


Empowering Local Economies: Unveiling the Vital Role of MSMEs in Community Workforce Empowerment

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Empowering Local Economie; Vital Role of MSMEs; Community Workforce	Local economic empowerment through the development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has an important role in supporting inclusive and sustainable economic growth at the local level. This research aims to analyze MSME development strategies in increasing local economic empowerment, with a focus on the success of MSMEs in Kebat District, Banyuwangi Regency. This descriptive method research takes data through analysis of trends in the number of MSME workers from 2019 to 2023, as well as through interviews with MSME owners and related stakeholders. The research results show that Kejaya Banyuwangi MSMEs face a number of obstacles in development, including limited resources, limited market access, and resistance to change. However, with strong capabilities in managing human resources (HR) and effective marketing strategies, MSMEs are able to overcome these obstacles and achieve sustainable growth. The results of this research contribute to understanding the role of MSMEs in empowering the local economy and empowering regional development. Research supports the importance of empowerment policies and programs to facilitate the growth of MSMEs and improve the welfare of local communities.
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INTRODUCTION

MSMEs or Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, refer to businesses with wealth and turnover not exceeding IDR 500 million per year and most MSMEs are run by individuals or households and often operate from home (Muryanto, 2022). MSMEs also play an important role in the Indonesian economy by accelerating the circulation of money and helping create jobs (Wibowo, 2023). Technological advances have encouraged more MSMEs to seek to increase their visibility through websites and social media, making their products more accessible. The criteria for MSMEs as small businesses, a class above micro businesses, are businesses that have a turnover of between IDR 300 to IDR 500 million per year, this includes motorbike repair shops, photocopying businesses, minimarkets, handcrafts, or various packaged food products and catering businesses, which can be owned by individuals or business entities (Abduh et al., 2023).

The increasingly rapid development of MSMEs has shown that their role in the local economy is increasingly significant. According to (Muryanto, 2022), MSMEs not only

accelerate money circulation and create jobs, but also empower local communities through innovation and use of technology. (Viddy & Herlina, 2023), stated that MSMEs can also be pioneers in encouraging local economic growth and empowering community workers, especially housewives, as is the case with MSMEs in Banyuwangi Regency, East Java, such as UMKM Kejaya Handicraft, which is an UMKM that in 2020 has been supported by Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI). Kejaya has achieved extraordinary success in penetrating the export market. UMKM Kejaya was founded in 1998 and is located in Tambong Village, Kabat District, Banyuwangi, and has recorded brilliant achievements in the craft industry, both domestically and in the international market. These export quality products from MSMEs have been sent to various countries such as America, Poland, England, Italy, Malaysia, Thailand, Hawaii and Jamaica. Kejaya Handicraft uses natural materials in making its handicraft products, such as rattan, banana waste, tapas (coconut fronds), coconut shells, bamboo and various types of wood. These environmentally friendly products are processed into various crafts such as bags, hats, fruit holders, trays, ashtrays, gadget holders, kalimba, maracas and souvenirs. This MSME also plays a role in empowering the local economy by absorbing 200 local workers, most of whom are housewives. The women are involved in the production of making handicrafts at the production house owned by Kejaya Handicraft in Kabat.

Several studies such as those conducted by (Muryanto, 2022) focus more on empowering the creative economy through the MSME home industry in the food sector based on intellectual property, this research places more emphasis on the aspect of empowering the community workforce at large. Meanwhile, research by (Jureid et al., 2024) focused more on the economic empowerment of the Kayulaut village community through the MSME community of the typical Bika Bakar Kayulaut cake community with a culinary fashion strategy. (Fatine, 2022) research focuses more on empowering urban communities in the economic sector through the Ladu Arai Pinang MSMEs in Lubuk Buaya, Padang City. (Nurjaman, 2022) researched e-commerce empowerment among MSME players in Indonesia, while (Abduh et al., 2023) focused on empowering MSMEs in urban economic growth in Makassar. So this research has a contribution in the knowledge aspect by exploring the contribution of MSMEs in mobilizing community workforce empowerment as an effort to increase local economic independence. The gap in this research pays more attention to how MSMEs can become a driving force for local economic development by empowering the workforce in certain communities.

