

Leveraging Family Welfare Programs in Local Economic Development: A Qualitative Study on Rural Communities

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ABSTRACT

The Family Welfare Program (PKK) is one of the instruments of social development that plays an important role in women's empowerment and improving the welfare of rural communities. This study aims to analyze how the Family Welfare Program can be leveraged as an instrument of local economic development through strengthening skills and household-based productive businesses. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The data collection technique was carried out through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of PKK administrators and rural communities involved in productive economic activities. The results of the study show that PKK plays a role as a facilitator, motivator, and driver in the development of community skills, especially women, so that it can increase family income and community welfare. The use of local potential and strengthening the capacity of human resources are the keys to the PKK's success in encouraging local economic development.

INTRODUCTION

National development essentially aims to improve the welfare of the community as a whole and sustainably. In the context of developing countries such as Indonesia, development is not only understood as economic growth, but also as a social process that involves the active participation of the community (Todaro & Smith, 2015). Community-oriented development places humans as subjects as well as objects of development. This approach emphasizes the importance of empowering communities to be able to manage their potential and resources independently (Chambers, 1997).

Rural areas have different social, economic, and cultural characteristics than urban areas. Limited access to capital, technology, and markets is often a factor inhibiting economic development in rural areas (Rondinelli, 2007). Nevertheless, rural communities have great local potential, both in the form of natural resources and traditional skills that can be developed as the basis of the local economy. The utilization of this local potential requires appropriate institutional and policy support (Suharto, 2014).

Local economic development is one of the strategic approaches in encouraging the economic independence of rural communities (Suprianto et al., 2025). This approach emphasizes strengthening local capacity through community participation, small business development, and utilization of local resources (Blakely & Leigh, 2010).

In the context of public administration, local economic development cannot be separated from the role of non-state actors, including community organizations and social institutions that grow from below (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). One of the social organizations that has a strategic role in the development of rural communities in Indonesia is the Family Welfare Program (PKK). PKK is a national movement that aims to empower the family as the smallest unit in society (Tim Penggerak PKK Pusat, 2010). PKK focuses on improving the quality of family life through various programs that include educational, health, economic, and environmental aspects. Through the ten main programs of the PKK, this organization has become a partner of the government in the implementation of family-based development (Soedijarto, 2007).

Women, especially housewives, are the main actors in the implementation of the PKK program. This is in line with the view that women's empowerment has a significant contribution to improving the welfare of families and communities (Kabeer, 2005). Women's empowerment in the economic context includes upskilling skills, access to resources, and opportunities to participate in productive activities that generate income (Moser, 1993).

Various studies show that women's involvement in household-based productive economic activities can increase family income and strengthen household economic resilience (World Bank, 2012). In its implementation, the PKK not only functions as an implementer of government programs, but also as a facilitator and driver of community participation in local economic development (Mirnawati, 2018).

The concept of leveraging in development refers to efforts to maximize available resources and potentials to achieve more optimal development

outcomes (Blakely & Leigh, 2010). In the context of the PKK, leveraging means leveraging the PKK's organizational structure, social network, and human resource capacity to encourage sustainable local economic development.

The use of the PKK as an instrument of local economic development is relevant because this organization has social closeness to the community and a deep understanding of local needs (Suharto, 2014). However, the effectiveness of the PKK in local economic development is highly dependent on the organization's ability to manage programs, provide assistance, and build community motivation (Anwas, 2013).

Previous studies have shown that the success of empowerment programs is greatly influenced by the active participation of the community and the suitability of the program with local potential (Chambers, 1997).

In many cases, development programs fail because they are top-down and do not involve the community as the subject of development (Rondinelli, 2007). Therefore, a study of the role of the PKK in local economic development needs to be carried out to see the extent to which this organization is able to bridge government policies with the needs of rural communities.

This research focuses on how the Family Welfare Program is utilized as an instrument of local economic development through the development of people's productive skills and businesses. This study also examines the social and economic changes that occur in the community after being involved in PKK activities.

By using a qualitative approach, this research is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of family-based community empowerment. The results of this study are expected to make a theoretical contribution to the study of public administration and community development. In addition, this research is expected to be a practical reference for local governments and community organizations in optimizing the role of the PKK as an instrument of sustainable local economic development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Local Economic Development

Local economic development is a development approach that focuses on the utilization of local potential through the active participation of the community and local stakeholders. Blakely and Leigh (2010) define local economic development as a collaborative process between the government, the private sector, and communities to create jobs and improve regional economic well-being.

The local economic development approach emphasizes that each region has comparative advantages that can be developed into a source of economic growth. In rural contexts, these advantages are often in the form of traditional skills, natural resources, and social capital of the community (Rondinelli, 2007).

The success of local economic development is highly dependent on the institutional capacity and ability of the community to manage its resources. Therefore, strengthening local institutions is an important element in encouraging sustainable development (Suharto, 2014).

