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## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF SHELL CRAFTSMEN IN TELUK NIBUNG DISTRICT, TANJUNGBALAI CITY

### Abstrak

The economic empowerment of seashell craftsmen describes the lack of business capital to start, operate and develop a seashell craft business, lack of training and assistance for seashell craftsmen in improving their skills, lack of access to raw materials and equipment in producing seashell crafts, lack of marketing and promotion in empowerment shell craftsman. This research aims to find out the process of economic empowerment of seashell craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District, Tanjung Balai City, as well as the obstacles in the process of economic empowerment of seashell craftsmen. This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods. Data collection techniques used were observation, interviews and documentation. The data that researchers obtained was analyzed using several steps, namely data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions. The types of data used are primary data and secondary data. The results of this research show that the economic empowerment of seashell craftsmen carried out by the Social Service is an effort to overcome the problem of seashell crafts in Teluk Nibung District, Tanjung Balai City. The empowerment carried out by the Social Service through Dekranasda is quite good. The research results show that the economic empowerment of shell craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District can be improved through several strategies. First, increasing the skills and knowledge of craftsmen through training on more modern and efficient shell processing techniques. Second, developing a wider marketing network to expand market share. Third, providing access to business capital through collaboration with financial institutions and government programs. Apart from that, this research also found that support from the government and community is very important in supporting the sustainability of the shell craftsman business. The government's role in providing supportive facilities and policies, as well as active community participation in promoting local products, can have a positive impact on improving the economy of craftsmen. Thus, economic empowerment of shell craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District requires a holistic approach involving various parties, including the government, craftsmen and the community, to achieve better and more sustainable economic prosperity.

**Keywords:** Economic Empowerment, Shell Craftsmen, Nibung Bay, Marketing

### INTRODUCTION

Empowerment according to experts is a way in which people, organizations, and communities are directed to be able to control (or have power over) their lives. Empowerment refers to the ability, especially vulnerable and weak groups so that they have the power or ability to meet their basic needs so that they have freedom, in the sense that they are not only free to express their opinions, but also free from hunger, free from ignorance, free from pain, reaching productive sources that allow them to increase their income and obtain the goods and services they need, and participating in the development process and decisions that affect them (Suharto, 2010)

Thus, empowerment is a process and a goal, as a process, empowerment is a series of activities to strengthen the power or empowerment of weak groups in society, individuals who

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experience poverty problems. As a goal, empowerment refers to the state or outcome that a social change wants to achieve, namely a society that is empowered, has power or has knowledge and ability to fulfill its life needs, both physical, economic, and social, such as having self-confidence, being able to convey aspirations, having a livelihood, participating in social activities, and being independent in carrying out their life tasks (Suharto, 2010).

The development of society today requires everyone to strive to be effective, in an effort to improve their standard of living towards a better direction in order to become the leading driving force in economic development and community welfare.

Economic empowerment has a strategic role in improving community welfare, especially in the small and medium industry sector. Teluk Nibung District, which is part of Tanjung Balai City, has extraordinary potential in the development of the shellfish crafts industry. Shells are one of the leading commodities of this area, strengthening its identity and economic value

Community economic empowerment through the management and utilization of industrial waste, especially shells, is a strategic issue in efforts to achieve sustainable development. Teluk Nibung District, located in Tanjung Balai City, has great potential in managing shells as a local economic resource. Shells are one of the industrial wastes that have added value that can be utilized to improve community welfare. Basically, shells are one of the industrial wastes produced from the processing of shells into consumer products. However, if managed properly, shells have great potential as a local economic resource. Community economic empowerment through the management and utilization of shells is a solution that can improve community welfare while providing a positive impact on the environment.

By holding empowerment, the community can become the subject of development itself. The regional development program itself aims to overcome the initiative and role of the community, increase the utilization of regional potential, increase and harmonize growth between regions, and accelerate the growth of regions that are still lagging behind, the existence of small industries that are considered capable of increasing food or goods production and can overcome the problem of employment opportunities that are still narrow.

The shell craft of Tanjung Balai City is fostered and developed by the Dekranasda of Tanjung Balai City and several other related agencies which are currently under the leadership of the National Craft Council of Tanjung Balai City, North Sumatra, since 2011 fostering community groups to process shells into crafts with economic value.

Seeing the large number of diverse craft industry developments in Indonesia, the emergence of this phenomenon has made craft industry players continue to produce creative and innovative products to help the industry grow bigger. In running the business that has been carried out by each craftsman, it will directly affect the income received by each craftsman. And this income is influenced by the capital factor. According to Frank H. Knight (1921): "Capital is a number of property rights that can be measured in the form of money, which can generate income or returns.

