

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN IMPROVING FAMILY WELFARE THROUGH CULTURED INDEPENDENT WOMEN CLASS PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Women's empowerment has become the main focus in efforts to improve family welfare. One of the approaches taken is a cultural independent class program which aims to develop the potential of women to preserve cultural identity in their area so that they can actively contribute to improving the quality of life and family income. The aim of this research is to determine women's empowerment in improving family welfare through a culturally independent women's class program. The method used in this research is qualitative and data is obtained by observation, documentation, interviews, documentation and focused discussions (FGD). The results obtained from this research are increasing family welfare and supporting national development goals as well as creating positive changes in society and increasing women's understanding of the importance of gender equality and cultural mainstreaming in achieving sustainable prosperity..

Keywords: Women's Empowerment, Family Welfare, Gender Equality

ABSTRAK

Pemberdayaan perempuan telah menjadi fokus utama dalam upaya meningkatkan kesejahteraan keluarga. Salah satu pendekatan yang dilakukan adalah program kelas mandiri berbudaya yang bertujuan untuk mengembangkan potensi yang dimiliki oleh perempuan untuk melestarikan identitas budaya di daerahnya sehingga dapat berkontribusi aktif dalam meningkatkan kualitas hidup dan penghasilan keluarga. Tujuan penelitian ini untuk mengetahui pemberdayaan perempuan dalam meningkatkan kesejahteraan keluarga melalui program kelas perempuan mandiri berbudaya. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif dan perolehan datanya dengan observasi, dokumentasi, wawancara, dokumentasi dan diskusi terfokus (FGD). Hasil yang diperoleh dari penelitian ini adalah meningkatnya kesejahteraan keluarga dan ikut mendukung tujuan pembangunan nasional serta menciptakan perubahan positif terhadap masyarakat dan meningkatkan pemahaman perempuan tentang pentingnya kesetaraan gender dan pengarusutamaan budaya dalam pencapaian kesejahteraan yang berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Kesejahteraan Keluarga, Kesetaraan Gender

INTRODUCTION

National development aims to create quality human beings through the golden generation. In realizing this goal, it is important to have the role of women to support every national development program. The success of achieving national development is not only measured in the economic sector, but also in the areas of education and health. However, the problem that occurs in society is that there is a gap between women and men. The gaps and disparities that occur between women and men are also caused by the absence of regulations that can actually be implemented to minimize the occurrence of injustice in society. Problems that are often found in society and are important to be addressed immediately are limited access for women to education, lack of social support and networks from family and society which is also caused by economic limitations and cycles of poverty so that many women work in sectors that are not suitable for them. feasible and less stable.

One effort to minimize inequality and disparity is through an empowerment program. This effort is made so that all elements of society can be empowered regardless of gender and in accordance with existing rules so as to improve the abilities and welfare of society. The women's empowerment program is an effort to provide equal roles and fair opportunities to women in society. As explained by (Marwanti, 2012); (Hanis & Marzaman, 2020) women's empowerment is an effort to realize equal roles, access and control of women and men in all areas of development by developing family entrepreneurship so that balanced roles are realized. Furthermore, research results from (Kuncoro & Kadar, 2016) show that women's empowerment in the micro scope is the steps taken to obtain added value that is useful for humans. Then (Tjiptaningsih, 2017) also explained that women's empowerment plays an important role in the survival of the family, both regarding the moral development of children, as well as meeting the family's economic needs as one of the main pillars of ongoing family life. Thus, women's empowerment is very important in society, and is an important agenda for improving family welfare and being able to overcome complex problems, such as:

1. Gender inequality is still evident in many societies, preventing women from making full contributions to their families and society.
2. Violence against women, such as sexual harassment, human trafficking which results in hampering women's ability to participate and contribute positively to the family.
3. Limited access to adequate education and training needed to develop skills and knowledge so that they can get productive work and can help open up economic opportunities. Limited

access is also found in the health sector, namely quality health services, which can threaten family welfare.

