

## Opportunities and Strategies For Women's Economic Empowerment Through Online Media

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### **Abstract**

*The global Covid-19 pandemic has affected almost all lines of human life without exception, be it economic, educational, social, or other aspects. One of the sectors which, according to the author, is the most affected is the economy. The implementation of social restrictions during Covid-19 has reduced the income of some people and lose their jobs. Men and women alike are the objects that are harmed. However, there is an interesting phenomenon that deserves attention, namely, the proliferation of digital businesses carried out by women. The author tries to capture this phenomenon using a qualitative descriptive method. Furthermore, the empowerment carried out by the author and the team utilizes the SL (Service Learning) method. In addition, the author also tries to offer a conceptual formula in the form of a women's empowerment strategy based on simple observations in the field. The result of this study of women's economic empowerment is the increase in women's creativity in making products that sell value through online marketing. It is hoped that this empowerment activity will be able to elevate the dignity and independence of the community, especially women.*

**Keywords:** *Opportunities and strategies, Women's economic empowerment, Online marketing*

## INTRODUCTION

Humans are basically divided into two genders, namely male and female. However, in Indonesia there has been a dominance of roles by men, especially from an economic perspective. Even though statistically, women are not much adrift in number compared to men. The Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri) released that the total population of Indonesia as of December 2020 reached 271.35 million, with details of the male population being 137.12 million, while the female population was 134.2 million. The difference in the number is not too far, it should encourage the advancement of women's mobility, especially from the economic aspect if supported by high quality human resources so that women will become productive potential and capital for development in Indonesia in the future.

The author considers that there is an opportunity that can be used to see these statistics through a formula for empowerment activities. Then, together with the team, the author made initial observations in the village of Jrebengkembang, Karangdadap sub-district, Pekalongan regency on the potential of women that could be worked on. In the village of Jrebengkembang itself, until now, quite a lot of families feel that their economy is a little hampered due to this pandemic. The husband's income has decreased, while the mothers have difficulty finding additional income to meet their economic needs. This phenomenon becomes painful because the women in the village of Jrebenmbang, which are dominated by mothers, only take care of the household every day. They have no other activities besides taking care of their husbands and children at home. In this paper, mothers are the target of the empowerment program carried out by the author and the team.

Empowerment is an issue that arises in the development approach when the community requires assistance in the process of economic and social strengthening in improving welfare. Community empowerment is basically a planned social and economic change strategy aimed at solving problems or meeting community needs. In the empowerment process, the community is given learning so that they can independently make efforts to improve the quality of their lives. Thus, the process must be carried out with the full involvement of the community itself gradually, continuously, and continuously (Saugi, 2015: 228).

As target objects, women have great potential to achieve independence through empowerment activities. Women's empowerment is an effort to empower women to gain access and control over economic, political, social and cultural resources so that women can organize themselves, play a role, and participate actively in solving development problems and being able to build themselves (Murenati, 2013). In another sense, women's empowerment is one way of the process of awareness and capacity *building* for greater participation, greater power and oversight of decision-making and transformational actions in order to produce greater equality between women and men (Priyono and Pranaka, 1996).

Empowerment of women is a very important strategy in increasing the role of women in increasing their potential so that they are more capable of being independent and working. Awareness about the role of women began to develop which was manifested in the approach of women's programs in development. This is based on the idea of the need for independence for women so that development can be felt by all parties, including women, because women are very valuable human resources so that their position is included in development. There are two characteristics of women's empowerment. First, as a reflection of emancipatory interests that encourage people to participate actively. Second, as a process of involving individuals or the community in the process of enlightenment, awareness, and active organization so that they can participate (Zakiyah, 2010).

The development of technology certainly has an impact in both positive and negative terms. It depends on how each person uses it. Especially in an era that is completely online, this should be an opportunity for women to be more productive without leaving their obligations in the domestic environment such as taking care of the house, taking care of children and others. The assumption that women only follow their husbands must be broken, one of which is by empowering women, making women more independent and productive by developing their skills and utilizing online media as a support that makes it easier. But not infrequently women still feel that there is no place to develop their skills, therefore women's empowerment activities are expected to be a place for women to develop their potential to be more productive.

Women's empowerment carried out in this activity utilizes the *Service Learning* (SL) method. Service Learning is a learning method that connects material and theory obtained in the classroom to apply it into a real action in the form of community service. Based on this brief definition, in the field, the empowerment, in this case the author and the team, provides services in the form of training on making home-priced products that are marketed through digital platforms and social media networks.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Women's Empowerment: Objectives and Strategies**

The objective of women's empowerment is to build women's awareness so that they are able to develop their potential, so that women can be independent and participate in development, especially the economy. According to Nugroho (2008), the objectives of the women's empowerment program have the following dimensions:

1. Increase the ability of women to involve themselves in development programs, play a role as active participation so that they are not just objects of development as has happened so far
2. Improving the ability of women in leadership, to improve their bargaining position and involvement in every development, both as planners, implementers, as well as monitoring and evaluating activities.
3. Improving the ability of women in managing household scale businesses and large industries to support the increase in household needs, as well as to open up productive and independent work opportunities.
4. Increasing the role and function of women's organizations at the local level as a forum for empowering women to be actively involved in development programs in the area where they live.

In this empowerment activity, the third goal is targeted. Empowerers have high hopes that women in the village of Jrebengkembang can be more productive

and solve economic problems at the family level, especially in the village. Through such treatment, it is hoped that business opportunities, work, independence, and productivity for women in the village can increase.

