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# Women's Empowerment through Umi Shohib's Home Industry Soy Milk Business to Improve the Welfare of Housewives in Deli Tua District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra

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## ABSTRACT

Gender inequality is a complex problem because it affects an individual's chances of getting a job. It is difficult for women to find work compared to men, making tough and creative women try home industry businesses to continue to carry out their role as housewives. Umi Shohib's soy milk business is an example of a home industry business by women. This business owner has unknowingly empowered women among housewives near his house. This article describes the feasibility of home industry businesses as a form of women's empowerment. The research location is in Deli Tua District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra. Data collection was carried out through interviews, observation, and documentation. The data was then analyzed using SWOT analysis to see the feasibility of home industry businesses as a form of empowering women and supporting their development. The research results show that empowering women through home industry businesses is quite effective because housewives who find it difficult to find work can increase their independence through working in home industry businesses. The problem experienced by Umi Shohib's soy milk as a home industry business is the lack of knowledge of how to use machines to make soy milk into UHT packaged milk so that it lasts longer. This problem shows that women's empowerment still requires professional experts to act as brokers to help connect clients with professional experts.

**Keywords:** Women's empowerment, home industry, gender, soy milk

## ABSTRAK

Ketidaksetaraan gender merupakan permasalahan yang kompleks dikarenakan memengaruhi peluang seorang individu untuk mendapatkan pekerjaan. Para wanita yang sulit mencari pekerjaan dibandingkan jenis kelamin laki-laki membuat para wanita-wanita tangguh dan kreatif mencoba usaha home industri agar tetap bisa menjalankan peran sebagai ibu rumah tangga. Usaha susu kedelai Umi Shohib merupakan contoh dari usaha *home industri* oleh perempuan. Pemilik usaha ini tanpa sadar telah melakukan pemberdayaan perempuan kepada para ibu rumah tangga di dekat rumahnya. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kelayakan usaha *home industri* sebagai bentuk pemberdayaan perempuan. Lokasi penelitian berada di Kecamatan Deli Tua, Kabupaten Deli Serdang, Sumatera Utara. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Data kemudian di analisis menggunakan analisis SWOT untuk melihat kelayakan usaha *home industri* sebagai bentuk pemberdayaan perempuan dan di dukung perkembangannya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemberdayaan perempuan melalui usaha *home indystri* cukup efektif dikarenakan para ibu rumah tangga yang sulit mencari pekerjaan dapat meningkatkan kemandiriannya melalui bekerja di usaha *home industri*. Permasalahan yang dialami oleh susu kedelai Umi Shohib sebagai usaha *home industri* adalah kekurangan pengetahuan untuk menggunakan mesin untuk membuat susu kedelai menjadi susu kemasan UHT agar lebih tahan lama. Permasalahan ini menunjukkan bahwa dalam pemberdayaan perempuan tetap membutuhkan ahli professional agar bisa berperan menjadi *broker* untuk membantu menghubungkan klien dengan tenaga ahli professional.

**Kata kunci:** Pemberdayaan perempuan, *home industri*, gender, susu kedelai



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## 1. Introduction

The era modern development has caused many changes to systems in this world. Some things have changed and some that are still the same. One thing that still hasn't changed is gender inequality. Gender inequality from the era before modernization until the era of development into modernization, and the problem of gender inequality is still ongoing. Gender discrimination still exists and is often fought against, gender and equality in education in society continue, but this is not an old problem. Salary inequality and inequality in career development are still challenging issues even though several movements and struggles to demand gender equality have made considerable progress in the last few decades [1].

Gender inequality is a system that discriminates against one gender. Gender inequality is a complex problem because it covers various areas of life, including education, work, health, violence, and social roles. Gender inequality is a complex issue involving inequalities in rights, access, opportunities, and treatment of individuals based on their gender. Gender inequality is a complex issue that occurs in modern society [2]. The problem of gender inequality greatly affects a person's social welfare because it interferes with individuals being able to develop their potential.

One of the problems arising from the existence of a gender inequality system is the difficulty of finding work. This is experienced by women, finding work is difficult because there is a lot of discrimination starting from salary, working hours, and appreciation. Inequality is created by differences in educational attainment between men and women and is continuous in the areas of work, power, and role in society. This inequality causes gender gaps [3,4]. The stereotype of women not having to be highly educated because they will end up working in the kitchen causes many women to lose the opportunity to improve their welfare. Creating characteristics that show that women are weaker than men will continue to create problems of gender inequality. Gender inequality is difficult to change due to the patriarchal culture which forces women to remain oppressed [4,5].