4. Not getting social support from family, friends and society, which becomes an obstacle for women to develop.

These problems not only hinder the progress and welfare of the family but can also hinder the realization of sustainable social and economic development goals. So, there needs to be an approach to empowering women that can be used to empower women and improve family welfare, namely the independent culture women's class program. The program includes various elements that promote the well-being of women and their families by considering cultural aspects. It is also hoped that this program can be a powerful means of improving the welfare of women and families in an empowered cultural context so that it can help break the cycle of poverty and produce positive changes in wider society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The cultural independent women's class program approach implemented in empowering women to improve family welfare includes various perspectives and is the main debate, namely about gender equality and cultural preservation. Theoretically, gender equality and cultural preservation developed by Amartya Sen, gender equality emphasizes the foundation of women's empowerment which focuses more on eliminating gender discrimination and increasing women's access to economic resources, education and power, while in cultural preservation the emphasis is on women's opportunities to be able to maintain and pass on their cultural traditions and empowerment programs that must include cultural elements in their approach. (Indonesia, 2012)

Issues of cultural preservation in the context of women's empowerment are also important strategic issues for gender equality which can be done to increase women's understanding through culturally independent women's class programs. Not only is it related to cultural preservation, what is developed through this approach also emphasizes the importance of women's economic empowerment as a way to improve family welfare. In accordance with Riane Eisler's opinion which was developed through research results (MD & Hudaidah, 2021) that women need self-development which can be obtained through skills training and economic support which can directly contribute to family income but must also be supported by a solid foundation, namely education in implementing empowerment so that women can get access to quality self-development and have a positive impact on the family.

However, the challenges in implementing women's empowerment in improving family welfare through the culturally independent women's class program are theoretically related to cultural challenges and the traditional role of women. Cultural challenges in empowering women are related to patriarchal and traditional cultural norms so that they become obstacles for women to take steps towards empowerment. Then, there is an obligation for a woman to respect the traditional role of women in society and this becomes an important aspect for empowerment through the implementation of a culturally independent women's class program approach. In an effort to support the concept of women's empowerment in improving family welfare through a cultured independent class program, there are several theories that are relevant in this context, as follows:

1. Feminism views women's empowerment as a struggle to overcome gender inequality and support women's equal rights, opportunities and freedom. Feminism emphasizes the importance of empowering women economically, socially and politically so that they can take part in the development of the family and society. This concept was developed and debated by (Hooks, 1984) and (Mohanty, 1984).
2. Capability Theory put forward by (Sen, 1999) and (Nussbaum, 2000) which emphasizes the importance of empowering individuals to have the ability (capability) to achieve a decent life. In this context empowering women through education, training and access to resources can increase their capability to bring about positive change in their families and communities.
3. Feminist economic theory developed by (Folbre, 2006) which explores the impact of gender inequality in the economic context resulting in a debate about women's empowerment which considers how women's economic empowerment can improve the overall welfare of the family and includes women's access to decent work, adequate wages, equal and other economic rights.
4. Development theory which includes various approaches to improving community welfare so that in the context of women's empowerment it can accelerate the development process by improving the quality of family life through education, health and economic participation developed by (Kabeer, 2005); (Duflo, 2011)

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in research is a qualitative research method that emphasizes analysis or descriptiveness. (Creswell, 2014) In a qualitative research process, things from the subject's perspective are more emphasized and the theoretical basis is used by the researcher as a guide, so

