



WOMEN SUPPORT WOMEN: HOW COASTAL WOMEN IN DEMAK STEP OUT FROM POVERTY

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ABSTRACT

According to research carried out by the Central Java provincial government in 2019, there are 13,415 poor people in the Demak Regency coastal area, where most people are fishers. The unstable income and the tendency of a consumer lifestyle followed by the weakness in money management are the main factors of poverty. Moreover, the covid-19 pandemic also aggravated the poverty of the coastal communities of the Demak Regency. Unfortunately for the coastal communities of the Demak Regency, the role of women is less significant because of the dominance of roles and cultural trends of patriarchy by men. Based on this, the coastal women there initiated a Women Support Women movement. This study used qualitative descriptive methods and a series of interviews and observations in its data retrieval. This study focused on identifying the form of the movement and explaining the impact on coastal women in Demak Regency to break out of the cycle of poverty and patriarchal culture. The results showed that the Women Support Women movement consists of individuals to the community, community to individuals, and community to community. There are three main actors in this movement: Forum Demak Hijau, Puspita Bahari, and Mrs. Pasijah. With this movement, coastal women in Demak Regency are proven to be able to contribute financially to their families, decreasing the patriarchal culture, and creating a trickle-down effect on others.

Keywords: Poverty, Movement, Coastal Area, Demak Regency

ABSTRAK

Menurut penelitian yang dilakukan oleh Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Tengah pada tahun 2019, terdapat 13.415 penduduk miskin di wilayah pesisir Kabupaten Demak yang sebagian besar penduduknya adalah nelayan. Pendapatan yang tidak stabil dan kecenderungan gaya hidup konsumtif yang diikuti dengan lemahnya pengelolaan uang menjadi faktor utama kemiskinan. Apalagi, pandemi covid-19 juga memperparah kemiskinan masyarakat pesisir Kabupaten Demak. Sayangnya bagi masyarakat pesisir Kabupaten Demak, peran perempuan kurang signifikan karena dominasi peran dan tren budaya patriarki oleh laki-laki. Berdasarkan hal tersebut, para perempuan pesisir di sana menggagas gerakan Women Support Women. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dan serangkaian wawancara dan observasi dalam pengambilan datanya. Penelitian ini difokuskan untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk gerakan dan menjelaskan dampaknya terhadap perempuan pesisir di Kabupaten Demak untuk keluar dari lingkaran kemiskinan dan budaya patriarki. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa gerakan Women Support Women terdiri dari individu ke komunitas, komunitas ke individu, dan komunitas ke komunitas. Ada tiga aktor utama dalam gerakan ini: Forum Demak Hijau, Puspita Bahari, dan Ibu Pasijah. Dengan adanya gerakan ini, perempuan pesisir di Kabupaten Demak terbukti

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mampu memberikan kontribusi finansial bagi keluarganya, mengurangi budaya patriarki, dan menciptakan trickle down effect bagi orang lain.

Keywords: Kemiskinan, Perpindahan, Area Pesisir, Kabupaten Demak.
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Introduction

The Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia explained that the Indonesian economy in Quarter II-2021 experienced a growth of 7.07% (yoy) (Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, 2021). The current increase in Indonesia's economic growth does not mean that Indonesia has achieved an inclusive economy. The term inclusive growth is often used interchangeably with broad-based, shared, or pro-poor growth, referring to growth that encapsulates both improved participation and benefit-sharing (Ranieri & Ramos, 2013). Broader, more dynamic perspectives of inclusive growth further include opening up new sectors and harnessing existing sectors to produce more value-added offerings. These rely on significant investments in productive capabilities and skills (De Mello & Dutz, 2012). Although there is an increase in economic growth in general, spatial economic growth cannot be said to be so. In fact, there are still gaps in various regions in Indonesia which indicate that an inclusive economy has not yet been achieved.

