



COMMUNITY RESPONSE IN EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMY THROUGH THE SALTED FISH BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

Poverty remains a persistent socio-economic issue in Aceh Province, particularly in coastal areas that possess untapped potential in the marine sector. One of the community-driven initiatives to improve economic well-being is the development of salted fish businesses. This study aims to examine community responses and efforts in enhancing the local economy through the salted fish industry in Lhokseudu, Gampong Layeun, Leupung Subdistrict, Aceh Besar District. Employing a qualitative research approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. The study involved key informants, including the village head (Keuchik), hamlet head, Tuha Peut (village council), community leaders, and local salted fish traders. The findings indicate that the salted fish business holds considerable potential for improving community livelihoods. However, several challenges hinder its development, including low levels of community participation, inadequate marketing strategies, and limited support in terms of training and access to capital. Moreover, the role of the village leadership in empowering and protecting small-scale entrepreneurs remains insufficient. This study highlights the need for increased community awareness regarding entrepreneurial self-reliance and calls for stronger institutional support from local governments through business facilitation programs, skill development initiatives, and policies that promote local economic growth. With more effective and targeted strategies, the salted fish industry could serve as a viable pathway toward poverty reduction and improved socio-economic welfare in Aceh's coastal communities.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a social issue that remains a primary concern in Aceh Province, including in coastal areas that possess significant natural resource potential, particularly in the marine and fisheries sectors. One of the developing businesses in coastal regions is the salted fish business, which has long been a source of livelihood for the community, including in Lhokseudu, Gampong Layeun, Leupung Subdistrict, Aceh Besar District. The abundant capture fisheries potential provides a great opportunity for the community to improve their economic welfare through processing marine products into salted fish. However, despite the salted fish business having a stable market prospect and having been passed down through generations, its management still faces various obstacles. Most business actors run

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their operations traditionally and are limited to the household scale, without support for entrepreneurship training, access to capital, or adequate marketing strategies. Weaknesses in business management, low business communication skills, and the minimal use of information technology are also major barriers to developing this business more productively.

On the other hand, the role of the village government, particularly the Keuchik (village head), is expected to be the driving force in encouraging the community to become economically independent and empowered. This role can be realized through the provision of supporting facilities, skills training, access to capital, as well as protection for the market and distribution of production results. However, based on initial observations and interviews with the community, it was found that the role of the Keuchik in providing support and protection to salted fish business actors is still very limited. As a result, the community lacks the confidence to manage their businesses independently and continues to rely on agents or external parties for product marketing. According to Steinberg (in Adawiyah, 2012), a person's motivation in entrepreneurship is influenced by their awareness of self-potential and the desire to be independent. Meanwhile, the role of village officials, especially the Keuchik, is crucial in providing support and protection for business actors (Mardikanto & Soebianto, 2019).

Dwintasari (2022) shows that the salted fish business has a significant contribution to the income of fisher families on Pasaran Island, Bandar Lampung. However, challenges such as lack of training and limited market access are also found. Therefore, this study aims to examine the motivation of the community and the role of the village head in running the salted fish business in Lhokseudu, Gampong Layeun, Leupung Subdistrict, Aceh Besar District. It is hoped that this research will provide an overview of the response of the Acehnese coastal community in utilizing local economic potential through the salted fish business, as well as evaluate the role of village officials in supporting its sustainability.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type, which aims to obtain an in-depth description of community responses to the salted fish business as an effort to improve the economy in Gampong Layeun, Leupung Subdistrict, Aceh Besar District. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is capable of revealing the meanings, perceptions, and social experiences of the community contextually (Moleong, 2016). The object of this research is the community involved in the salted fish business, as well as village officials such as the Keuchik and Tuha Peut who have roles in supporting this enterprise. The main focus of the study is: (1) the motivation of the community in running the salted fish business, and (2) the role of the Keuchik in strengthening and protecting salted fish business actors.

The research location is in Lhokseudu, Gampong Layeun, Leupung Subdistrict, Aceh Besar District. The selection of this location is based on the local economic potential of the fisheries sector, as well as the existence of a developing salted fish business practice that has not yet been optimally managed by the local community.

Data in this research were collected through three main techniques: (1) Observation, conducted to directly understand the activities of the community in managing the salted fish business, including the production and marketing processes; (2) In-depth Interviews, conducted with five key informants consisting of: the Keuchik, the Hamlet Head, Tuha Peut, Community Leaders, and Salted Fish Entrepreneurs. This technique was used to explore their views, experiences, and obstacles they face in business development; (3) Document Study, used to obtain supporting data from official village documents such as population data, economic activity reports, and documentation of empowerment programs that have been implemented. Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which includes: (1) Data Reduction, which is the process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying data from interviews and observations; (2) Data Display, conducted in the form of descriptive narratives and direct quotes from informants; and (3) Conclusion Drawing, carried out continuously during the research process to discover themes, patterns, and meanings from the data obtained.