The main objective of this research is to identify and analyze the role played by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in encouraging local economic independence with a focus on empowering the community workforce. The research provides an overview of how MSMEs can become a driving force for local economic development by empowering the workforce in certain communities. Meanwhile, novelty in this research can illustrate the importance of MSMEs in encouraging local economic independence by empowering community workers, as well as emphasizing the need for greater support for MSMEs to increase their positive impact in local economic development.

METHODS

This research using a descriptive method uses a descriptive qualitative approach which will explore MSME activities and indicators of workforce empowerment and the local economy in depth, with a focus on job creation, household income and contribution to regional domestic product. The research object is the UMKM Kejaya Handycraft which is located in Kejoyo Hamlet, Tambong Village, Kabat District, Banyuwangi. This research method will use a survey or questionnaire to collect data about the profile of MSMEs in the research area (Moleong, 2017), their economic contribution, workforce empowerment programs carried out, as well as the challenges and obstacles they face.

In this research, the data collection technique used was a survey or questionnaire (Creswell, 2012). This survey will be conducted to collect information about the profile of MSMEs in the research area, the economic contribution they make, workforce empowerment programs that have been implemented, as well as the challenges and obstacles faced by these MSMEs. Through a questionnaire, respondents will be asked to provide their responses to questions designed to cover various aspects (Moleong, 2017) related to MSME activities and workforce empowerment. Data collected from interviews were categorized based on themes, and confirmed with available document data and numerical data. Next, a member check was carried out from significant others, credible people providing information regarding the development and progress of MSMEs, then further analysis was carried out as a reference for drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Entrepreneurial Journey Profile

Khotibin, a resident of Kejoyo Hamlet, Tambong Village, Banyuwangi, has the principles of never giving up, thinking creatively and praying which have helped him achieve success in his business. Initially selling banana stems, Khotibin switched to handicrafts from natural materials such as bamboo and rattan. Its products, such as bags, hats, accessories and musical instruments, have been successfully received in both local and international markets, including Asia, America and Europe. Despite facing obstacles such as fraud by Italian customers, Khotibin continues to progress and now produces various handicrafts, including car freshener containers, with increasing demand from his business partners, especially in Jakarta.

The efforts made by Khotibin, or Ibien, in developing Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in this story are very inspiring. Through the principles of never giving up, thinking creatively, and praying, Ibien succeeded in overcoming various obstacles in his journey. He was not only able to adapt to change and change the focus of his business from banana stems to handicrafts from other natural materials such as bamboo and rattan, but also continued to innovate in his products. Apart from that, Ibien has succeeded in expanding its business market not only to local markets, but also to international markets such as Asia, America and Europe. Despite experiencing bitter experiences such as fraud by old customers, Ibien remains committed to the quality of its products and is selective in partnering. Collaboration with business partners, especially in Jakarta, is also one of his

successful strategies in developing his MSMEs. Ibien's entire story illustrates that with determination and hard work, MSMEs can develop and achieve success even amidst the challenges they face. Although initially Kejaya Handicraft was just a family business created by a handful of people. Only then did Ibien invite his neighbors to join in as workers. So various products can be produced from banana stems, ranging from tissue holders, photo frames, bag products, to jewelry holders. After the industry began to develop, the materials used expanded. Coconuts are also used as raw materials, from stems, roots, leaves and sticks, fibers, to the shell.

