



Empowering Dasawisma Groups to Increase Family Independence Through the Spirit of Independence

Dewi Jannah¹, Lilis Wahyuni^{2*}, Sulis Pratiwi³

¹⁻³Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Administrasi Lancang Kuning, Dumai, Indonesia

*Corresponding author : liliswahyuni6@gmail.com

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Abstract: Dasawisma groups have strategic potential in supporting family independence, but have not been optimally empowered. This Community Service activity aims to strengthen Dasawisma's capacity as agents of social change in enhancing family independence through the internalization of independence spirit values. The method used was a participatory and educational community organizing approach, implemented at Dasawisma Asoka RT.007, Bukit Timah Sub-district, Dumai City, on August 10, 2024. Activities included interactive material delivery, group discussions, work program preparation simulations, and reflective evaluations. The results showed increased understanding among Dasawisma members regarding their strategic roles, emergence of initiative and self-confidence, ability to formulate solutions based on local potential, and formation of more structured cooperation patterns and emergence of local mobilizer figures. The participatory approach based on independence values proved effective in driving Dasawisma's transformation from administrative implementers to subjects of independent and sustainable family and community development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The spirit of Indonesian independence is not only defined as freedom from physical colonization, but also as a continuous process in building self-reliance, empowerment, and community welfare. In the context of social development, the family is the smallest social unit that has a strategic role in forming an independent, prosperous, and competitive society. Family independence becomes an important foundation for national development because the family functions as a center for value formation, decision-making, resource management, and strengthening the social and economic resilience of society (Todaro and Smith 2015).

One of the social institutions that has great potential in supporting family independence is the Dasawisma group. Dasawisma is a group of housewives formed based on territorial proximity and has a strategic function in supporting various family-based development programs, such as health, food security, family education, and environmental sanitation. Within the framework of community empowerment, Dasawisma serves as a local social institution that can become a driver of change at the grassroots level, particularly in strengthening the role of women in development (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection 2018).

However, objective conditions in the field show that many Dasawisma groups have not been optimally empowered. Based on preliminary observations of the Dasawisma group in RT 007 Bukit Timah Sub-district, group activities are still administrative in nature and have not been fully directed toward efforts to comprehensively improve family independence. Limited access to training, mentoring, and minimal understanding of the strategic role of Dasawisma has caused the group's potential to not be maximally utilized. In fact, research shows that empowerment of community-based women's groups contributes significantly to improving family economic resilience and social cohesion (Kabeer 1999).

In this context, higher education institutions have a moral and academic responsibility to contribute through Community Service (PkM) activities. PkM is part of the implementation of the tri dharma of higher education which aims to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and real community needs. Through participatory and community-based approaches, PkM activities can become an effective instrument in improving the capacity of community groups to identify problems, formulate solutions, and manage local resources independently (Chambers 1997).

The momentum of the Indonesian Independence Day commemoration becomes a strategic context in implementing this PkM activity. Independence values such as self-reliance, mutual cooperation, and social empowerment are relevant to be reinstilled in family and community life. Dasawisma is viewed as an appropriate social instrument to internalize these values because of its position close to the daily life of families. Strengthening Dasawisma through educational and communicative approaches is expected to encourage the emergence of collective awareness and concrete actions toward family independence.

Family independence in this activity is understood multidimensionally, not only limited to economic aspects, but also includes the family's ability to make decisions, manage resources, communicate effectively, and actively participate in social life. This approach is in line with the concept of empowerment which emphasizes the process of increasing the capacity of individuals and groups to have control over decisions and actions that affect their lives (Narayan 2002).

In addition, strengthening communication within the Dasawisma group becomes an important aspect in the empowerment process. Effective communication plays a role in building participation, trust, and cooperation among its members as well as with other stakeholders, such as the sub-district government and PKK organizations. The perspective of public administration communication emphasizes that dialogical and participatory communication is an important prerequisite in collective decision-making and community-

based development (Denhardt and Denhardt 2015).

Therefore, the Community Service activity entitled "Empowerment of Dasawisma Groups in Improving Family Independence through the Spirit of Independence" was implemented with the aim of strengthening Dasawisma's capacity as agents of social change at the local level. The social changes expected from this activity include increased understanding and awareness of Dasawisma members regarding their strategic roles, the growth of motivation to take initiative and be independent in family social and economic activities, and the formation of sustainable collective work patterns. Thus, Dasawisma does not only function as a program implementer, but as a development subject capable of driving family and community independence sustainably.

