

Empowering Quality Cococraft Craftsmen Through Strengthening Partnerships Network

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment through strengthening partnerships is urgent and crucial for quality cococraft craftsmen. The research location was determined using a purposive sampling area technique at a quality cococraft craft center in Purbalingga Wetan District, Purbalingga Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. The research uses an in-depth case study method. The results showed that in the process of empowering quality cococraft craftsmen, it was revealed that the most dominant strengthening of the cooperation network was with the suppliers of raw materials. This partnership is beneficial to ensure the availability of raw *glugu* wood waste and coconut shells as the main raw materials for quality cococraft. Empowerment of quality cococraft craftsmen requires a network of partnerships with various parties, namely market traders, sales agents, customers, tourism market managers, exhibition event managers, local governments, universities and shipping service agents. The various elements that determine the strengthening of the partnership network include mutual trust, communication effectiveness, high social interaction, social closeness, length of social relationship, and symmetrical bargaining position.

Keywords: *craftsman, empowerment, quality cococraft, partnership.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is a dynamic process to increase people's capacity to behave productively, creatively and innovatively. The function of empowerment is not only to increase economic capacity but also to develop socio-cultural feasibility by continuing to take environmentally friendly actions through the use of local resources [9], [20]. One of the goals of empowerment is to increase independence [1], [15]. The dimensions of empowerment are indeed broad and complex but require adaptive management that is strategic and sensitive to conditions, problems, needs and potential resources owned by residents including farmers and craftsmen [2], [8], [11]. Empowerment process cannot be carried out in pieces and in a limited period of time. The nature of empowerment requires a continuous cycle. Therefore, efforts to strengthen self-capacity require gradual and systematic planning. It is important to evaluate empowerment to find out the various weaknesses, strengths, obstacles, failures and successes achieved.

The empowerment process is always tied to participation, cooperation and support, including in the form of partnerships [15], [21]. Cooperation in the form of partnerships is the key that opens the way for the achievement of empowerment goals and this fact is found in a group of quality cococraft craftsmen in Purbalingga Wetan, Purbalingga Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. Cococraft craftsmen have formed partnerships with several parties to increase business productivity. Social relations with a partnership pattern are carried out by cococraft craftsmen not only in the production process but also in pre-production and post-production.

The existence of partnerships carried out by cococraft craftsmen is strengthened by social capital. Utilization of social capital has an essential value as a pillar of strengthening partnerships oriented towards community empowerment [6], [19]. Partnerships help farmers and craftsmen in facilitating the procurement of raw materials and product marketing [14], [22]. Optimizing the empowerment of craftsmen can be done by developing

the function of partnership cooperation with various parties [3], [9], [21].

Partnership cooperation has a function as a driver of the spirit and ability of craftsmen in producing quality cococraft products. Several partners have transformed production technology and modification in order to improve quality of the cococraft, so that the designs motif will be richer and more attractive [17]. Improving the quality of the craft cannot be separated from the assurance of raw materials in the form of wood waste and coconut shells that are selected with the best characteristics. This statement requires that the craftsmen must be skilled in identifying the characteristics of the best cococraft raw materials [4], [7], [16]. The guarantee of the best raw materials can be obtained by craftsmen through continuous partnership relationships with suppliers of raw materials.

The partnership pattern makes it easier for craftsmen to gain access to various potential market segments for quality cococraft products. Traders and sales agents as well as transportation service agents include those who have partnership with craftsmen in post-production activities. Partnership cooperation makes a major contribution to the empowerment of craftsmen as producers of quality cococraft through increasing entrepreneurial skills. The series of problems concerning the urgency of partnership cooperation for the empowerment of craftsmen motivates the theme of this research. The research is deliberately focused on the study of various socio-economic elements that determine the strength of partnership cooperation for the empowerment of quality cococraft craftsmen.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The research method used is an in-depth case study. The research approach is a combination of qualitative and quantitative with a dominant type of qualitative [6]. The research location was deliberately set in the cococraft production center area in Purbalingga Wetan Village, Purbalingga Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. The reason behind the selection of research sites is the fact that the previous research [7-9] result shows that quality cococraft craftsmen have cooperative relationships with a partnership pattern with various parties. The established partnership supports the empowerment of craftsmen in managing quality cococraft businesses to be more productive, creative, and innovative.

