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# **THE ROLE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY TOWARD THE RESILIENCE OF DISASTER-AFFECTED BATIK SMALL MEDIUM ENTERPRISES: AN EFFORT TO OVERCOME TECHNOLOGY DISRUPTIVE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This research purpose is to analyze the role of women empowerment and organizational agility toward the resilience of Disaster Affected Batik Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The type of this research is qualitative research that conducted*

*on 5 SMEs women groups of natural dyes Batik in Bayat District, Klaten Regency, Central Java Province. The data was collected using intensive interview through in-depth interview and field secondary data cross check, supported by photographs. The research result explained that group-based SMEs have a high level of resilience, because it is easier for them to find solution rather than SMEs that operate individually. Group-based SMEs are also relatively open to empowerment, mentoring, knowledge sharing, information, and market. This research recommends that women empowerment and organizational agility should be prioritized in organization groups rather than individuals, because it is easier to improve the resilience. This should be done as an effort to overcome their limitations in the adoption of information technology, especially in the aspect of product marketing and services. They must strengthen the organizational agility in expanding the network because of the lack of ability to manage information technology media.*

**Key words:** women empowerment, organizational agility, resilience, Batik SMEs.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia have potential risks to disaster because Indonesia's geographic position is very vulnerable to disaster. The Head of Disaster Management National Agency (BNPB) Syamsul Maarif said: "Indonesia is surrounded by Pacific Ring of Fire, or in other term, it is like an axis of potential disaster such as earth quake and volcano,"

<https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2011/03/18/16275189/cincin.api.pasifik.melingkari.indonesia>, accessed on March 4, 2018).

In 2006, when an earthquake occurs in Yogyakarta and its surrounding areas such as Klaten District of Central Java, 150.389 SMEs were severely affected. About 650.000 people lose their jobs, while 90% of them work in SMEs. Workers and owners of SMEs suffer from workplace and asset damage, loss of raw materials, and cessation of production, and the impact of all that was loss of workers in a long term. For some time after the disaster, the SMEs sector have an obstacle in continuing its operation, so as a result, the business process is not working. Six years later, it was discovered that there were about 20.000 SMEs that left bad loans to be written off at Bank Indonesia (<http://perkumpulanidea.or.id/dialog-publik-membangun-ketangguhan-umkm-terhadap-ancaman-bencana/>, accessed on March, 04, 2018). Therefore, it is very important for every SMEs to have resilience, resistance to disaster impacts, and able to recover quickly, even better than their previous business. Every SME in Indonesia need to build toughness in improving its organizational agility. According to Harper (2001), "*agility is the ability to turn on a dime.*" SMEs must have the ability to be flexible, make changes, able to adjust, clever, and quick to seize the opportunities. In organizational agility, the people must have personal agility capability so they are expected to be able to overcome the existing problem, including business management problems and technological changes. According to Sivaraman (2017), personal agility is a person who has

the ability to adapt the need of uncomfortable changes and uncertain condition. Individuals must continually improvise to ensure that the needs can be fulfilled while improving long term goals. They also have to adjust to the situation and find out the right decision in every situation. They must work creatively, learn and grow from mistakes, and be confident to solve problems,

The industry of Kebon Indah natural dye Batik was formed from the earthquake in Yogyakarta in 2006. The earthquake caused Yogyakarta and its surrounding areas badly damaged, including the area in Klaten Regency. One of the damaged areas in Klaten is Kebon Village. People's homes were destroyed, which caused them to lose their jobs because their homes were a place to create Batik. The main problem is not only on the restoration of their living condition, but also their business. There are 5 Batik groups in Kebon Village which consists of 200 women with cooperative as the form of business. The Batik craftsmen who are entirely female have the skills which passed down from generation to generation. Their parents are mostly work to be Batik craftsmen in Yogyakarta and Surakarta which are two city of Batik centers in Indonesia. The uniqueness of these Batik women groups in Kebon Village is the batik cloth is produced using natural dyes without synthetic dyes and it is famous as environmentally friendly batik. This is the advantage of their batik products because environmentally friendly products are in great demand in European countries and the United States. "The trend of the world community now is they love green products that are environmentally friendly. Consequently, demand for Batik products with natural dyes is also increased," said I Wayan Dipta, Deputy of SME Production in Jakarta, on Friday November 20, 2015 (<http://marketeters.com/batik-dengan-pewarna-alam-diminati-pasar-ekspor/>, accessed on April 01, 2018).

