



Empowerment Based Social Assistance in the Role of PKH Companions to Encourage the Transformation of Beneficiary Family Independence

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Empowerment, PKH, Social Companions, Independence, Social Policies

Received : 20, December

Revised : 22, February

Accepted: 24, April

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of the Family Hope Program (PKH) companions in encouraging the transformation of the independence of beneficiary families (KPM) through an empowerment approach. PKH as a conditional social assistance program not only functions as an instrument of social protection, but also as a means of community empowerment. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to understand in depth the dynamics of the role of companions in the empowerment process. The results of the study show that PKH facilitators have a strategic role as facilitators, mediators, educators, and motivators in increasing the capacity of KPM. However, there are various obstacles such as limited resources, high workload, and low KPM participation. This study concludes that the success of empowerment is highly dependent on the quality of interaction between facilitators and KPM as well as adequate institutional support.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a complex and multidimensional social problem that is still a major challenge in development in various developing countries, including Indonesia (Todaro and Smith 2015). Poverty is not only related to low incomes, but also includes limited access to education, health, and decent economic opportunities. Therefore, poverty alleviation efforts require a comprehensive and sustainable approach. From the perspective of social development, poverty management is not enough through an economic approach alone, but also requires a social approach that focuses on building the capacity of individuals and community groups (Chambers 1997). This approach emphasizes the importance of empowerment as the main strategy in creating community independence. Empowerment not only aims to improve welfare, but also to build people's ability to manage their lives independently.

The Indonesian government has implemented various policies and programs to overcome poverty, one of which is the Family Hope Program (PKH). This program is a form of conditional social assistance designed to improve the quality of life of the community through increasing access to basic services such as education and health (Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia 2020). PKH adopts a conditional cash transfer approach that has been widely applied in various developing countries as an effective strategy in poverty alleviation (Fiszbein and Schady 2009). As a conditional social assistance program, PKH not only functions as an instrument of social protection, but also as a means to encourage changes in the behavior of the beneficiary community. This behavior change includes increasing awareness of the importance of education, health, and family economic management. Thus, PKH has a strategic role in encouraging social transformation towards community independence.

The success of the implementation of PKH is highly determined by various factors, one of which is the role of social companions. Social companions are the spearhead of the implementation of programs at the field level that interact directly with the beneficiary families (KPM). They act as a liaison between government policies and society, as well as agents of social change (Suharto 2014). In practice, the role of social companions is not only limited to administrative aspects, but also includes community empowerment functions. Companions are tasked with providing education, motivation, and facilitation to KPM in order to be able to increase their capacity and get out of poverty. This role is very important because empowerment is a long-term process that requires intensive and continuous interaction.

Community empowerment in the context of PKH is realized through various activities, one of which is the Family Ability Improvement Meeting (P2K2). This activity aims to improve KPM's knowledge and skills in various aspects of life, such as childcare, family health, and financial management. Through this activity, it is hoped that KPM can experience positive behavior changes.

However, the implementation of empowerment in PKH does not always run optimally. Various obstacles often arise in the field, both from internal and external factors. One of the main obstacles is the low level of KPM participation in participating in empowerment activities. This can be caused by a lack of awareness, motivation, and other socioeconomic factors. In addition, the limited number of companions compared to the number of KPM is also a significant challenge. This condition causes the workload of the companions to be high, so that it can affect the quality of services provided. Facilitators often have to handle multiple KPMs in a limited amount of time, which can ultimately reduce the effectiveness of their role in the empowerment process.

From the perspective of role theory, these conditions can give rise to role conflict and role strain (Biddle 1986). Companions are faced with various demands that must be fulfilled simultaneously, such as administrative tasks and empowerment tasks. This imbalance between demands and capacity can have an impact on the performance of the companion. On the other hand, community empowerment requires a participatory and sustainable approach. This process cannot be done instantly, but requires time and commitment from various parties. The active involvement of KPM is a key factor in the success of empowerment, because without high participation, program goals are difficult to achieve.