The research population includes all cococraft craftsmen in Purbalingga Wetan. Respondents as primary data sources were determined by purposive sampling technique. All of the respondents must meet all the criteria that have been set. The criteria used to determine the respondents are the main income pattern as cococraft craftsmen, craftsmen produce quality cococraft regularly,

have partnerships with various parties both at the pre-production, production, and post-production stages, and actively participate in various empowerment processes. The number of selected respondents was not carried out proportionally according to strict statistical rules. However, the determination of the number of respondents is based on the fulfillment of data needs in order to answer the formulation of research problems in-depth and complete. For the purpose of checking the validity and correctness of the primary data, key informants were determined as other data sources. Key informants were selected using the snowball sampling technique.

Types of data collected in the form of primary and secondary data. Primary data includes a description of the partnership network, variations in the strength of partnerships, the terms of partnership sustainability, and various elements of partnerships in empowerment. Primary data collection techniques used in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and focused discussion. Secondary data in the form of previous research results and relevant ideas have been published in several scientific articles. The technique of collecting secondary data is using content analysis.

The data collected was processed qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data has been processed and then analyzed using the Interactive Analysis Model [13]. Quantitative data that has been processed is directly analyzed using simple statistics in the form of percentage values, tabulations, frequency distributions, scoring, and average values. The data that has been analyzed is then interpreted and discussed in a complementary quantitative and qualitative description.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The partnership is one of the strategic needs of every community empowerment process, including farmers on-farm and craftsmen on off-farm. Partnerships are based on cooperation and can be expected to increase productivity, creativity and innovation. The essential value of partnerships is undoubtedly to increase the ability of farmers to maintain the sustainability of agricultural systems [12]. Partnerships provide economic, technological and social benefits for farmers [18]. Partnerships in agriculture do require clarity of goals, activities, rights and obligations that are mutually agreed upon by the partnering parties. The implementation of partnerships cannot be separated from mutual agreement [5]. Of course this is important so that no party is harmed. The results of this study also show that the partnership of craftsmen with various parties has been going on for a long time.

All of the respondents acknowledged that partnerships were always needed from the pre-production, production to post-production processes of

quality cococraft. This finding is in accordance with the results of other research that proves that handicraft businesses can benefit craftsmen to improve the quality and techniques of coloring as well as marketing, including tin-based crafts [22]. Each partner makes a special collaboration with the respondent. There are partners who collaborate on pre-production, production or post-production processes only. Suppliers of quality cococraft raw materials have partnered with respondents in the interest of preparing coconut waste in the form of wood and shell residues. Regular contact and communication on average twice a week. The first social interaction is for ordering and the second is for delivering orders for raw materials. Suppliers of raw materials are ready to meet the needs and requests of respondents regarding the accuracy of the type, volume and quality of raw materials. On the other hand, the respondent has an obligation to pay according to the agreement. Partnership activities between raw material providers and respondents are not only in raw material activities but also cooperate in the production process. Several suggestions were submitted by the raw material provider to the respondents for the technique of identifying the conditions and characteristics of good raw materials used in the quality cococraft production process.

Respondents conducted partnerships with various parties to expedite the production process. Apart from providing raw materials, respondents have developed partnerships with the Purbalingga local government and universities. Some of the results of research and service in the form of product modification technology, enrichment of motif designs, cutting, splitting and slicing tools, sanding machines for smoothing, tools and rafts, sorting and grading techniques, promotion and marketing techniques were conveyed to respondents. Partnership activities take place regularly and periodically. Not only in production activities, but local governments and universities are also interested in increasing the guarantee of raw materials and the smooth running of the quality cococraft market.

Respondents formed partnerships with sales agents for quality cococraft products which were marketed to several areas of Java and outside Java. Partnership activities with customer agents are not only limited to post-production, especially marketing. Sales agents often provide information about product motif designs that are

trending in the market. Likewise, customers convey quality cococraft collections that are contemporary and have high artistic value so that prices increase. Sales agents and customers always cooperate with respondents to fulfill several raw material requirements according to market demand in order to produce quality cococraft and motif design works. The respondent's partnership with sales agents and customers includes pre-production, production and post-production activities due to the importance of a lasting business relationship so that they try to maintain product quality to meet customer satisfaction.