Demak Regency is located in a geographical mix between agricultural and coastal areas that are experiencing economic difficulties. Based on BPS data, it is stated that the percentage of poor people in Demak Regency in 2020 is 12.54%, while in the previous year, the percentage of poor people in Demak was 11.86% (BPS, 2021). The conditions indicate an increase in poverty in Demak by 0.86%. As one of the coastal areas located around the North Coast of Central Java, not a few people in Demak have their primary profession as fishermen. Supported by data from the Demak Regency website, as many as 12,869 residents of the Demak community work as fishermen. Although fisheries are one of the potentials of the Demak Regency, unfortunately, much of the poverty hit the coastal areas.

Poverty which has always been a "trademark" for the coastal community of Demak can be justified by several facts such as the condition of slum settlements, low levels of income and education, the vulnerability of the community to social, political, and economic changes, as well as the powerless of the community towards intervention from investors and rulers who come.

In line with Juliantono (2015) which states that several technical roles hinder the welfare of fishermen, among others, most of them are still traditional fishermen with socio-cultural characteristics that are not yet conducive. The income of the community which is classified as uncertain is followed by a pattern of deeply rooted consumptive life culture as well as the weakness of the community in managing finances which is the main factor in the occurrence of poverty in the coastal community of Demak. Especially with the Covid-19 pandemic, it has also become a factor in increasing poverty for coastal communities in Demak Regency.

Looking at the conditions, there is a need for an active contribution between the roles of men and women. Unfortunately, in the coastal community of Demak Regency, the role of women is actually less significant due to the dominance of the role and the tendency of patriarchal culture by men. The condition of coastal women in Demak Regency is the same as for coastal women in general. The condition of women can be said to be 'under pressure; both on the socio-cultural and economic side, the deep-rooted patriarchal system impedes women's rights, causing limited access to these coastal women. According to the results of interviews conducted with Mrs. Sri Widayatuti (65) as an activist in empowerment activities in Demak Regency, the harsh character of fishermen's lives who don't have sufficient education and an unfavorable environment is supported by economic conditions that do not lead to domestic violence. The strong religious principles that are held make women not dare to speak and

cannot argue because it is in accordance with their beliefs that this violates nature and is a normal thing for them.

According from the economic side, coastal women only depend on their husbands who work as fishermen with uncertain income, especially when the rainy season arrives, fishermen can't go to the sea for several months. The sea catch is only sold to the market because the fisherman's wife does not have the skills to process sea catches that do not sell or have a low selling value. Departing from this, coastal women in Demak Regency Initiated a movement that invites coastal women in Demak Regency to be more active and independent so that they can improve the economy as well as promote women's rights that should be obtained.

Literature review

Poverty

Coastal communities, especially fishermen, are closely related to poverty and are even called the poor among the poor. According to [Kusumaningrum \(2013\)](#) the poverty of fishermen is related to complex problems both structurally, culturally and naturally. According to [Sipahelut \(2010\)](#) the causes of poverty in fishing communities are limited quality of human resources (HR), limited capital and technology, dependence on fishing occupations, and extravagant lifestyles. According to the results of [Widodo's \(2011\)](#) research, the low access to capital, especially financial capital, causes fishermen to be unable to access physical capital in the form of more modern fishing technology. One of the coastal areas that is currently still in a cycle of poverty is in the coastal area of Demak.

Coastal Area

According to [Trinanda \(2017\)](#) defines the coastal area as a meeting area between land and sea towards the land. The coastal area includes parts of the land, both dry and submerged in water, which are still influenced by the characteristics of the sea such as tides, sea breezes, and water seepage. salty. While towards the sea, the coastal area includes the part of the sea that is still influenced by natural processes that occur on land such as sedimentation and fresh water flow, as well as those caused by human activities on land such as deforestation and pollution. Considering that coastal areas have a very strategic role as well as being vulnerable to environmental changes and human activities, in the utilization of coastal areas it is necessary to find the optimum balance between utilization, management and conservation ([Hamuna et al., 2017](#)).

Women Empowerment

Empowerment is the transformation of power relations between men and women at different strata, namely family, community, market and state. The concept of empowerment can be understood in two contexts. First, power in the decision-making process focuses on the importance of women's roles. Second, empowerment in terms of empowering women and their impact on men in the diversity of society ([Haqiqiansyah & Sugiharto, 2018](#)).

