



The Role of Village Government in Empowering Purun Handicrafts in Mekar Jaya Village, Wampu District, Langkat Regency

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of the village government in empowering purun artisan businesses in Mekar Jaya Village, Wampu District, Lalat Regency. The method used is qualitative descriptive with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The research informants include village heads, community empowerment officers, and purun artisans. The study results show that the village government's role in empowering purun artisans in Mekar Jaya Village is very strategic, including the role of regulator, dynamizer, facilitator, and catalyst. The village government runs various programs such as skills training, marketing facilitation, network development, and supervision and evaluation of empowerment programs, which positively impact the capacity, productivity, and welfare of artisans. However, empowerment efforts still face challenges such as limited access to capital, low quality of human resources, limited marketing, inadequate infrastructure, fierce market competition, and lack of private sector support. Therefore, an integrated and collaborative sustainable strategy is needed to increase program effectiveness, expand access to technology and markets, and strengthen partnerships with various parties to support village economic growth and community welfare.

Keywords: Village Government; Empowerment; Purun Craftsman; Mekar Jaya Village; Local Economy.

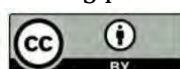
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INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have a strategic role in the national economy, not only as the primary driver of economic growth but also as absorbers of labor and distribution agents of development results (Gunawan, 2023; Mokoginta & Sulisty U., 2021; Munizu et al., 2023). The resilience of MSMEs in facing various crises, such as the economic crisis in Indonesia, shows that this sector is more resilient than large companies prone to bankruptcy (Sahda, 2022; Yuliaty et al., 2020). MSME empowerment is an effective solution to overcoming socioeconomic problems, such as unemployment, poverty, and income inequality, so it becomes the primary focus of national development policies (Sudaryanto & Wijayanti, 2013).

MSME empowerment is a driving force for regional economic development, supporting local economic development, creating jobs, encouraging innovation, and creating new markets (Suryanto, R., & Fauzi, 2020). One form of MSMEs developing in Indonesia is the handicraft industry based on local resources, including pure weaving crafts (Batubara & Nurminah, 2020; Ernawati et al., 2021; Turang & Turang, 2021). Purun, a weed that grows in wetlands, has excellent potential as a raw material for handicrafts. Purun weaving produces various products, such as baskets, mats, bags, and tablecloths, that have high economic value and are even able to penetrate the export market (Chairunnisa et al., 2021; Kumala, 2017a; Wadi et al., 2022).

Desa Mekar Jaya in Wampu District, Langkat Regency, is one of the areas that relies on pure crafts as a source of livelihood for its people. The majority of the villagers, especially women, have pure weaving skills that have been passed down from generation to generation. This potential is very valuable, considering that run crafts are economically valuable and contain local wisdom that can become a regional cultural identity. However, despite

having great potential, purun artisans in Mekar Jaya Village still face challenges that hinder their businesses' development, such as limited capital, low product quality, and lack of design innovation.

The Village Government has a key role in supporting the empowerment of MSMEs, including purun artisan businesses. Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages gives broad authority to the village government to regulate and manage local potential, including community economic empowerment (Eriyanti, 2015; RI, 2014). The village government is expected to become a facilitator, motivator, and catalyst in developing local businesses through various training programs, mentoring, access to capital, and product promotion. Thus, the village government plays an important role in creating an ecosystem that supports the growth of small and medium enterprises at the local level (Pamungkas, 2019; Rosyid, 2015).

In the context of Mekar Jaya Village, the village government has tried to empower purun artisans through various programs, such as skills training, procurement of production equipment, and product promotion at various exhibitions. This effort showed positive results, where artisans began producing more varied designs and better quality products. In addition, the village government also encourages the use of automatic crushing tools to increase production efficiency. Purun woven products are now more diverse, ranging from mats, bags, and hats to flower pots, with a touch of color and interesting motifs.

However, these empowerment efforts still face various obstacles. One of the main problems is the low formality of purun artisans' businesses, where most artisans consider this activity a side job to increase family income. In addition, the production process, which is still carried out manually, causes low production capacity and inconsistent product quality. Other obstacles are the limited business capital

owned by artisans, low access to modern technology, and the lack of a marketing network that can expand the market for pure products.

