

Community Empowerment Based on Creative Economy in Processing Palm Sap into Palm Sugar Through *Home Industry*

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the potential of human resources in an effort to develop and empower the home industry group processing palm sugar into ant sugar based on a creative economy. This type of research is qualitative, with data collection techniques using interviews with 20 informants from elements of the home industry group, village and sub-district governments, the BUMDes as a companion. The data analysis technique used triangulation starting from data reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study found that: 1) The potential of human resources for the home industry group from the aspect of quantity was adequate, but the quality aspect of education was not adequate with an average education level of elementary school (SD), 2) Efforts to develop human resources for the home industry group were carried out through training and mentoring carried out by the Village government and BUMDes, and 3) empowerment of the home industry fostered group for palm sugar processing in Pattalassang District, Gowa Regency, has not been optimal, because there is still a lack of knowledge and life skills in conducting business innovations, home industry groups are more likely to sell in the form of palm wine or palm wine. processed into alcoholic wine because it makes money faster.

1. Introduction

Human Resources (HR) are an important element and potential in development. According to Soetomo (2009), the use of HR in the process of community development basically involves two things, namely (1) improving and developing the quality of HR to increase potential and ability, and (2) utilizing it through various opportunities, efforts and activities to be more productive in meeting the needs and improving the standard of living of the community.

Human resource potential can be improved through efforts to develop knowledge, skills and training with the aim of improving the quality of individuals and groups. In these efforts, the government always formulates and implements programs related to community empowerment which is one of the important processes in improving the welfare of the community to start the process of social activities to improve the situation and condition of themselves. This is done in order

to encourage the community to become independent and increase creativity.

The community has an important role as a determinant in the empowerment process because it is the basis of development, be it local, regional or national development. The community must be facilitated in fulfilling their needs so that they are able to overcome problems and change people's lives for the better and increase income for community welfare. Thus, the community can develop development programs and strengthen the sustainability of the program so that the community has a sense of independence and responsibility. According to Sumaryadi, (2005) community empowerment is an effort to empower the community so that they are able to realize progress, independence, and welfare in an atmosphere of sustainable social justice.

Community empowerment efforts can be developed in activities based on the creative economy, namely a new economic concept that focuses on the existence of information and

creativity that prioritizes ideas and knowledge from human resources as the main production factor. The concept of a creative economy is very much needed by the government to strengthen the economy that is more based on the superiority of its human resources that come from creative ideas of its people, namely trying to create new and quality product innovations for develop and empower product innovations to make them easily accessible to consumers.

The Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia (2008) formulated the creative economy as an effort to develop the economy sustainably through creativity with a competitive economic climate and having renewable resource reserves. So with the government's tourism and creative economy program, it is able to encourage the growth and development of the Creative Economy in areas that have potential. One area that has abundant natural resource potential is Pattalassang District in Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi. The area is very much overgrown with sugar palm trees. Sugar palm trees produce palm sap , which is a liquid taken from the male flower stalks of sugar palm trees. It tastes sweet because it contains glucose. so it can be processed into palm sugar which has added economic value . According to Hidayati (2009) that the palm sap liquid tastes sweet because it contains glucose so that the sap is widely processed into traditional sugar by most people in several areas. In Indonesia, sugar palm plants can grow and produce optimally on land that has an altitude of 1,200 meters above sea level with an average air temperature of 25 ° Celsius. Apart from that, sugar palm trees can still grow but their production is less than optimal (Anonymous, 2008). In principle, the development of sugar palm plantations in Indonesia is very prospective because sugar palm plantations are one of the plantation commodities that have high economic value and have very large

opportunities in improving the economy of a region.

Based on the potential of the area, the Pattalassang District Government, Gowa Regency, together with BUMDes as the supporting party, held a community empowerment program based on the creative economy by initiating the formation of fostered groups. *Home Industry* in processing palm sap into palm sugar which has economic added value in order to increase income and improve the standard of living of village communities. Palm sugar has added economic value because in addition to being useful when mixed in various types of food and drinks or in making cakes, it also has many health benefits, namely: it can increase the body's immune system, and palm sugar is safe for diabetics, can increase energy, and so on (Joseph & Layuk, 2012).

