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Empowerment In Micro Social Groups As An Effort To Strengthen The Economy Of The Middle Community By Utilizing Eco Enzyme

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is (1) to determine efforts to empower people in social groups by utilizing eco enzyme (2) to find out how the role of the community in the micro social sphere in an effort to improve the economy of the middle class by utilizing eco enzyme. (3) to determine the meaning of social interactions that occur between social groups that act as enablers with social groups of the middle class as an effort to strengthen the community's economy. The study approach was carried out using qualitative research methods, the data obtained were then analyzed qualitatively aimed at the object and the relationship of interaction between these social groups with the scope of implementation research in Summersari District, Jember Regency. Based on the results of the study, it was found that (1) Community empowerment is carried out by: (a). Socializing the use of Eco Enzymes as an effort to increase community insight, (b). Conducting training on the use of EcoEnzym as a community social activity, (c) Providing assistance to the community as an effort to strengthen the economy. The results of the study to (2) the role of society in the micro social sphere is as an actor who acts as the main figure driving the community. (3) The meaning of social interaction that occurs between social groups that act as empowerment with social groups of the middle class as an effort to strengthen the community's economy is as a fulfillment of human needs as social beings.

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1. Introduction

Empowerment is an effort to build community capacity by encouraging, motivating, trying to raise awareness of the potential that exists or has been owned and strives to develop the potential it has into something that makes a person or a group independent and not dependent. In line with this, empowerment is a way of social strengthening of the community as a process of increasing awareness and ability to achieve success. The purpose of community empowerment is as an effort to overcome the problem of poverty that occurs in the community, with empowerment expected to be able to make the community productive and empowered, have the ability to change themselves to be more independent [1].

Currently, there are many government efforts to make empowerment activities so that people can better develop themselves and produce something economically. One example is village community empowerment programs. The village community empowerment program that is currently occurring has economic benefits for the community, because this program receives assistance funds that are quite tempting for the community with a large enough nominal so that it makes the community interested in participating in empowerment activities. However, behind the efforts to empower rural

communities that are carried out today, not all communities are able to be empowered. This is because not all objectives of empowerment activities are the same. One example is empowerment activities in the community of Muang ilir Village. The empowerment is supported by 100% of the people of Muang ilir Village and the community believes in its development [2].

In line with this, women's empowerment can lead to increased economic growth, increased social prosperity, and increased human development [3]. However, due to the lack of other supporting factors, such as lack of facilities and infrastructure, lack of participation, lack of capital owned and many other factors that hinder empowerment can occur. Many empowerment activities can be used as a reference for better social change. However, not all empowerment activities are successfully carried out optimally.

One of the programs that is considered the most useful is a program that has continuity or *sustainable program*. In line with Nurviana's 2020 research, the empowerment program that can be implemented in the New Normal era is to empower digital-based Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) provide benefits to maintain the country's economic sector. Digital-based MSME empowerment is an important effort in advancing the economy [4]. However, the actors of this business are people who have a level of education that is technologically literate. This is supported by the results of Waridin's research in his research on community empowerment in rural infrastructure development programs, that the main actors in community empowerment are local governments, academics, and business actors[5].

Efforts to empower the community are not easy, because there are many things that must be prepared. But if the goal of empowerment is the same, it will become easier to do. One of these goals in this study is waste handling. Garbage is one of the problems faced by all humans on this earth. In Indonesia, World Bank data says, national solid waste production reaches 151,921 tons per day, this means that each Indonesian disposes of solid waste on average 0.85 kg per day. The same data also states, of the total waste generated nationally, only 80% was collected, the rest was wasted polluting the environment. Indonesia is the number 2 largest waste producing country after China, and the most waste produced is the type of plastic. The biggest suppliers of waste are usually housewives, especially plastic waste or waste that is not easily destroyed or inorganic [6].