Tanjung Balai City, located in North Sumatra Province with a population of 183,636 people in 2023, plays an important role in the regional economy. One of the sub-districts in Tanjung Balai City that has great potential in the fisheries and industrial sectors is Teluk Nibung District. The existence of marine natural resources, including shellfish, is one of the main assets in this area. Tanjung Balai City is not free from problems, including the community who utilize shellfish, one of which is the community in Teluk Nibung District. This can be seen from the income table of shellfish craftsmen in 2023.

Tabel 1. Data on income of shell craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District, Tanjung Balai City, 2018-2023

No	Year	number of craftsmen	Amount of Income from Utilization of Shells in Teluk Nibung District, Tanjung Balai City
1	2018	30	Rp. 150.730.000
2	2019	30	Rp.87.950.000
3	2020	30	Rp.40.300.000
4	2021	29	Rp. 94.300.000
5	2022	29	Rp. 117.220.000

6	2023	29	Rp. 295.800.000
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Source: *Disdagper Data*

The highest income value in 2023 is IDR 295,800,000 with 30 craftsmen. While in 2018 the income value was IDR 150,730,000 with 30 craftsmen. But in 2019 there was a decrease in income of IDR 87,950,000 with 30 craftsmen. And in 2020 there was also a decrease in income of IDR 40,300,000 with 30 craftsmen. But in 2021 there was an increase from 2020 with an income of IDR 94,300,000 with 29 craftsmen. And in 2022 the income value was IDR 117,220,000 from 29 craftsmen.

From table 1.2 above, the income value in 2023 was IDR. 295,800,000.00.- with the number of shell utilization of 29 people.

In the utilization of this shell made through shell craftsmen, the problem faced is the price of raw materials where fluctuations in the price of shells or other raw materials can affect production costs and as a result the selling price of the product can affect income.

## METHOD

### Research Location

The research location is a place or area where the research will be conducted. The author conducted research in Teluk Nibung District, Tanjung Balai City. located in Teluk Nibung District, Tanjung Balai City. The reason the author chose this location is because of the significant shellfish craftsman sector, the economic potential and sustainability of craftsmen in the area in the social and economic diversity of the population as an important element of empowerment. The problems that occur are due to limited resources that have difficulty in obtaining raw materials (shells) sustainably or at affordable prices, markets and marketing where craftsmen may face difficulties in marketing their products.

### Research Approach

The research approach used in this study is a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the context of economic empowerment of shellfish craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District. The use of qualitative methods is expected to obtain descriptive data in writing or verbally from the objects to be observed by the researcher.

### Data Collection Techniques

To make it easier to obtain the data and information needed, the author uses three data collection techniques, namely:

#### 1. Observation

James Neill: According to Neill (2022), observation is a systematic process of observation and recording carried out by researchers on certain subjects or phenomena. Observations are often carried out in the natural environment where the phenomenon occurs. Conducting direct observations of economic activities carried out by shell craftsmen. Researchers come to the place to see directly things related to the researcher

#### 2. Interview

James Neill (2022) states that an interview is a form of interaction between two or more individuals in which one party (the researcher) asks questions and the other party (the respondent) provides relevant answers to the questions. The author is free to ask informants regarding the economic empowerment of kersng leather craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District.

#### 3. Documentation

Documentation includes archives in the form of writings, photos, pictures and things that can be explored as data in the research process. Documentation study is a technique for collecting the necessary documents related to the problem being studied so that it can support and increase confidence in proving the problem. **Data Analysis Techniques**

A According to Sugiyono (2022), Data analysis techniques are the process of systematically searching and compiling data from interview results, field notes and documents, organizing data into categories, describing data into units, organizing data into patterns, selecting the most important data and what is learned, and drawing conclusions that are clear enough for oneself and others. The data is analyzed before field research, while in the field and after data collection is complete. The process of data analysis is as follows:

##### a. Data Reduction

Data reduction is one of the qualitative data analysis techniques. Reduction is a form of  
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data analysis that sharpens, classifies, directs, removes unnecessary and organizes data in such a way that final conclusions can be drawn. Data reduction is the process of coordinating, sorting, and selecting relevant data to suit the focus and objectives of the research. In the thesis on the economic empowerment of shellfish craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District, data reduction functions to manage the data that has been collected so that it is easier to understand and used as a basis for conclusions. The stages of Data Reduction in this thesis include: Data Simplification, The initial step data collected from interviews, observations, or questionnaires. In research on economic empowerment, relevant data is that which is directly related to the economic conditions of shellfish craftsmen, the types of empowerment programs provided, and changes that occur after empowerment. Irrelevant data such as information that is not related to the objectives of the research must be fulfilled or eliminated.