The village government also faces challenges in optimizing its role as an empowerment agent. Budget limitations, the low capacity of the village apparatus in economic empowerment management, and a lack of coordination with relevant stakeholders are factors that hinder the effectiveness of empowerment programs. In addition, resistance to change among artisans, who tend to maintain traditional ways of production, is also an obstacle in itself. Therefore, a comprehensive and sustainable strategy is needed to overcome these challenges.

This study aims to analyze the role of the village government in empowering purun artisan businesses in Mekar Jaya Village, Wampu District, Lalat Regency. The focus of this research is to determine the extent to which the village government plays a role in supporting the development of purun artisan businesses, including the strategies, programs, and results. In addition, this study also aims to identify the obstacles to empowerment efforts, both internal and external.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted in Mekar Jaya Village, Wampu District, Langkat Regency, starting in June 2024. This location was chosen because of its potential as a center for purun crafts and the strategic role of the village government in empowering artisans. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method to deeply understand social phenomena through interviews, observations, and documentation. This method is appropriate for exploring the role of the village government in empowering purun artisans and identifying the obstacles they face. Informants were selected purposively, including the village head as a key informant, the head of community

empowerment as the primary informant, and purun artisans as additional informants. The data source consists of primary data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation and secondary data from official documents, activity reports, archives, books, and journals relevant to the research.

This study uses data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with semi-structured guides to gather information about the role of village government and empowerment constraints. Participatory observation is used to observe empowerment activities and interactions between village governments and artisans directly, while documentation complements the data through photos, reports, and activity notes.

The research concept includes the role of the village government as a regulator, dynamizer, facilitator, and catalyst. Empowerment is defined as increasing the capacity of purun artisans in production, management, and marketing. Sampling was carried out purposively, and snowball sampling was used to obtain relevant informants. Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions drawn. Coding techniques and thematic analysis are used to identify patterns, while data validity is maintained through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. The research results were compiled in a report with strategic recommendations to increase the empowerment of purun artisans in Mekar Jaya Village.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Village Government in Empowering Purun Artisans in the Village

Purun artisans in Mekar Jaya Village process purun plants into handicraft products, such as mats, bags, and

accessories. This activity is not only the primary source of income for the community but also plays a role in preserving local wisdom inherited from generation to generation. The abundant natural potential in this village, especially purun plants, is the basic capital needed to develop the handicraft sector, which can contribute significantly to the local economy. However, artisans often face challenges such as limited access to marketing, lack of skills training, and limited business capital. This is where the role of the village government becomes crucial in encouraging the empowerment of artisans to be more independent, productive, and competitive.

The Mekar Jaya Village Government is responsible for empowering purun artisans through various strategies, one of which is providing skills training. The village government collaborates with training institutions to organize programs that include purun processing techniques, product design development, and business management. This training aims to improve product quality and build artisans' capacity to compete in the broader market. In addition, the village government also facilitates access to business capital through soft loan programs and cooperation with microfinance institutions. This access to capital is important to increase production capacity so artisans can meet the larger market demand.

Regarding product marketing, the village government plays an active role by facilitating the participation of artisans in various local exhibitions, bazaars, and collaborations with digital platforms. This strategy aims to expand the market reach and increase the visibility of purun handicraft products. In addition, the village government also initiated the development of cooperation networks with the private sector and non-governmental organizations. This collaboration includes product development, capacity building, and more effective marketing. No less

important, the village government also supervises and evaluates the empowerment programs that have been implemented. This aims to ensure the program's effectiveness and make continuous improvements if necessary.

Based on Arif's theory (2021), community empowerment is divided into four: regulators, dynamizers, facilitators, and catalysts. As a regulator, the village government plays a role in establishing policies supporting pure crafts development. The results of the interview with Muhammad Ripin, SE, the Head of Mekar Jaya Village, show that the village government functions to regulate economic activities, including purun craftsmen, with a policy that ensures all activities are by applicable regulations. Artisans like Ngatini also benefited from this policy, such as the ease of obtaining permits to participate in exhibitions, which positively impacted market expansion.