In line with this, environmental volunteers *Word Clean Indonesia* is one of the communities that is able to provide a positive side of society from the other side, namely taking advantage of the processing of kitchen waste that occurs around us. One of the actors of the Environmental volunteer community *Word Clean Indonesia* in Jember consciously and deliberately invites the public to use garbage or kitchen waste to be recycled into *Eco Enzyme*. Dr. Rosukon Poompanyong was the first to introduce *Eco Enzyme* who is the founder of the Association of Organic Farming in Thailand. The purpose of Dr. Rosukon's research is to process enzymes from various to household organics that are abundant in creation into organic cleaning fluids that can be diversified into various products such as dish cleaners, stoves, clothes, hair, pools, organic fertilizers, floor cleaners, vegetable and fruit cleaners, insect repellents and plant fertilizers. In addition, it also functions as a disinfectant because it contains alcohol and acetic acid [7], [8].

The use of kitchen waste for manufacturing *Eco Enzyme* Indirectly involves the middle class who are also contributors to kitchen waste. The determination of the middle class in this case is based on the income received and daily consumption needs. . Kharas and Gertz (2010) define the middle class as a population with daily expenditures between \$ 10 to \$ 100 per person in purchasing power parity terms. Furthermore, Benerjee and Duflo (2007) measured the lower middle class with daily expenditures between \$ 2 to \$ 4 per person and the upper middle class between \$ 6 to \$ 10 per person in developing countries. Meanwhile, Boumphrey and Bevis (2013) using income data, define the middle class in several definitions, including households with an income of 50 percent to 100

percent of the average aggregate gross income, households with an income for consumption of at least \$ 10,000 per year (for developed countries), or discretionary income of more than 30 percent. The expenditure approach is also used by the World Bank (2014) in determining the middle class in Indonesia, Population with per capita expenditure of more than Rp. 950,000 is included in the middle consumer class, although vulnerable to falling into poverty [9]

The existence of the middle class contributes more to the development process. There are two factors that encourage the formation and stimulate the middle class, namely: jobs with stable wages and *well paid* with various benefits and higher education. This study focuses more on the middle class based on income that cannot be said to be the poor category (who cannot meet their needs, live in shortage) or the rich category who are considered to have an excess economic life. The results of observations in this study are only in the middle class who have the ability to do, collect the remaining fruit skins, the remaining pieces of vegetables as eco Enzyme ingredients. The middle class is considered capable of consuming more fruit and vegetable needs, because it is adjusted to the results of income / income used as a guideline in this study.

Empowerment that has many benefits but among the middle class people is less able to take a role in utilizing this activity, less able to take advantage of the large, but there are also middle class communities who are able to survive in this empowerment activity and get additional income from this activity, namely middle class women who use kitchen waste as a source of income. So this makes researchers interested in researching: (1) how are community empowerment efforts in middle social groups by utilizing *eco enzyme*?, (2). how is the role of the community in the micro social sphere in an effort to improve the economy of the middle class by utilizing *eco enzyme*?, (3) how does society give meaning to social interactions that occur between social groups that act as empowerment with social groups of the community middle class as an effort to strengthen the community's economy

2. Materials and Methods

The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive research method with a natural observation research approach, social situation or object of study is a generalized area that has certain qualities or characteristics that the researcher sets to study and research, then draw conclusions. The social situation consists of three elements, namely place, actors, and activities that interact synergistically. In this research object, researchers tried to make in-depth observations of the activities of people in certain places (Sugiyono 2010). Based on this understanding, the object of this study is the Micro Social Group of Environmental Volunteers in Summersari Jember. The key informant criteria for research include:

1. The informant is a volunteer activist who cares for the environment
2. The informant has been actively caring for the environment for more than 2 years
3. Informants understand the condition of the social environment of the community who carry out empowerment activities

In addition to key informants, there are also accompanying informants who are useful in strengthening the data obtained by researchers. The criteria for accompanying informants include:

1. Have a close relationship with environmental volunteers for more than 2 years
2. Have cooperation / partners related to Eco Enzyme processing
3. Active in the social community of environmentalist volunteers.