Women's empowerment is a strategic way to increase women's potential and increase women's roles both in the global and domestic spheres. According to (Zaki, 2010), women's empowerment can be done with the following strategies:

1. Unraveling the myth of women as a complement in the household.

In ancient times, there was a strong assumption in society that women were *konco wingking* (friends behind) for their husbands and the assumption that women's fate was very dependent on their husbands/men. Women have a passive connotation and do not have the initiative.

2. Provide various skills for women.

This strategy aims so that women can also be productive and not depend their fate on men. Various skills can be taught to women, such as sewing skills; entrepreneurship by making batik cloth; make various foods; as well as trade by utilizing online media which is getting easier.

3. Provide the widest possible opportunity for women to be able to follow or take the widest possible education.

Given the still strong public opinion that a woman's education is as high as possible, she will eventually return to the kitchen. This is what causes the (mostly) low level of education for women.

### **Women and Economic Empowerment**

Efforts to empower women in the economic field are carried out to increase their role and participation in economic development, especially the people's economy, considering the increasing number of women entering the labor market and increasing opportunities for women. However, due to limited employment opportunities in the formal sector, women's empowerment is aimed at increasing their ability to create their own jobs.

Therefore, the steps to empower women in the economic sector are aimed at improving the skills and expertise of women's resources in terms of technical production, entrepreneurship, business management and resources. Quoting DKI

Jakarta Governor Regulation Number 38 of 2007 concerning General Guidelines for Women's Empowerment, in order to support women's empowerment in the economic sector, the following steps were developed:

1. Mainstreaming gender in economic development and employment, the activities carried out include:
  - a. Increase gender awareness and sensitivity and encourage the realization of gender-equal and just behavior for all officials in the economic and labor sector.
  - b. Organizing advocacy related to gender mainstreaming in economic and employment programs to officials and managers of the economic sector
  - c. Organizing trainings for the dissemination of gender mainstreaming in the economic sector
  - d. Organizing gender mainstreaming training in the economic sector.
2. Empowerment of women in the development of the people's economy
  - a. Women's empowerment in the field of entrepreneurship in order to grow productive economic enterprises
  - b. Increasing women's access to information about sources of funds/credit and market information
  - c. Increasing poverty alleviation for women and their families, the activities are:
    - 1.) Increasing women's participation in poverty alleviation programs. For example, increasing the intensity of the dissemination of poverty alleviation programs.
    - 2.) Use of appropriate technology. For example, by encouraging activities to develop and apply technology, suitable and profitable business patterns for each region to be disseminated to women in particular and society in general.
  - d. Improving the quality and professionalism and productivity of women workers
  - e. Improving the welfare of women and their families by encouraging the holding of counseling on improving the social security of workers.

### **Product Marketing with Online Media**

Internet is very beneficial for various aspects of life, such as education, commerce, economy and government. One of them is doing business with online media, there is no longer a reason for market limitations or costs. Doing business through online media is very effective and cheap. Anyone, even people who don't have a job can also do business via online media such as Shopee, Lazada, Tokopedia or use social media such as Instagram, Facebook as a means of finding markets.

The existence of social media now continues to penetrate human life. In its development, social media can be used for various purposes, one of which is media promotion and marketing of certain products or services. The existence of rapid progress in the field of technology is offset by advances in transportation and logistics management such as the number of delivery expedition services to support business activities via online media. These two things should be business opportunities that must be utilized to the maximum extent possible.

Social media is now widely used by the community, social networking or on a general scale called social media has become the main pillar in the delivery of information. His speed in conveying news is the choice of today's society. This is also used by the Jrebengkembang village community in informing and promoting existing products and potentials (Suryani, 2014).

### **Community Profile and Training Materials**

Almost all of the women who participate in this empowerment activity do not have permanent jobs. This is due to the lack of development of the potential that exists in the community, because most of them are only high school graduates or equivalent. Participants who took part in this empowerment activity were dominated by housewives and teenagers in the village of Jrebengkembang who almost all had sewing skills. This skill is a potential that needs to be further developed so that women in the village can be more creative and productive. The products produced through *service learning* are marketed through online media. The choice of marketing using an online platform is driven by the rapid advancement of industrial technology in the 4.0 era. In addition, the empowerment activities carried out also lacked capital support.

To increase the prosperity of society in the long term by taking into account the common interests and skills of each member. It is hoped that women in this empowerment activity will be motivated to become entrepreneurs, direct their families to attend education and establish relationships with fellow community members, as well as a forum for underprivileged families to learn to do business so that it has implications for improving their economic welfare.

The training material provided in this empowerment activity is in the form of assistance in making products that have a selling value such as cloth masks which are then marketed independently by using online media. Product manufacturing and marketing skills training is carried out in stages. The first stage is to provide training on how to make cloth masks with sewing skills, then the second stage is socialization and training on how to promote and market products online by utilizing social networking media in the form of *marketplaces* and *shopee*.

## CONCLUSION

The essence of empowerment is how the community has a bargaining position so that they become actors in a participatory and active development process and not only as objects of development. Community empowerment can only occur if its citizens participate. There are still many women who have not been able to show their potential and identity optimally, because they are still confined by structural, cultural, and natural limitations or poverty. Empowerment of women is expected to increase *capability* and quality of life, family and community, because empowering women can increase women's productivity which ultimately leads to increased family and community income.

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