

# **HIJAB SMEs: Women's Cooperative Embryo as Media to Grow Eco-Feminism of Hijab Craftsmen in Gresik**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Gresik Hijab SMEs provably show their significance roles in business sustainability and local economy. Hijab considers as women's fashion and most related parties in this industry are women. Accordingly, this situation leads to women's role through gender point of view in entrepreneurship. This article aims to determine whether there are eco-feminism values possibly developed by hijab craftsmen while running their business. The respondents are 41 Gresik hijab craftsmen who join the newly established women's cooperative. Data were collected through online interviews and analyzed using qualitative research approach with the indicator of Experiential Ecofeminism Programming developed by Fowler and Potter. The result shows that women's cooperative is able to grow the eco-feminism of hijab craftsmen in Gresik.

**Keywords:** *Eco-feminism, Women's cooperative, Hijab craftsmen, Experiential Ecofeminism Programming*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Corona virus 2019 disease, known as Covid-19, has become world pandemic in which infecting more than 18.2 million people and 692 thousand deaths in over two hundred countries (August 2, 2020). This disease not only affects health but also other aspects, especially economy. The economic adversity challenges all elements including government, entrepreneurs, and small business actor to overcome this problem. Many researchers report that Covid-19 widens discrepancy existed in society [23][26]. [26] found in their research that in China, Covid-19 highly impacts on society especially in those places which have technology development gap. While [23] mentions in his article that Singapore, aside from its stability in various aspects (health, economy, technology, governmental system, etc.), has been seriously affected by the pandemic. Although Covid-19 becoming global pandemic cannot be avoided, it must be overcome. Problems (economy, education, and government) arising from this issue have to immediately be dealt in order to minimize the impact. Technology offers great assistance in this case. Virtual meetings, schools, online businesses, and other activities utilizing technology support the existence of many aspects including economy, health, education, as well as

government. [7] argues that informatics and communication technology has significant roles in period post pandemic (known as New Normal). In addition, [6] mention that new normal (especially in economy) is highly needed technology serving as the wheel to drive the economic activity. Appropriate approach in term of strategies and ideas is required in order to successfully adapt to the new situation. [15] states that government and institutions' performances become significant particularly for those in economic, health, and education sectors. According to [3], economy challenges is highlighted particularly in crisis. Therefore, crisis management strategy must be drawn and carried out gradually during the post pandemic era. Organizations and related institutions need to be prepared individually, in teams, as well as cooperatively to deal with the new era [5].

Cooperative means as an individual independent association willingly affiliating to fulfill similar economic, social, and cultural needs as well as aims through jointly-owned enterprises [16]. Women's cooperative is cooperative created of the notions on sisterhood, parity, and fortitude from unity [8]. While MacHenry in her study mentions that women's cooperatives are often established due to the similar

bound among women and usually bear confidants and independences through interactions of each members [23]. In Gresik, Hijab SMEs actors mostly consist of female craftsmen rather than male craftsmen. The high numbers of female (women) craftsmen are made them possible to establish women's cooperative.

The Covid-19, a pandemic that infects 213 countries [27], not only affects the national health but more importantly it also endangers many aspects such as national economy and security. The economy becomes fall apart, as there was 'lock down' in many areas. This 'lock down' forbade people to engage in economic activities. In Indonesia, there were many areas experiencing 'lock down', such as Jakarta Raya and Surabaya Raya. Furthermore, many regions implemented local 'lock down'. The condition seizes the national economy and it worsens with the social funding providing by government during the policy. This most affected party is the small entrepreneurs, such as SMEs actors. They cannot carry out their business activity due to the restriction as well as the mass panic. As there was no business activity, it means that family has to face the financial crisis. One of SMEs actors experiencing the problems is Gresik hijab craftsmen. Most of Gresik hijab craftsmen sell their products in the wholesale market in Surabaya and several other areas. Since the Mass Social Restriction or known as PSBB (*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar*), wholesale markets and trade centers were closed and forbade having any business activity. Thus, they were unable to sell any product. As the situation (pandemic) has taken a period of time, the financial struggle has urged them to find another solution. Women's cooperative becomes an alternative for them to engage business activity in order to ensure their household survival. Aside of being able to help Gresik hijab craftsmen to survive through the pandemic, the women's cooperative also becomes a media to implant the idea of ecofeminism.