Researchers see that Umi Shohib's Soy Milk Home Industry Business is proof that women don't only need to work in the kitchen, but they can be able to open a business and are even able to empower other people with the skills and knowledge they have. A woman must have knowledge and skills even though she plays the role of housewife in marriage. Due to the difficulty of finding work for women who are getting older, running a home industry is one way/strategy to overcome this problem. The home industry is a business carried out at home on a small scale.

This research is important because the problem of gender inequality is a problem that is currently difficult to resolve. Apart from changing the system, problem-solving can be done with the efforts of the gender. Women's empowerment is an alternative so that women can be independent in improving their welfare in life. The novelty in this research is that the researcher tried to use a participatory approach from social workers in carrying out research to obtain detailed data regarding how empowerment is carried out through the Umi Shohib's soy milk home industry business to improve the welfare of housewives in the surrounding area.

## 2. Method.

This research is a type of descriptive qualitative research. Data was collected through interviews and observations of informants. The data was then analyzed using SWOT analysis to see the role of empowerment carried out on housewives who worked at the research location. The research location is at the Umi Shohib Soy Milk Business which is located on Jalan Roso Pahlawan II, Deli Tua District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra. In collecting data, researchers used a participatory approach based on the assumption that people know what they need and what is good for them. The research location can be seen in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1.** Map of research location

### 3. Result and Discussion

Umi Shohib's Soy Milk Home Industry Business has been established since 2007. She first started this business when she was pregnant and made ice lollies from soy milk, a neighbor offered her to sell the ice to a school near her house because it was healthier for children to consume. At first, she refused because she doubted that the ice would sell, but because the family's economic condition was in crisis at that time, she finally tried the opportunity. Unexpectedly, the ice made from soy milk is selling well among school children. She started developing ice lolly into fresh soy milk so she could sell it to local shops.

When she started the business, she was only helped by relatives, but because the number of requests continued to increase, she started recruiting neighbors. She prioritizes housewives, especially those who are widows to help them improve their economy. Currently, Umi Shohib's Soy Milk is quite well known because it has a market in the Deli Tua area. This happened with the help of an agent who promoted her soy milk to shops. Umi Shohib's soy milk business is now certified halal because it uses natural ingredients and has a logo. The following is a photo of the Umi Shohib's Soy Milk packaging.



**Figure 2.** The pacakaging of Umi Shohib's Soy Milk

The workers currently working at the soy milk production site are 12 housewives. The work is divided into several parts, namely the task of making soy milk, the task of wrapping soy milk, the task of packing soy milk for the shop, and the task of mopping. The officer who makes the milk will come at 02.00 WIB and finish at around 05.00 WIB, which is before the morning prayer call to prayer. Meanwhile, workers who wrap and package will start working after dawn until 10.00 WIB. The salaries earned by workers also vary, starting from IDR 30,000 per day for wrapping officers, while the salary for packaging soy milk is IDR. 220,000-240,000 per week and for mopping duties they are paid Rp. 90,000 per week.

Based on interviews with workers at the Umi Shohib Home Industry Business, they are very happy with this job vacancy because with their old age and status as housewives, they are aware that it will be difficult to find work. This business helps their economy and does not interfere with their role as housewives. They can still prepare their children's lunch before going to work and cook lunch after work.



**Figure 3.** Interview with the workers

By using a participatory approach in interviewing the owner of Umi Shohib's Soy Milk, the author discovered the problems currently being experienced by the home industry business which has helped the local community. She said that she had bought a machine to make soy milk into UHT packaged milk so that it could last longer. Currently, with plastic packaging, soy milk only lasts about 3 days in the refrigerator, therefore she is trying to buy a machine/technology so she can make soy milk last longer like UHT milk in supermarkets. Unfortunately, after spending a lot of money to buy the machine, she had difficulty using it because there were no technical experts in his work team.