Women empowerment is a bottom-up process to transform gender relations both individually and collectively because of the increased awareness of women subordination and the creation of the ability to deal with it. Women empowerment is the process by which women redefine gender roles in ways that expand their possibilities of being and doing ([Mosadale, 2005](#)). According to ([Ly Phan, 2013](#)), women empowerment is a self-acquired process to achieve women's choices in all aspects of life, including decisions about their health and body, their education, employment, and political representation.

Previous research

According to research conducted by [Haqiqiansyah & Sugiharto \(2018\)](#), it shows that women living in the coastal areas of Sanga-Sanga have potential and prospective opportunities to be empowered through various activities consisting of productive businesses and

mentoring activities. This is different from the results of research conducted by [Rahim \(2018\)](#) which shows that the strategy of empowering the wives of traditional fishermen in the west coast of Barru, South Sulawesi Province, is to improve the household economy through increased activities. with an interest-free loan technical assistance program.

According to the results of research conducted by [Fröcklin et al. \(2018\)](#) shows that empowering women, through the introduction of small-scale innovations such as shell crafts, is the right thing to do. Target women experienced increased access to financial, physical, human, and social resources, and decision- making at the individual level. Then, according to research conducted by [Sudarso et al. \(2019\)](#) the results show that the phenomenon of gender codes faced by women, such as in the coastal areas of East Java, cannot be separated from patriarchal culture which is a way of life and ethics. These problems can be eliminated by reconstructing the thinking of coastal communities about existing socio-religious institutions, both formal and informal. In addition, there must be economic empowerment of coastal families so that girls are no longer victims who have to burden the family economy by dropping out of school or getting married.

Based on the four previous studies, many studies on women's empowerment have been carried out. The similarities between the five studies and the research conducted by the authors are that they both study women's empowerment in coastal areas. The difference between the research and the research conducted by the author lies in the subject and empowerment program. The subjects studied by the author are women, especially women who live on the coast of Demak and the empowerment program being studied is providing training on financial planning and management.

Research methods

This writing uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method that describes the data according to the actual situation that occurs through interviews and observations. The use of this approach is based on the notion of [Mack \(2005\)](#) that qualitative research is very effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of a particular population, as well as effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, based on the research.

This paper takes primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources are collected directly from the sources and processed by the related institution ([Ruslan, 2006, p.138](#)). The primary data was obtained from observations on the subject of the problem and interviews with Forum Demak Hijau, Puspita Bahari, and Mrs. Pasijah The Mangrove Activist in Drowning Village, all of whom lived in Demak Regency. The secondary data was used to support the primary information that has been obtained, namely from library materials, literature, previous research, and books.

Data collection techniques in this study used the methods of interview, observation, and literature study. An Interview is a data collection technique by asking questions directly by the interviewer to the respondent, and the respondent's answers are recorded or recorded ([Hasan, 2002, p.85](#)). While observation is the selection, modification, recording, and coding of a series of behaviors and conditions relating to the organization, in accordance with empirical goals ([Hasan, 2002, p.86](#)). Interviews and observations in this study were used to find out the form of the women support women movement in Demak Regency and how it affected the women there to help them get out of poverty and patriarchal culture.

Result and Discussion

Women Support Women Movement

Women's empowerment is an effort made to increase women's ability to gain access and control over resources in all aspects of life. In the Women Support Women movement,

there are three forms of programs, namely individuals to community, community to individuals, and community to community.

Individual to Community

The women support women movement is carried out in the type of individuals to the community, it can't be separated from the role of Mrs. Pasijah (62) as an activist for cultivation of mangroves. The types of programs provided are training on mangrove cultivation and also training on processing mangrove leaves into tea and chips. This activity was proven to be able to move women's communities such as the Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK) to visit Mrs. Pasijah to learn how to use mangroves as a food ingredient. The utilization activities also were done by Mrs. Sri Widayatuti (65). She became an activator in utilizing water hyacinth as a craft worth selling. These skills are transferred to the community of vulnerable women to be able to increase family income. Water hyacinth crafts in the form of hats, pencil cases, and dining tablecloths, can be sold with prices starting from IDR 20,000 to IDR 50,000. At this price, women can supply their family's income.