The transformation from recipients to independent individuals is the long-term goal of the PKH program. This independence is not only measured from the economic aspect, but also from the ability of individuals to make decisions and manage their lives independently. Therefore, the role of companions is very strategic in encouraging the transformation process. This research departs from the importance of understanding how the role of PKH facilitators in encouraging the empowerment and independence of KPM. In addition, this study also aims to identify various factors that support and hinder the implementation of this role in the field.

This study is expected to contribute to the development of public administration science, especially in the field of social policy and community empowerment. In addition, the results of this research are also expected to be evaluation material for the government in increasing the effectiveness of the PKH program. Thus, this research has high relevance in the context of social development in Indonesia. Through a deeper understanding of the role of PKH companions, it is hoped that more effective strategies can be formulated in encouraging community empowerment and independence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of role theory is an important foundation in understanding the functions and responsibilities of social companions in the implementation of the Family Hope Program (PKH). According to Biddle (1986), a role is a set of behaviors expected of individuals who occupy a certain position in a social system. In this context, PKH facilitators have a complex role, not only as a technical implementer of the program, but also as a facilitator of social change. This role includes the function of an educator, mediator, facilitator, and motivator for beneficiary families (KPM). In addition, role theory also explains the possibility of role conflict and role strain experienced by individuals when faced with unbalanced demands (Biddle 1986). In the implementation of PKH, companions are often faced with high administrative demands on the one hand, as well as demands for community empowerment on the other. This condition can affect the effectiveness of the companion's performance in achieving program goals. Furthermore, empowerment theory is the main framework in analyzing KPM capacity building efforts. Zimmerman (2000) defines empowerment as a process that allows individuals or groups to gain control over their lives. Empowerment focuses not only on the end result, but also on the process that involves the active participation of the community in decision-making.

In the context of PKH, empowerment is realized through various activities that aim to increase the knowledge, skills, and awareness of KPM. Companions act as agents who encourage the process through direct interaction with the community. This empowerment process is expected to produce sustainable behavior changes, so that KPM is able to get out of poverty. In addition, the social policy approach is also the basis for understanding the implementation of PKH as part of government intervention in improving people's welfare. According to Midgley (1995), social policy is a planned effort to improve welfare through state intervention. PKH as a conditional social assistance program is a form of social policy that integrates social protection and community empowerment. Furthermore, the concept of conditional cash transfer (CCT) explains that the provision of cash assistance to the community must be accompanied by certain obligations, such as children's attendance at school and regular health checks (Fiszbein and Schady 2009). This approach aims to encourage behavior change that can improve the quality of human resources in the long term. Thus, the combination of role theory, empowerment theory, and social policy concept provides a comprehensive analytical framework in understanding the role of PKH companions in encouraging the transformation of KPM independence.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to understand in depth the phenomena that occur in the field related to the role of PKH facilitators in empowering KPM. This approach was chosen because it is able to describe social reality holistically and capture the meaning behind the social interaction between the facilitator and KPM. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies. The interview was conducted to explore information about the experiences, roles, and obstacles faced by the facilitator and KPM. Observation is used to see firsthand the interactions and empowerment activities carried out. Meanwhile, documentation is used to complement the data obtained from the field.

Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which included the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The analysis process is carried out continuously from the data collection stage to the completion of the research, so that a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied is obtained. To maintain the validity of the data, this study uses source and method triangulation techniques. In addition, a re-check was also carried out on informants (member checks) to ensure the accuracy of the data obtained.

RESEARCH RESULT

The results of the study show that the role of the Family Hope Program (PKH) in encouraging the empowerment and transformation of the independence of beneficiary families (KPM) takes place through a series of interintegrated functions, namely as facilitators, educators, motivators, and mediators. In their capacity as facilitators, facilitators play an active role in ensuring that KPM has access to basic services such as education and health. The facilitator monitors the KPM's compliance with program commitments, such as the child's attendance at school and maternal and child health checks. In addition, the companion also assists KPM in the administrative process, such as data updates and disbursement of assistance, so that KPM does not experience obstacles in accessing its rights as beneficiaries.