Other partnerships were carried out by respondents with several parties for the benefit of post-production activities, especially the marketing of quality cococraft. It's just that market traders, tourist market managers, exhibition managers and goods transportation service agents only cooperate with respondents for product marketing. The partnership has lasted an average of > 5 years. Each party tries to maintain trust and fulfill obligations so as not to harm one party. A description of the diversity of the respondent's partnership with several parties in the pre-production, production and post-production activities of quality cococraft is shown in Figure 1.

The strength of the relationship between respondents and various parties shows differences in aspects of economic functional usefulness, duration, implementation of interactions, ease of agreement and fulfillment of rights and obligations. The raw material provider has the strongest partnership with the respondent compared to other parties. Both parties get maximum service from the partnership aimed at maintaining the availability and guarantee of premium cococraft raw materials. All respondents acknowledged the role of partners in providing raw materials to be the most dominant for the continuation of production. Respondents feel lost when raw supply partners cannot be contacted to order wood waste and coconut shells. The raw material provider has the right to receive cash payments by the respondent. There are rarely any late payments. The right of respondents to obtain raw materials is always responded quickly by partners. If raw materials are in short supply, suppliers of raw materials try to collect them from outside the Purbalingga area, especially from Banjarnegara and Wonosobo.

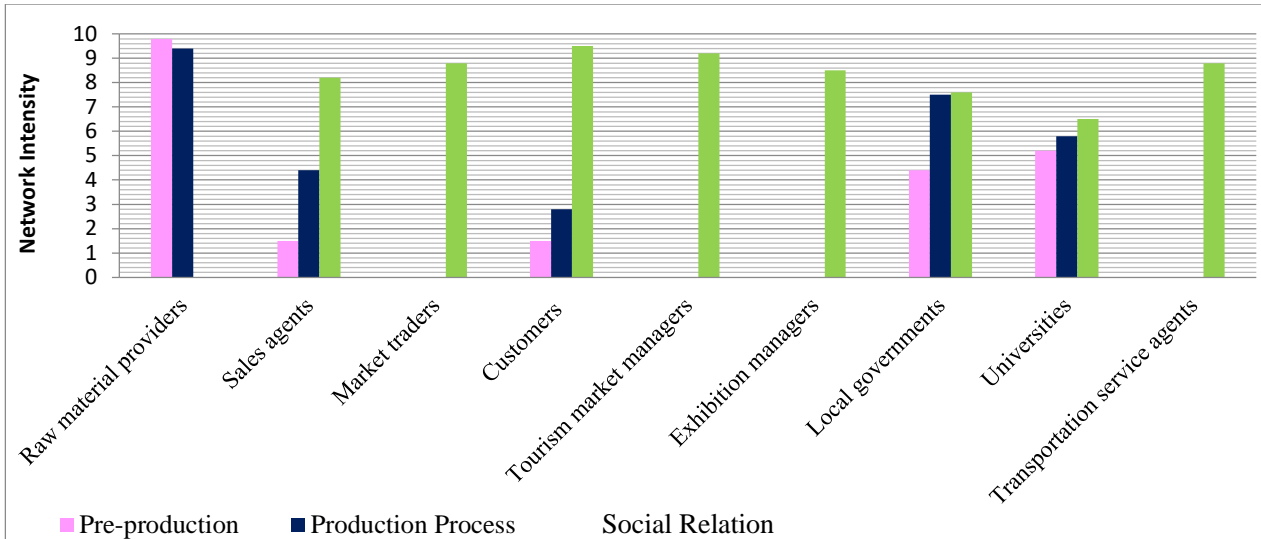


Figure 1. Partnership Network of Respondents in Pre-Production, Production and Post-Production of Quality Cococraft

The respondents also succeeded in establishing strong partnerships with market traders, transportation service agents, sales agents and customers. Some of these parties play a role in the strategy in helping the marketing of quality cococraft products. Market guarantees are provided by partners to respondents as a form of obligation that was mutually agreed upon from the start. The intensity of partnerships with local market traders, sales agents, transportation service agents and customers is relatively high because the coconut marketing process to artisans takes place on average once a week.