The Concept of Leveraging in Development

The term leveraging in development refers to the strategy of maximizing available resources in order to produce greater development impact. According to Blakely and Leigh (Blakely & Leigh, 2010), leveraging involves utilizing social, institutional, and human resource capital to achieve economic development goals.

In the context of community development, leveraging is not only related to financial resources, but also social networks, organizational capacity, and social legitimacy. Community organizations that have closeness to residents become strategic actors in the leveraging process.

PKK as a family-based organization has great potential to be leveraged because of its inherent existence in the social structure of rural communities as well as its sustainable role in various aspects of people's lives.

Community and Women's Empowerment

Community empowerment is a process of increasing the capacity of individuals and groups to be able to control resources and make decisions that affect their lives (Anwas, 2013). Chambers (1997) emphasizes that empowerment must depart from the needs, potentials, and aspirations of the community itself.

Women's empowerment is an integral part of sustainable development. Kabeer (2005) states that women's empowerment includes access to resources, capacity building, and the ability to make life choices.

In rural communities, women have a strategic role in the household economy. Women's involvement in productive businesses has been proven to be able to increase family income and strengthen household economic resilience (World Bank, 2012).

Family Welfare Programme (PKK)

The Family Welfare Program (PKK) is a national movement that aims to empower the family as a basic unit of development. The PKK functions as a partner of the government in improving family welfare through ten main programs that cover economic, educational, health, and environmental aspects (Tim Penggerak PKK Pusat, 2010).

The PKK has characteristics as a participatory and community-based social organization. The PKK's closeness to the community makes it an effective means of implementing empowerment programs, especially for women in rural areas (Mirnawati, 2018).

In the context of local economic development, the PKK plays a role as a facilitator of skills development, a driving force for increasing family income, and a mediator between government policies and community needs.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen to deeply understand the process of utilizing Family Welfare Programs in local economic development in rural communities (Creswell, 2014). The research informants consist of PKK administrators and community members involved in productive economic activities. The selection of informants was carried out purposively by considering direct involvement in the PKK program.

Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. The interviews were conducted to explore the experiences, perceptions, and views of informants related to the role of the PKK in local economic development. Data analysis is carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing as stated by Miles and Huberman (2014). The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques.

RESEARCH RESULT

The results of the study show that the Family Welfare Program (PKK) has a significant role in encouraging local economic development in rural communities. The existence of the PKK is directly felt by the community as an organization that is close, easily accessible, and relevant to the daily needs of the family.

The PKK is the main forum for women, especially housewives, to be involved in various economic empowerment activities. These activities are not only routine, but are also designed to improve the skills and productivity of PKK members.

Based on the results of the interviews, most of the informants stated that before being involved in PKK activities, they did not have skills that could be developed into an additional source of income for the family.

Through the training program organized by the PKK, the community began to acquire new skills that were in accordance with local potential and local socio-economic conditions. The training includes skills in production, processing, and packaging of handicrafts. The PKK plays a role as a facilitator in the training process by presenting resource persons, arranging activity schedules, and providing supporting facilities and infrastructure. This role allows the community to participate in training activities on an ongoing basis. In addition to training, PKK also provides assistance to members who have started productive businesses. Mentoring is carried out informally through regular meetings and communication between members.

The results of observations show that PKK assistance helps the community overcome various obstacles in running a business, such as limited capital, marketing, and simple business management.

The PKK also plays a motivator that encourages women to be more confident in developing household economic businesses. This encouragement can be seen from the increasing participation of women in productive activities. Some informants said that involvement in the PKK provides space for women to share experiences, knowledge, and business strategies with fellow members.

PKK activities create a social environment that supports the learning process together. Social interaction between members is an important capital in the development of community-based businesses.

The results of the study show that productive businesses developed through PKK are household-scale and adjusted to the abilities of members. This effort does not interfere with women's domestic roles. The income generated from the business is used to meet the family's daily needs, such as food needs,

children's education, and other household needs. Some informants stated that although the income obtained was not large, the business provided additional income that was quite significant for the family economy.

The PKK also acts as a liaison between the community and the village government in the implementation of economic empowerment programs. Information about programs and assistance is conveyed through the PKK forum. Through this role, the PKK helps the community access various forms of support, such as advanced training and assistance with production facilities.

The results of the study show that there is an increase in public awareness of the importance of economic independence. People are beginning to realize that local potential can be used as a source of income. This change in mindset can be seen from the increasing initiative of the community to develop their businesses independently after participating in PKK activities.

The PKK also plays a role in building the discipline and responsibility of members through the division of duties and roles in each activity. The active involvement of PKK management is the main supporting factor for the success of the program. The management plays a role in coordinating activities and maintaining the sustainability of the program. The results of the interviews show that a harmonious relationship between the management and members of the PKK creates trust and solidarity within the group.

PKK is able to utilize the social capital of the community, such as togetherness and mutual cooperation, in supporting productive economic activities. PKK activities also have a social impact in the form of increased interaction and communication between citizens, which previously rarely occurred in the context of economic activities.