2. METHOD

Contains a description of the planning process for joint action with the community (community organizing). This explains who the subjects of service are, the place and location of service, the involvement of beneficiary subjects in the planning and organizing process of the community, the research methods or strategies used to achieve the expected goals and the stages of community service activities. The planning process and strategy/method use a flowchart or diagram. (Times New Roman, size 12, Spacing: before 0 pt; after 0 pt, Line spacing: 1)

The Community Service (PkM) activity entitled "Empowerment of Dasawisma Groups in Improving Family Independence through the Spirit of Independence" was implemented using a community organizing approach that positions the Dasawisma group as active subjects in all stages of activities. The subjects of service are members of Dasawisma Asoka RT.007 Bukit Timah Sub-district, South Dumai District, Dumai City, who are mostly housewives and drivers of social activities at the local level. This activity was conducted face-to-face on August 10, 2024 in the Dasawisma Asoka area, with consideration of high community participation and group potential in strengthening community-based family independence.

The activity planning process was carried out participatively through initial coordination between the service team, Dasawisma administrators, RT officials, and group member representatives. This stage focused on identifying the objective conditions of the community, problems faced, priority needs, and local potential that can be developed. The involvement of beneficiary subjects from the planning stage aims to build a sense of ownership, increase active participation, and ensure that the implemented service program is relevant to the needs and socio-cultural context of the local community.

The implementation method of PkM activities uses a participatory and educational approach through a combination of material delivery, group discussions, simple practice simulations, and joint evaluation and reflection. Material delivery was conducted interactively by emphasizing the strategic role of Dasawisma in improving family independence and linking the values of the spirit of independence with women's social responsibility in family and community life. Discussion and question-and-answer sessions became a dialogical space for participants to share experiences, identify obstacles, and formulate applicable and contextual solutions. Systematically, the stages of PkM activities include the preparation stage, joint action planning, activity implementation, evaluation and reflection, and reporting and follow-up. Evaluation was conducted verbally and in writing to assess the level of understanding, participant responses, and initial impact of the activity.

3. RESULTS

The implementation of Community Service (PkM) activities at Dasawisma Asoka RT.007 Bukit Timah Sub-district demonstrated participatory and collaborative mentoring dynamics. The entire series of activities, from initial coordination, material delivery, group discussions, work program preparation simulations, to joint evaluation and reflection, took place in a conducive and communicative manner. The active involvement of participants during the activity process showed that the community organizing approach used was able to build a shared learning space between the service team and Dasawisma members.

The results of the activity showed an increased understanding among Dasawisma members regarding their strategic role in improving family independence and social development at the local level. Before the activity took place, most participants viewed Dasawisma merely as routine administrative activities. After the outreach and discussion, participants began to understand that Dasawisma has an important function as an agent of social change that plays a role in strengthening family resilience, developing women's capacity, and improving the quality of the social environment.

Group discussions became an effective means of identifying various problems faced by Dasawisma, such as limited continuous training, minimal resource support, and suboptimal coordination with sub-district authorities. Through these discussions, participants collectively were able to formulate realistic and contextual alternative solutions, including strengthening cross-institutional cooperation, forming small working groups based on interests and expertise, and planning simple household-based productive economic activities.

The simulation of preparing Dasawisma work programs became the most applicable form of technical action in this activity. Participants were trained to prepare activity plans based on local potential and the real needs of families in their environment. This activity encouraged the emergence of courage and initiative among Dasawisma members to take a more active role in planning and implementing social activities. Some participants even expressed commitment to immediately realize the programs that had been prepared independently at the RT level.

In terms of behavioral change, this activity showed the emergence of self-confidence and collective awareness among participants. Dasawisma members began to view themselves not merely as activity implementers, but as subjects of family and community development. This attitudinal change was reflected in increased participation in discussions, courage to express opinions, and readiness to contribute to family-based social activities.

This PkM activity also gave rise to the embryo of new social institutions in the form of more structured cooperation patterns among Dasawisma members and with the surrounding environment. In addition, the emergence of local mobilizer figures (local leaders) from among Dasawisma women who have communication skills and social leadership began to be seen. The existence of these local leaders becomes important capital in maintaining the sustainability of empowerment programs after PkM activities end.

Overall, the results of the activity showed that the participatory and educational approach based on the values of the spirit of independence was able to revive the spirit of mutual cooperation and togetherness in the Dasawisma group. This activity not only increased individual capacity, but also strengthened social solidarity and collective awareness toward social transformation at the family and local community levels.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of this PkM activity reinforce the view that community empowerment will be more effective if carried out through a community organizing approach that positions the community as active subjects of development. This approach is in line with Chambers' view which emphasizes the importance of community participation in the planning and decision-making process so that empowerment programs truly originate from the real needs of the community (Chambers 1997).