This kind can strengthen the opinion of [Purwati \(2018\)](#) which says that fishermen's wives have a double burden of not only taking care of the house but also helping to earn a living. With the existence of individuals who use natural products to be used as food and increase income, they can fulfill the double burden element that has been revealed by previous research.

The Women Support Women movement is in the type of individual to the community under the target of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) number 8, particularly achieving a higher level of economic productivity, through diversification, improvement, and technological innovation, including through a focus on sectors that provide high added value and are dense.

Community to Individual

Women support women movement is also employed as empowerment from community to individual. These communities include Forum Demak Hijau and Puspita Bahari. Mrs. Sri Widayatuti (65) from Forum Demak Hijau said that her community conducted training for women in that environment to process fertilizer from coffee grounds. Then she taught the community to manage plastic waste with reuse, reduce, recycle programs. Every woman in the family was taught about food security by being given education on growing food crops in their respective homes for consumption.

In addition, Puspita Bahari also made efforts to empower women from community to individual. These were proven by Mrs. Sri Hayati (37) from Puspita Bahari who said that Puspita Bahari provides legal assistance for every coastal women who have household problems. Problems that usually occur in coastal women are domestic violence and husbands who don't provide for their families. Puspita Bahari accompanied this woman from the process of filing a lawsuit to the divorce trial. The activities carried out by Forum Demak Hijau and Puspita Bahari support research from [Aslichati \(2011\)](#) states that Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK) can be a place or else of empowering women, especially for the members. This shows that the role of the community towards the individual is very significant to help women.

Community to Community

The activities of several empowerment organizations in the Demak Regency were able to influence positive interactions of the Demak coastal women's community. In line with that, Kalsey and Hearne in [Faqih \(2014\)](#) state that if community empowerment is not carried out, change will be difficult to achieve. In this case, empowerment means providing the skills and information needed for making decisions and activities appropriately and being able to overcome the problems they face themselves.

Forum Demak Hijau and Puspita Bahari provide various activities that encourage coastal women to get out of the patriarchal environment and lead to economic independence. The implementation of empowerment activities carried out by Forum Demak Hijau through the provision of household waste management skills. As stated by Mrs. Sri Widiyatuti (65) as the pioneer of Forum Demak Hijau, there are various pieces of training on processing waste into high-value craft materials and organic fertilizers for Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK). In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in point eight, through the provision of labor-intensive activities, these skills training activities are able to increase economic productivity for coastal women in Demak Regency.

In addition, various socialization activities regarding awareness of rights and legal understanding were also provided, especially for the community of fishermen's wives. The provision of socialization with basic materials such as rights and obligations as citizens and as a woman became a topic that underlies efforts to reduce gender inequality in the coastal areas of Demak Regency. This is reinforced by Mrs. Sri Hayati (37) as a member of Puspita Bahari that awareness of women's basic rights is often carried out in encouraging women from the coast of Demak Regency to get out of the patriarchal circle. In addition, legal understanding is also given as a form of protection for women in coastal Demak Regency as victims of domestic violence that often occurs.

Impact

Increasing Economic Value of Families in the Demak Coastal Area

The program from Puspita Bahari is in accordance with one of the indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) point one, particularly the proportion of routine and development expenditures in sectors that benefit women, the poor, and vulnerable groups. Puspita Bahari provides training on planning and management financial services to coastal women in Demak Regency. In addition, Puspita Bahari also established a cooperative to facilitate the community to implement financial management. According to Mrs. Sri Hayati (37) as a member of Puspita Bahari, financial management training or the like has proven to be effective in providing understanding to the public about the importance of financial management. In addition, the program provided by Ms. Pasijah (62) as the initiator of mangrove planting in the sinking village of Bedono, Demak is in accordance with the target of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) point eight, namely achieving a higher level of economic productivity, through diversification, technological improvement, and innovation, including through a focus on high value-added and labor-intensive sectors.