Table 1. Labor Development

Labor	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Full Time	52	48	47	98	124
Contract	18	12	12	24	30
Part time	30	32	35	46	62
Amount	100	92	94	168	216

Data on the development of the number of workers in Banyuwangi MSMEs shows a significant fluctuating trend from 2019 to 2020. The number of full-time workers decreased by 7.69%, down from 52 to 48, while the number of contract workers experienced a larger decrease of 33.33%, from 18 to 12. However, there was a slight increase in the number of part-time workers at 6.67%, up from 30 to 32. Overall, the total number of workers in Banyuwangi MSMEs fell by 8%, from 100 to 92. This decrease reflects potential economic challenges or policy changes that affect the capacity of MSMEs to employ employees during 2019-2021 during the Covid Pandemic, as well as a potential shift in human resource management strategies towards a more flexible model.

Employment Management

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on reducing sales turnover of MSME products. Limited mobility, closure of business premises, and changes in consumer behavior which tend to reduce spending are some of the main factors causing a decline in turnover. Apart from that, disruptions in the supply and distribution chain also contributed to the decline in turnover. MSMEs that depend on direct sales or offline retail are directly affected, while MSMEs that are unable to switch to online business models also experience challenges in reaching the market. This condition forces MSMEs to adjust marketing strategies, increase online presence, and strengthen collaboration with partners and customers to overcome the decline in turnover and restore business growth. After the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant increase in the number of workers in Banyuwangi MSMEs from 2021 to 2023. In 2021, there was an increase in the number of workers by 4.26% from the previous year, up from 94 to 98. Then, in 2022, there was a bigger increase of 68.09%, reaching 168. This increase continued until 2023, where the number of workers reached 216, showing an increase of 28.57% from the previous year, where all of these workers divided into work fields with the following employment status.

Table 2. Employment Management

Labor Status	Local Community Workers			Field of work
	Production house	Employee Home	Amount	
Full Time	109	15	124	Production, Quality control, Marketing
Contract	26	4	30	Finishing and Packing
Part time	62	0	62	Raw material processing

Of the total 116 employees who work at UMKM Kejaya Handicraft, the majority, namely 109 people, have full-time worker status. Of this number, 109 people work in Production Houses, while 15 other people work in Employee Houses, mainly in the fields of production, quality control and marketing. Apart from that, there are also 26 employees with contract status who work at the Production House, and 4 other people work at the Employee House, especially in the finishing and packing fields. On the other hand, there are 62 part-time employees who work at the Production House, especially in processing raw materials. Employing employees to work from home or Work From Home (WFH) in handicraft production has proven effective in various aspects. As research by (Abduh et al., 2023), WFH increases working time flexibility for employees, allowing them to organize their working time according to personal and work needs. This can also reduce transportation costs and travel time, thereby saving operational costs for employees employed at Kejaya Handicraft. According to (Nurjaman, 2022), implementing WFH can improve the quality of life of employees by allowing them to work from a comfortable environment and in accordance with individual preferences. This helps maintain productivity and smooth operations in handicraft production.

Marketing Performance and Government Support

This increase in the number of workers can be interpreted as post-pandemic economic recovery, where Kejaya Banyuwangi MSMEs play an important role in increasing job opportunities and local economic growth. The significant increase in the performance of Kejaya Banyuwangi MSMEs is associated with the growth in the number of workers, which shows the confidence and optimism of MSMEs in developing their businesses amidst post-pandemic conditions. This can be stated as follows.

Table 3. Development of Turnover and Marketing Areas

MSME performance	Year 2005-2007	Year 2008-2010	Year 2018-2020	Year 2021-2023
Turnover	206,250,000	75,075,000	497,736,000	1,065,312,000
Marketing Area	Indonesia Malaysia	Indonesia Malaysia	Indonesia Malaysia Thailand America	Southeast Asia Europe America

The increase in turnover and expansion of marketing areas illustrates that MSMEs were founded in 1998 and have provided quite significant results. Since the 2000s, managers have begun accepting orders to be sent abroad. The results of the interview also explained that "Since the beginning of 2000, we have known a guest from England who lives in Bali. He often buys our products, and he also takes care of all export needs." This success cannot be separated from the product innovation that has been created. Apart from that, the large number of foreign tourists who visit the shop also helps market its products overseas. Although initially, it was limited to making products according to the requests of the guests who came. However, as time goes by, it understands tastes and develops various other products. The owner and labor manager is a real example of how local MSMEs can successfully bring Banyuwangi products to the international market through innovation, dedication and hard work.

