

Development of Academic Atmosphere in Women's Small Enterprises in North Sumatra

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ABSTRACT

This community service aims to develop the academic atmosphere of women entrepreneurs to have entrepreneurial competencies in overcoming challenges and developing their enterprises to become upgraded SMEs. This service was conducted in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency with a total of 31 women's small enterprises. This activity was carried out using qualitative descriptive methods from 5 tools, namely documents, focus group discussions (FGDs), interviews, observations, and workshops. The results of FGDs showed that women entrepreneurs needed to collaborate with universities to make affordable and quality products. The results of interviews and observations showed that they ran the enterprises because they wanted to get more income, dared to take calculated risks, had the competence, were able to take advantage of opportunities, and were able to face changes in society. These women entrepreneurs were also given training in the form of workshops to develop the academic atmosphere and increase competence in managing entrepreneurship by creating entrepreneurial journeys, namely the understanding of being successful entrepreneurs. Therefore, they can contribute to large companies.

KEYWORDS

academic atmosphere; entrepreneurial competencies; women's small enterprises

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has the fourth largest population in the world after China, India, and the United States, which is 273.5 million people. The existence of a large population causes a large workforce. A large workforce has an impact on Indonesia, especially in the workforce who are unemployed. This includes educated unemployment such as graduates who find it difficult to get jobs. Open unemployment is a population who does not have a job and is looking for a job. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) [1], the open unemployment rate in Indonesia comes from the population with education in vocational high school (13.55%), senior high school (9.36%), diploma (8.08%), and bachelor (7.36%).

Unemployment has an impact on long-term social problems that can cause losses to the state due to poverty and lead to high crime. Unemployment is a population aged 15 years and over who do not have a job. According to BPS [1], unemployment in Indonesia was 9.77 million people in 2020. This number increased by 2.67 million from 2019 which was 7.10 million. The open unemployment rate in 2020 rose by around 1.8% from 2019 which was 5.23% to 7.07%.

The percentage of unemployment originating from the undergraduate education level is

still quite high when viewed from the unemployment originating from the elementary and junior high school education levels. Every year, universities that produce millions of scholars should be able to produce quality human resources so that they can advance regions in Indonesia. It turns out that unemployment in Indonesia is dominated by educated unemployment. Unemployment in Indonesia can be reduced by entrepreneurship. According to Zimmerer [2], someone can develop a new business with risks and uncertainties to gain profits by seeing opportunities and utilizing resources. Entrepreneurship plays an important role in improving the economy of a region in a country because it can create jobs, increase national income, and reduce economic and social inequalities.

An entrepreneur has reduced unemployment, especially for him/herself. Meanwhile, according to Alma [3], a developed country has many educated people who run enterprises so that the country is assisted in creating jobs. The ability of Indonesian government has limitations in creating job opportunities because the government cannot carry out all aspects of development due to having to spend a large enough budget. Therefore, the development will be more successful if many entrepreneurs can create many jobs.

The number of entrepreneurs in Indonesia is still relatively small when compared to other ASEAN countries. It is 3.4% of the total population in Indonesia according to the Minister of Cooperatives and SMEs, Teten Masduki. On the other hand, Malaysia has 4.74%, Thailand has 4.26%, and Singapore has 8.76% [4]. One of the steps in increasing the number of entrepreneurs in Indonesia is to develop the academic atmosphere [5] for entrepreneurship for students and women's small enterprises in North Sumatra. So, when students graduate from universities, they prefer opening their businesses and creating jobs (job creators) to being job seekers. Entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged, motivated, and built through the development of the academic atmosphere at universities, such as Universitas Sumatera Utara. It acts as the main capital in creating new entrepreneurs from graduates and helping SMEs have an entrepreneurial spirit to overcome the challenges of developing their enterprises into upgraded SMEs.

An entrepreneurial academic atmosphere is developed through an interest in entrepreneurship for students and women's small enterprises. According to Alma [3], there are three influencing factors, namely 1) personal factors, which involve aspects of 4 personality types, 2) environmental factors, such as the physical environment, and 3) sociological factors, which are related to the social environment. Based on the data above, one of the determining factors in entrepreneurship is a change in student behavior from job seekers to job creators. Changes in entrepreneurial behavior for students are of course influenced by the existence of the academic atmosphere to encourage the creation of new entrepreneurs from diploma and bachelor's degree graduates.