The local government together with BUMDes as the accompanying party, formed a *home industry fostered group* into 10 groups, each consisting of 5 people, and as an effort to develop group human resources, the local government held a coaching and training program on how to process palm sap into palm sugar. The large number of palm sugar processing *home industry* groups has produced products with various results. Starting from fairly good product quality to very good quality. The variety of product quality produced indicates that the palm sugar processing group has not maximized their potential to produce added value, in order to obtain more profit because knowledge and skills are still lacking and are still considered as side jobs, palm sugar products are only marketed in a mediocre manner, so the added value of the palm sugar product is still relatively small, and its marketing reach is still only around the sub-district, so it still provides small profits for palm sugar processors .

Apart from that, the community, especially farmers who tap the aren palm in Pattalassang District, tend to prefer selling it raw in the form of a sweet liquid called tuak

manis, and also utilizing aren sap in a non-constructive way, namely by fermenting it to make alcoholic palm wine which can have a negative effect on the behavior of village people who consume it . The local community has not yet maximally developed their potential to produce added value, in order to obtain greater profits.

This is due to several factors, namely:

(1) Community knowledge and skills regarding the palm sugar production process are still low, (2) Community members are not yet fully motivated to become serious entrepreneurs (only as a sideline) because the profits obtained are still low, and (3) Knowledge about developing marketing networks still tends to be low.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Human Resources

Human resources are the main driver of an organization. These resources can be developed, trained and maintained for the future of the organization and can even determine the sustainability of the organization. Without human resources, all activities or plans that have been prepared by the organization will not be able to run.

According to the theory of human resources or *Resource Based Theory (RBT)* from Nothnagel (2008), it explains that an organization basically has two specific resources, namely: 1). Tangible resources *where* organizational performance can be measured from the performance of *physical capital* or physical capital as an economic resource controlled by the company directing how the company's ability to produce goods and services and *financial capital* or *financial capital* 2). *Intangible* resources that can be measured from the performance of *human capital* or human capital which is a collection of aspects of knowledge, expertise, abilities, to skills which make a human being an asset in an organization. *Structure capital* which is the composition of the capital of an organization or

company to meet long-term business needs. *Relational capital* or the establishment of harmonious relationships that make cooperation smooth from outside the organizational or company environment that can add value to the organization or company.

These two organizational resources have an important role in creating a competitive advantage of an organization. So since the 2000s it has been directed at the management and development of *intangible resources* , especially the role of *human capital* or human resources as a long-term asset of an organization.

According to Soetomo (2009), the use of human resources in the process of community development basically involves two things, namely (1) improving and developing the quality of human resources to increase potential and ability, and (2) utilizing them through various opportunities, efforts and activities to be more productive in fulfilling needs and improving the standard of living of the community.

2.2. Definition of Human Resource Development

Human resource development is an activity in the process of increasing knowledge, skills and capacity of all people in order to improve the quality of workers or individuals. Human resources are important company assets that can contribute to achieving organizational goals to achieve competitive advantage. In order for human resources to be used as core competencies that are not easily imitated by competitors, companies need to invest in training and development. Investment in human resources is called *human capital* , and can be implemented through *human resource development (HRD)* . One of the theories underlying *human resource development* is the *human capital theory* .

According to *The Human Capital Theory* (Becker, 1964), *human capital* is a long-term

investment of an organization that needs to be maintained, fostered and developed.

Kaswan (2015) explains that Human Resource Development includes activities that can have an impact on individual, group and organizational learning.

Human Resource Development through education and training is a driver or input that can increase profits or performance (Sengge, 1990).

2.3. Definition of Community Empowerment

The concept of empowerment is basically the transfer of power through strengthening social capital in community groups, to make them more productive and avoid less productive habits. Empowerment adapted from the term empowerment developed in Europe starting from the middle ages, continuing to develop until the late 70s, 80s, and early 90s. The concept of empowerment then influenced the theories that developed later that were oriented towards humans becoming more superior. One of them is the ACTORS theory.

