

The Role of Village Youtubers in Community Empowerment

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Abstract: The term Village Youtuber refers to the trend of the emergence of content creators for the Youtube platform in various villages. As in Kasegeran village, Cilongok district, Banyumas regency, Central Java, dozens of youths have become successful YouTubers. This study tries to examine the role of these YouTubers in empowering local communities. Data collection for this qualitative research was conducted through in-depth interviews and observations. The results of the study show that the constructive use of YouTube by these youths has encouraged them to become more empowered both personally and socially. Personally, they have reversed fate, from poor to well off. The increased of economic status encourage them to collaborate in developing the village, through charity activities or economic development for the village.

1 INTRODUCTION

Youtube is the largest video sharing site. In the Hootsuite survey, by January 2021, Youtube is the second most used application in the world (Kemp, 2021). Youtube users continue to increase, not only in urban areas but also in rural areas. They are not only viewers but also content creators (Youtubers). That is what happened in Kasegeran Village, Cilongok District, Banyumas Regency, Central Java. In that village, around 30 young people focus on producing Youtube content, such as workshop tutorials to mystery stories using only simple devices. The activity, which was initiated by Siboen (Siswanto), A motorcycle mechanic, has continued since 2016 during the pandemic (Suwarna, 2021). Apart from Kasegeran Village, there are also many YouTubers from other villages in remote Indonesia who are victorious. From East Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, for example, appears YouTuber Ronsi Geroniyono (22) with 1.05 million followers (Soekirno, 2021). As a social media platform, the presence of Youtube is like presenting two faces. On the one hand, social media is considered a new problem that comes along with the increasing number of internet users. Social media is synonymous with various problems in the information age, such as exploitation, invasion of privacy, pornography, terrorism, hoaxes, or hate speech (Hemsley et al., 2018). Indonesian President Joko Widodo said that social media has now become a fertile field for

content in the form of incitement, slander, false news, and hate speech. On social media, people become irritable and emotional (Januarius, 2017). But, on the other hand, social media is also praised as a form of democratization of mass media (Gayo-Avello, 2015).

Several studies show the use of social media for positive activities. As Hartoyo and Supriadi (2015) wrote, social media is used for social activities, for example in the exclusive breastfeeding campaign by the Indonesian Breastfeeding Mothers Association (AIMI). Edi Santoso's study of citizen Journalism practices in Brebes Regency also show how social media has a significant role in encouraging the development of rural areas (Santoso, 2019). Some studies have been carried out on Youtube, both in qualitative and quantitative approaches. The research themes revolve around the influence of the personal aspect of Youtubers (Ladhari et al., 2020; Budiasa & Savitri, 2005), the influence of Youtube on people's attitudes (Balakrishnan & Griffiths, 2017; Zimmermann et al., 2020; Alzara, 2019), the medium aspect of Youtube (Li et al., 2020). the business dimension or monetization of Youtube (Han, 2020; Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018), and the use of YouTube for journalism (Djerf-Pierre et al., 2019). From the internet search, there is no research which specifically studied the use of Youtube in community empowerment.

The study of the use of Youtube for community empowerment parallels the study of the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT). In the SCOT

perspective, technology should not direct human life (technological determinism), but on the contrary, humans should shape the use of technology. The use of social media is indeed increasingly significant in the world of politics, social interaction, and economic development. This is shown by a number of literatures that describe how social media has become a strategic tool in political action, democracy promotion, business marketing, and public relations management (Betton et al., 2015; Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Winograd & Hais, 2008; Qualman, n.d.). The use of social media in economic and community development has also attracted the attention of scholars such as Fernback (2005) and Laudeman (2005).

A number of studies point to the fact that social networks can increase the level of community welfare. Eagle et al. (2010) found that social network structure and diversity of individual relationships were correlated with community economic development. Meanwhile, in Canberra Australia, Howard (2012) found a correlation between the use of social media by local governments and the improvement of public services. Research on the use of digital technology in governance (e-government) has even become a separate phenomenon in recent years.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative design, with a descriptive approach. Descriptive approach reveals events or facts, circumstances, phenomena, variables and circumstances that occurred during the research by presenting what actually happened. This approach places researchers as the key to conducting inductive analysis (Sugiyono, 2010). Data mining was carried out through: (1) observation, (2) in-depth interviews, and (3) focus group discussions (FGD). Observations are used to identify practices and narratives of hyperlocal journalism that have been running on social media. Meanwhile in-depth interviews and FGDs were chosen to explore the practice of using social media, by selecting informants purposively, namely village media activists, village government officials, village empowerment experts, and social media experts. The researcher uses narrative analysis to explain the qualitative data. The term narrative involves several things: a relationship between parts, a sequence that forms a kind of plot, a selection that emphasizes which parts are more important and which are less important, and a special combination of time and place (Neuman, 2014).

