

Tempe Production Business in Community Empowerment at Sodong Company, Tangerang

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the efforts and challenges faced by tempe producers in community empowerment. It employs a qualitative descriptive approach and uses both primary and secondary data. Data collection methods include observation, in-depth interviews with respondents, and document analysis. Data analysis techniques involve data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. The findings indicate that: (1) There are ongoing efforts to empower the community in Tangerang Regency, particularly through Sodong Trading's tempe production initiative. The company recruits two men and four women, providing them with raw soybeans and step-by-step theoretical training on tempe production, progressing from beginner to independent production. The training emphasizes practical, hands-on experience, including how to manage and market the tempe, with average monthly production increasing over time. As a result, the economic conditions of the community have improved. (2) However, the main challenge faced by the tempe producers is the availability of raw materials, particularly soybeans. Imported soybeans are often difficult to obtain, while local soybeans are insufficient and expensive.

Keywords: Tempe Production, Community Empowerment, Challenges

1. Introduction

Tempe production creates job opportunities for job seekers. In Indonesia, tempe production is a promising business as tempe is a staple food consumed daily by many, ensuring

consistent demand. Several aspects are necessary to meet the needs of producers and consumers, and one way to ensure this is through community empowerment.

Community empowerment is a key perspective in development strategies. This approach emphasizes the importance of human capability in fostering independence and enhancing internal and external resources, both material and non-material. As a development strategy, empowerment helps individuals acquire the ability to make decisions and take actions regarding their own lives by overcoming personal and social barriers through increased confidence and skill-building.

Empowerment involves activities that provide the vulnerable and marginalized with the ability to meet their needs—physically, economically, and socially. This includes fostering self-confidence, the ability to express aspirations, the pursuit of livelihoods, social participation, and independence in fulfilling life tasks. The main goal is to support and train individuals to improve their quality of life.

According to Eddy Ch. Papi Laya, empowerment is an effort to build community capability by encouraging, motivating, and raising awareness of their potential, which can then be developed into concrete actions. Successful empowerment requires collaboration and openness between workers and employers. If workers are not involved in planning and decision-making, and if trust between management and employees is lacking, the business will not thrive. Therefore, cooperation is essential for the success of any initiative.

Tangerang Regency holds significant potential for reducing unemployment through the proper identification and utilization of community resources. According to data published by the Central Bureau of Statistics of Tangerang, the open unemployment rate in August 2019 was 6.42%, a 0.39% decrease from August 2018.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Community Empowerment

According to Suharto, empowerment refers to the ability of individuals, especially vulnerable groups, to access productive resources, enabling them to increase their income and obtain essential goods and services. Empowerment also involves building an individual's presence in society, promoting their ability to make informed decisions and actions.

Huraera adds that the purpose of empowerment is to foster social justice by creating conditions where communities can support one another, especially those who are less fortunate, helping them to compete for a better quality of life. Empowerment can take many forms, including:

- Meeting basic needs, such as freedom from hunger, ignorance, and illness.
- Accessing productive resources to increase income and obtain necessary goods and services.
- Participating in development and decision-making processes that affect their lives.



Figure 1 Framework Community Empowerment
(Source: Community First Develove)

2.2. Tempe Production

Tempe production is a thriving local industry in Indonesia, with tempe being a daily staple for many. The economic downturn has led people to seek cheaper, protein-rich alternatives like tempe. Tempe is a traditional Indonesian food made from fermented soybeans or other legumes, and it is widely consumed for its high nutritional content, including fats, proteins, minerals, carbohydrates, and vitamin B12.

3. Research Methods

This study focuses on the tempe production business at Sodong, exploring its role in community empowerment in Solear, Tangerang Regency.

3.1. Data Collection Techniques

The researcher used several methods to gather data:

- a. Observation: This is crucial in qualitative research, as it allows the researcher to systematically document and reflect on the activities and interactions observed. In this study, the observation focused on the tempe production business at Sodong and its role in empowering workers in Solear, Tangerang.
- b. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth insights. This method is flexible, allowing for open-ended responses and the discovery of new information during the conversation. The researcher asked questions to elicit opinions and ideas from the respondents while allowing the discussion to develop based on the situation.
- c. Documentation: Documentation involves gathering data from records, transcripts, newspapers, books, and other written materials relevant to the research. In this study, documentation was used to obtain data that complemented the findings from other sources, ensuring objectivity and concreteness.