According to the ACTORS Theory on empowerment put forward by Sarah Cook and Steve Macaulay (1997), society is seen more as a subject capable of making changes by freeing someone from rigid control and giving them the freedom to be responsible for their ideas, decisions and actions.

The study of community empowerment management using the "ACTORS" framework is as follows:

- a. Authority, groups/communities are given the authority to change their stance or spirit (work ethic) into something that is their own. So that they feel that the changes made are the product of their desire to move towards better change.
- b. Confidence and competence, which creates a sense of self-confidence by seeing their ability to change their circumstances.

- c. Trust, creates the belief that they have potential and they must be able to change.
- d. Opportunities, provide opportunities for people to choose what they want so that they are able to develop themselves according to their own potential.
- e. Responsibilities, in making changes must go through management with full responsibility to change for the better.
- f. Support, there needs to be support from various parties to make it better, namely the support expected in addition to the economic, social and cultural aspects, is also support from various stakeholders (government, society, and the business world) which is carried out simultaneously without being dominated by one party.

By using the ACTORS work concept to foster community empowerment, it can be done by referring to empowerment that comes from within and between communities. Where the government and non-governmental organizations are the actors. The government plays a central role in community development, namely determining operational, strategic, and technical policies; (2) the government plays a role in providing technical guidance to the community so that later the community is able to do it themselves, for example in terms of planning by the community; and (3) the government can also carry out coaching for community organizations that can function to facilitate communication between the government and the community and do other things to increase the success of development.

2.4. Definition of Creative Economy

Creative Economy is a concept in the new economic era that identifies information and creativity by relying on ideas to create something new and different that has more value and is commercial, and also knowledge from human resources as the main production factor. This concept is supported by the

existence of the creative industry as a real container.

The central government through the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy 2010-2014, explained that one of the innovations of the development of the era that must be taken is the existence of a creative economy, by relying on new ideas, and knowledge based on the experience of human factors as the driving force in the main production sector. The creative economy is one of the tiered or sustainable efforts through innovation and creativity that continues to develop according to circumstances.

According to Teddy K Wirakusumah (2009), the creative economy or creative industry is an industry that has resources based on the intellectualism of the human resources it has, so it has the potential to be developed.

According to John Howkins (2001), the creative economy is an economic activity that is full of creativity and is used as part of a culture, cultural heritage and the environment as an asset in the future.

economy has an important role in a country's economy. Namely: 1) Can reduce the number of unemployed. Creative economy has been able to create many jobs. , 2) Can increase the number of country exports . Creative economy will be able to innovate in creating products , 3) Can develop social and cultural communities , 4) Provides large and broad opportunities for the community to participate in economic development activities so that society is able to innovate, create skills through intellectual abilities that can develop its economy. , 5) Can open up job opportunities to absorb many unemployed people in order to improve the quality of life of the community , 6) Open up opportunities for young people to be able to exploit their ideas, creative ideas, intellectual thinking abilities, in order to be able to further increase work opportunities to develop the skills they have.

2.5. Definition of *Home Industry*

Home Industry is a home business producing goods or also a small company. According to Suratiyah (1991) that *Home industry* is not in the form of a legal entity and is run by one person or several members of the workforce, consisting of four people or less , with the activity of changing raw materials into finished or semi-finished goods or from those of less value into those of higher value with the aim of selling .

According to Mul y Awan, (2008) *Home industry* is a small-scale company engaged in a particular industry , using only one or two houses as production houses , where administration and marketing are carried out simultaneously. The business capital and number of workers are less compared to large companies in general.

The existence of *Home Industry* certainly has an influence on changing the socio-economic conditions of the local community, whether on a large, medium or small scale, for the better.

According to the Food and Drug Monitoring Agency (BPOM), a home business is a food company that has its own business premises at home with simple, manual to semi-automatic processing equipment.

The definition of small business is clearly stated in Law No. 9 of 1995, that small business is a business with a maximum net income of Rp. 200,000,000, - (excluding land and buildings of business premises) with a maximum annual sales result of Rp. 1,000,000,000, - Small industry according to Law number 9 of 1995 concerning small business is a small-scale people's economic activity that has the criteria Regarding Small Businesses is owned by Indonesian citizens. Although on a small scale, this economic activity is able to open up employment opportunities for families or neighbors in their hometowns. That way, this small business can automatically help government programs in an effort to reduce unemployment.