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Kasegeran Village is one of the poorest villages in Cilongok District, because 25-27 percent of its residents fall into the poor category. Almost every year this village experiences a drought every time it enters the dry season, so that some RW (Rukun Warga) always experience a clean water crisis. The majority of the population work as farmer laborers and penderes (harvesters of sap water to be processed into sugar). Around 50 percent of the 1,776 families (4,776 people) become penderes with daily income between Rp 25,000-Rp 30,000. The rest are field farmers, farm laborers, and traders whose incomes are Rp 60,000-Rp 70,000 per day, but do not always have income.

For decades, the majority of residents of Kasegeran Village have had a difficult life because there are almost no job opportunities for residents, most of whom are junior high school graduates and do not have special skills. The area of agricultural land in the form of rice fields is limited, because most of the land in the village with an area of 618.9 hectares is fields. Coconut trees dominate the number of plants, the rest are secondary food crops and a few rice fields (Soekirno & Wicaksono, 2021). With this condition, various social problems arise, such as the high level of juvenile delinquency.

However, different conditions have been seen in Kasegeran Village in recent years. The presence of dozens of YouTubers in this village has brought significant changes. In the midst of depressed economic conditions due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, some villagers were actually able to buy motorized vehicles and renovate houses. Luxury houses began to appear in Kasegeran.

The presence of these Kasegeran Youtubers illustrates the reality of community empowerment, especially when community empowerment is interpreted as a concept of increasing community welfare in development. Development and the empowerment process are an inseparable unit because to achieve a development goal the process that must be passed is to empower the community so that community empowerment is realized in development (Laksono, 2018).

This increase in welfare is reflected in the changes in the lives of these YouTubers. The pioneer of this Kasegeran Village YouTuber is Siswanto (37) who is more familiar with the nickname Siboen. Siboen--the child of toy seller only graduated from elementary school (SD). Hearing his parents' complaints, the village head of Kasegeran Saifudin sent Siboen to Magelang, Central Java to attend a training program

at the Antasena Children's Social Rehabilitation Center in 2000. In this program, Siboen chose to study mechanics. Because he was ranked first out of 335 students in the training, Siboen got a job offer at a motorcycle factory from Japan. However, he refused the offer because he wanted to open a bike shop in his own village.

In 2004, Siboen opened a bike shop in his village. But because it was quiet, he decided to migrate to Jakarta. In the Capital, good fortune was not yet his. He returned to his village, and intends to re-open a bike shop by previously honing his skills at a reliable mechanic in Yogyakarta. When the workshop was not yet crowded, Siboen was inspired by a successful Youtuber from Jakarta. At that time he just found out there is a social media called Youtube that can make money.

Siboen then learned to be a self-taught youtuber since 2016. Not long after, he was able to create tutorial content about motorcycle repair that he mastered. A year later, his Youtube account has produced the first "salary" of 1.8 million rupiahs. Since then, he has been increasingly passionate about creating content, especially regarding motorcycle issues. Unexpectedly, many people love to learn from the tutorial content. In a short time, his followers continued to grow to reach 1.2 million. His income quickly shot up from millions of rupiah to more than two hundred million rupiahs per month. From his income as young as this youtuber, Siboen can buy land, build a house and a bike shop.

Empowerment starts from the figure of Siboen who does not want to succeed alone. Siboen shares the secret of his success as a Youtuber to his relatives and friends. At least he has fostered more than 30 youths in his village. Currently, there are 33 active Youtubers on Kasegeran, although not all of them make money. Some youtubers who have produced can be seen in Table 1

The majority of these Youtubers previously lived hard like Siboen. After successfully monetizing Youtube, along with the increase in loyal subscribers and viewers, their standard of living slowly rose. As experienced by Suroso who has 3 YouTube channels, namely Adipati Seger, Adi Croom, and Calon Budayawan. This employee at one of the coconut sugar collectors has been working as Youtuber for the last 1.5 years. Previously, for two months, he watched and learned from Siboen about what it is and how to use YouTube to earn an income. Suroso tells how hard his life was before becoming a youtuber:

Working for a sugar collector, I usually earn IDR 35,000 per day. Obviously it wasn't enough for the family's needs. I once did not eat rice for three days

because of the lack of income. I only have IDR 7 000 to feed my wife and children. Now through YouTube, I can earn IDR 2.5 million to IDR 7 million a month. (Suroso)

Table 1: List of YouTubers who are already earning.