The data and data sources used in this study are qualitative descriptive. The data used in this study is the processing of Eco Enzyme as the main ingredient used for human needs for example as a fever medicine, as a disinfectant, as a facial cleanser and so on. While the data sources used in this study consist of primary data sources and skunder data sources. Primary data sources are data sources that directly provide data to data collectors (Sugiyono 2010). The primary data sources referred to in this study are the results of interviews and documentation from primary data. While secondary data is data that indirectly provides data to data collectors (Sugiyono 2010). The secondary data source is partners, namely communities working in the field of beauty services "Mengyu".

Data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation. The observation used in the study is an active participatory observation, that is, in the observation the researcher participates in doing what the resource person does, but it is not completely complete.

The interview technique used in this study is an in-depth structured interview where the informant is given the same questions but the questions can develop according to the informant's answers. Meanwhile, documentation

used is data obtained in the Community of Environmental Care Volunteers. Data validity techniques use data triangulation. The data analysis techniques used in this study are data analysis techniques according to Miles and Huberman, namely data reduction, data display, and data conclusion drawing/verification.

3. Results and Discussion

Empowerment in Micro Social Groups as an Effort to Strengthen the Economy of the Middle Community

Micro social group efforts carried out by environmental volunteer activists are able to have a positive impact on social change in society, especially women. The result of women's empowerment activities is kitchen waste which is converted into products that can provide positive benefits to society and the world. For example: health soap, body soap, therapi aroma candle, fever-reducing medicine. But these efforts do not just happen in their social environment. Environmental volunteers carry out several empowerment activities as an effort to empower groups and some of the empowerment activities carried out include socialization, training and mentoring.

In line with this, according to Zainudin Hilmi's research (2020) on the influence of empowerment, training, compensation through organizational commitment to the financial performance of provincial government management in North Sulawesi that: Empowerment, training, training and organization have a direct and positive influence on employee performance (Hilimi, Susita, and Kindangen 2020). There are several stages that can be done in empowerment activities. Here are the results of research and data analysis:

a. Socializing the use of Eco Enzyme as a source of income

Socialization of the use of Eco Enzyme is carried out by environmental volunteers from one community to another. However, not all communities give more interest in the use of Eco Enzyme. The response may vary in each community, there are community groups that provide a high sense of enthusiasm but not a few who give disinterest in the use of Eco Enzyme. As stated by the informant in his interview (April 2024):

"Yes, that's mbak... if there is socialization on the use of eco enzyme, not all want a positive response, what knowledge will be gained, but more to what I will get from this socialization" (February 2024 interview results)

Empowerment has a positive and direct influence on society. This influence is the community's response, one of which is to change the way people think when they are willing to accept the knowledge provided during socialization. Socialization of the use of

Eco Enzyme as a source of income is carried out when there are actors who help foster self-awareness for the environment and surroundings. Socialization regarding the use of Eco Enzyme is by utilizing kitchen waste, namely leftover skins, fruits, vegetables, waste, waste, used oil, and so on which are even difficult to decompose, such as cooking oil used for frying.

Socialization in this empowerment activity is carried out by bringing product samples and explaining the turnover achieved. Socialization is needed as one of the efforts to achieve the success of empowerment activities. The absence of socialization or lack of socialization leads to the failure of empowerment. This is also in line with Hanok's research (2019) in his article on *The Effective Of Management The Community Economic Empowerment Fund Program In Improving Community Welfare In Kupang City, East Nusa Tenggara Province* that one of the failures of the empowerment program is the lack of socialization to the community (Biaf 2019).