Through this approach, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of community responses in managing the salted fish business and the extent to which the role of the village government contributes to strengthening the local economy based on coastal potential.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. *Motivation of the Community in the Salted Fish Business*

The results of this study reflect two main aspects that became the focus, namely: (1) the motivation of the community in running the salted fish business, and (2) the role of the Keuchik in promoting the business in Gampong Layeun, Leupung Subdistrict, Aceh Besar District. The findings were obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document studies of the activities of salted fish processors and related village officials.

a. Understanding Self-Potential

Based on research results related to Understanding Self-Potential, it shows that “the success of the salted fish business in Gampong Layeun is not only determined by the availability of opportunities and resources, but also by the community’s readiness to change their mindset and innovate. With increased awareness, active participation, and more organized cooperation, as well as real support from the government in the form of capital assistance, facility improvements, and training, existing potential can be optimized. This will ultimately improve economic welfare and reduce poverty in the Gampong environment.”

From the above research results, the dimension of understanding self-potential is an ability within a person that has not yet been managed, discovered, explored, or further developed. Self-potential can grow through effort, hard work, learning, or natural talent possessed since birth, but has not been trained. Usually, self-potential can be identified since childhood or can be explored through daily formed habits. Unfortunately, not everyone can discover or develop their potential well. Yet, developed potential can help someone prepare for their future. In line with the researcher's discussion on understanding self-potential, according to Maslow in Sunaryo (2018:112), understanding self-potential is

part of the self-actualization process, where individuals gradually realize their best abilities and use them to achieve life satisfaction. Goleman in Suryabrata (2015:87) argues that understanding self-potential is closely related to emotional intelligence, where a person who can recognize and manage their emotions will more easily find and develop their potential.

Interview results also show that most people in Lhokseudu, Gampong Layeun, run the salted fish business as a family heritage passed down through generations. They regard this business as a relatively stable primary livelihood, although the results are often uncertain. The motivation to run the business is mostly driven by economic needs rather than professional business orientation. From the aspect of active participation, the majority of the community is only involved in the traditional production process, but shows little initiative in expanding markets or scaling up the business. This indicates that their motivation has not fully grown as independent entrepreneurs. The community also still depends on agents to sell their products, resulting in a lack of control over selling prices. This situation is worsened by the lack of communication and marketing skills, which prevents them from reaching wider markets.

b. Driving Independence

Based on the research results on driving independence, it shows that “the success of the salted fish business in Gampong Layeun is not only determined by the availability of resources and opportunities but also by the individual's ability to drive independence. The dimension of independence includes the ability to communicate effectively, manage the business independently without fully relying on external assistance, foster a sense of responsibility in every business process, and actively solve arising problems. The results of the study show that although there are efforts to implement independence, there are still shortcomings in innovation, coordination, and responsiveness that hinder business development. Therefore, increasing government support through more adequate facilities, management training, and modern marketing strategies, as well as mindset change so that the community becomes more proactive and braver to innovate, is a key factor in optimizing self-potential and achieving progress in the salted fish business. With better synergy between government officials and business actors, it is expected that the independence that has been implemented can develop more optimally so that the salted fish business can make a significant contribution to improving the community's economic welfare and reducing poverty in the Gampong area.”

Driving independence is one of the goals to be achieved in every life process. Although every human is born needing others to fulfill their needs, over time and developmental tasks, an individual will slowly break free from some dependencies, such as from parents, by learning to be independent. In another sense, independence is the readiness and ability of an individual to stand alone, characterized by taking initiative. It also includes trying to solve problems without asking for help from others, striving, and directing behaviour toward perfection. In line with the above discussion, according to Steinberg in Adawiyah (2012:78-79), independence is the ability of an individual to make decisions and be responsible for life choices without excessive dependence on others. Driving independence means providing space for individuals to develop their capacities

optimally. Zimmerman in Suryabrata (2015:102) explains that independence can be driven through active learning, direct experience, and environmental encouragement that supports individuals to think and act independently. From the explanation above regarding independence, the people of Gampong Layeun have not been able to manage their businesses independently. Most of them do not have business records, financial management, or production planning. This shows a lack of preparedness in running the business as a competitive economic unit. This condition is in line with Maslow's theory of motivation, where individuals will focus more on fulfilling basic needs first before being able to pursue self-actualization needs (Taruh, 2020). In this case, salted fish processors are more focused on meeting daily living needs than on strategic business development.

2. *The Role of the Keuchik in Advancing the Salted Fish Business*

a. Empowerment

Based on research findings from the empowerment dimension, the researcher found that "Overall, the empowerment of the salted fish business in Gampong Layeun greatly depends on the improvement of supporting facilities, the organization of official training, and the provision of effective capital assistance. Limitations in facilities such as modern drying tools and adequate storage space, as well as the absence of formal training, hinder the innovation process and product quality improvement. On the other hand, the lack of capital assistance forces traders to rely on their capital or take loans, which negatively impacts business development.