The increased understanding of Dasawisma members regarding their strategic role reflects the process of social capacity building. In the perspective of empowerment, capacity building not only includes aspects of technical skills, but also changes in the mindset and critical awareness of the community regarding their position and role in development (Soetomo

2011). This finding shows that PkM activities successfully encouraged a paradigm shift of participants from objects to subjects of family development.

Group discussions and work program simulations reflect dialogical social learning practices. This process is in line with participatory learning theory which emphasizes that knowledge and social awareness will be stronger when built through shared experiences and collective reflection (Freire 1970). In this context, Dasawisma not only received information, but was actively involved in analyzing problems and formulating solutions based on local conditions.

The emergence of participant initiatives in designing and planning work programs shows an increase in agency or community capacity to act. Agency becomes an important indicator in empowerment because it reflects the community's ability to control and determine the direction of their own social change (Giddens 2018). This shows that PkM activities have triggered the initial process of social independence at the Dasawisma group level.

The behavioral and attitudinal changes seen in participants can also be understood as a result of the internalization of the values of the spirit of independence, such as empowerment, social responsibility, and mutual cooperation. These values function as symbolic forces that strengthen motivation and community self-confidence in taking more active social roles. In the context of value-based development, this symbolic aspect becomes an important element in encouraging sustainable social change.

The emergence of local leader figures in the Dasawisma group shows the dynamics of local leadership that grows organically. According to Soetomo, local leadership born from the empowerment process has strong social legitimacy because it is rooted in trust and emotional closeness within the community (Soetomo 2011). The existence of these local leaders has the potential to become the main driver in maintaining the continuity of family empowerment programs.

From the perspective of public administration communication, this activity shows that participatory, contextual, and dialogical communication is very effective in building awareness and community participation. Material delivery that uses simple language and concrete examples has proven able to increase understanding and participant involvement. This is in line with the view that effective public communication must be able to bridge the interests of institutions and society equally (Habermas 1984).

The active involvement of participants during the activity process also shows the strength of social capital in the Dasawisma Asoka community. Social capital in the form of trust, solidarity, and social networks becomes an important supporting factor in the success of

community empowerment (Putnam 2000). This condition strengthens the argument that empowerment will be more effective if carried out in communities that have relatively strong social ties.

Furthermore, this activity shows that women's empowerment at the grassroots level has a strategic impact on family and community development. Women, especially housewives, have a key position in household decision-making and the formation of social values in the family. Therefore, strengthening Dasawisma's capacity can be viewed as a long-term social investment in sustainable development.

Theoretically, the findings of this PkM support a community-based development approach that emphasizes synergy between local actors, social values, and institutional support. This approach allows social change to grow from below and be more adaptive to local contexts (Todaro and Smith 2015).

Thus, the discussion of the results of this activity confirms that the success of Dasawisma empowerment is not only determined by external intervention, but especially by internal awareness, active participation, and the collective capacity of the community. The spirit of independence raised in this activity functions as a trigger for social transformation that encourages Dasawisma to move toward family independence sustainably.

5. CONCLUSION

The Community Service (PkM) activity entitled Empowerment of Dasawisma Groups in Improving Family Independence through the Spirit of Independence shows that a participatory and educational approach based on community organizing is effective in improving the capacity, awareness, and strategic role of Dasawisma groups as drivers of family independence. The dialogical, contextual, and applicable mentoring process was able to encourage changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of Dasawisma members in interpreting their role not only as implementers of routine activities, but as agents of social change at the family and environmental levels.

Theoretically reflectively, the results of this activity confirm that community empowerment will run optimally if it positions the community as subjects of development, not merely objects of intervention. Strengthening Dasawisma's capacity through participatory communication, internalization of the values of the spirit of independence, and direct practice of program planning based on local potential is in line with community empowerment and social capital theory which emphasizes the importance of collective awareness, local leadership, and mutual cooperation as the foundation for sustainable social transformation.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that Dasawisma groups continue to be strengthened through continuous mentoring, thematic training, and strengthening networks with sub-district governments, PKK, and related institutions. In addition, higher education institutions are expected to make PkM activities based on Dasawisma a model of social learning integrated with the tri dharma of higher education, so as to encourage the realization of independent, empowered, and sustainable families as part of grassroots-based community development.

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