b. Data Presentation

Data presentation is one of the qualitative data analysis techniques. Data presentation is the process of expressing or presenting research data, to be compiled and reported so that it can be understood and facilitate decision making, and plan the steps to be taken next. The processed data is arranged systematically. The data sources include interview results, documentation and internet sources. So the data presentation includes information related to the implementation of service standards, relevant findings and efforts made in empowering the economy of shellfish craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District, Tanjung Balai City.

c. Drawing Conclusions

Drawing conclusions is one of the qualitative data analysis techniques. Drawing conclusions is the result of the analysis that can be used to take action. After the data is collected, the next step is to draw conclusions and find the meaning of all the data presented through the data reduction and data presentation process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Economic Empowerment of Leather Craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District, Tanjung Balai City**

Economic empowerment activities of shell craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District, Tanjung Balai City, in addition to maintaining and developing shell crafts, are also a characteristic of Tanjung Balai because Tanjung Balai City is also known as a shell city. This shell craft also aims to improve the community's economy to reduce unemployment and open up employment opportunities for the community to improve community welfare.

Narayan (2002): According to Narayan, economic empowerment is increasing the ability of people, especially those who are marginalized or vulnerable, to control their own lives. This involves increasing access to resources, markets, and employment opportunities, as well as increasing the capacity to participate in decision-making that affects their lives. Taking training or empowerment to continue to build and develop the abilities you have in order to open up employment opportunities for yourself and others.

#### **Motivating, Encouraging and Building the Potential Owned by the Community**

Economic Empowerment is a process that aims to increase the capacity of individuals, groups, or communities to manage economic resources and opportunities independently, effectively, and sustainably. Economic empowerment involves providing access, skills, and opportunities that enable individuals or groups to improve their standard of living and well-being. This process usually includes various aspects, such as improving education and skills, access to capital, and developing networks and markets. The purpose of empowerment is to make the community more independent and able to improve all aspects in the sense of having the potential to have the potential to be able to solve the problems they face and be able to meet their needs well without depending on their lives on the help of others.

Empowerment must be able to grow and develop all abilities and self-confidence in order to support community independence. Increasing the knowledge and abilities of the community, especially related to local social potential so that they are able to solve problems and can be useful to meet their basic needs by creating the Economic Empowerment of Shell Craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District, Tanjung Balai City.

#### **a. Developing and strengthening the potential or power that has been owned by the**

## community

In the process of economic empowerment, it needs to be carried out in stages in order to maximize the potential owned by the community to be able to truly utilize the potential and power that has been owned by the community to the maximum to get better results. With this training, it can be one of the very important means in the process of economic empowerment in improving the quality of life to be better than before.

### b. Protecting the potential or power that has been developed by shell craftsmen

Empowerment means protecting the empowerment process so that it is prevented from weaknesses. Protecting must also be seen as an effort to prevent unbalanced competition. Instilling a sense of togetherness with each other as shell craftsmen is also very important to anticipate the feeling of competition with each other to bring down the efforts of each shell craftsman.

Protecting the potential that has been developed by shell craftsmen means maintaining and preserving what they have achieved, both in terms of skills, innovation, products, markets, and resources, so that craftsmen can continue to develop and compete in the long term. A more detailed explanation of the aspects that need to be protected is as follows:

#### 1. Product innovation

Sea shell craftsmen may have developed various innovations in form, design, or production techniques. This potential needs to be protected so that it is not copied or taken by other parties without permission. Protection of innovation can be done through registration of intellectual property rights such as copyright and industrial design, as well as providing awareness to craftsmen about the importance of maintaining the uniqueness of their products.



Gambar 1. Dokumentasi kegiatan

#### 2. Knowledge and skills

The expertise possessed by craftsmen is one of the greatest assets in the craft industry. To protect this potential, there needs to be advanced training programs that not only strengthen basic skills, but also increase knowledge of new technologies and more efficient production practices. The transfer of knowledge between generations is also important, so that the skills that have been developed are not lost in the future.

#### 3. Market and Network

Craftsmen of shells who have succeeded in developing market networks, both locally and nationally, need to be protected so that their market potential continues to grow. This can be done by strengthening branding, conducting ongoing promotions, and seeking new market opportunities, including expansion into digital platforms or international exhibitions.