As educators, companions carry out an important function in increasing the capacity of KPM through Family Capacity Building (P2K2) activities. In this activity, the companions delivered various materials related to childcare, family health, financial management, and the importance of education. The results of the study show that P2K2 activities have a positive impact on increasing KPM knowledge, although the level of understanding and application of the material still varies. Some KPMs show significant behavioral changes, such as increased awareness of the importance of children's education and healthy lifestyles, but others still show dependence on social assistance.

In their role as motivators, the facilitators try to encourage KPM to have enthusiasm in improving living standards and getting out of poverty. Companions provide psychological and social encouragement so that KPM does not only depend on the assistance provided, but also strives to be independent through productive activities. The results of the study show that the success of this role is greatly influenced by the intensity of interaction between the facilitator and KPM. KPMs who receive intensive assistance tend to have higher motivation to change compared to KPMs who rarely interact with their companions.

In addition, the companion also acts as a mediator who connects KPM with various parties, such as the village government, health facilities, and educational institutions. This role is very important in ensuring that KPM gets services that suit their needs. Companions are often the liaison in solving various problems faced by KPM, such as difficulties in accessing health services or administrative obstacles in education.

However, this study also found that the implementation of the role of companions has not been running optimally. One of the main obstacles faced is the limited number of companions compared to the number of KPM that must be accompanied. This causes the workload of the companions to be high, so that the time and attention that can be given to each KPM is limited. This condition has an impact on the lack of optimal empowerment process, especially in terms of intensive and sustainable assistance.

In addition, the low level of KPM participation in empowerment activities is also a significant obstacle. Some KPMs still show a passive attitude and lack motivation to participate in P2K2 activities. This is influenced by various factors, such as low levels of education, economic conditions, and a culture of dependence on social assistance. In some cases, KPM only participates in activities as a formality without really understanding and applying the material presented.

Another factor that affects the effectiveness of the role of a companion is the limitation of supporting facilities and infrastructure. The lack of adequate facilities in the implementation of empowerment activities, such as meeting places and learning media, is an obstacle in delivering material effectively. In addition, institutional support that is not optimal also affects the performance of the companion in carrying out their duties.

However, this study also found that there are supporting factors that can increase the effectiveness of the role of companions. One of them is the existence of a good interpersonal relationship between the companion and the KPM. Companions who are able to build effective communication and harmonious relationships with KPM tend to be more successful in encouraging behavior change. In addition, support from local governments and good coordination between stakeholders are also important factors in the successful implementation of the program.

Overall, the results of the study show that the role of PKH companions has a significant contribution in encouraging the empowerment and independence of KPM. However, this success is still partial and not evenly distributed across all KPM. This shows that even though the PKH program has been running well, various improvement efforts are still needed to increase the effectiveness of program implementation, especially in the aspect of community empowerment.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study confirm that the role of the Family Hope Program (PKH) companion has a very strategic position in determining the success of the beneficiary family empowerment process (KPM). The findings show that the companion not only functions as the technical implementer of the program, but also as a key actor in the process of social transformation. From a role theory perspective, this condition reflects that the facilitator carries out various role expectations simultaneously, ranging from facilitator, educator, motivator, to mediator. This is in line with the view of Biddle (1986) who states that individuals in a social position often face complex and multilayered role demands.

However, the complexity of these roles also raises potential role conflicts and role strains. In the context of this study, the facilitators are faced with fairly high administrative demands, such as data reporting and validation, on the one hand, and the demand for intensive empowerment on the other. This condition shows an imbalance between the workload and the capacity owned by the companion. As a result, the empowerment function that should be the core of the PKH program often cannot be implemented optimally. These findings reinforce the argument that the effectiveness of policy implementation is highly dependent on the suitability between the demands of the role and the resources available.

From the perspective of empowerment, the results of this study show that the empowerment process carried out through PKH is still in the early stages, namely increasing KPM awareness and knowledge. Although activities such as the Family Ability Building Meeting (P2K2) have made a positive contribution to improving the understanding of KPM, behavioral changes that lead to independence have not been fully achieved equally. This shows that empowerment is not an instant process, but rather requires time, consistency, and a sustainable approach. In line with Zimmerman's (2000) theory, empowerment is a process that involves increasing an individual's control over their lives, which depends not only on external interventions, but also on the individual's own internal readiness. Furthermore, the low participation of some KPMs in empowerment activities shows that there are structural and cultural barriers that affect the effectiveness of the program. Factors such as low levels of education, economic limitations, and a culture of dependence on social assistance are challenges in encouraging behavior change. In this case, a participatory empowerment approach is very important. Facilitators need to develop communication strategies and a more contextual approach in order to increase the active involvement of KPM in every activity carried out.

