

Women in the Ceramic Craft Industry of Mayong Lor: Contribution and Empowerment

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Abstract. Mayong Lor Village, Jepara has long been known as a centre for ceramic crafts. Women play a crucial role in this industry, yet their contributions are often less visible. This study aims to reveal women's involvement in the ceramic production process, its impact on empowerment, and the challenges and opportunities faced. This research uses a qualitative method with data collection through observation, in-depth interviews, and literature study. The main informants are women ceramic craftsmen in Mayong Lor. The results show that women have a very important role in the entire ceramic production process, from material preparation to finishing. Their involvement has contributed significantly to the family economy and the preservation of local culture. However, women also face challenges such as limited access to capital, training and markets. Women in Mayong Lor are one of the main pillars in the ceramic craft industry. Empowering female workers is crucial to maintaining tradition, improving welfare and advancing the local economy. A comprehensive empowerment strategy, including increased access, network building, and policy advocacy, needs to be implemented to strengthen the role of women in the Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry.

Keywords: women, ceramics, Mayong Lor, empowerment

1 Introduction

Mayong Lor Village is a village located in Mayong Sub-district, Jepara Regency. Mayong Lor has an area of 290.20 Ha. Mayong Lor is divided into 49 neighbourhood associations (RT) and 9 community associations (RW), with a total population in 2018 of 13,059 consisting of 6,588 men and 6,471 women. Mayong Lor has a population density of 4,053 per km² in 2018. Most people in Mayong Lor work in industry, trade, and services [1]. Mayong Lor is the centre of the mosaic handicraft industry, so many people work in the industry. Mayong Lor is a very strategic village in terms of trade because it is close to the traditional market. Mayong Lor, which is also the centre of the ceramic industry, certainly supports the trade sector. Mayong Lor, with its rich culture and economic potential, is one of the villages that has contributed significantly to the development of Jepara Regency, especially in the craft sector. The economy of Mayong

Lor is dominated by the handicraft industry, especially ceramics, which have been recognised throughout Indonesia.

Mayong Lor is famous as a centre for ceramic crafts that has been going on for centuries. The skill of making ceramics has been a hereditary legacy for the people of Mayong Lor, making it an inseparable part of their identity and daily life. The history of ceramic crafts in Mayong Lor is estimated to date back to the 6th century. The people of Mayong Lor believe that ceramics have existed since the time of Kanjeng Roro Ayu Mas Semangkin, a figure who is considered the forerunner of the village [2] [3] [4].

The Mayong Lor ceramic industry experienced ups and downs over time. After Indonesian independence, the Mayong Lor ceramics industry continued to grow with government support through various training programmes, the formation of cooperatives, and the establishment of industrial centres [5]. Workers in the ceramic craft industry are currently dominated by the older age group. A significant number of workers are women, and some women in Mayong Lor are involved in various processes in the ceramic craft industry. The research will seek to uncover women's involvement in the production or marketing of ceramics. Explore the impact of women's involvement in the ceramics industry in empowering and improving social and economic status. The research will investigate the challenges and opportunities faced by women in the ceramics industry, as well as strategies to strengthen women's roles and representation.

2 Methods

Data collection in this study was conducted through observation, interviews, and literature studies online and visiting libraries [6]. Information relating to women workers in the Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry was obtained through direct observation to the field to see and observe the object under study [7]. These observations aimed to gain a more complete picture of how women workers in the Mayong Lor ceramics industry are involved in the production, design and marketing of ceramics, and explore how this involvement has empowered and improved the socio-economic status of women workers [8]. In this process, in-depth interviews were also conducted with female workers to find out about their working process and socio-economic conditions. This source collection process combines primary and secondary sources [9]. Primary sources were obtained from observation, searches of government and individual archives, and interviews with women workers. Meanwhile, secondary sources were obtained from relevant writings such as books, journals, and other literature. The available sources were then criticised and interpreted. The results of the above analyses are then linked and reconstructed into an article.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Women in the Craft Industry

Working women are women who are engaged in professional activities such as business, offices, and others based on education, expertise, skills, honesty and so on that promise progress and career paths [10]. Gender studies on women workers highlight the roles, conditions and challenges faced by women in the world of work. In industry, women are often trapped in inequalities that are usually triggered by structural factors such as traditional gender norms, unfair access to education and training, and domestic roles that are often expected of women. Women often face barriers in the form of discrimination in the form of lower pay for equal work, as well as limited opportunities for promotion or leadership positions in the workplace.

