space for actualisation.

The community response to this activity was very positive. Some residents said that this was the first time they had received training that directly touched their needs. They felt valued as subjects, not just objects of campus activities. The interactions that were established during the activity formed a new social network between residents, students, and lecturers, which is expected to be the initial foundation for long-term collaboration.

Another important outcome was the initiative from the residents to explore access to higher education through the KIP-Kuliah programme. Some participants even asked for further information about this scholarship pathway, both for themselves and for family members. This reflects that the service activities did not stop at improving practical skills, but also opened new horizons about social mobility and the importance of education as an empowerment tool.

Documentation of activities was conducted thoroughly and systematically. Each session was recorded through observation notes, photo documentation, and transcripts of discussion results. This is not only useful for administrative reporting needs, but also serves as a rich database for further programme development and scientific article writing. In addition, this documentation will be provided back to the community in the form of a short report so that they can reflectively review and evaluate their involvement.

This activity also provided an important learning space for the implementation team, especially the students. They experienced first-hand the process of building trust with the community, delivering materials in a language that is easy to understand, and adjusting methods to local dynamics. This experience is an important part of students' intellectual and social character building, in accordance with the values of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education.

From the institutional side, this activity succeeded in strengthening the image of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Dehasen University Bengkulu as an institution that cares and is directly present in the community. The success of building healthy and productive two-way communication with residents opens up opportunities for cooperation across study programmes, and allows replication of similar activities in other areas with a contextual approach.

The overall results of the activity show that a service strategy that combines participatory, dialogical, and local potential-based approaches can produce an impact that goes beyond the delivery of material. It can encourage social transformation, pave the way for sustainable collaboration, and form a new awareness of the role of women in holistic village development.

DISCUSSIONS

The results of community service activities in Dusun 001 Pasar Pedati Village show that the participatory approach applied is able to directly touch the root of the problems faced by the community, especially women. Problems such as limited access to information, low digital literacy, and weak local product distribution networks can begin to be addressed through a series of educational activities, open discussions, and facilitation of village potential mapping.

Early indicators of the success of the activities can be seen from three main aspects: (1) increased active participation of women in discussion forums, (2) the emergence of initiatives from residents to develop local products and access educational opportunities, and (3) the formation of initial commitments for further cooperation with higher education institutions. These three indicators reflect that the community no longer sees itself as passive recipients, but has begun to take a position as active subjects in the development process.

The main internal strength in this activity lies in the collaborative spirit of the community, especially the women's group who are very open to new ideas. The presence of local female leaders such as the Head of Hamlet is a significant social capital. She not only opens the discussion space, but also becomes the driving force that bridges the community with external parties. In addition, the community service team from Dehasen University Bengkulu also demonstrated consistency in a humanist approach that enabled trust to be built between the parties involved.

From the external side, great opportunities arise from the opening of access to simple technology that is now relatively affordable, such as smart phones and light application-based social media. The region's already adequate telecommunications infrastructure is also a driving factor. In addition, national policy support for women's empowerment programmes and MSMEs provides a legal umbrella as well as an opportunity to establish partnerships with local governments and other funding institutions.

However, this activity is not free from a number of internal weaknesses. One of them is the limited time for implementation, which only takes place in one day. This duration is not enough to deliver more in-depth material or conduct practical training. Another weakness was the lack of historical documentation from the community about previous activities, which meant that the initial mapping had to be done from scratch.

External barriers are also present in the form of the residual impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which still limits the scale of community participation. Some residents who belong to vulnerable groups chose not to attend due to concerns about health risks. On the other hand, the absence of local regulations that specifically encourage digital-based training at the village level also slowed down the process of integrating innovations into community activities.

Nevertheless, this service approach has succeeded in opening up space for problem solving in a way that is adaptive and relevant to the local context. For example, the limited distribution of MSME products began to be overcome with a commitment to provide promotional space at Gallery Cantik

Anggut, which is managed by internal campus partners. This initiative can be a prototype of a community-based distribution model with low costs and high affordability.

The problem of women's low digital literacy is being addressed through initial education on the basic functions of social media as a promotional tool, with a follow-up plan to provide specialised training on mastering digital tools. Meanwhile, social challenges such as early marriage and gadget dependency among teenagers have been addressed through open discussions that sparked the collective awareness of residents to design community-based productive activities involving teenagers.

This service goes beyond mere technical solutions; it becomes a growing space for collective consciousness that encourages the community to strategically map the future of the village. Residents began to interpret development as a joint process that demands active involvement, not as a burden that is solely borne by the government or outsiders. Gotong royong re-emerged as a concrete social force, not just a rhetorical symbol. Local power, access to accessible technology, and an educative approach based on participation have proven to be able to drive change. Instead of relying on high technology or large-scale interventions, success lies in sensitivity to local realities, the ability to build equal communication, and the willingness to hear the aspirations of citizens directly and sincerely.

CONCLUSIONS

Community service activities in Hamlet 001 of Pasar Pedati Village produced a number of important findings that significantly contributed to the resolution of problems faced by residents, especially women. The most prominent contribution lies in the success of opening a critical participation space that encourages the growth of collective awareness of the strategic role of women in village development. This awareness forms a new foundation for community-based social transformation.

Discussion activities, potential mapping, and delivery of educational materials are able to build connections between local needs and solutions that can be accessed in real time. The utilisation of social media as a means of promoting local products, the introduction of higher education scholarship opportunities, and the establishment of a network of cooperation between residents and higher education institutions are concrete manifestations of results that are not only short-term, but also open space for sustainability.

The participatory approach used succeeded in reversing the position of residents from being mere recipients of assistance to the main actors of change. The trust built through two-way communication and the willingness to listen to the needs of the community are the main keys to the success of this activity. Equally important, the presence of local women leaders helped strengthen the social structure that supports empowerment.

However, the implementation of the activity also encountered a number of weaknesses that need attention in planning future activities. The limited duration of the activity makes the delivery of material dense and has not been able to reach the practical aspects thoroughly. Meanwhile, the limited digital literacy of residents is a challenge in introducing the new technology offered.

External barriers such as limited support regulations at the village level and residents' concerns about post-pandemic health impacts are also inhibiting factors that cannot be ignored. Therefore, further activities are recommended to extend the mentoring time so that the process of internalising the material can run more deeply and inclusively.

In addition, systematic efforts are needed to build a database of village potential that is neatly documented so that mapping problems does not always have to start from scratch. Digital mentoring involving students as facilitators also needs to be expanded so that knowledge transfer takes place simultaneously and sustainably.

Overall, this activity shows that solving village problems can start from simple things that are rooted in the reality of the community. When participation is open, local potential is recognised, and social relations are strengthened, then empowerment efforts are no longer an external agenda, but an internal movement that grows with the community.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declared that no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the authorship and publication of this article.

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