In addition, the research findings also show that the quality of interaction between facilitators and KPM is a key factor in the success of empowerment. Companions who are able to build good interpersonal relationships tend to be more successful in influencing KPM's attitudes and behaviors. This shows that social and psychological aspects have an important role in the empowerment process. In other words, the success of a program is not only determined by policy design, but also by the quality of implementation at the field level.

From a social policy perspective, the results of this study indicate that PKH as a conditional cash transfer program has been successful in providing short-term social protection, but still faces challenges in achieving the long-term goal, namely community independence. This shows that the integration between social assistance and empowerment has not been fully effective. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the empowerment aspect so that the program is not only charitable, but also transformative.

Limited facilities and infrastructure as well as institutional support are also factors that affect the effectiveness of the role of companions. The lack of supporting facilities in the implementation of empowerment activities can reduce the quality of material delivery and interaction with KPM. In addition, coordination between stakeholders that is not optimal is also an obstacle in the implementation of the program in an integrated manner. This shows the importance of systemic support in supporting the successful implementation of social policies.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the success of empowerment in the PKH program is largely determined by the synergy between the role of companions, KPM participation, and institutional support. Companions as the main actors at the field level need to be supported with adequate capacity, both in terms of competence and resources. On the other hand, KPM needs to be encouraged to more actively participate in the empowerment process. Thus, the program's goal of creating community independence can be achieved more optimally and sustainably.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the research and discussions that have been conducted, it can be concluded that the role of the Family Hope Program (PKH) has a very strategic position in encouraging the empowerment and transformation of the independence of beneficiary families (KPM). Companions not only function as technical implementers of the program, but also as facilitators, educators, motivators, and mediators who play an active role in increasing the capacity and awareness of KPM. Through various empowerment activities, especially Family Capacity Building (P2K2) Meetings, facilitators are able to contribute to increasing knowledge and changing KPM behavior, even though the results are not evenly distributed overall. This shows that the empowerment process carried out through PKH has been running, but it is still in the early stages and needs further strengthening to be able to produce sustainable independence.

However, this study also found that the implementation of the role of companions is not optimal due to various obstacles faced in the field. The limited number of companions compared to the number of KPM, the high administrative workload, the low participation of some KPM, and the limited facilities and infrastructure are the main factors that hinder the effectiveness of empowerment. In addition, the persistence of a mindset of dependence on social assistance among KPM is also a challenge in realizing transformative program goals. Therefore, a more comprehensive and integrated effort is needed to overcome these various obstacles.

In line with these findings, this study recommends several strategic steps to increase the effectiveness of the role of facilitators and the overall success of the PKH program. First, it is necessary to increase the capacity of companions through continuous training, especially in the aspects of community empowerment, social communication, and participatory mentoring. Second, the government needs to adjust the workload of assistants by reducing administrative pressure and increasing the number of assistants so that the mentoring process can be carried out more intensively and optimally. Third, there needs to be a strategy to increase the active participation of KPM, such as a local needs-based approach, more interactive learning methods, and continuous motivation.

In addition, strengthening institutional support is also important, both in the form of providing adequate facilities and infrastructure and improving coordination between stakeholders, such as local governments, educational institutions, and health facilities. With good synergy between various parties, the implementation of the PKH program is expected to run more effectively and have a more significant impact on improving people's welfare. In the end, empowerment efforts carried out through PKH are expected not only to be able to reduce poverty in the short term, but also create community independence in a sustainable manner in the long term.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

With good synergy between various parties, the implementation of the PKH program is expected to run more effectively and have a more significant impact on improving people's welfare. In the end, empowerment efforts carried out through PKH are expected not only to be able to reduce poverty in the short term, but also create community independence in a sustainable manner in the long term.

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