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# Village Marginal's Women Empowerment with Paulo Fraire's Problem-Facing Approach

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The village marginal women group is a group of people who are marginalized and therefore unable to adapt to current developments. The inability to adapt results in women not having strong relationships and the power to adapt their identified needs to align with the demands of village development developments. Marginal village women's groups are neglected and do not receive attention from the government and village community, so women experience obstacles in expressing themselves, speaking out to express their rights, and providing opinions on what they experience. This research analyzes efforts to empower rural marginal women based on Fraire's empowerment theory by using a problem-facing approach in the context of empowerment as an awareness effort at four levels of awareness. The research method used is a library study with techniques of content analysis. The research results state that: 1) empowerment of marginalized village women has been carried out in various countries including Indonesia with different empowerment concepts. This empowerment is carried out on a regional, national, and international/global scale; and 2) empowerment of marginal village women based on Fraire's theory has been carried out in several countries such as Finland, Pakistan, Nepal, China, and other countries. However, in Indonesia, the Fraire empowerment concept has not been implemented properly and can only reach the intransitive awareness stage.

Keyword: Village Marginal's Women Empowerment, Paulo Fraire's Facing Problem Approach

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country in the Southeast Asia region with a complex level of women's problems, especially marginalized rural women's groups. Marginal village women groups are part of marginalized communities so they cannot adapt to existing developments [1]. The inability to adapt to marginal village women groups causes them to experience obstacles in expressing themselves, speaking out to convey their rights, and expressing opinions about things they experience so that they appear helpless in the wider community. *The United Nations Children's Fund* stated that in 2013, Indonesia became the country with the seventh-highest rate of child marriage in the world [2]. Data from the Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak (KemenPPPA) shows that the rate of early marriage in Indonesia is very worrying and has still been above 11% for the last five years, and in 2021 there were 65 thousand cases of child marriage, followed by 55 thousand cases in 2022 [3;4]. From 2007 to 2015 the maternal mortality rate (MMR) in Indonesia increased from 228/100 thousand people to 305/100 thousand people [5]. Apart from that, the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) also noted an increase in the number of unemployed women in 2019 to 51.89% from 2018 which was only 51.88% [6]. These problems place women as oppressed people, targets of continuous exploitation [7].

Analyzing further the condition of Indonesian women, the issue of gender equality is a complicated problem that continues to exist today. Gender equality refers to differences in roles, functions, and responsibilities between women and men, not just oriented towards biological differences between women and men [8; 9; 10]. Gender can change over time through the socio-cultural construction of the local community [11;9]. Gender equality guarantees equal rights and obligations between men and women in all areas of life including education

[12;9]. Gender equality between men and women from a social perspective experiences problems that are not being swallowed by time [13]. Society's stereotype of women as weak creatures causes women to continue to be oppressed and unable to develop as intelligent, independent, and independent individuals on their own two feet [9;14].

Views and stereotypes towards women have led to the emergence of empowerment efforts as assisting so that women are empowered and have abilities because helping women is the same as helping society [15]. Empowerment is the main and most important thing because it relates to the ability to change knowledge and skills to have more power over oneself sustainably [16;17]. Empowerment can be done through education with a dialogic and problem-facing educational approach [18]. According to Fraire (2020), empowerment through education focuses on education as a humanization process. Specifically, humanization leads to freedom from oppression and shackles in any form [18]. Some of the main concepts in Fraire's (2020) thinking regarding liberating education are: 1) awareness; 2) education facing problems; and 3) alphabetization. Education in Fraire's concept [18] generally has a reconstructionist humanization pattern, namely education to help people rise from conditions of oppression through empowerment activities in all aspects of life according to their interests [19].

Empowerment through education to face problems has four levels of awareness in fighting for the fate of one's life absolutely [18]. The four types of consciousness in question are 1) intransitive consciousness, namely a condition where the individual only prioritizes physical needs without caring about other things; 2) semi-intransitive consciousness, namely the magical consciousness of people with a mute and closed culture who are fatalistic and live under dependency; 3) naive awareness, namely a condition in which the ability to recognize reality has begun to emerge, but still primitive and naive by engaging in polemics without dialogue; and 4) transitive critical awareness, namely a condition characterized by a depth of interpretation of the problems that occur, carrying out dialogue together and being able to reflect on cause and effect relationships.