b. Training on the use of EcoEnzym as a community social activity

Training on the use of Eco Enzyme carried out by environmental volunteers is carried out in several steps or several stages. The training is adjusted to the selected Eco Enzyme utilization empowerment activities. For example, the use of Eco Enzyme from used cooking oil waste into used candles, the use of waste oil from soap, the use of vegetable residues from kitchen waste, the use of fruit peels for treatment. Of the many types of empowerment activities, what researchers take by chance is the use of used cooking oil to be made into decorative candles. These stages include the stages: oil purification and continued on making candles. Oil purification is by: using charcoal or re-boiling used waste oil using pandan leaves for approximately one hour. However, if purification using charcoal the step is by putting waste oil into a container / pot then put the charcoal that is still hot into the container and then closed, let stand for 2 days (3 charcoal for 1 liter of used waste oil). Then proceed to the candle making stage, namely: (1). Put the used oil in a pot and then warm it on the stove, (2). When the oil is half boiling put the stearin, (3). Next insert paraffin, (4). If it is all dissolved put the dye, (5). Then wait until it dissolves all and turn off the stove, (6). Wait until the oil is not too hot / warm, put it in a candle mold container, (7). Put the candle into a glass/container filled with oil, (8). Put a paper with a hole in the glass to hold the wick of the candle centered, (9). Let stand until the oil hardens so that it becomes wax, (10). When it hardens, the wax is ready for use.

By knowing these stages, there will be additional insight for the community about making decorative candles. In addition, self-motivation is very necessary in training activities which are part of empowerment activities. According to the results of Usman's research on *Women Empowerment and Entrepreneurial motivation: Solution for Increasing Family Economics* that empowerment is an increase in human resource potential. With training on aspects of improving soft skill as much as: 50% of partners gain insight or understanding and knowledge about the importance of business motivation in supporting the household economy (Usman, Dahlia, and Fadhilah 2022).

Furthermore, based on the results of Ina Khodijah's (2021) research on creative economy empowerment through ecoprint training of PKK cadres as a driver of the family economy in Sayar Taktakan Serang sub-district, the training carried out was an effort to improve the skills of PKK members of productive age in Sayar village based on the creative economy. With the training, it is hoped that new women entrepreneurs will be born to improve the family economy and to support businesses.

c. Providing assistance to the community as an effort to strengthen the economy.

The assistance carried out to the community in this study is to always provide continuous communication or follow-up which is a form of monitoring evaluation in mentoring even though they already have an independent business. Mutually beneficial

relationships between environmental volunteers and other social communities can provide economic benefits that make their social interaction bonds stronger.

One community that stands in the field of beauty services and uses eco enzyme when treatment is "Mengyu", a community engaged in beauty services such as salons with a house-to-house work system. "Mengyu" offers services ranging from hair, face and body care using products from Eco Enzyme. As one of the actors said during an interview (February 2024):

"The application of Eco Enzyme products is from the beginning to the end of the bund, starting from cleaning using pure enzyme, peeling using fruit enzyme, and masks using processed Enzyme" (March 2024 interview results)

This business has been running for more than three years, with members consisting of all women and only one man in the marketing department. Mengyu partners with environmental activists, who in this case are referred to as the main actors. When the treatment request uses Eco Enzyme, the main actor as a provider of Eco Enzyme products used for facials.

One of the purposes of empowerment is as an effort to promote public welfare. That makes society more self-sufficient and independent so that it can provide for its own economic needs. In keeping with hariyani's research (2024): the purpose of monitoring activities for service partners, namely Bumdes Mart Mulyoagung in Mulyoagung Village, Malang district, is to develop a shopping business unit by opening a shop on the Shopee marketplace. By opening a shop on the marketplace, it is hoped that it can increase store sales, which so far have experienced problems with delays in the delivery of goods and no increase in sales due to limited consumers, namely only those with shop business WhatsApp numbers. Village community products will also be able to reach a wider range of consumers by opening shops on the marketplace.

Activities are carried out in stages starting from the preparation, implementation, and evaluation stages. The results of the activity were the formation of the Bumdes Mart Mulyoagung online store on the Shopee marketplace as well as online sales transactions. It is hoped that increased sales through the marketplace will increase shop profits so that they can be used for store operational costs, and the excess can provide input for Village Original Income (Hariyani 2023) .