2.6. Definition of Sugar Palm (*Arenga Pinnata*)

Aren (*Arenga pinnata*) is a group of Arecaceae (betel nut), a closed seed plant (Angiospermae). Aren plants contain sap or are called aren sap. According to Widyawati (2012) that aren sap is a liquid that is tapped from the male flowers of the aren tree. This aren sap liquid tastes sweet and contains between 10-15% sugar so that the sap liquid is used as a raw material to make palm sugar or ant sugar. Good quality sap liquid will produce good quality sugar. When fresh, it tastes sweet and smells good and has an acidity level with a pH of around 5-6, sucrose content >12%, and alcohol content <5%. The sap that is tapped in the morning has a lower pH and sucrose content than the sap that is tapped in the afternoon, because during the day there is higher evaporation than at night (Rachman, 2009).

Palm sap liquid can also be used to make acetic acid. fermented into alcoholic beverages, and also become traditional medicine (Helmina A., 2006). Sour palm sap is not processed to make palm sugar because the sugar will not crystallize. Palm can be tapped twice a day to produce 3-10 liters of palm sap, as much as 300-400 liters per season and 900-1600 liters of palm sap per year.

3. Research Methods

The type of method used in this research is qualitative. This research is descriptive analysis. Qualitative research is a research used to investigate, find, describe, and explain the quality or characteristics of social influence that cannot be explained, measured and described through a quantitative approach (Saryono 2010). Qualitative methodology as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior. (Lexy J. Moleong 2002). In this study the author used 4

data collection techniques, namely observation, interviews, documentation and triangulation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Human resource potential (HR) of the *Home Industry Group* for Ant Sugar Processing in Pattalassang District, Gowa Regency.

The human resource potential of the fostered group of *home industry* palm sugar processing in Pattalassang District, Gowa Regency, in terms of the number of groups, namely 10 groups, is quite a lot, but in terms of education, on average, they only graduated from elementary school (SD) and their skills are also generally inadequate. Low levels of knowledge and inadequate skills mean that their ability to receive information is also weak, this greatly influences receiving and absorbing information and innovations related to the processing process that can produce good quality palm sugar that can provide added economic value.

4.2. Efforts to develop human resources (HR) for fostered groups of *home industries* processing palm sugar in Pattalassang District, Gowa Regency

The local government policy in efforts to develop human resources in the fostered group of *home industry* palm sugar processors in Pattalassang District, Gowa Regency, namely through coaching programs, guidance, direct training on how to process palm sap into palm sugar to produce better and quality products, the results of its implementation are still not optimal, because not all group members participate in development efforts due to low scientific knowledge factors so that there is still a lack of awareness of the benefits of training that greatly supports increasing their knowledge and skills. This also causes a lack of interest in participating in HR development efforts. In addition, the local government does not make sustainable development efforts so that their overall skill level is not optimal and

the results of their processing have not yet obtained maximum results.

4.3. Home Industry Groups of Ant Sugar Processors in Pattalassang District, Gowa Regency.

Empowerment of fostered groups of *home industry* palm sugar processors in Pattalassang District, Gowa Regency, which was formed in 2017 with 10 groups and each group consisting of 5 people who are mostly housewives, the results have not been optimal and have not run smoothly as expected, because there are still many obstacles and barriers both from government participation, obtaining raw materials and also product marketing. The obstacles and barriers are as follows:

- There are still some groups who are less interested and lazy to participate in coaching, training guidance so that their knowledge is still lacking and finally they are not serious in palm sugar processing activities, also their reason is that the processing process takes a long time. They have not fully realized that the work of processing palm sugar provides added economic value that can increase income for their welfare.
- Provision of working capital due to the available budget being limited.
- Coordination problems with *home industry groups*, they are also inconsistent with the work of processing palm sugar because when the rice planting season arrives, they switch jobs and go down to the rice fields to plant rice so that the palm sugar processing activities do not run smoothly.
- In general, the social behavior of the community that is still difficult to change is the habit of drinking fermented palm wine so that farmers who tap palm sap prefer to make alcoholic palm wine and then sell it to make money quickly, rather than preparing it to be used as raw material to be processed into palm sugar. As a result,

the palm sugar processing *home industry group* lacks raw materials. These problems are what make it difficult for the palm sugar processing *home industry group* to develop.