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The partnership relationship between respondents with local governments and universities has lower strength than raw material providers, market traders, sales agents, customers and transportation service agents. However, the partnership is stronger than that forged by respondents with tourism market managers and exhibition managers. The purpose of the partnership developed with local governments and universities is not much different, namely increasing the productivity of micro-businesses for quality cococraft as Purbalingga's superior product. Workshop facilities have been permanently prepared by the local government. The form of partnership with universities is oriented towards empowering craftsmen in utilizing several types of environmentally friendly production technology. The partnership with tourism market managers and exhibition managers does not yet have an established strength because they are incidental. The difference in the level of partnership strength regarding the empowerment of respondents in producing quality cococraft is observed in Figure 2.

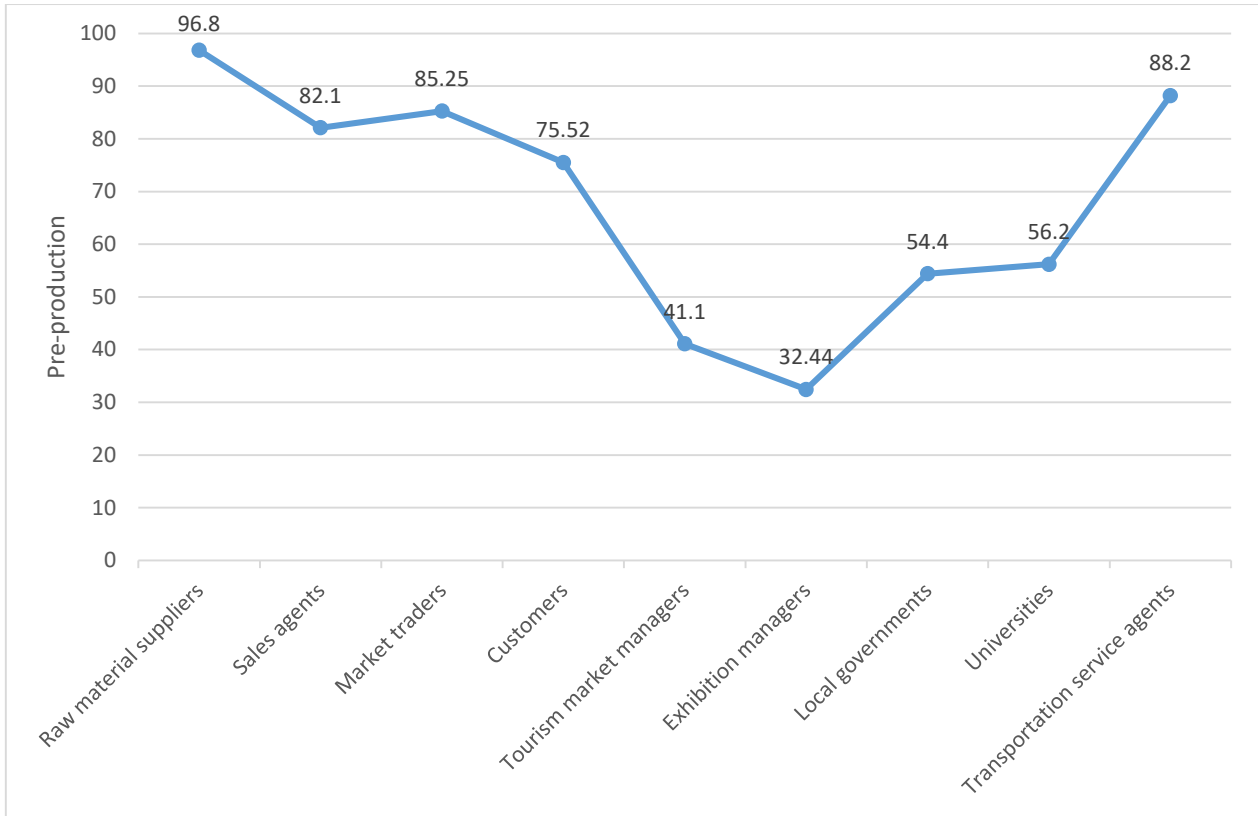


Figure 2. Level of Partnership Strength for Empowerment

The sustainability of the partnership function for the empowerment of respondents with various parties is determined by several conditions that bind the two. The most dominant requirement for maintaining routine frequency and social distance from activities stems from the ability of each party to provide an agreement regarding the certainty of the availability of time and activities. The time allocation of the two partnering parties is based on certain interests. Respondents and partners always try to avoid conflicts of activity time. However, it is often the respondent who tries to adjust the time of the activity. Adjustments are made so that there is a greater opportunity for quality cococraft micro-businesses to be empowered together with other parties.