In the context of HR management, (Fatine, 2022) suggests that the increase in MSME performance is the result of improved recruitment strategies and increased investment in employee development to face recovering market demand. Therefore, changes in the number of workers, as is the case in Banyuwangi, do not only reflect a response to changing economic conditions and regulations, but also reflect the important role of HR management in supporting business adaptation and growth in times full of uncertainty. Apart from that, the progress of MSMEs in Bayuwangi Regency, such as Kejaya Handicrafts, cannot be separated from the involvement of the Banyuwangi Cooperatives and MSMEs Service and the role of Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI) in providing training and assistance which is an important factor in developing MSMEs in the region. The Banyuwangi Cooperatives and UMKM Service has a strategic role in providing various supporting services for MSMEs, starting from business registration, coaching, to market development. (Viddy & Herlina, 2023), stated that the existence of the Government and banking acts as a facilitator that connects MSMEs with resources and opportunities that can improve the quality and competitiveness of micro, small and medium enterprises. Apart from that, Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI) also has a significant role in providing training and assistance to MSMEs. Through programs such as BRI UMKM School and BRI Mentoring, this bank provides access to business actors to gain the knowledge and skills needed to manage and develop their business (Jureid et al., 2024). Apart from that, BRI also provides financial assistance and banking solutions that suit the needs of MSMEs, such as business loans and digital banking services (Tahawali et al., 2023).

Economic Empowerment of Local Communities

Apart from that, Kejaya Handicraft UMKM's efforts to empower the surrounding community are an important aspect in sustainable business development. This was also stated in research by (Rachmawati & Yasin, 2022), that MSMEs not only act as drivers of the local economy, but also as agents of social change that can improve the welfare of the surrounding community. One of the main ways that MSMEs empower communities is by providing job opportunities and local business opportunities. (Husaeni & Dewi, 2019), explained that by trying to recruit workers from the surrounding environment, MSMEs not only provide employment opportunities, but also help improve the skills and work

experience of local communities. This is in accordance with Kejaya MSMEs which have also involved the community in the supply or production chain, and allowed the community to participate in the production process or supply of raw materials. This not only increases community involvement, but also improves product quality and business sustainability. Apart from that, together with the Regency government through the Cooperative Service and BRI Banyuwangi, they also provide training or assistance to the surrounding community in various fields such as skills development, business management and marketing, as follows.

Table 4. Local Community Empowerment

Empowerment	MSME efforts
Training	Together with the Government and BRI, they are active in organizing training programs for their community members, both related to technical and managerial work skills, including production and marketing management.
Providing Job Opportunities	Employ community members as employees or part-time workers, most of whom are mothers with very low incomes
Microeconomic Empowerment	Providing financial support for workers who want to start their own small business. This is done through a business capital lending program
Participation in Community Development Programs	Actively participate in community development programs aimed at improving the quality of life of local communities.
Providing Social Support and Welfare:	Providing social support to workers and their families in the form of welfare, such as health insurance, employee welfare programs, and assistance in emergency situations.

Efforts to empower the surrounding community are the main pillar in achieving successful development of the Kejaya MSME business. These MSMEs not only act as business entities, but also as agents of social change who are actively involved in improving the welfare of their communities. One of the steps taken is to provide employment and training opportunities to the local community. Apart from that, MSME Kejaya also integrates the community in the supply or production chain, giving them the opportunity to be involved in the process of making products or providing raw materials. According to (Wibowo, 2023) research report, this not only increases community involvement, but also strengthens the relationship between MSMEs and their communities. Furthermore, (Anwar et al., 2023), explained that through efforts to strengthen the capacity of local communities, MSMEs not only create positive economic impacts, but also build a solid foundation for sustainable and inclusive business growth.