Real support from the Gampong government through infrastructure improvement, training, and an organized capital assistance system, such as through cooperatives, is greatly needed to optimize the potential of the salted fish business. Through these empowerment efforts, it is expected that business actors can improve product quality, expand markets, and ultimately enhance the economic welfare of the Gampong Layeun community." This is in line with Skinner's opinion in Adawiyah (2012: 112-113), stating that reinforcement is the process of giving stimuli that increase the likelihood of a behaviour recurring. In the context of individual development, reinforcement can be used to build positive habits and increase motivation.

The discussion shows that the role of the Keuchik in empowering and protecting the salted fish business is still not optimal. From the empowerment side, the assistance provided by the Gampong government has not touched on important aspects such as modern production tools, processing and marketing training, as well as access to business capital. Although several empowerment programs have been planned, their realization remains very limited.

b. Protection

The research findings on the protection dimension show that to achieve optimal development of the salted fish business, more comprehensive protection is needed through structured programs. The Gampong government must immediately implement policies that support business actors by providing accurate market information, broader marketing strategies, as well as capital assistance and modern facilities. Increasing coordination and synergy between the government apparatus and the community, coupled with a mindset change so that business actors become more proactive and innovative, are key to

overcoming existing obstacles. With more comprehensive protection efforts, it is hoped that the salted fish business can grow significantly, improve price stability, and ultimately enhance the economic welfare of the Gampong Layeun community.”

From these research results, the researcher concludes that protection is an absolute prerequisite in realizing a healthy economy through a balance between protecting the interests of consumers and business actors. Only through the existence and empowerment of adequate consumer protection will the Keuchik of Gampong Layeun be able to build a dignified, intelligent, healthy, strong, innovative, and productive human quality to bring the Gampong Layeun community to be competitive. Increased protection efforts through the role of the Keuchik of Gampong Layeun are directed to support the growth of the community’s salted fish business so that it can produce a variety of salted fish with added value to improve the welfare of the community.

This discussion on protection aligns with Maslow’s view in Adawiyah (2012: 89–90), stating that protection is a basic human need that must be fulfilled before individuals can achieve self-actualization. Protection includes physical, psychological, and social aspects that provide a sense of security for individuals. Soerjono Soekanto in Suryabrata (2015: 145–146) explains that social protection is an effort made by individuals or groups to maintain well-being and security from various threats, both from the environment and from within themselves. Based on the discussion above, it shows that the Keuchik of Gampong Layeun has not been active in providing protection and market information or assisting the community in accessing wider distribution networks. As a result, salted fish entrepreneurs depend on prices set by agents or middlemen, without certainty of price standards or village institutional support.

This contradicts the role of the village head as expressed by Mardikanto and Soebianto (2019), who stated that the village head should be a pioneer in providing facilities, building market networks, and helping the community overcome business barriers. The lack of intervention from the village government also affects the low enthusiasm of the community to innovate and seek broader business opportunities. Some business actors feel insecure due to the absence of support or guarantees from the village.

The findings of this study strengthen Rahmat’s (2016) thought regarding community responses, which are not only formed by perceptions and attitudes but are also greatly influenced by the structure of social and institutional support. The absence of support from the village government causes the community to tend to be passive, consumptive, and unable to develop productively. In terms of poverty theory, according to Chambers (1983), the coastal community of Gampong Layeun is still trapped in a cycle of poverty caused by limited access to information, low bargaining power, and helplessness in managing businesses. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of structural empowerment from village officials. This study also found that although the potential of the salted fish business is quite promising from the market side, the weakness of village institutions and lack of business training have caused this potential to be underutilized. Therefore, a transformation of approach is needed – from merely maintaining tradition to a productive business based on community empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted on the motivation of the community in the salted fish business in Gampong Layeun, as well as the role of the Keuchik in advancing the salted fish business, several conclusions can be drawn as follows: (1) Understanding Self-Potential, the success of the salted fish business in Gampong Layeun is not only determined by the availability of opportunities and resources but also by the community's readiness to change their mindset and innovate. Increasing awareness, active participation, and more organized cooperation, as well as government support in the form of capital assistance, facility improvement, and training, are essential to optimize the potential of the salted fish business; (2) Promoting Independence, the success of the salted fish business also depends on the community's independence in managing the business. The dimension of independence includes the ability to communicate effectively, manage the business independently without fully relying on external assistance, and foster a sense of responsibility in running the business. Research findings show that there are still shortcomings in terms of innovation, coordination, and responsiveness that hinder business development; (3) Empowerment, the empowerment of the salted fish business in Gampong Layeun heavily relies on the improvement of supporting facilities, the organization of official training, and the provision of effective capital assistance. The lack of facilities such as modern drying equipment and adequate storage space hinders innovation and the improvement of product quality. The Gampong government needs to provide real support in the form of infrastructure improvement, training, and a more organized system of capital assistance; (4) Protection, to achieve optimal development of the salted fish business, more comprehensive protection is needed through structured programs. The Gampong government must immediately implement policies that support business actors by providing market information, broader marketing strategies, as well as capital assistance and modern facilities.

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