Another requirement that determines the function of the partnership to support the empowerment of craftsmen

in producing good quality cococraft for the frequency of activities and social distancing is the clarity of activities and contributions made by each party. Respondents accept every activity, contribution and role given by the original partner for the development of quality cococraft production. Guarantee the availability of raw materials that are ready to be delivered on time is a pre-production activity that is given in the form of contributions from partners providing raw materials. Conditions related to the location of activities and the balance of exchange are not dominant determinants of the continuation of the partnership function for the empowerment of craftsmen in managing a quality cococraft business. Details of the requirements for the sustainability of the partnership function are clearly listed in Figure 3.

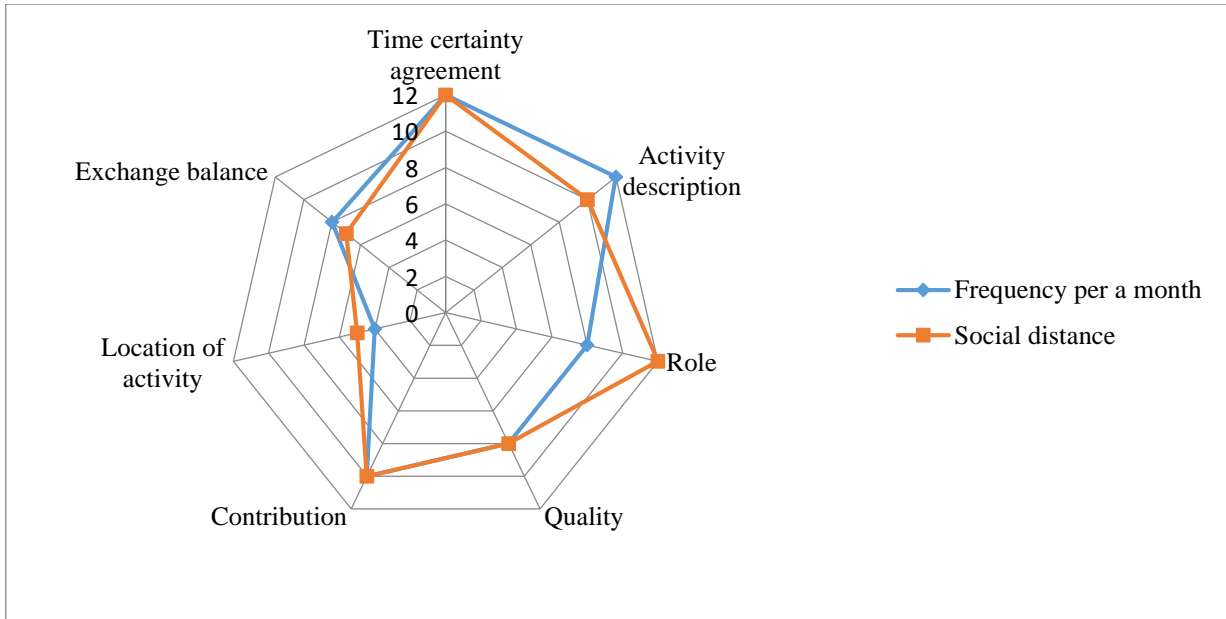


Figure 3. Various Terms of Partnership Sustainability

The elements of partnership in the process of empowering quality cocraft craftsmen are varied. The effectiveness of communication and social closeness are included in the elements that have dominant strength both in the strength of the partnership and its contribution to the empowerment of respondents. Regular communication with the same interests of messages regarding the type and quality of raw materials, cutting and splitting technology, binding and rafting techniques, smoothing techniques, enrichment of motif designs and artistic and contemporary texture arrangement techniques. Another dominant element is mutual trust