Obstacles and Development Efforts

The increasing progress of Kejaya MSMEs in Kebat Banyuwangi District cannot be separated from the use of technology and innovation in their business operations. Kejaya MSMEs have adopted various modern technologies to increase efficiency and productivity.

One of them is the application of information technology in production and marketing management. Business and HR management followed by utilizing computerized systems and HR and marketing management software, Kejaya MSMEs can optimize production processes, control inventory and monitor product quality more effectively. Apart from that, MSME Kejaya also utilizes digital platforms and social media to expand its market reach and increase its brand visibility. Through websites, online shops and social media accounts, MSME Kejaya can reach potential consumers in various regions, even abroad. Apart from that, product innovation is also the main focus of MSME Kejaya. Some of the Kejaya MSME administrators continue to test and develop new products that are more unique and high quality in accordance with market trends and consumer needs. Apart from this success, the development of MSMEs is related to the economic empowerment of local communities, such as Kejaya Handicraft, especially regarding access to capital, business regulations, market competition or infrastructure issues. This is stated in full in the following table.

Table 5. Barriers to Microeconomic Empowerment of Local Communities

Obstacle	Description
Resource Limitations	Often facing limited resources, whether in terms of capital, skilled labor, or adequate infrastructure. Most local people (especially mothers) from low-income family groups lack sufficient skills in product development, innovation, especially in marketing, or the use of technology.
Access to Markets and Resources	It often faces difficulties in accessing large markets and necessary resources, such as high-quality raw materials, adequate transportation infrastructure, or efficient distribution networks.
Income and Welfare Levels	The income level and welfare of local communities in the marketing area are also factors that influence success. If the income level is low, people may not have sufficient purchasing power to support MSME businesses in the handicraft product sector.
Resistance to Change	Cultural and social factors also play a role in resistance to change, especially if traditional values and social norms are considered threatened by changes resulting from macroeconomic empowerment activities by MSMEs involving banking companies.

The table provides an illustration that the obstacles in developing MSME businesses related to economic empowerment of local communities include several aspects. First, limited resources, be it capital, skilled labor, or adequate infrastructure, can hamper the ability of MSMEs to empower local communities. Second, the lack of skills and knowledge of the community in running a business is also a significant obstacle. Apart from that, access to large markets and the necessary resources, as well as complex regulations and heavy bureaucracy, can also hamper efforts to empower the economy of local communities through MSMEs. In the context of society in Kebat District, Banyuwangi, resistance to change is also an obstacle that needs to be overcome, especially considering that the majority of the population is classified as having a below average welfare level. Therefore,

to overcome these obstacles, an approach is needed that is sensitive to the local context, involves active community participation, and strengthens understanding of the benefits of change and minimizes the associated risks.

In the context of MSMEs, (Suyanto, 2007), explains that they are often faced with various resource limitations, ranging from limited capital, skilled labor, to adequate infrastructure. This is a significant challenge in developing a business, because the ability to access capital, quality human resources and adequate infrastructure is critical to success. In addition, most local people, especially mothers in low-income family groups in Kebat District, tend to lack sufficient skills in product development, innovation, especially in marketing, or the use of technology. Difficulty in accessing large markets and necessary resources, such as high-quality raw materials, adequate transportation infrastructure, or efficient distribution networks, is also a major obstacle. Apart from that, the level of income and welfare of local communities in the marketing area also influences the success of MSMEs. If income levels are low, people may not have sufficient purchasing power to support MSME businesses, especially in the handicraft product sector. Cultural and social factors also play a role in resistance to change, especially if traditional values and social norms are considered threatened by changes resulting from macroeconomic empowerment activities by MSMEs involving banking companies. Therefore, a deep understanding of the challenges and potential solutions is key in advancing MSMEs in the handicraft sector.