There are obstacles and challenges faced when developing entrepreneurship in universities and society at large, ranging from methods, curriculums, and interests in entrepreneurship. Therefore, in this service, survey and training activities were carried out on the entrepreneurial interests of students and women's small enterprises in North Sumatra to collect data related to the constraints and challenges of small enterprises being carried out.

RESEARCH METHODS

This service was held in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency using a qualitative descriptive method. Data collection and activities were carried out in five ways, namely 1) documentation studies—data and information were taken from textbooks and journals related to the research focus, 2) focus group discussions (FGDs)—conducted on students and women's small enterprises in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency, 3) interviews—to dig deeper information about the obstacles and challenges faced by women's small enterprises

in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency, 4) observations—to observe the object of research, namely women entrepreneurs in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency, and 5) workshops—as training for women entrepreneurs to develop the academic atmosphere and increase an entrepreneurial competence. Data collected were primary data carried out directly on the object of research in the form of interviews and observations. The data analysis technique was a descriptive analysis method to see thoroughly the relationship between situations as well as service instruments in the form of questionnaires and various activities that have been made together based on aspects related to the development of the academic atmosphere in women's small enterprises in North Sumatra.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Characteristics

Data on the characteristics of respondents and enterprises described in this service were seen from age, educational background, length of enterprise, and type of enterprise as listed in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Respondent's Identity Description

Respondent's Identity	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
21-30	5	16 %
31-40	10	32 %
41-50	13	42 %
≥51	3	10 %
Education		
Elementary School	5	16 %
Junior High School	8	26 %
Senior High School	16	52 %
Bachelor's Degree	2	6 %

Source: Questionnaire 2022

Based on Table 1, women entrepreneurs were generally aged 41-50 years with a percentage of 42%. It means most of the women entrepreneurs were aging mothers experienced in entrepreneurship. Furthermore, women entrepreneurs' education on average was a high school graduate and currently studying at a university as much as 52%.

Table 2. Enterprise Identity Description

Enterprise Identity	Frequency	Percentage
Length of Enterprise		
<5 Years	22	71 %
5-10 Years	4	13 %
>10 Years	5	17 %
Type of Enterprise		
Food/ Culinary	18	58 %
Herbs/Herbal Drinks	2	6 %
Livestock	4	13 %
Stall/Outlet/Store	4	13 %
Online Business	2	6 %
Home Industry	1	4 %

Source: Questionnaire 2022

From Table 2, it is known that most respondents had run their enterprises for under 5

years by 71 %. This is due to the impact of COVID-19 which hampered many of their activities. Thus, women were required to innovate and be creative to keep earning for daily needs by selling food and drinks, selling livestock, opening stalls or outlets, and selling online on social media. Most enterprises survive amid the COVID-19 pandemic situation, even if they can grow rapidly.

Description Analysis

The results of questionnaires and interviews with women entrepreneurs regarding their involvement in various social activities are shown in Figure 1. The reasons are listed in Table 4. Meanwhile, their entrepreneurial competencies can be seen in Table 4 as follows.