#### 4. Raw Material Resources

Crafts of shells as the main raw material must be protected through sustainable resource management. Overexploitation of marine resources can damage the supply of shells in the future, which ultimately threatens the sustainability of craftsmen's businesses. Craftsmen need to be involved in environmental protection and conservation programs to maintain the sustainability of this natural raw material.



Gambar 2. Dokumentasi kegiatan

5. Business Sustainability

The potential that has been developed by craftsmen needs to be protected so that their businesses can be sustainable amidst increasingly tight market competition. This can be done by helping craftsmen in terms of access to financing, marketing support, and developing business models that are more adaptive to changes in trends and technology.

6. Economic Welfare

The success of craftsmen in developing shell crafts is also an economic potential that must be protected. Providing access to micro-financing, people's business credit, and partnership programs with the government or private sector can ensure that craftsmen can continue to produce and get decent results from their businesses.

7. Local Recognition and Appreciation

The potential that has been developed by craftsmen often reflects local culture and traditional wisdom. Recognition of their products as cultural heritage or geographical indication products will protect their uniqueness and historical value, as well as provide higher appreciation in the market.

8. Supportive Policies and Regulations

Protection of shell craftsmen also needs to be supported by government policies that ensure that regulations favor small business actors. This includes policies on copyright, low taxes, easy access to capital, and promotion of the creative industry. Support from this policy will strengthen protection of the potential they have developed.

## **Obstacles to the Economic Empowerment of Shell Craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District, Tanjung Balai City**

### *a. Business capital*

Business capital is a sum of funds or assets used to start, operate, and develop a business or enterprise. Business capital is an important element in the business world because it functions as a basis for carrying out various operational activities, purchasing raw materials, paying labor, and developing the business further.

Business capital provided by the government to shellfish craftsmen Shellfish craftsmen in Teluk Nibung District have difficulty in obtaining loans from formal financial institutions such as banks. Strict requirements, such as collateral that must be provided, and high loan interest are the main obstacles.

### *b. Training and mentoring*

Training is a systematic process to improve the skills, knowledge, and competencies of individuals or groups so that they can carry out certain tasks or jobs more effectively and efficiently. Training is usually designed to meet specific needs, either in the context of work, education, or personal development.

Training in empowering shellfish craftsmen aims to improve the skills, knowledge, and capacity of craftsmen so that they can produce products that are of higher quality, innovative, and have high selling value. In addition, this training also aims to strengthen their business and marketing capabilities so that they can increase income and welfare.

Training in empowering shell craftsmen can face various obstacles that can affect its effectiveness and success. These obstacles need to be identified and overcome to ensure that the training can provide maximum benefits to the craftsmen. Here are some obstacles that may be faced in shell craftsman empowerment training: Obstacles in Shell Craftsmen Empowerment Training.

### *c. Access to raw materials and equipment*

Access to raw materials and equipment in the context of empowering shell craftsmen refers to the availability and ability of craftsmen to obtain raw materials and equipment needed to produce shell crafts. This access is very important because it affects the quality, efficiency, and sustainability of craft production.

Raw materials refer to all types of materials used by craftsmen to make shell craft products. This can include raw shells, dyes, adhesives, and other supporting materials.

- Availability of raw materials
- Quality of raw materials
- Cost of raw materials

Equipment includes all tools and machines used in the shell craft production process, from manual tools to automatic machines.

- Type of Equipment
- Availability of Equipment
- Cost of Equipment

### *d. Marketing and promotion Marketing constraints*

- Limited access
- Lack of distribution channels
- Lack of understanding of modern marketing
- Limited skills
- Limited budget
- Limited human resources
- Distant market where competition with other crafts
- Lack of differentiation Promotion constraints
- Low awareness
- Limited promotional media
- Less effective promotional strategies
- Limited budget for promotion

## **CONCLUSION**

Empowerment carried out by the government seeks to motivate and encourage untrained shell

craftsmen in making shell crafts. they already have skills in making crafts. But they are not yet well trained. They can only make flower motifs. But with training from the government they become more creative in making crafts. The government carries out empowerment to strengthen the potential or skills in making shell crafts which previously could only make flower crafts from shells to making crafts with more attractive and beautiful motifs.

The obstacles faced by the government in developing shell crafts in Teluk Nibung District, Tanjung Balai City are in the government's efforts to motivate and encourage the government to have difficulty in collecting data on who, where they can find shell craftsmen. Furthermore, the government's obstacles in terms of efforts to protect shell craftsmen so that the weak do not become weaker.

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