Likewise, when facing these challenges, Kejaya MSME's ability to manage human resources becomes crucial. According to (Anwar et al., 2023), MSMEs need to have skilled and qualified employees, as well as have effective management in utilizing available human resources. Apart from that, marketing is also a very important aspect in overcoming market access barriers. (Nurjaman, 2022), explains that MSMEs need to have an effective marketing strategy to expand market reach, increase brand visibility, and attract consumer interest. This, according to (Suyanto, 2007), involves the use of digital marketing techniques, increasing online presence, and collaboration with business partners or larger marketing institutions. With strong capabilities in managing human resources and effective marketing strategies, Kejaya MSMEs can overcome the development obstacles they face and achieve sustainable growth in the face of challenging economic conditions.

The ability of Kejaya MSMEs in Bayuwangi to overcome development obstacles, such as limited resources and market access, can be supported by Human Resources (HR) and marketing theories. When referring to the HR management approach, according to (Suyanto, 2007), human resources in MSMEs are a valuable asset and a significant competitive resource. In this context, MSMEs can adopt an HR management approach that focuses on skill development, training and employee motivation (Husaeni & Dewi, 2019). Kejaya MSMEs have been able to build a skilled and qualified team, MSMEs can improve operational efficiency, product innovation and service quality, so they are able to overcome obstacles that arise due to limited resources. Apart from that, marketing theory also provides an important foundation for MSMEs in overcoming market access barriers (Suyanto, 2007). When referring to marketing theory, Kejaya MSMEs have been able to adapt to the market well, identify consumer needs, and develop appropriate marketing

strategies, utilizing digital marketing techniques, strong branding, and collaboration with business partners, as well as utilizing support from the Government and banking institutions such as BRI can expand their market reach and increase their competitiveness. Efforts to combine an effective HR management approach with appropriate marketing strategies, successful MSMEs have a better opportunity to overcome development obstacles and achieve sustainable growth and are able to empower the micro economy of local communities.

Based on the results of this discussion study, it can be said that various obstacles in developing MSMEs, especially those related to economic empowerment of local communities, include limited resources, lack of community skills and knowledge, limited access to markets, and resistance to change. To overcome these challenges, every MSME needs to have strong capabilities in managing human resources (HR) and effective marketing strategies. Through an HR management approach that focuses on developing employee skills and motivation, as well as marketing strategies that utilize digital technology and collaboration with business partners, MSMEs can overcome these obstacles and achieve sustainable growth. Support from the government and financial institutions, such as Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI), is also an important factor in facilitating the growth of MSMEs. So that every MSME, such as the Kejaya Handicraft UMKM in Banyuwangi, has succeeded in facing challenges and taking advantage of opportunities to effectively empower the micro economy in local communities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study underscores the intricate challenges faced by Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in fostering local economic empowerment, spotlighting the Kejaya Banyuwangi MSME case study. The COVID-19 pandemic induced a notable decline in turnover and workforce fluctuations, showcasing the substantial impact on MSMEs. Nevertheless, adept human resource (HR) management and effective marketing strategies enable MSMEs to surmount most hurdles, particularly amidst evolving economic and regulatory landscapes. The burgeoning significance of MSMEs in post-pandemic local economic rejuvenation manifests considerable potential in job creation and hastening regional economic growth. Enhanced policy backing and robust collaboration among governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and business entities afford MSMEs better prospects for sustainable development, thereby catalyzing positive impacts on local communities and the broader economy. It is recommended that the Government extends support through skills training, access to business capital, and provision of requisite facilities to aid MSMEs in their business endeavors. Additionally, Kejaya Handicraft should enhance the promotion and marketing of MSME products, both locally and internationally. Crucially, fostering collaboration among MSMEs, governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector is paramount to bolstering community workforce empowerment and augmenting overall local economic self-reliance.

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