- marketing of ant sugar products don't have the right marketing yet, so that production and sales are very minimal, the parties involved in marketing palm sugar products do not yet know much about how to market them properly and where they can be distributed.

The results of the empowerment of the fostered group of home industry palm sugar processors in Pattalassang District, Gowa Regency, were declared to be still unsuccessful, in fact, the fostered group of palm sugar processors stagnated or the group's business became paralyzed so that the level of social life of the fostered group of *home industry* palm sugar processors in Pattalassang District, Gowa Regency has not changed significantly, has not shown any increase in income and social life of the group.

4 Closing

4.1. Conclusion

This study examined the community empowerment process based on the creative economy in the home industry group for processing palm sap into palm sugar in Pattalassang District, Gowa Regency. The findings highlight three major conclusions.

First, the human resource potential within the home industry groups is adequate in quantity but limited in quality. Most group members have low educational backgrounds and lack technical skills, which hinders their ability to absorb new knowledge and adopt innovations in palm sugar processing. This condition indicates a strong need for continuous human resource development.

Second, efforts to develop human resources through coaching, mentoring, and technical training provided by the local government and BUMDes have been carried

out but remain sub-optimal. Participation among group members is inconsistent due to low motivation, limited understanding of training benefits, and the absence of sustainable development initiatives. As a result, improvements in knowledge and processing skills have not yet produced significant changes.

Third, the empowerment of home industry groups has not run effectively. Several inhibiting factors disrupt the sustainability of palm sugar processing activities, including inadequate raw material availability due to the community's tendency to ferment palm sap into alcoholic beverages, limited access to working capital, weak coordination among group members, and ineffective product marketing strategies. Consequently, the empowerment program has not succeeded in improving income levels or enhancing the socio-economic conditions of the community. Overall, the study concludes that although the potential for developing a creative economy-based home industry is promising, its success requires strengthened human resource capacity, consistent institutional support, and sustainable empowerment strategies.

4.2. Research Limitations

This study was conducted with several limitations that may influence the generalizability and depth of the findings:

- a. The research scope was limited to one sub-district (Pattalassang), so the results may not represent conditions in other regions with similar industries or empowerment patterns.
- b. The research object focused solely on the empowerment process of existing home industry groups, without examining comparative groups or regions that may have adopted different empowerment strategies.
- c. Data collection relied heavily on interviews, which may be influenced by subjective responses from informants, especially regarding internal group dynamics and government support.

4.3. Implications

This study provides several practical and theoretical implications:

a. Practical Implications

- Local governments need to design more structured and continuous capacity-building programs tailored to the educational level and learning abilities of the community.
- Strengthening access to capital, raw material availability, and marketing networks is crucial to ensure the sustainability of home industry activities.
- BUMDes and other stakeholders should function not only as facilitators but also as active partners in developing innovation, product quality, and market expansion.

b. Theoretical Implications

- Findings contribute to the literature on community empowerment, particularly regarding the application of creative economy principles in rural home industries.
- The study reinforces the importance of human capital, institutional support, and socio-cultural factors as determinants of empowerment success.

4.4. Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies are encouraged to consider the following directions:

- a. Expanding the research area to include multiple sub-districts or regencies to compare empowerment outcomes and identify best practices.
- b. Conducting quantitative or mixed-method studies to measure the effectiveness of empowerment programs more objectively. Examining the role of digital marketing, technology adoption, and creative product innovation in enhancing the competitiveness of palm sugar-based home industries.

- c. Exploring behavioral and cultural drivers behind community preferences, such as the tendency to ferment palm sap into alcoholic beverages, which significantly affects raw material availability. Investigating long-term policy impacts and institutional collaborations to strengthen community-based creative economy ecosystems.

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