The success of the empowerment of natural dyes batik craftswomen in Kebon Indah Klaten is supported by institutions including: Ministry of Research and Technology Indonesia, Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises Indonesia, and International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO with support from CITI Foundation. The Head of UNESCO Cultural Unit in Indonesia, Bernards Alens Zako said, "Kebon Village was chosen based on the survey conducted. Batik skills are hereditary become cultural wealth that should be developed. UNESCO has conduct empowerment with training for young people." (<http://www.suaramerdeka.com/sm cetak/detail/6042/Membatik-Massal-di-Kain-Sepanjang-300-Meter>, accessed on April, 2018). The empowerment support caused Kebon Indah Batik reached IDR 57 million per month to IDR 100 million per month. The empowerment is also developed not only in the development of Batik production, but also for the paid training of natural dyes Batik to increase business income. Arini, one of the members of Nuju Makmur Batik group in Kebon Village said, "Tourists from Chile, America, Manado, and Jakarta stay for 5 days in Kebon Village to learn to create batik at a cost of IDR 600.000,- per day," (Interview on March 30, 2018). This shows that empowerment has a significant impact in managing business. If it supported with the capability of organizational agility, SMEs will be more resilient.

According to Salavou et al. (2004; Badawi et al., 2017), traditionally SMEs have several advantages such as its flexibility to adapt with changes. SMEs tend to be more innovative and resilience because they are learning-oriented. Storey (1994) argued that resilience can be seen as ability in terms of adaptation, responsiveness, sustainability, and competitiveness in a growing market. According to Dalmini as the Chairman of Kebon Indah Batik Promotion Team, his groups is very confident in facing the era of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), because the uniqueness and advantage of the group production is hand made with natural dyes

which material comes from Indonesian nature, so it is difficult for other countries to compete. Furthermore, Dalmini also said, “We will continue to search for markets in other countries which when we are invited to the country, they respond very well to our product,” (Interview, March 30, 2018). That statement shows that Kebon Indah Batik Group has a good organizational agility which can be seen from having an agility response that is proactive toward change (Bessant et al., 2001) in a turbulent environment (Sharifi & Zhang, 2001; Sugandini, et al., 2018). This is because they have the ability to survive and still show improvement in an unexpected environment (Dove, 2005; Muafi, et al., 2018).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Women’s Empowerment and Resilience**

Inter-American Development Bank (2010), defined women empowerment in terms of extending women’s rights, resources, and capacities to make decisions and act independently in the social, economic, and political fields. Meanwhile, according to United Nations (2001), women empowerment is defined in five components as follows: (1) women self-esteem; (2) right to have and determine choices; (3) right to have access to opportunity and resources; (4) right to have power to control their own lives, both inside and outside the home; (5) ability to affect the direction of social changes to create more fair social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

According to Luthar (2000; Axelsson & Blomqvist, 2012) resilience is personal and organization resilience capability to recover from difficulties and quickly adapt positively and dynamically. Resilience means having the ability to survive dynamically and quickly adjust itself compare to other (Tugade, 2007). The research from Loh (2013) found that many women show resilience strategy when dealing with business failure. They are capable to develop despite of their limited social, cultural, and political constraint. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate the development of women empowerment as a part of women empowerment effort. Community empowerment gives positive impact toward organizational performance on a group managed business (Diharto et al., 2018; Muafi, 2015).

### **2.2. Organizational’s Agility and Resilience**

Some researchers simplify agility definition by using formulas. For example, Dove (2005), defined “Agility = Responsiveness + Knowledge Management”. Other researchers argue that agility depends on speed and flexibility; “Agility = Flexibility + Speed” (Ganguly, 2009). The implementation of agile manufacturing on SMEs using 10 case studies in Malaysia and United Kingdom identified that the main barriers to improve the agility in three categories which are lack of management skills, technological limitation, and lack of work experience of workers (Moradlou & Asadi, 2015). In the contrary, in Korean company survey, the highest score of SMEs were strategic agility (60.3 point), slightly above operational agility (59.4 point), and ahead of portfolio agility (55.1). This strongly reflects the ability of SMEs in Korea to see opportunities well (Kim, 2012).

The McKinsey Quarterly (2006) stated that organizational agility is the ability to change tactics or directions quickly to anticipate, adapt, and react decisively toward the change of business environment that can impact business performance. The research from Phillips (2009; Muafi, 2017a; 2017b) stated that organization should have the ability to respond to unexpected change in the market as key factor in survival (resilience).

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted in 5 SMEs women groups of natural dyes Batik in Kebon Indah and at the sales center of Batik Tulis or Kebon Indah showroom located in Bayat District, Klaten Regency, Central Java Province. The large group of producers in Kebon Indah is a combination of 5 smaller groups which have their own organizational structure; 1) Sido Luhur Group with 26 batik craftsmen members; 2) Nusa Indah Group with 28 batik craftsmen members; 3) Nuju Makmur Group with 37 batik craftsmen members; 4) Sido Makmur Group with 34 batik craftsmen members; and 5) TSP Mukti Group with 36 batik craftsmen members. The informants or participants to gather information are the leaders of each group which consists of 5 people. This research is using qualitative research by relying on 5 participants who involved in the research. The research team used structured and unstructured interview and questionnaire. The questions are developed based on theoretical framework. Question number 1 to 3 is about agility using the formula from Dove (1999) and Ganguly (2009); number 4 is about resilience; and number 5 is about women empowerment on business.