Problem-facing education is education with the aim of awareness that exposes students to the realities of life that occur directly [18]. In this way, students as targets of empowerment will have a complex view of existing problems, resulting in awareness at four levels. Problem-facing education is expected to be able to increase student's awareness to the level of transitive critical awareness so that students as targets of empowerment can carry out discussions together in a dialogic manner and can reflect freely on themselves in resolving the shackles of problems that have been oppressing themselves and their groups [18].

The important role of women in a nation places women as a resource that must excel in all aspects of life. Jawaharlal Nehru stated that the condition of a nation can be known by looking at the status of that nation's women [20;15]. Women are the main actors in today's development concerns and are an important element in determining the success of a nation's development in all aspects of life, including the family [16;20;21]. The aim of empowering marginalized village women is so that women have full contribution and awareness of themselves, participating in the internal and external spheres of the social environment of society [22]. Several women's empowerment programs that have been successfully implemented in Indonesia include providing business capital assistance to Kelompok Usaha Bersama Perempuan (KUBP), providing business capital in the form of money and equipment, providing superior seeds, providing small industry training, providing BumDes funding assistance, establishing PRIMA Villages (Perempuan Indonesia Maju Mandiri), the formation of Perintis (Perempuan Innovator Indonesia) and the formation of the PKK (Pemberdayaan dan Kesejahteraan Keluarga) [23;24;25;26;27].

The Indonesian government's policy of implementing women's empowerment programs has had a positive impact on people's lives. The positive impact of women's empowerment programs can be in the form of increasing family and even national economic welfare [28]. Women's empowerment assists with decent work, creates a form of solidarity, drives gender transformation, strengthens social status, increases awareness, and provides opportunities in the decision-making process [30;31;29;32]. Women's empowerment in a wider area is carried out independently and collectively to earn income and start a business [30]. Women's empowerment is also carried out to transfer knowledge, attitudes, and skills that can realize independence improve economic quality appropriately, and reduce poverty rates [33;17;27]. The success of the women's empowerment program through providing materials has triggered a broader understanding of the concept of empowerment, namely as an awareness effort so that people can live a decent life [18]. Therefore, this research conducted an exploratory study of a group of women's empowerment programs implemented in Indonesia. This exploratory study aims to explore the extent to which women's empowerment efforts can increase awareness through problem-solving education

[18].

#### **METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a literature study method. In the context of literature study, the results of research findings are the result of exploration of literature studies from books, journal articles, proceedings, and mass media writings which are analyzed based on certain paradigms or theories holistically using a qualitative approach according to the research objectives. To achieve the research objectives, the researcher used Fraire's (2020) empowerment theory as a frame of reference in analyzing the existence of empowerment values that exist in marginalized communities, especially village women groups in Indonesia. The data analysis steps are carried out starting from collecting reading material related to the research problem, sorting and reviewing the material according to need, and analyzing it using content analysis or content analysis.

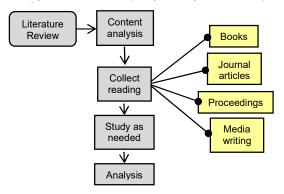


Figure 1. Literature Study Methods in Research

#### SULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the research results and discussion through a literature study using content analysis on the detailed empowerment of village marginal women are categorized into two assumptions, namely: 1) efforts to empower groups of village marginal women in general at a certain level; and 2) efforts to empower marginalized village women groups are seen from the concept of empowerment according to Paulo Fraire.

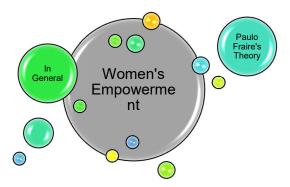


Figure 2. Research Findings

### **Empowerment of Village Marginal's Women**

Long before the word empowerment became popular among people nationally and internationally, women independently and collectively have tried to make various efforts to gain full control over themselves and participate in determining the right decisions for themselves, both within the family, community, government and in international development. The problem that occurs is the lack of women's groups that have a clear conception regarding empowerment. Even though it is easy to aspire, in reality, this isn't easy to implement. The female group has limited movement space compared to the male group [34].