This study purposes to reveal how ecofeminism is able to grow and develop through women's cooperative embryo. According to [19], women have limited accesses and chances in business worlds as it is proved by only in small scale industry or manufactures women can be found as a leader. Prior research mostly found that women engagement on trading or business activity is on creative business (such as crafts or B&F) [20]. They argue that this involvement is mainly due to financial challenge in their family. The action earning money for family (becoming breadwinner) shows how women's emancipation and social status in their family. However, [12] mentions that their roles face a bigger

challenge in term of social acceptances. This study employs EEP (Experiential Ecofeminism Programming) concept on women's cooperative embryo to measure whether any ecofeminism values found in Gresik hijab craftsmen. The result of this study is going to be the reference for other studies on women-based SMEs as well as industrial development policies especially in the post pandemic era.

### **1.1. Women's Cooperative**

Cooperative is an independent association of individuals who voluntarily unite to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs as well as aspiration through jointly-owned enterprises [16]. Women's cooperative is cooperative built on ideas of sisterhood, equality, and strength from unity [8]. While [20] mentions that women's cooperatives are often established due to the similar bound among women and usually bear confidants and independences through interactions of each members. Moreover, [24] argues that women are able to strive in business industry individually or in groups. In Gresik, Hijab SMEs actors mostly consist of female craftsmen rather than male craftsmen. It is due to the assumption that sewing or tailoring refers to feminine's job which is mostly done by unmarried or married ladies as their part time jobs. Although this view is gradually changed, common view referring this job as women's crafts is not completely lifted in society. Therefore, this condition becomes the prelude for women's cooperative of hijab craftsmen successfully established in Gresik.

### **1.2. Ecofeminism**

[21] defines ecofeminism as a multivalent politics consisting of multiple perspectives, covering various contradictory goals and methods. [19] states that the pedagogy of ecofeminism science receives little exposures in education. Meanwhile, problems of environmental and social justice are interrelated and hardly divided from feminist ideals such as compassion and equality. Chircop (2008) in [19] states that women can be at the forefront of the social and environmental justice movement. Hence, ecofeminism is possibly carried out in many sectors, including business. [10] argue that women are naturally born for nurturing and engaging in life cycle which supported by [13] in point of view on women exploration.

However, [11] have different perspective accordingly, especially in the practicality of women's

role in ecological learning. [14] in contrary mentions that ecowomanism (referring to ecofeminism) is interdisciplinary approach of environmental ethics that promote ecological justice and combine women's role and environment ethical analysis to intersectional, class, and gender analysis study. While [25] engages ecofeminism community in order to create alliances with society. [22] and [1] analyze ecofeminism as an alternative rescue for 'unhealthy' social system. This study aims to observe how ecofeminism value grows in hijab craftsmen through women's cooperative as media.

### ***1.3. Experiential Ecofeminism Programming***

EEP or Experiential Ecofeminism Program by Fowler & Potter was an experiential learning program that brings out the value of ecofeminism [17]. Accordingly, this study engaged EEP adopted from Fowler & Potter which was observed from hijab craftsmen prior and after the media (women's cooperative embryo) was introduced and established. The nine EEPs adapted from Fowler & Potter used are:

*Participants' Self-Concept*; [4] mention that self-concept is defined into three steps, a) causal attribution, it links success and failures to self-restrain; b) reflected assessment, it reflects on how individual think of their peers, family, and role figures; and c) external and internal referential framework, it compares individual ability to their peers. While [9] explain that self-concept according to PISA refers to individual cognitive. This study used the participants' (hijab craftsmen) self-concept prior to join the women's cooperative embryo. The indicators used refer to [10].