- Does the group quickly respond to customer needs during the business? (agility-1)
- Does the group regularly share information whether about markets, product development, and training?(agility-2)
- How does group dealing with the issue of business environment change? (agility-3)
- How is the group strategy to survive when dealing with business failure? (resiliency-1)
- What is the effect of business empowerment toward group business? (Empowerment – 1).

To strengthen the research result and make it easier to be understood, the research team also did documentation with photos and other resources. The research team also conducted data cross check in field with reliable sources and related reference. They also consulted with experts in validity and reliability test (Muafi & Wijayani, 2015; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Diharto, et al., 2018).

The research result in field identified that some answer from the informants generally support that women empowerment and organizational agility can improve their resilience. The answer below is related to organizational agility.

#### ***Answer from Question Number 1:***

“Yes, we always respond to every customer request, although sometimes we are not ready yet. This is because maybe we do not understand about technology, so sometimes it troubles us... but we have to be prepared with every condition,” (Participant 1)...“We do not want to lose the opportunity if we respond slowly,” (Participant 2)... “We.....ever get a difficult and special request, and we try to do it,” (Participant 5)...“Although sometimes the request is not make sense at all, we still try to make it,” (Participant 4)“All members in our batik groups are required to be proactive,” (Participant 3).

#### ***Answer from Question Number 2:***

“Yes, routine, every month we share information and others for the sake of our justice,” (Participant 1)...“We always maintain solidarity by sharing opportunities and learning with each other so that we become strong united,” (Participant 2)...“There is a regular schedule, sometimes it also held together with other activities,” (Participant3)... “We usually met other groups in showroom to share information,” (Participant 4)...“There is a media to inform each other, we create a group on WhatsApp,” (Participant 5).

***Answer from Question Number 3:***

“Even though we do not understand technology, if there are problems related to market, environment, and others, we always communicate it together,” (Participant 1)...“Our strength is we are a group, so we always face it together, either it is opportunity or threat... We have to learn about information technology,” (Participant 2). “We have to face issues together, and we believe we can face it,” (Participant3). “As long as we do *gotong royong*, we will be strong,” (Participant 4). “We are solid, there is no problem that cannot be solved if it is done together,” (Participant 5).

***Answer from Question Number 4:***

“Our strategy is to develop business that can support the main business to create natural dyes batik, such as a training to create natural dyes batik, educational tours, and so on, so that we have endurance in business,” (Participant 1)... “To anticipate production, the cooperative supplies materials to create batik with payment behind, so that we can keep producing,” (Participant 2)... “Our strategy is by developing new motives, and sometimes not the original motives of our village,” (Participant 3)...“We held exhibitions and established relationships with related parties,” (Participant 4). ... “Everyone plays an active role in marketing the group’s production, and there is a bonus when there is a demands.. We have to survive in the middle of this tight competition, our advantage is we use natural dyes and love the environment,” (Participant 5),

***Answer from Question Number 5:***

“Empowerment and assistance is what we need, without those, we would not become like this. We are a community affected by the great earthquake in 2006. Without being facilitated and empowered, we may not be able to be like this,” (Participant1)....“We really need empowerment. We are villagers with a low level of education. But after we get an empowerment, we are confident that we can manage our business well,”(Participant 2).... “There are many people who help us, so we can develop more and our profit is increasing. It is all because of the support from those who really care about us,” (Participant3)...“Empowerment makes us understand how to manage batik business, group organization, calculate the selling price, and market our products,” (Participant4). “It happens that all of our 200 members are women, so it is like we have the same needs and understand each other, so it is easier for the empowerment. Batik is the cultural heritage of our grandmother that we must preserve..” (Participant 5).

#### **4. THEORY IMPLICATION**

This research gives theory contribution that woman empowerment in a business group can improve the resilience of SMEs group, especially in Indonesia. It also proves that integrating the development of women entrepreneur is a part of women empowerment and it can improve the resilience in business. The next theory contribution in this research is the importance to improve the ability of organizational agility, because it can change the tactic or direction quickly to anticipate, adapt, and react firmly toward the change of business environment. This ability is necessary in facing the fierce competition in business.

#### **5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION**

The direction of conceptual framework of women empowerment and organizational agility is very important in facing the era of technology disruption, a term popularized by Clayton Christensen. As it is known, disruption is a fundamental change, which is a technological evolution that targets the human life gap and a strong way to think about growth which is driven by innovation (Christensen, et al., 2015; Muafi, 2009; Muafi, 2016; Muafi, et al., 2018;

Muhsin et al., 2018). It is important for the organization to be agile, and the level of agility should be done frequently. For SMEs which located in disaster-prone areas such as SMEs in Kebon Indah Klaten, Central Java, it is important to increase the role of women empowerment in business sector and have the ability in organizational agility so that they can continue to create innovations that must be developed (Surjanti et al., 2018), either through horizontal diversification or vertical diversification in products, services, and experience in order to have a high resilience. In group-based SMEs, the level of resilience is high because it is easier for them to find solution and they can solve problems together than self-operated SMEs.

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