Research findings through activities content *analysis* state that empowerment of marginalized communities, especially rural women groups, has been widely carried out, both at the national and international levels. Some of these empowerment programs have even become a top priority for the Indonesian government. However, as far as empowerment programs are carried out they have not been able to produce effective and efficient forms of

empowerment and have not been able to reach all levels of society, including marginalized communities who are vulnerable to the complexity of problems [35].

Research results presented by Lean In and McKinsey in 2016 stated that there were almost 75 million women who were empowered to earn income and start businesses. As a result, the empowerment carried out did not progress and stalled with very worrying results. This is caused by the lack of direct involvement of women in these empowerment efforts. This research reveals that of the 80% of women who work, the level of involvement only reaches 47%. To increase this involvement, Lean In and McKinsey offer empowering women by involving men's groups to achieve equality. Empowerment solutions consist of sponsoring work for women, investing in women, and inviting women to rise and make decisions [36;30].

Cornwall (2016) in his research stated that women are the main actors in today's development concerns. Cornwall is more concerned with what women gain from development compared to what women can do for development. This is due to the role of empowerment as a goal of development which will be carried out through existing empowerment programs. Furthermore, Cornwall also stated that empowerment can be done independently and collectively to explore abilities at a high level of awareness of the importance of being empowered. However, many institutions and even governments carry out empowerment with the aim and focus of providing access to external resources, assets, or services without prioritizing the initial goal of empowerment as an effort to build self-confidence and self-esteem.

In modern times, the implementation of women's empowerment programs can be encouraged through the development of information and communication technology that can be utilized in global scale networks. This empowerment aims to reduce the gap in women's knowledge at the global level. Technology plays a very important role in supporting the development of women's capacity and resources. The results of research by Mackey and Petrucka (2021) state that the reach of interventions using information and communication technology reaches all aspects of life including education, lifestyle, prevention, health challenges, and perceived barriers. Despite the positive use of information and communication technology to support women in their lives, inequality occurs because empowerment is inconsistent and cannot be measured based on an individual perspective [37].

In developing countries like Pakistan, the issue of women's empowerment is one of the important things that is hotly discussed in the socio-demographic and cultural circles of society. This situation is caused by significant differences in views regarding the status of women and men. Therefore, the context of women's empowerment is very important to be studied and applied in Pakistani society so that women have an awareness of the importance of equality in ensuring a better life in the future. The results of research conducted by Abbas et al. (2021) highlight aspects of Pakistani women's empowerment on economic, social, and information access variables significantly. Women with a higher level of education, skilled work, and access to information are said to be more empowered and easily empowered. Based on this, Abbas et al. (2021) offer the concept of empowerment with engineering to the bottom by enforcing policies to limit underage marriage [38].

A researcher named Van der Meer Annie found a way to empower women's groups in the East Asia region. Several countries he visited, such as Japan, China, and Korea, had many old stories that unfairly viewed women. To raise awareness of women in these countries, Van der Meer Annie provoked thought by stating that before a society with a culture of male dominance was formed, there was once a peaceful egalitarian society with a matriarchal culture where women as mothers were in the middle among society better known as "Venus Art". Through her views on the glory of women's groups, Van der Meer Annie hopes that women's groups will rise again and realize that they have equality and an important role in helping the development of civilization in a better direction [39].

Conceptually and theoretically, the empowerment of women's groups in Indonesia aims to achieve gender-equitable village governance whereby by electing women as leaders, gender equality in village development in all aspects of community life can be realized. Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages [40], firmly states that development implementation must include women's groups with the absence of discrimination based on gender differences. Empowerment of village women is implemented into three pillars of empowerment as follows: 1) village governance; 2) implementation of village development; and 3) village regulations [35].

In balance with a theoretical conceptual framework, empowerment of village women's groups has been carried out in several rural areas of Indonesia on a regional and national scale. Several regional-scale empowerment programs are carried out with specific objectives such as increasing family income, increasing knowledge, abilities, and skills, and even as a form of preserving regional cultural values. As is the case with

women's empowerment in Samboja Kuala Village which is motivated by the minimal participation of women's groups in development, both as policymakers, decision-makers, implementers, and communities who share in enjoying the results of development equally. This is caused by the low level of education and the large number of marriages at an early age which causes helplessness from an economic and social perspective. To overcome this problem, the regional government carries out empowerment activities by providing business capital for fish drying technology in the form of money and equipment, providing superior seeds, holding small industry training, and conducting intensive training for PKK women at the village, sub-district, and district levels [24].