In addition, the village government develops business development policies, such as providing incentives for businesses that develop. This policy aims to increase the community's spirit of entrepreneurship. In terms of supervision and evaluation, the village government routinely monitors the implementation of empowerment programs to ensure that the expected goals are achieved. This supervision also provides constructive feedback to artisans to improve the quality of their products.

As a dynamic, the village government plays a role in mobilizing community participation and maintaining the development dynamics. Syafaruddin Bangun, Head of Empowerment of Mekar Jaya Village, emphasized that the government is trying to create a conducive atmosphere for craftsmen to continue to innovate. The government provides training and encourages collaboration between craftsmen to support each other. In addition, the government provides supporting facilities and infrastructure,

such as production space and market access. This facility helps artisans work more efficiently and increase their confidence in marketing products.

The government also encourages innovation by holding product design competitions and awards for creative works. This initiative encourages the emergence of new and more attractive products in the market. However, challenges remain, especially when it comes to marketing. Although the government has tried to establish cooperation with various parties, artisans still face difficulties in expanding the market. Therefore, village governments must continue innovating in marketing strategies, such as utilizing digital technology to expand product reach.

As a facilitator, the village government creates conditions supporting empowerment programs. Muhammad Ripin, SE, explained that the government provides access to training and resources to improve the skills of craftsmen. The training provided focuses on production techniques and business management, including financial management and marketing strategies. In addition, the government also facilitates access to raw materials and production equipment by working with suppliers to get affordable prices. This support helps to improve the quality and efficiency of artisan production.

In terms of marketing, the village government actively promotes purun handicraft products through exhibitions and bazaars and encourages the use of social media as a means of marketing. This support opens up new opportunities for artisans to reach a broader market and increase their income. The role of facilitators by the village government has proven effective in increasing the productivity and welfare of purun artisans in Mekar Jaya Village.

The village government accelerates the development of local potential by acting as a catalyst. The government encourages

collaboration between craftsmen, training institutions, business people, and the market. Muhammad Ripin, SE, emphasized that the village government is actively connecting artisans with various potential partners to expand the cooperation network. The government also facilitates meetings and discussion forums that allow artisans to share experiences and learn from others.

The construction of this network allows artisans to access information about the latest markets and technologies relevant to their needs. The government also encourages innovation by providing access to information and training that can increase the competitiveness of pure products in the market. Support for this innovation is essential to encourage artisans to create more creative and competitive products.

However, in implementing it, village governments face challenges such as a lack of public awareness of the importance of training and innovation, limited access to technology, and fierce market competition. To address these challenges, governments must develop relevant training programs, promote products more intensively, and facilitate access to modern technologies. This effort is expected to increase the capacity of purun artisans, encourage village economic growth, and improve the community's overall welfare.

Village Inhibiting Factors in the Empowerment of Purun Artisans in Mekar Jaya Village, Wampu District, Langkat Regency

The empowerment of purun artisans in Mekar Jaya Village, Wampu District, Langkat Regency, is an important part of efforts to improve the welfare of the village community. Purun, as a raw material for traditional handicrafts, has considerable economic potential for local needs and the broader market. Although various empowerment programs have been

designed and implemented by the village government, several inhibiting factors affect the effectiveness of these efforts. These factors are related to internal and external aspects that impact the development of purun craftsmen's business (Kumala, 2017b; Liyanawati & RIZALI, 2019). Based on the results of interviews and observations in the field, six main factors are obstacles in this empowerment process.

1. Lack of Access to Capital

One of the biggest obstacles faced by purun artisans in Mekar Jaya Village is difficulty accessing business capital. Capital is crucial to support production development, raw material procurement, and product marketing. Although village governments have tried to facilitate access to soft loan programs, many have challenging administrative requirements for small artisans. For example, there is a need to have guarantees or collateral that are often not owned by small business actors in the village. In addition, the lack of financial literacy among artisans makes it difficult for them to manage loan funds effectively, ultimately hindering their businesses' development. This condition causes many artisans to be stuck on a small production scale without the ability to expand the market or improve the quality of products.