*Connection to nature*; [10] connect individual and nature. They illustrate that of 9-5 work on 5 days a week surely creates boredom and stress. Thus, one needs to reflect to nature in order to release the tense and wandering mind. According to [18], the needs of sustainability open the gate to the development of sciences, technology, and information. This study employs Fowler & Potter's indicators to measure how the participants (hijab craftsmen) treat their production wastes and implement eco-friendly approach on their daily life.

*Understanding of Current Issues*; this standard refers to the participants' understanding and knowledge of the currents issues on sustainable business especially in the pandemic era (Covid-19). This standard assess the participants correspond the social phenomena.

*Relation to Ecofeminism*; as sustainability business cannot be separated from environment and society, this study relates the ecological and social environment of the business actors. Hijab craftsmen who mostly consist of female craftsmen can be connected with the feminism issue. Nature and feminism becoming two points assessed lead to the value of ecofeminism. The values of ecofeminism were implanted through women's cooperative. Therefore, this study measures the value of ecofeminism from their engagement in women's cooperative.

*Success of Experiential Education*; this study uses the participants' activeness to measure their understanding on ecofeminism. Women's cooperative embryo serves as media to introduce and implant the idea/value of ecofeminism to hijab craftsmen.

*Changes in Understanding of Issues*; the changes in understanding issues (ecological and social phenomena) is used to observe the development of ecofeminism in hijab craftsmen. How they reflect ecofeminism in both life and business especially in dealing with the changeable issue in society.

*Emergent Emotions*; inequality, unfairness, and unbalance relate to emotion. One tends to feel these conditions when there is social gap whether in term of class (economic state) or status. This study uses the emerging emotions as indicators to assess the participants' feelings and thoughts while conducting the business during the economic crisis.

*Empowerment*; empowerment in this study relates to the enthusiasm in conducting business activity while joining women's cooperative. The indicators used to measure the enthusiasms are their eagerness and fast-response when receiving order (to produce new design hijab) during pandemic era.

*Changes in Self-Concept*; the changing self-concept in feminism reflects from the positive response given during their engagement with women's cooperative and eco-friendly business activities. The indicators to measure the changes are based on the participants' responses in carrying out business activities (the immediate response) starting from receiving order, executing the production, to delivering the products.

## 2. METHOD

This study is phenomenology study of experimental case. The technique employed is qualitative descriptive using narrative approach. The case studied is the establishment of women's cooperative embryo on Gresik hijab SMEs consisting 41 women hijab craftsmen. Data were collected through online interview (WhatsApp calls, video, and messages). Data were analyzed using 9 EEPs (Experiential Ecofeminism Programming) standards adopted from [10]. The conclusion is drawn by deducting the analysis which carried through EEP.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Results

This study finds that through 9 EEP standards (Fowler & Potter, n.d.), ecofeminism values are derived into two points, ecological and social values. The ecological value is seen from how the participants are able to conduct sustainable business (according to GDPs standard) and eco-friendly industry. Meanwhile the social value is seen from how the develop an awareness of self-concept (self-existence) serving their roles as breadwinner and increasing their social status (in society) through their position in the household. Thus, 9 EEP standards are mainly drawn into three points, namely: understanding self-concept, understanding social and ecological issues, and developing knowledge. In addition, through women's cooperative as media, this study finds that Gresik hijab craftsmen are able to grow and carry out the ecofeminism values. It means that the women's cooperative as media to grow ecofeminism value is provably effective. Viewed from the growth of ecofeminism value in the members (participants) of women's cooperative embryo established in Gresik Hijab SMEs.

### 3.2. Discussion

The 9 EEP standards, which mainly focus on four aspects, including: understanding self-concept, social issues, nature, and knowledge. Understanding self-concept means that the participants know what to do, when to do it, where to do it, how to do it, and why to do it. It refers to various elements in ecological and social aspect. Of the ecological aspect, self-concept means that participants are able to decide what type of businesses is possible without endangering environment

as well as maintain the nature of ecosystem. While in social aspect, it considers their roles in society (whether as the breadwinner or financial supporter).