She provides training on mangroves cultivation and processing of mangrove plants into products that have a selling value. Training plays a role in improving certain skills needed by the community in the context of community empowerment in order to improve their quality of life (Saugi & Sumarno, 2015). Mrs. Pasijah (62) also provided training on the management of mangrove plants into products that have a selling value, namely mangrove tea which is sold at IDR 5,000, mangrove coffee is sold at IDR 35,000, mangrove chips are sold at IDR 15,000, and brayo is sold at a price of IDR 2,000 per glass. With the training in processing mangrove plants, it can increase the selling value of mangrove plants and provide decent jobs for women in coastal areas as well as increase family income in the coastal areas of Demak Regency. This was also done by Mrs. Sri Widiyatuti (65) as the founder of Forum Demak Hijau provides training on processing fertilizer from coffee grounds and processing water hyacinth crafts in the form of hats, pencil cases, and dining tablecloths. Water hyacinth crafts are sold at prices starting from IDR 20,000 to IDR 50,000. This program increases income and can help families in the coastal area of Demak Regency get out of poverty.

Reducing Gender Inequality due to Patriarchal Culture in the Coastal Area of Demak

Edward (2014) argues that women's perceptions about themselves can also hinder their own advancement and empowerment. Internalizing these perceptions negatively is able

to influence the attitude of women themselves towards participation in public activities. In improving the welfare of women in coastal Demak Regency, the development of intrapersonal skills and capacities of women fishermen through various socialization and training programs is the first step in the empowerment activities of Forum Demak Hijau and Puspita Bahari.

Through activities that focus on empowerment as an effort to build self-confidence, improve skills possessed, and meet needs, more than that the empowerment carried out also provides guidance so that women can get out of their problems and can resume their lives without prolonged trauma by providing motivation and support. Strengthen each other to meet the needs with good cooperation between groups of organizations and groups of coastal women. So that interconnectivity between women from the coast of Demak Regency is increasingly intertwined with this they are able to mutually strengthen and encourage each other in an effort to get out of the patriarchal cultural circle and actively participate in public activities.

Following the fifth point of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ensure that women can actively participate and gain opportunities in economic and public life, which can achieve gender equality and empower women. According to the agreement, if the five-point sustainable development goals can be established, it will greatly enable the problem of poverty in coastal society to decrease gradually. According to this [Nguyen \(2021\)](#) according to the positive impact of gender equality in both health and socioeconomic and political rights has many positive effects on economic considerations. Following this, gender equality can achieve a goal at the first point of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, through increased complexity in economic production systems.

Trickle Down Effect

The impact of women support women movements are felt not only by women as individual subjects, but it extends by communities and communities alike. It is evident from the coastal society that is concerned about the additional income made by fishermen's wives, gender equality, and the use of foodstuff from the coastal environment. Sri Hayati (37) as an activator of Puspita Bahari reveals that awareness of escape from poverty and patriarchy is beginning to appear in several coastal villages of Demak Regency, such as Purworejo and Bonang district. The coastal women joined the women's special operations and were no longer afraid to report domestic violence.

This is a form of the trickle-down effect which explains that the progress achieved by a group of people will automatically trickle down to create jobs and various economic opportunities which in turn will foster various conditions for the creation of an equitable distribution of economic growth ([Larasati, 2017](#)). This is in accordance with the narrative of Mrs. Sri Hayati (37) about what happened to women in several other coastal villages who also began to be moved to dare to take part in productive activities outside the home together with Puspita Bahari with the aim of improving their standard of living. Furthermore, it can also contribute to one of the targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) point eight to achieve higher levels of economic productivity, through diversification, upgrading, and technological innovation, including through a focus on high value-added and labor-intensive sectors.

Conclusion

Based on our research, the type of the women support women movement in Demak Regency consists of individuals to community, community to individuals, and community to community. This movement also has an impact on increasing the economic value of the family, reducing gender inequality, and providing a trickle-down effect in the coastal community of Demak Regency. The women support women movement is expected to be implemented not only on the coast of Demak Regency, but also in other coastal areas in Indonesia. Suggestions from the author, there is still a need for further research that examines the statistical impact of the movement on economic growth.

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Appendix