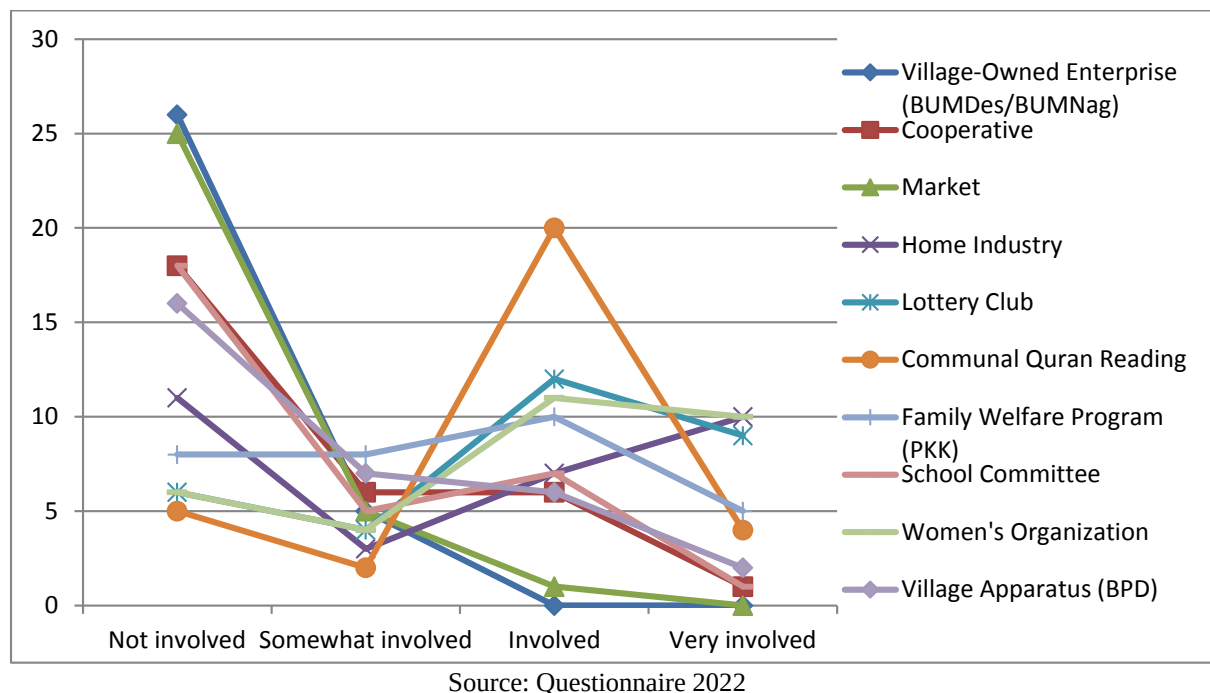


Figure 1. Women's Small Enterprise Involvement in Social Activities

Based on Figure 1, it is presented that many women's small enterprises were not involved in social activities. The most followed social activities were women's lottery clubs, communal Quran readings, and women's organizations. For an entrepreneur, actively participating in social activities is very important to extending the network and establishing good relationships with consumers and the community.

Table 3. Entrepreneurial Reason Description

Entrepreneurial Reason	Option								Category
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Have more free activities, especially in deciding the time to work	0	0	0	0	17	55	14	45	Agree
Desire to develop a hobby	1	3	2	6	15	48	13	42	Agree
More interested in being an enterprise owner than working	0	0	0	0	16	52	15	48	Agree

with other people									
Can apply new ideas	0	0	2	6	18	58	11	35	Agree
Dare to face challenges	2	6	3	10	15	48	11	35	Agree
Want to continue a family enterprise	0	0	2	6	19	61	10	32	Agree
Hope to earn more	0	0	0	0	14	45	17	55	Strongly agree
Have a sense of dissatisfaction with the previous job	1	3	0	0	16	52	14	45	Agree
Hope to give more time to the family	0	0	0	0	12	39	19	61	Strongly agree
Want to create jobs for family	0	0	0	0	15	48	16	52	Strongly agree
Dare to take calculated risks	0	0	0	0	11	35	20	65	Strongly agree

Source: Questionnaire 2022

Based on Table 3, the biggest reason women entrepreneurs chose to become entrepreneurs was because they hoped to earn more income, could provide more time for their families, and dared to take calculated risks. In entrepreneurship, there are many aspects more flexible than working formally for other people or companies. So, for women, especially housewives, this is the most considered aspect considering the roles they also carry out as mothers and wives. But, it cannot be denied that entrepreneurship also has challenges and risks that are big enough to be faced.

Table 4. Entrepreneurial Competency Description

Entrepreneurial Competency	Option								Category
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Knowledge of bookkeeping	8	26	11	35	10	32	2	6	Disagree
Knowledge of business operations (production infrastructure)	5	16	9	29	16	52	1	3	Agree
Knowledge of supporting human resource management	2	6	10	32	13	42	6	19	Agree
Able to identify business opportunities	0	0	2	6	18	58	11	35	Agree
Able to set clear business goals	0	0	0	0	20	65	11	35	Agree
Able to maintain relationships with supporting people for business development	0	0	0	0	19	61	12	39	Agree
Able to take advantage of opportunities as well as possible	0	0	0	0	14	45	17	55	Strongly agree
Able to deal with changes that occur in society	0	0	0	0	12	39	19	61	Strongly Agree
Able to make decisions based on calculated risks	0	0	2	6	16	52	13	42	Agree
Able to manage stress from conditions of uncertainty	0	0	5	16	18	58	9	29	Agree