3.2. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing process that occurs during and after data collection. In this study, the following steps were used:

- a. Data Reduction: The data gathered from the field were abundant and needed to be carefully recorded and summarized. As more data were collected, the complexity increased, requiring systematic reduction to focus on the relevant information.
- b. Data Presentation: After reducing the data, it was displayed in narrative form, using flowcharts, short descriptions, and diagrams to illustrate the findings. Narrative texts were the most commonly used format for presenting qualitative data.
- c. Verification: The final step involved drawing conclusions and verifying the findings. Preliminary conclusions were tentative and subject to change based on further data collection and analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

Efforts to Empower the Tempe Production Business in Sodong, Solear District, Tangerang Regency

4.1. Community Empowerment from a Pluralist Perspective

Community empowerment from a pluralist perspective is a process designed to help individuals and disadvantaged groups compete more effectively by equipping them with the necessary skills in lobbying and understanding the system (rules of the game). The goal is to enhance their capability, ensuring no clear winners or losers in the process. In the context of the tempe business, employees are trained gradually, from beginners to those capable of running the operations independently. Emphasis is placed on field practice to immediately apply theoretical knowledge, enhancing experience more than theory alone could. This illustrates the empowerment process within Suryana's tempe business in Sodong, Solear District, Tangerang Regency.

4.2. Community Empowerment from an Elitist Perspective

Community empowerment from an elitist perspective involves forming alliances with elite groups, such as community leaders or public officials, to instigate change among the elite. Communities often feel powerless due to the vast control elites hold over media, education, and public policy. Suryana's tempe business began with strong connections established by his parents, which eased business operations. However, maintaining these relationships became challenging. The tempe, initially well-known, gained further recognition, especially among market vendors, who became a large part of the clientele. Workers, many of whom are fishermen, were also empowered by the business as they earned additional income by working part-time. This reflects the elitist perspective of empowerment in Suryana's tempe business.



Figure 2. Community Empowerment. Utara/PDPI
(Source:Poskota.online)

4.3. Community Empowerment from a Structural Perspective

From a structural perspective, empowerment is a struggle against structural forces that oppress communities due to social class, gender, race, or ethnicity. The goal is liberation through structural change. In Suryana's business, both men and women work without distinction. Out of six workers, two are men and four are women, highlighting an egalitarian work environment where workers are valued for their diligence and honesty, regardless of

gender or background. This demonstrates the structural empowerment occurring in Suryana's business.

4.4. Community Empowerment from a Post-Structural Perspective

Post-structural empowerment challenges and transforms discourse. It fosters new analytical thinking. In Suryana's case, business development faced fluctuations due to consumption patterns. The business owner innovatively expanded to new markets, including offering products to food stalls and establishing networks in other regions like Pangkajene. As a result, workers are encouraged to eventually become independent entrepreneurs themselves. This illustrates post-structural empowerment as Suryana continues to grow his tempe business.

4.5. Barriers to Empowerment in the Tempe Business in Sodong, Solear, Tangerang Regency

Various obstacles can slow down or hinder the empowerment process, including challenges in transportation, work, human resources, or natural resources. According to Ibrahim, key factors hindering empowerment were identified in this research:

- a. Planning and Resource Availability: A major barrier was the shortage of soybeans, leading to price hikes and halting production. This, in turn, affected income. However, the issue was eventually resolved as soybean supplies normalized. Similar challenges were noted by Nurul Aisyah in her study on tempe businesses in Cilegon, Banten, which faced difficulties due to the rising cost of imported soybeans.
- b. Conflicts and Motivation: Personal issues, such as conflicts among team members and lack of motivation, can also slow down innovation. In Suryana's case, no such conflicts have occurred, as the business operates like a family, fostering a harmonious work environment.
- c. Financial and Social Barriers: Financial difficulties have occasionally arisen but were manageable. There have been no instances of rejection from local groups, as the community benefits from the tempe business. Social relationships within the business have remained positive, supporting both workers and the broader community.



Figure 3. Tempe Business in Sodong
(Source:Poskota.online)

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

5.1. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the tempe production business and its role in community empowerment in Suryana, Tangerang:

- a. The tempe production business has provided significant benefits to the community, especially to workers, by enhancing their knowledge and improving their economic status. The business has successfully empowered previously disadvantaged individuals.
- b. One major challenge for the business is the high cost of soybeans, particularly due to the superiority of imported soybeans compared to local varieties.

5.2. Recommendations

Following the discussion and conclusions, several recommendations are proposed:

- a. Tempe producers should expand their marketing networks and partnerships to ensure continued growth and development.
- b. Local governments should facilitate access to affordable soybean imports and invest in local soybean production to reduce dependence on foreign imports.

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