and social interaction between respondents and partners. These two elements are important in maintaining the partnership relationship so that it is continuous and beneficial for the empowerment of respondents. Only the symmetrical bargaining position element has a less dominant influence on the partnership function in supporting the empowerment of respondents. This is because the respondent's position with partners is not always required to be parallel during the technology transfer process or market segment expansion. The other elements can be observed in Figure 4.

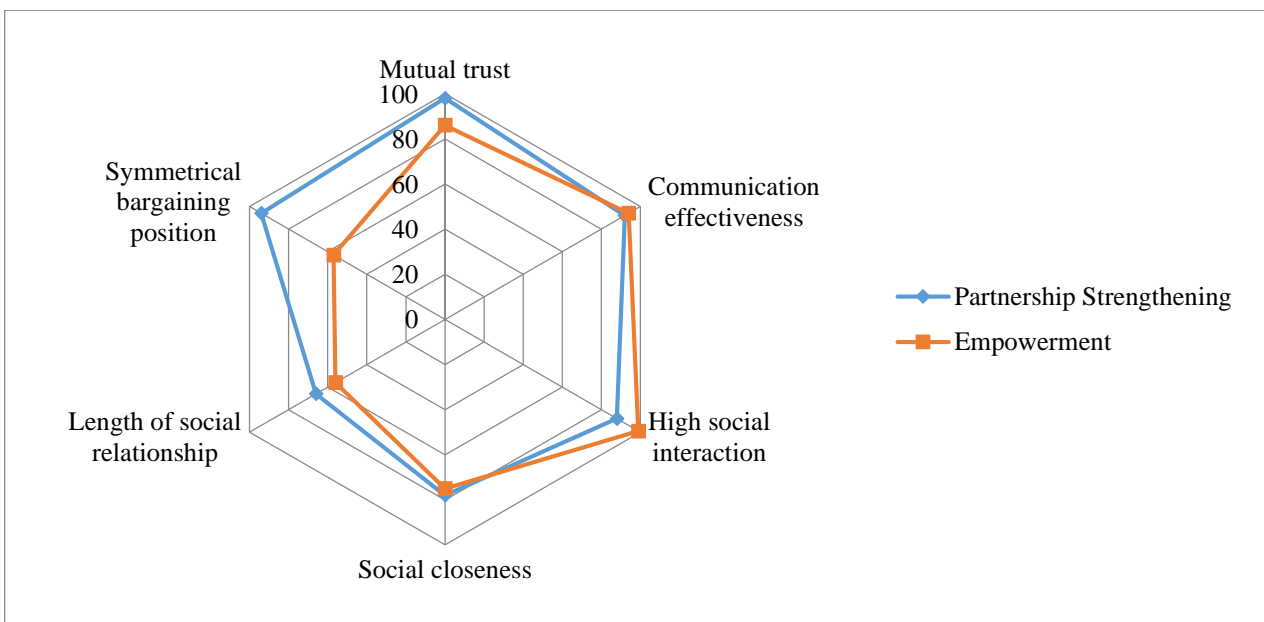


Figure 4. Elements of Partnership in Empowerment

The existence of social relations in the form of partnerships has proven to be an important part of the strategic need for respondent empowerment. Partnerships play a role in helping respondents open their horizons and access to entrepreneurial spirit, technology adoption and marketing of quality cococraft products. Cooperation networks based on social capital cannot be separated from empowerment [10], [12], [20].

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Social relationships in the form of partnerships found in respondents turned out to have a wide network. The partnership network does not only exist in the production process but also in pre-production and post-production activities. The strongest partnership that supports the empowerment of respondents comes from the raw material provider. However, the results of data analysis show that all partnership networks contribute to empowering respondents to be able to produce quality cococraft products. The elements of partnership in the form of effective communication, social interaction, social closeness and mutual trust need to be strengthened to continue to support the empowerment of respondents.

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