With assistance, there will be good expectations for the sustainability of empowerment activities, namely the acquisition of economic benefits that are expected to improve the welfare of life. Mentoring helps a successful empowerment activity. With assistance, there will be an evaluation that will be carried out gradually, it can be once a month or once every three months.

The role of society in the micro social sphere is as an actor

Actors here are images of humans who have a leading role in a social community. Actors are able to act as the main driving force of society. Actors are able to exert greater influence than others. In theory, actors work towards a specific goal. Actors have the means, tools and means to achieve their goals. Actors face many situational conditions that can limit activities to achieve their goals. Actors are bound by various norms and values as well as abstract ideas that influence them to choose and decide alternative goals and actions to achieve goals. The actor pursues the goal in a situation where the norms direct him in choosing alternative ways and tools to achieve the goal. The norm does not set its choice of means or tools. But it is determined by the actor's ability to choose. This ability is what Person calls Voluntarism. In short, voluntarism is the ability to perform actions in the sense of putting means or tools from a number of available alternatives in order to achieve an objective. Actors according to the concept of voluntarism are active or creative actors and have the ability to assess and choose from alternative actions (Azmi 2018). As

revealed by the manager of Mengyu to researchers when asked the beginning of a community formed:

"I took the initiative to cooperate with the Women's Empowerment Office, Bu, I kept asking for the data, finally I WA one of the data. Before I was also a companion for victims of violence when I was in law school..." (2024 actor interview results)

Empowerment activities in a micro social group of middle class society always have actors who act as the main role. This actor has a high awareness of the social life of the community, this actor also has an important role in terms of carrying out his functions ranging from efforts for socialization, training to mentoring. Women as the main actors are able to provide extraordinary changes to society. Women's empowerment can lead to increased economic growth, improved social welfare and increased human resource development. Empowering women helps the economy and the overall well-being of society and identifies important steps that can be taken to achieve a goal (Sudha and Reshi 2023).

The meaning of social interaction that occurs between social groups (Environmental Volunteers) and other Micro Social Groups is as an effort to strengthen the economy of the middle community

The purpose of empowerment carried out by the social group of the middle class is for the community to be empowered so that they can be independent and as an effort to improve community welfare and strengthen the community's economy, one of which is an effort to meet human needs as social beings. Inappropriate empowerment will lead to failure in everything including goals. Such as research conducted by Syabarrudin (2020) on economic community empowerment strategies based on environmental characteristics in Banjarmasin (Agus Syabarrudin, Ahmad Alim Bachri, Udiannoor 2020).

The meaning of social interaction that occurs between social groups that act as empowerment with social groups of the middle class as an effort to strengthen the community's economy is as a fulfillment of human needs as social beings. Where humans have a need to interact with each other. Social interaction is generally a necessity of every human being. Every human being is a social being, therefore each of them needs interaction with others. So that humans can survive. And over time the level of need for social interaction is increasing. And there are more and more media to interact with. Each person has their own motivation in conducting social interaction. According to sociologist Herbert Blumer there are three main principles of interaction, namely meaning, language, and thought. This study used descriptive qualitative research method. In research it was found that, in getting acquainted or doing social interaction there are still many people who like to do it directly or face to face. The use of social media is only an alternative addition, when they cannot reach their interlocutors directly (Xiao 2018).

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it was found that (1) Community empowerment is carried out by: (a). Socializing the use of Eco Enzymes as an effort to increase community insight, (b). Conducting training on the use of EcoEnzym as a community social activity, (c) Providing assistance to the community as an effort to strengthen the economy. The results of the study to (2) the role of society in the micro social sphere is as an actor who acts as the main figure driving the community. (3) The meaning of social interaction that occurs between social groups that act as empowerment with social groups of the middle class as an effort to strengthen the community's economy is as a fulfillment of human needs as social beings.

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