Source: Questionnaire 2022

Based on the results shown in Table 4, the competency possessed by women entrepreneurs was still very minimal in terms of knowledge about enterprise bookkeeping. This is because these women entrepreneurs still mix up the bookkeeping of enterprise and family finances. It makes the money earned not optimal to be allocated for enterprise development and expansion. Meanwhile, the superior competencies possessed by many women entrepreneurs were being able to set clear business goals, being able to take advantage of opportunities as well as possible, and being able to deal with changes that occur in society. Women tend to be more creative and more adaptable in facing various changes. Therefore, the ideas and creativity of women entrepreneurs are always honed to create product innovations and promotions according to market needs.

Results of FGD and Workshop

Based on the FGDs carried out on women's small enterprises in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency, the results showed that women's small enterprises still had many challenges and obstacles, especially those who were new to the business world. Making a consistent and growing enterprise is very difficult, especially during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Many activities are limited and have strict health protocol rules. This makes women entrepreneurs need to be creative and quickly adapt to the environment and conditions that occur. For this reason, a collaboration between women's SMEs and universities is needed to make their products have high quality but affordable prices. Reciprocal relationships between lecturers, students, and women entrepreneurs are needed in productions or promotions that can generate maximum profits.

Women entrepreneurs were also given training in the form of a workshop that can develop an entrepreneurial academic atmosphere and increase their competencies in managing and developing their enterprises. The workshop was in collaboration with the Malaysian Academy Of SME & Entrepreneurship Development (MASMED) Universiti Teknologi MARA in terms of the university's role in developing an entrepreneurial academic atmosphere for USU society of academicians and women's small enterprises in North Sumatra. Also, a collaboration was made with the Human Resources Training of Export and Trading Services (PPEJP) Secretariat General of the Ministry of Trade which provided training on competencies in developing entrepreneurship so that product quality is maintained and SME products can be marketed globally.

The values of the academic atmosphere obtained from the workshops with MASMED and PPEJP are making entrepreneurs' journeys, namely understanding to become successful entrepreneurs. So, women entrepreneurs can contribute to large companies. The academic atmosphere values consist of 1) advice—to develop entrepreneurial skills, identify opportunities for innovation and develop business models consistently, sustainably, and profitably, 2) finance—to provide financing to women entrepreneurs in accelerating their enterprise development, 3) support—to provide business guidance and training, 4) training—professional training on the theoretical and practical aspects of entrepreneurship, 5) research—to expand the body of entrepreneurial knowledge along with innovative ways to improve its pedagogy, and 6) collaboration—with big entrepreneurs and all stakeholders of the ecosystem to ensure that the programs carried out remain relevant and useful.

CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged, motivated, and built through the development of the academic atmosphere at universities, such as Universitas Sumatera Utara, as the main

capital in creating new entrepreneurs from graduates and helping SMEs to have an entrepreneurial spirit to overcome the challenges of developing their enterprises into upgraded SMEs. The development of an entrepreneurial academic atmosphere is by developing an interest in entrepreneurship for students and women entrepreneurs in North Sumatra. For this reason, a collaboration between women's SMEs and universities is needed to make the products have high quality but affordable prices. Reciprocal relationships between lecturers, students, and women entrepreneurs are needed in productions or promotions that can generate maximum profits. Women entrepreneurs must also acquire the values of academic atmosphere to be able to create an entrepreneurial journey, namely the understanding of being a successful entrepreneur. As a result, they can contribute to large companies. The values of academic atmosphere that need to be built are 1) advice—to develop entrepreneurial skills, identify opportunities for innovation and develop business models consistently, sustainably, and profitably, 2) finance—to provide financing to women entrepreneurs in accelerating their enterprise development, 3) support—to provide business guidance and training, 4) training—professional training on the theoretical and practical aspects of entrepreneurship, 5) research—to expand the body of entrepreneurial knowledge along with innovative ways to improve its pedagogy, and 6) collaboration—with big entrepreneurs and all stakeholders of the ecosystem to ensure that the programs carried out remain relevant and useful.

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