In craft industries such as ceramics, women are often employed in processes that require high manual skills. Gender studies in this field seek to explore the dynamics of power in the workplace, the distribution of resources and how company policies can affect the well-being of female workers. In addition, this study also emphasizes the importance of empowering women in the industry through education, training and access to strategic positions so that gender equality can be achieved. The inclusion of women in these economic activities is a reality that women are productive development assets [11].

Women have long been one of the backbones of the craft industry in many parts of the world, including Indonesia. Women have dared to exist in the public sector [12]. Fine hand skills, patience, and a deep understanding of cultural values have made women the main actors in preserving ancestral heritage. Women are often the custodians of traditional knowledge and skills passed down from generation to generation. Women play an important role in transferring knowledge and skills to the younger generation, ensuring the continuity of craft traditions. Women understand the symbolism, meaning and unique manufacturing techniques of each craft product.

Women are one of the biggest contributors to craft production in several craft industry centres. Women work individually or collectively in groups or co-operatives. Women play a very important role in maintaining the continuity and development of traditional craft industries [13]. The right support, such as access to education, resources and markets, can empower women and ensure that cultural heritage is preserved.

The role of women in the traditional craft industry goes beyond production. Women are social pillars that maintain traditions, community values and family welfare. Several social aspects of women's role in the craft industry stand out. Women act as a bridge between generations, transferring knowledge, skills and cultural values related to traditional crafts to children and younger generations. Women preserve the motifs and symbols contained in each craft product, which often have philosophical and religious meanings. Women strengthen a community's local identity and values through crafts. Craft products are often symbols of community pride and identity [14].

Women who participate in the craft industry can increase their self-confidence and self-esteem. The role of women in the traditional craft industry is complex and multidimensional. Women are not only producers, but also cultural custodians, economic drivers, and agents of social change. Successful empowerment of women can be achieved by providing the right support.

The role of women in the traditional craft industry is not only limited to social and cultural aspects, but also has a significant economic dimension. Their contribution to the economy on a local and national scale is very important [15]. Women can have their own source of income by producing craft products, thus increasing economic independence. For most families, especially in rural areas, income from crafts is an important main or supplementary source to fulfil daily needs. Women in the traditional craft industry not only play a role as custodians of cultural heritage, but also as strong economic actors. Some examples of women's involvement in the traditional craft industry are women in Banyumelek, East Nusa Tenggara, women in Semampir hamlet in Bantul, and women in Gilgit, Pakistan.

Women and pottery in Banyumulek village in NTT are inseparable. Pottery craft for Banyumelek women is not only a skill acquired through lineage, but also a dynamic and sustainable social and cultural identity of the community. The dynamism and continuity of Banyumulek's pottery craft can be seen from the functional transformation of pottery, which started from fulfilling the needs of household tools, to becoming a market commodity to export [16].

Women play an important role in the sustainability of the pottery craft in Semampir Hamlet. The division of labour in the pottery making process is dominated by women. Men help during the firing process and do marketing. This is influenced by the community's view that working at home is more done by women. Women crafters have a dual role, working from home as crafters and doing housework as housewives. Women in Semampir Hamlet also feel obliged to maintain and preserve the pottery craft [17].

The experience and situation of women's empowerment in Gilgit paved the way for women's stable social status in society. Women empower themselves with handicraft skills. Women's economic and social position became stronger after they started earning income. Women also felt they were a source of change in terms of motivation, inspiration and encouragement for other women in the community. Women viewed and considered handicraft skills as a source of income and financial support for the family [18]. Proper empowerment of women in various fields including crafts will help improve their social status in society. Women who earn and control their own income have their self-esteem increased [19]. Women with a good income will gain social standing in the community [20].

3.2 Women in Mayong Lor's Ceramic Craft Industry

Many women in Mayong Lor work in the ceramic craft industry. These female workers have an important role that has lasted for generations. Female workers are currently dominated by women aged 40-50 years old. Young women are not interested in working in the ceramic craft industry, as their income is less stable. Young women prefer to work in factories, where the income is higher and relatively stable [21].