Empowerment of women's groups is also carried out in Belo Village, Palibelo District, and Bima Regency through Badan Usaha Milik Desa (BUMDes) programs. As a result of the high poverty rate general In Indonesia, the government is trying to create innovation to empower society, especially women's groups. The women's group empowerment program through BUMDes in Belo Village is carried out by providing business capital to form home industries with creative results worth selling in rupiah. This creativity moves in the culinary field, *fashion*, crafts, traditional medicines, and so on. This empowerment is intended to support family resilience for women who are widows or have lower middle-economic status [27].



Figure 3. Women's Empowerment in Global

#### **Empowerment of Village Marginal Women Based on Fraire Theory**

Based on Fraire's view, empowerment with the concept of education facing problems must reach a level of transitive critical awareness, where the target of empowerment can interpret the problems being faced through dialogic discussions with the empowered. This then became the main basis for the successful implementation of the Fraire concept in empowerment as a form of awareness. In Finland, Fraire's pedagogical concept is a basic reference in contemporary non-formal education, including women's empowerment. Based on Fraire's thinking, it cannot be denied that Finland is the country with the best level of education in the world. This success indicates that the concept of education Fraire's facing problems is being implemented comprehensively in Finnish education [41].

Apart from Finland, several countries such as Pakistan, Nepal, and China have begun to apply the concept of empowerment with Fraire awareness as a complex and comprehensive empowerment concept. Tahira Khan from Pakistan was enthusiastic about Fraire's views and began to realize the importance of women's participation in a country. She decided to continue her PhD studies in the hope of reducing the existence of a patriarchal culture in her country. Smita Magar from Nepal stated that she would play an active role in Nepalese cultural shamanism which is a characteristic of her society. Jue Sun from China began to realize the essence of sacred marriage and the importance of knowledge regarding reproductive health so as not to be misunderstood. These several cases show the important role of education as an awareness process carried out through empowerment efforts [39].

In contrast to the findings above, women's empowerment in Indonesia, especially in rural areas, is still far from achieving awareness at the transitive critical awareness stage as Fraire hopes. Empowerment is only able to reach the intransitive awareness stage where empowerment only aims to fulfill physical needs or market demand without being aware of what is being done so that it is constantly under organized oppression. Two examples of cases of women's empowerment in Samboja Kuala Village and Belo Village indicate that the empowerment stage as an awareness effort is at the lowest level where the main form of empowerment provided is in the form of physical assistance such as money and equipment. There is a shift in the essence of empowerment which should

raise awareness to prioritize aspects of external resources, assets, or services without prioritizing aspects of overall self-awareness in facing oppression.

This shift was previously mentioned by Gita Sen, who stated that the essence of empowerment values in the next 20 years will change. Empowerment no longer focuses on engaging critical awareness dialogically in discussing rules, norms, and contributions to power. However, empowerment is only intended to provide resources, assets, or services that only benefit one party. In this case, Gita Sen focuses more on the role of women in realizing their involvement in various areas of life and starting to move to have the courage to make decisions in determining their destiny [16].

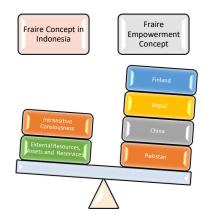


Figure 4. Fraire Empowerment Concept

#### CONCLUSIONS

Empowerment of marginalized village women has been carried out in many parts of the world, including Indonesia. Empowering marginalized village women is intended so that women have full awareness of themselves and their role in village governance. Marginal women empowerment programs are carried out through various methods and approaches according to the characteristics of the community to be empowered. In several countries such as China, Pakistan, and Nepal empowered by Europeans, women have a high awareness of their role. They are starting to open themselves to change. However, in Indonesia, empowerment still has the pattern of providing material assistance in the form of tools and money and has not yet led to the stage of self-awareness. For this reason, efforts are needed to metamorphose the thinking of empowerment actors in Indonesia so that they have a broad and deep view of the essence of empowerment values that must be realized.

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