2. Limited Human Resources

Limitations in terms of human resources are also a significant inhibiting factor. Although the village government has organized some skills training programs, not all craftsmen can participate in such training. Factors such as low levels of education, lack of motivation, or inability to leave their daily jobs to attend training are obstacles in themselves. In addition, for craftsmen who have participated in training, there is often a gap between the knowledge gained and its application in daily practice. This leads to a lack of innovation in product design, production techniques, and business management.

This limitation also impacts product quality, making competing in the broader market difficult.

3. Limited Marketing

Marketing purun handicraft products in Mekar Jaya Village is still a big challenge. Many artisans do not have the knowledge or skills in effective marketing strategies. Most still rely on traditional marketing methods, such as selling directly at local markets or relying on regular buyers from the surrounding neighborhood. Although the village government has made efforts to facilitate marketing through participation in local fairs and bazaars, the marketing reach is still minimal. The lack of digital technology and social media as promotional tools is also an obstacle to expanding the market. In the digital era like now, access to online platforms can be a solution to increase product visibility. However, limitations in the use of technology are a significant obstacle for craftsmen.

4. Infrastructure Limitations

Infrastructure factors also play an important role in the success of empowering purun artisans. In Mekar Jaya Village, supporting infrastructure such as roads, production facilities, and access to markets is still limited. Damaged or impassable roads, especially during the rainy season, hinder the distribution of raw materials and the delivery of finished products to the market. In addition, many artisans still use inefficient, traditional equipment, so their productivity is low. The lack of adequate production facilities, such as coworking spaces, modern equipment, or storage warehouses, also limits the production capacity of artisans. This condition causes production costs to be higher while the competitiveness of products in the market is low.

5. Fierce Competition

Competition with handicraft products from other regions is also challenging for purun artisans in Mekar Jaya Village. Products from other regions often have

better quality or more competitive prices, as they are supported by more advanced technology and effective marketing strategies. In addition, the existence of substitution products from synthetic materials or cheaper imported products also threatens the market share of pure products. In the face of this competition, local artisans often struggle to improve the quality and design of their products due to limitations in terms of innovation and technology. Without clear differentiation, purun handicraft products are challenging to compete in the broader market, both at the regional and national levels

6. Lack of Support from the Private Sector

Support from the private sector, both in investment, training, and market development, is still minimal in Mekar Jaya Village. Partnerships with the private sector can open opportunities for purun artisans to increase production capacity, expand marketing networks, and access new technologies. The lack of initiative from the village government to establish cooperation with business actors, non-governmental organizations, or educational institutions is also one factor limiting the potential for the development of purun handicraft businesses. Without continuous support from various parties, the empowerment efforts carried out by the village government become less effective and risk not being sustainable in the long term.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion that has been described, the role of the village government in empowering purun artisans in Mekar Jaya Village is very strategic and multifaceted. The village government plays the role of a regulator who sets policies to support the development of handicraft businesses, a dynamic that drives community participation and encourages innovation, as a facilitator that provides access to training, capital, and supporting infrastructure, and as a catalyst that

accelerates the development of local potential through collaboration with various parties. These efforts include skills training, marketing facilitation, network development, and supervision and evaluation of empowerment programs. This role has positively impacted the capacity, productivity, and welfare of purun artisans in the village.

However, the empowerment of purun artisans in Mekar Jaya Village still faces various challenges inhibiting factors, such as limited access to capital, lack of skilled human resources, limited marketing, inadequate infrastructure, fierce market competition, and lack of support from the private sector. To overcome these barriers, continuous efforts are needed from the village government by increasing the effectiveness of training programs, expanding access to technology and marketing, and strengthening partnerships with the private sector and related institutions. With a more integrated and collaborative approach, it is hoped that the empowerment of purun artisans can run more optimally, support local economic growth, and improve the community's overall welfare.

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