Women workers have actively participated in various stages of production, from the preparation of raw materials to the completion of the final product. Women workers in the ceramic craft industry are involved in various processes. Female workers assist in clay processing, such as selecting, mixing and grinding. Female workers are also often involved in shaping ceramics using manual techniques or tools. Female workers are also involved in decorating and engraving ceramics, which requires a great deal of precision and creativity. Female workers also perform painting and final finishing of ceramics, which requires specialised skills to give the final touch to the product [22].



Fig. 1. Female workers are carrying out the jug production process



Fig. 2. Female workers are carrying out the remittance production process



Fig. 3. Female workers are carrying out the process of painting toys or piggy banks

Women workers in the ceramic craft industry contribute significantly to the family economy. The income from this work helps improve household welfare and provides opportunities for women to become financially independent. Women workers in the Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry play a vital role in the sustainability and development of the industry. Women workers do not give up their domestic duties in taking care of their families, even though they also work. The double burden held by female workers, namely domestic and public duties, will be detrimental to women. Women workers with a double burden can spend a lot of time, energy and thoughts so that the time to gather with the family is limited [23] [24].

3.3 Empowerment Strategy for Women's Role and Representation in Mayong Lor Ceramic Craft Industry

Women workers need to strengthen their position with empowerment. Empowerment is when individuals, groups or communities try to control their lives and try to shape their own futures. Empowerment encourages individuals or groups to have full awareness and power over their lives [25]. Women's empowerment must have three

aspects included in its meaning. First, creating conducive conditions that can develop women's potential. Second, strengthening women's potential or social capital to improve their quality of life. Third, preventing and protecting women, and alleviating oppression and marginalisation in all areas of life [26].

Empowerment will achieve maximum potential success by conducting three events. Firstly, motivating and raising awareness of one's potential. Second, it creates accessibility to various opportunities to achieve empowerment. Third, it is necessary to protect the potential as evidence of partiality that prevents and limits unbalanced competition and tends to exploit the weak by the strong [27].

The Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry has long had women workers playing an important role. The contributions of female workers are less visible and recognised. Strengthening the role of women in the Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry requires a multidimensional approach that involves various aspects, from the individual level to government policy. Empowerment strategies to increase the role and representation of women in the Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry can be done in several ways.

Firstly, women have equal access to education and training in crafts such as technical training, design, marketing, and business management. Second, facilitate women workers' easy access to funding sources, such as soft loans, grants, or investment from the private sector. Third, introduce appropriate technology to improve production efficiency and product quality. Fourth, establish women workers' cooperatives to increase bargaining power and access to markets. Fifth, advocate for policies that support women's participation in the craft industry, such as affirmative policies and protection of women workers' rights. Sixth, encourage partnerships with the government for support in the form of training programmes, technical assistance, and marketing facilitation. Seventh, encourage women workers to actively participate in ceramic craft-related organisations. Eighth, involve the entire community in empowering women workers, such as the village government, community leaders, and civil society. By implementing the above strategies, it is hoped that the role and representation of women in Mayong Lor's ceramic craft industry will become stronger, contributing to economic growth and cultural preservation. Along with these strategies, there must be innovation and technology adoption related to improving the capabilities and potential of women workers. Empowerment is an important strategy in improving the roles and opportunities of women workers [28].

4 Conclusion

Women workers play a central role in the Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry. Women workers are not only actors of production, but also custodians of cultural heritage, economic drivers, and agents of social change. Women workers' skills, patience and deep understanding of traditional values have made Mayong Lor ceramics of recognised quality. Women workers also have a significant contribution to cultural and

economic preservation. Women workers play an important role in maintaining the continuity of traditions and cultural values contained in each ceramic product. Women workers contribute significantly to the family and community economy through the income earned from the craft.

Women workers also face challenges such as limited access and changing times. Women often face constraints in accessing capital, training, and markets. Competition with mass-produced products and changing consumer interests are also challenges. Strategies to strengthen the role of women workers in the Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry include improving access, establishing networks, marketing, partnerships and policy advocacy. Empowering women workers in the Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry will not only improve individual welfare, but will also contribute to cultural preservation and local economic growth. With the right support, women can continue to work and become the main pillar in the Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry.

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