According to [9] self-concept cannot be separated from the individual understanding of their roles in both ecological and social aspect. As such, when the participants know their roles, they tend to increase their knowledge in order to maintain their position. Proved by data obtained from R1: "... I'm happy ... I've worked for 6 years as part timer ... It's truly helpful; my crafts (product) are good, clean.... ("... *saya senang bu, ...sudah 6 tahun bekerja sebagai kerja sampingan, ... saget mbantu-mbantu, alhamdulillah jahitan rapi, bersih...*"). R2 also said "I have no other job, sewing is the only job I can do ..." ("... *Gak ada pekerjaan lain bu, usaha saya ya ini, menjahit ...*"). Other respondents (R3 and R4) mention that women's cooperative helps them to maintain their position in the family (as breadwinner) R3 said "I'm glad with the existence of women's cooperative, it helps me when my family need a financial assistance as well as when I need a capital, it makes my family feeling reassured...." ("... *saya lega bu. Dengan embrio koperasi ini keluarga saya terbantu, ketika butuh uang buat keperluan rumah atau modal dapat dikasih pinjaman dulu...*").

Those prove that participants' awareness grow through the women's cooperative, which accordingly develop their self-concept as an individual that actively assist the family financially.

Second is an understanding of social issues. Social issues refer to all problems that bring out or lay out in the society, whether it relates to nature or community. According to [18] industrial pollution is one of the social problems related to industry. A waste generated from SMEs manufactures mostly creates the biggest problem especially in ecological aspect. However, SMEs as micro industry are the backbone of nation economy due to its roots in society. Through women's cooperative, Gresik hijab craftsmen (participants) given the knowledge on how to treat the waste in order to maintain eco-friendly industry and conduct sustainable business according to GDPs. One of action done by the participants in treating the production waste is by making them into handcrafts such as cloth dolls or cushions. "... I am happy to live near with Delegan beach, I make chair cushion and sell it there, help me to manage the waste ...." ("... *Saya senang tinggal dekat pantai Delegan, saya buat bantal kursi dari sisa kain dan benang, lumayan jadi nggak ada sisa ...*") (R4). Another respondent (R5) told that she sold the

production waste to flea dealer, aside from maintain the waste it also adds another income.

Besides ecological issues, their understanding also reflects on their response in facing national problems. Accordingly, through pandemic, the participants adapt to the situation by designing new model of hijab meeting the requirement for safety device. R8 mentions that the new design corresponds to the current condition where people need to wear face mask, thus by attaching it in hijab, it makes the wearer easier to use it.

Developing knowledge means that one has an ability to seek further information and knowledge in order to enrich oneself. A country is considered as developed one when it hands on the advanced knowledge and information. It means when an individual is able to develop one's knowledge voluntarily in order to improve oneself. An individual plays an important role in a performance management system because that individual is the most aware of the needs and what actions must be taken to ensure system alignment [21]. Hence, by developing individual knowledge, it certainly ensures the organization (the society) development. Developing knowledge in this study observed from EEP standards is seen from how the participants eagerly learn new information and knowledge given by women's cooperative supporters. One of respondents mentions that women's cooperative assists its member in gaining information and giving opportunity to seek more experiences (R10). Moreover, another respondent states that through women's cooperation their skills as hijab craftsmen are increased in which it improves self-confident to survive during the crisis (R21).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, women's cooperative embryo successfully entices the idea of ecofeminism on Gresik hijab craftsmen. Evidently, it can be seen from how female hijab craftsmen (as member of women's cooperative) are conscious of their existence and roles as human being. It means that the idea of feminism is successfully embodied into their life respectively leading to the social aspects of the ecofeminism value. In addition, according to EEP standards (Fowler & Potter), female hijab craftsmen in Gresik provably pass the points analyzed. Their roles in sustainable eco-friendly business show that ecofeminism value starts to ingrate in everyday life, meaning that the ecofeminism value in term of ecological aspects is successfully engraved. Consequently, women's cooperative is provably able to

serve as media to grow ecofeminism on Gresik hijab craftsmen. The authors suggest that employing women's cooperative embryo is helpful in order to grow ecofeminism to women-based SMEs. This is caused by the number of women who actually engaging in small business to support their family (household).

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