The community feels that PKK activities not only provide economic benefits, but also strengthen social relations in rural environments. However, the results of the study also show that there are limitations in business development, especially related to marketing and market access which are still local. Limited business capital is an obstacle often faced by PKK members in increasing the scale of production. Despite the obstacles, the community still shows a commitment to continue the business that has been pioneered through the support of the PKK.

The results of the study show that the sustainability of economic activities is greatly influenced by the consistency of assistance and support from the PKK. The PKK plays a role in maintaining the continuity of the program through scheduled routine activities and simple evaluations of the activities that have been carried out.

Overall, the Family Welfare Program can be used as an instrument for local economic development through strengthening skills, mentoring, and community motivation. The results of this study show that the optimal use of PKK can make a real contribution to improving the economic welfare of families and rural communities.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study show that the Family Welfare Program (PKK) has a strategic position in the local economic development of rural communities. The role of the PKK that is directly felt by the community confirms that

community-based organizations have advantages in reaching target groups compared to top-down development approaches. This is in line with the view of Chambers (1997) who emphasizes the importance of social closeness in the empowerment process.

The involvement of women as the main actors in PKK activities reflects the family-based development approach that has been a characteristic of the PKK movement. The findings that women acquire new skills and begin to engage in productive endeavors show that the PKK functions as a social space that allows for learning and capacity building. This condition reinforces the argument of Kabeer (2005) that women's empowerment is not only related to access to resources, but also to the ability to actively participate in economic activities.

The training and mentoring facilitated by the PKK reflects the practice of leveraging institutional and social resources. The PKK uses its organizational structure, social network, and social legitimacy to encourage the development of the household economy. These findings are in line with the concept of leveraging in local economic development which emphasizes the optimization of non-financial resources, such as social capital and organizational capacity (Blakely & Leigh, 2010).

Assistance that is carried out in a sustainable manner has been proven to help the community overcome limited knowledge and experience in running a productive business. This process shows that empowerment is not an instant activity, but rather a long-term process that requires ongoing interaction and support. This supports the view of Anwas (2013) that the success of empowerment is greatly influenced by the intensity of mentoring and the quality of the relationship between facilitators and the community.

The increase in women's confidence in developing productive businesses shows significant psychological and social changes. This change is an important indicator of the success of empowerment, as it shows a shift from dependency to independence. These findings are consistent with a World Bank report (2012) which states that women's involvement in economic activities has a positive impact on household well-being.

The productive efforts of households that develop through the PKK show that local economic development does not always have to start on a large scale. Instead, the development of household-based small businesses that are in accordance with the social and cultural context of rural communities has more potential to be sustainable. This strengthens Rondinelli's (2007) argument that rural development must be adapted to local capacities and realities.

The additional income earned, although relatively small, has an important meaning for the family. This income not only increases the ability to meet basic needs, but also strengthens household economic resilience. These findings show that the success of local economic development is not solely measured by the amount of income, but also by the stability and sustainability of the family economy.

The role of the PKK as a liaison between the community and the village government shows the institutional function of the PKK in the public administration system at the local level. The PKK plays the role of a mediator

who conveys the needs of the community to the government as well as socializing government programs to the community. This condition is in line with the New Public Service paradigm which emphasizes collaboration between the government and the community in the implementation of public services (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

The change in people's mindset towards the importance of economic independence is an important finding that shows the long-term impact of PKK activities. This awareness reflects the internalization of empowerment values instilled through PKK activities. Chambers (1997) affirms that a change in consciousness is the main foundation for sustainable development.

Social capital in the form of togetherness and mutual cooperation has proven to be a supporting factor for the success of PKK-based economic activities. Intensive social interaction between members strengthens solidarity and facilitates the learning process together. This shows that local economic development cannot be separated from the social and cultural dimensions of the community. However, findings on limited market and capital access show that empowerment through the PKK still faces structural challenges. These limitations show the need for stronger synergy between the PKK, local governments, and other sectors to support the development of community businesses. Without adequate policy support and market access, the potential of the local economy is difficult to develop optimally.

The consistency of the assistance carried out by the PKK is a determining factor for the sustainability of the community's economic activities. These findings confirm that active and responsive local institutions have an important role in maintaining the sustainability of empowerment programs. Suharto (2014) emphasized that strengthening local institutions is the key to the success of community-based development.

Overall, this discussion shows that the Family Welfare Program can be effectively leveraged as an instrument of local economic development. The PKK not only functions as the implementer of the program, but also as an agent of social and economic change at the rural level. These findings strengthen the PKK's position as a strategic actor in community and family-based development.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study show that the Family Welfare Program (PKK) has a strategic position in the local economic development of rural communities. The role of the PKK that is directly felt by the community confirms that community-based organizations have advantages in reaching target groups compared to top-down development approaches. This is in line with the view of Chambers (1997) who emphasizes the importance of social closeness in the empowerment process.

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ADVANCED RESEARCH

Further research is recommended using comparative and quantitative approaches.

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