that the research process is in accordance with the facts encountered in the field when conducting research. Qualitative research methods aim to explain a phenomenon in depth and are carried out by collecting data in as much depth as possible. Qualitative methods prioritize observing phenomena and researching more into the substance of the meaning of these phenomena. The analysis and sharpness of qualitative research is greatly influenced by the strength of the words and sentences used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Equality of position under the law, including in law enforcement for every citizen, is a guide for law enforcers in carrying out their duties. When law enforcers no longer treat citizens equally, this is the seed of injustice. (Indonesia, 2012) that the principle of equal standing in law is one of the pillars of justice. However, in reality, not all Indonesian people are able to enjoy development and empowerment programs from the government, one of which is Indonesian women. However, the patriarchal culture and ideology that is still widely adhered to by traditional societies in Indonesia has caused women's empowerment to still be far behind when compared to men. Based on research results from (Susanti et al., 2021) that lagging behind in development for women will certainly make them helpless and this helplessness will increasingly put women in a disadvantageous position when they have to face and compete with men in various fields. Then, (MD & Hudaidah, 2021) also explained that the circle of patriarchal culture which places the role of men in a superior position while women are only subordinate is one of the factors underlying the movement to empower women so that they get access to quality education services. Thus, women's empowerment can provide complex solutions regarding gender equality and design effective and contextual programs in an effort to improve family welfare.

Domestic tasks such as washing, cooking, cleaning the house, or providing food for all family members are one of the social roles inherent in women in various circles of society with a patriarchal culture, including those in society. Apart from that, powerless women are also very vulnerable to becoming poor if shocks occur due to socio-economic uncertainty. One of them is women who live in rural areas, who have minimal access to education, health facilities and job opportunities, because the infrastructure in rural areas is still poor. Poor infrastructure in rural areas makes access to information, education, health and employment very difficult for women. Women's contribution to national development is still very minimal, therefore government programs and policies for the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Service are needed to be more effective and efficient. One of them is increasing women's empowerment programs.

Providing the best education for women means indirectly providing education to other individuals in a family, so the success of a household really depends on the adequate abilities and potential of women. One of the women's empowerment programs established by the North Sumatra Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Service is the Independent, Cultural Women's Class program in Denai Kuala Village, Pantai Labu District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra Province. Problems experienced by women such as gender inequality, subordination, stereotypes and other problems are still problems that have not been resolved over time. Even the women's empowerment program that was implemented previously had not been able to resolve the problems experienced by women in the village. Women's empowerment is very important to continue to increase women's capacity, so that they can have the confidence to participate and take part in all lines of development in Indonesia.

It is very important to implement women's empowerment, so that every Indonesian woman has the confidence to participate and take part in all lines of Indonesia's development. The women's empowerment program in Indonesia has been started since 1978. Through empowerment, several regions have achieved adequate results in increasing personal capacity, improving the economy, improving health, improving the quality of life of women. However, there are still many women in Indonesia who have not been touched by empowerment programs, both in urban areas and especially in rural areas. Women will not be separated from community empowerment. Community empowerment aims to create an independent society, able to explore and utilize the potential that exists in its area, and help the community to be free from backwardness. Women's empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building for greater participation such as breadth, supervision and decision making as well as transformational actions that lead to the realization of greater equality between women and men. One form of women's empowerment carried out by the government is through the Independent Cultured Women's Class (KELAPA MUDA) program in Denai Kuala village, Pantai Labu District, Deli Serdang Regency. This activity brings together all village women to be more active and responsive to environmental situations and conditions. Denai Kuala Village has four hamlets. The interesting thing about this village is the diverse ethnic, religious and cultural communities brought by each of these ethnicities. In fact, each ethnic group has a certain area that forms its own hamlet. Hamlets occupied by ethnic groups, indirectly, whether they realize it or not, reflect their respective cultural systems.