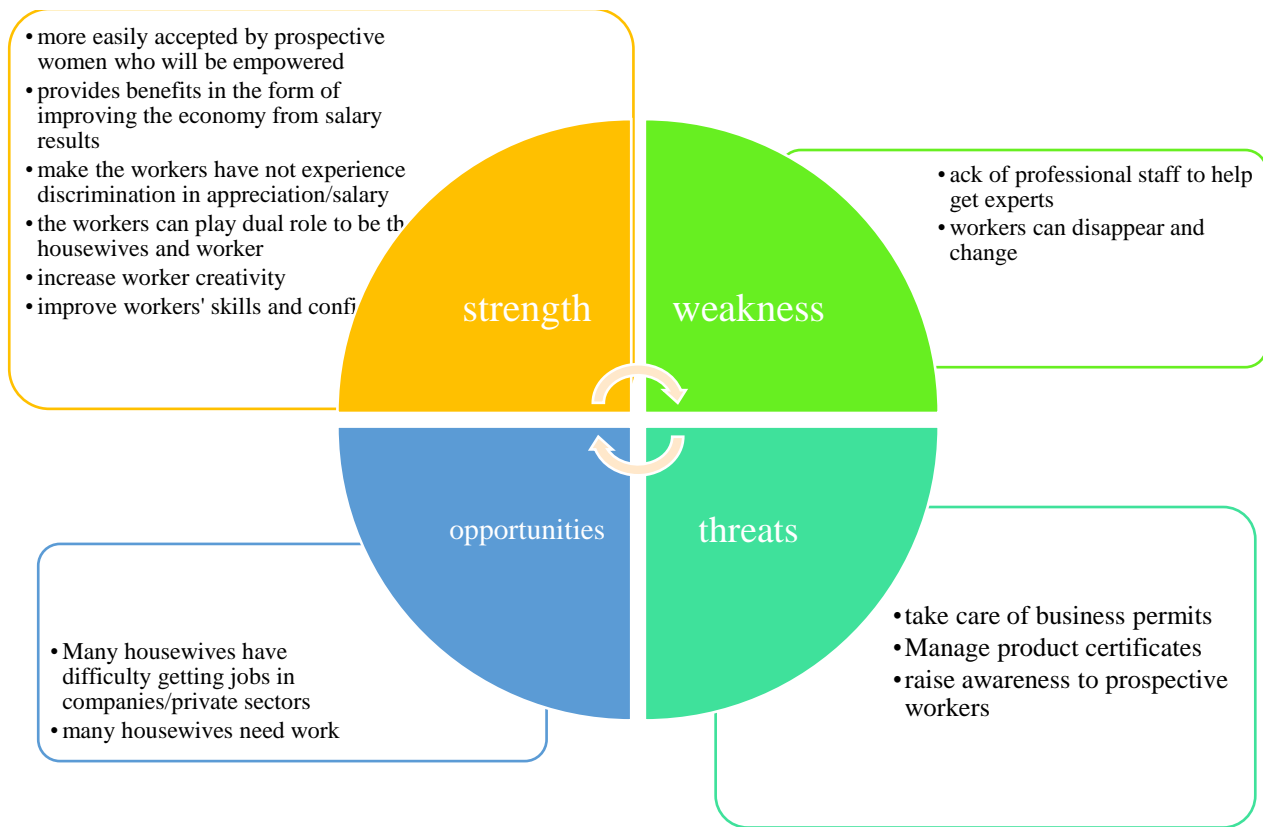
**Figure 4.** Unused UHT milk processing machine

Based on the problems experienced by the owner of the soy milk home industry business, Umi Shohib, the author tries to act as a broker so that Umi Shohib gets food engineering experts through writing this article. Academics and Food Engineering Experts who wish to collaborate with this business are well received, especially to help resolve problems experienced by the owner for the sustainability of this business opportunity.



**Figure 5.** Assessment with the owner of Umi Shohib's soy milk

The author uses a SWOT analysis to test the feasibility of empowering women through the Umy Shohib Soy Milk Home Industry business to see how women's empowerment can be carried out through developing a home industry.



**Figure 6.** The SWOT Analysis

From the results of data analysis through SWOT, it can be seen that empowerment through home industries has a great chance of success because the community, especially housewives, is still very open to being employed as workers because they find it difficult to find work, especially with their role as wives and mothers in the household. Empowerment through home industries has been proven to have a good impact. Several previous studies such as research by [6] entitled Empowering Women Through Cassava Home Industry Processing in the Ngudi Sari Tanjung Sari Women Farmers Group (KWT) Gunungkidul Regency showed that empowerment carried out through the development of home industries from cassava which is the main product in Gunung Kidul gave positive results in the form of increasing the income of housewives, increasing self-confidence, improving the standard of living of the community by utilizing existing resources. Furthermore, research [7] entitled Empowering Women Through Home Industry During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Case Study in the Nurfa Home Industry Cluster Mustikasari) showed that empowering women through the home industry greatly helped women affected by the economic crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic by making masks. This empowerment also increases their creativity. Empowering women through home industry businesses can improve the welfare of women because they are equipped with skills and creativity to create independence in improve their standard of living. In empowering women through the Umi Shohib soy milk home industry business, 3 stages are needed [8,9]:

1. Awareness: this effort aims to encourage the community to understand the conditions/problems they experience and provide an understanding of the benefits that can be done as a solution to the problem for resolution. In empowering women through Umi Shohib's home industry business, awareness of the problem of women who can participate in economic activities is the first step so that housewives realize that they have the ability to be independent in improving their standard of living. Creating awareness that women do not only need to act as housewives is the first challenge in empowering women.
2. Capacity building: this process is the process of providing knowledge and skills so that the community is able to increase their capacity. This effort is carried out through training/seminars so that individual capacity increases and builds empowerment. In empowering women through Umi Shohib's home industry business, training to become workers is part of the capacity building stage
3. Empowerment: this stage is the process of giving power to the community so that they can manage the



resources they have, make decisions independently, solve problems, and expand networks. At this stage, the community is expected to have become an independent community without relying on external parties. In empowering women through the home industry business of Umi Shohib, this empowerment stage has not been fully implemented because they have been able to process resources, expand networks, and successfully produce well. However, there are still unresolved problems, they wanted to make milk into UHT packaging with the machines that have been purchased, but it still can't be used. They still need external parties in the form of food engineering experts to train them to use the machine.

Gender differences are not an important issue if they do not cause gender injustice/inequality. Gender differences between humans are formed, socialized, reinforced, and constructed by social or cultural means through state or religious teachings. Gender, which is a trait inherent in the male or female sex, changes into a divine provision due to the influence of social construction. This gender difference is further strengthened by the creation of gender as if it were the nature of men or women. The problem of gender injustice is caused by the inequality of nature imposed on one sex, this injustice stems from several problems, namely:

- Gender and marginalization of women: a system that excludes women for irrational reasons, namely religion, ethnicity, and state policy. Examples are the Green Revolution program that excludes women from farming work and different inheritance laws for men and women.
- Gender and subordination. Society's assessment of one gender as better than another. The assumption is that women are irrational and emotional so they are not worthy of being leaders and placing women in unimportant positions. For example: prioritizing men in higher education because women do not need to go to college and will end up in the kitchen too.
- Gender and stereotypes: labeling women and attaching them unfairly. For example, women dress up to attract the opposite sex, rape cases are blamed on women, and the main task of women is to serve their husbands so that women's education is put on second.
- Gender and violence: violence here means physical or psychological, this violence occurs because of gender bias. For example, rape, domestic violence, circumcision on the grounds of controlling women, prostitution, pornography, forced sterilization in family planning, holding/touching certain parts of a woman's body in various ways and opportunities without the owner's consent, and sexual and emotional harassment.
- Gender and workload: the assumption that women are diligent and nurturing so they are suitable to be given the burden of household chores, caring for children, and being made into "women's work". Women experience unfair workloads starting from the family, workplace, organization to the state. In the family, all household chores and taking care of children are delegated to women. In the workplace, the salary and appreciation received by women are not equal to their workload. In organizations/society, women are rarely invited to take part in decision making. This is not much different from the policies made by the state [10].

The gender gap system which is still a complex problem in the world does not stop the enthusiasm of women who want to be independent in improving their standard of living as long as they have the motivation and awareness within themselves to try to be creative in finding ways to improve their family's economy. Home industry businesses are a solution for women who are treated unfairly in the world of work. Home industry is one example of entrepreneurship that can eradicate poverty and reduce unemployment rates. Home industry is a business carried out at home by absorbing the unemployed and empowering the community. Generally, home industry workers are housewives who live around them [11]. The target of empowerment through home industry is women, especially housewives. What is needed is capital skills, not education [12].

Empowering women who aim to be independent still needs support in the process. In carrying out empowerment, it is important to provide assistance. Business development requires support from local governments and other parties that can help the success of the home industry being carried out. The preservation and development of businesses that have quality and highlight regional characteristics must receive support from all parties [12,13]

#### 4. Conclusion

Empowering women through home industry is one of the right strategies to empower women. The problem of gender inequality experienced by women makes it difficult for women to get jobs, lack self-confidence, and are second in education. This will continue without any changes made by women

themselves. Soy milk business owner Umi Shohib proves that women are able to open businesses that can improve the family economy. Based on the analysis that has been done, this happens because women who are old and widowed will be very participatory when given home industry work because they are aware of the difficulty of finding work with their current status and age, they are still able to carry out their role as housewives, they will not get discriminatory behavior like in other workplaces, they can increase their skills and increase their self-confidence. Based on this, empowering women through home industry is the right strategy for women who are still in a gender inequality system.

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