Implementation of the Cultural Independent Women's Class program activities is carried out through direct training for members conducted by village facilitators. Their main program, namely food security education, aims to introduce diverse, nutritionally balanced and safe food

consumption patterns in order to break the chain of stunting and create an active, healthy and productive generation. It is also hoped that this activity will give each member of the Independent, Cultural Women Class an idea of how to manage a garden and produce healthy food plants such as vegetables and fruit. Apart from studying social affairs, entrepreneurship and local resources, the Independent Cultured Women Class also provides climate resilience education. Climate resilience is the social-ecological condition of a society that is able to meet its basic needs, while simultaneously carrying out climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. Each member of the Independent Cultured Women group will be coached and directed in facing and handling changing weather situations and conditions. The Village Facilitator will deliver material in the form of an explanation of climate resilience and solutions. One of them is by planting reserve food crops instead of rice such as sweet potatoes, taro, potatoes and others. In fact, each member will be trained to plant and process family medicinal plants (TOGA), because this is a very important basic need in climate change and uncertain weather.

The next program is education on reducing stunting rates. Stunting is a problem that can be solved and prevented, namely by improving diet, parenting patterns and improving sanitation and access to clean water availability. The problem of stunting is influenced by low access to food in terms of quantity, quality and lack of variety. For children during their growing period, it is necessary to increase protein sources and consume fruit and vegetables. Stunting is also influenced by behavioral aspects, especially poor parenting patterns in feeding practices for babies and toddlers. Apart from focusing on food security, climate resilience and reducing stunting rates, the Independent, Cultural Women Class has several additional programs. Where the program is implemented within a certain time period and does not bind individual members, it remains more of a group activity. The additional programs carried out by the Independent, Cultured Women's Class in Denai Kuala Village include: social and entrepreneurial guidance, skills guidance, education on handling cases of domestic violence (KDRT) and preventing early marriage, inter-agency workshops.

The achievements of the Independent Cultured Women's Class program have provided many positive changes, including the government once again embracing all village women, especially Denai Kuala village. After the presence of this program, women in Denai Kuala Village began to improve. Starting from mindset, self-confidence, health, economy, children's health problems, to handling women's problems, such as cases of domestic violence, cases of sexual violence, divorce and others. The presence of this program provides a new breakthrough for women in Denai Kuala village, through the routine activities they carry out they are able to support their

respective families, and are able to recognize and explore their respective potential. Apart from critical thinking and new mindsets, in this program women are expected to be able to develop further in terms of knowledge, management of surrounding natural resources, and others for the betterment of themselves, their families and the development of their villages and the country.

Behind the achievements that have been achieved, there are several obstacles in the implementation of this program, some of which are structural obstacles that arise from government officials who are not yet optimal in including gender issues in the planning process and determining budget proportions, women's empowerment programs that are not yet able to stand alone and cause women's participation in Denai Kuala Village experiences discrimination, patriarchal culture is a social system that places men as the main power holders and dominates in the role of political leadership, moral authority, social rights and others, the next obstacle is related to the social status of talking about women, there are quite a few study results that stated that women are still a vulnerable group who often experience various problems, such as poverty, natural disasters, conflict, violence, and so on. Even in the current era of emancipation, women are often considered a second class (subordinate) group so that they do not have equal rights with men.

CONCLUSION

The efforts made by the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Service of North Sumatra Province through the Independent Women's Class Program in Denai Kuala Village, Pantai Labu District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra Province are running effectively. This is in accordance with the results obtained, where through food security and climate resilience education, they are able to help and support the economy of their respective families. Furthermore, the understanding and mindset of women in Denai Kuala Village is increasingly developing in terms of parenting knowledge, reducing stunting rates and healthy lifestyles. In fact, the rates of domestic violence (KDRT), early marriage, sexual violence and other violence have begun to decline, in accordance with routine socialization and training for each member of the Independent, Cultural Women Class. Several recommendations from researchers to make the Independent Cultured Women's Class program more successful and right on target include: For the government, to re-evaluate the implementation of the Independent Cultured Women's Class program in Denai Kuala Village. Considering that the village has four hamlets, not all women in the village participate and join in implementing the program. For all facilitators, both main, regional and village, to increase women's activities in Denai Kuala Village, so that these activities have a big impact and influence and are beneficial for the lives of all women in the village.

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