No	Name	Profession	Age	YouTube Channel
1	Siswanto	Mechanic	37	Siboen Chanel
2	Suroso	Laborer	42	Adipati Seger
3	Tirwan	Small trader	40	Angger Pradesa
4	Kuswan	Scavenger	40	Sura Blendong
5	Syam	fresh graduate	25	Mister Syam
6	Arema D.	College graduate	22	Digna Mbul
7	Karto	Laborer	42	Karto Blero
8	Narto	Carpenter	42	Narto Cu
9	Romi	Small trader	20	Inisial RH
10	Taufik H.	laborer	32	Taufik Nf
11	Arif	Mechanic	37	Ireng Setiawan

At least now for daily meals, Suroso and his family are no longer in trouble. He was able to buy a new motorcycle vehicle. Suroso's income is not only from Youtube, but also from the help of his loyal channel viewers. One person, for example, regularly gives Rp. 300,000 per month to Suroso.

Economic empowerment ultimately affects the surrounding community, either through charity activities or productive businesses that absorb labor. Like Siboen, after his success he developed various businesses, such as a repair shop, a motorcycle parts shop and a fishing arena. For the various business units, he recruited workers from Kasegeran residents themselves.

Currently Siboen is the Chairman of the Village-Owned Enterprise of Wiragem, Kasegeran Village and is starting to realize his dream to create a recreation area in his village so that villagers do not have to go far for recreation. He has made K-Boen Park a place to play and eat for visitors. In the future, Siboen wants to create a tourist forest in his village as a place of recreation as well as empowering residents who live on the edge of the forest.

The YouTubers from Kasegeran Village share their income by routinely buying rice and cooking oil to be distributed to hundreds of needy residents. They repair uninhabitable houses so that their owners rejoice. They don't forget to fulfill the needs of houses of worship such as the Koran. If depicted, the contribution of village youtubers in realizing prosperity can be seen in Figure 1

The empowerment process is essentially an effort to make a community have more control over its environment. In practice, empowerment certainly involves various parties (Badaruddin et al., 2020). Therefore, the practice of community empowerment

here is conceived of as an effort or way by which people, organizations and communities are directed to be able to master their lives (Indrayani, 2016). At least, there are two important parties in the process of empowering these YouTubers, namely the Siboen team and the village government.

Siboen took the initiative to form a kind of mentoring team for new YouTubers or prospective YouTubers. Through this forum, Siboen performs three functions, namely (1) coordination, (2) collaboration, and (3) mentoring. Coordination is done mainly to avoid disputes between YouTubers. They prefer collaboration over competition to achieve success. This collaboration is manifested in the process of creating content together. For example, in making mystery content, they only use one camera whose content is divided into each of the Youtuber's channels. Furthermore, each youtuber provides a narration or comment. Monitoring is done by Siboen incidentally, for example, occasionally they gather at Siboen's house to share experiences and knowledge. The mentoring process is also carried out indirectly when Siboen and other YouTubers work together in the field.

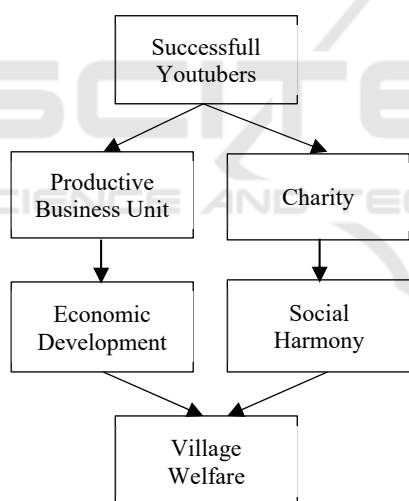


Figure 1: Contribution of village youtubers.

The second party, namely the village government, also supports this youtuber empowerment program. Seeing the enthusiasm of the youth to become YouTubers, the village government also declared Kasegeran as a 'Youtuber village'. Government support that has been running, among others, is by seeking adequate technological infrastructure, namely through the village internet program. Through this program, internet access becomes easier and cheaper. They worked with Telkom to install a server at the village hall and then the internet signal was

spread through wifi poles in 4 RWs to reach residents. One transmitter pole can provide internet service for 1 RW or a radius of about 200 meters. To enjoy the internet, there are about 150 households that do not need to subscribe per house, but simply buy internet vouchers from agents appointed by the village. To enjoy the internet for 2 hours, the voucher price is only IDR 2,000. As for the voucher for Rp. 5,000, they can get 24-hour internet facilities.

The village government is currently also preparing a 'Village Studio' which will facilitate the youtubers in producing their content. Through this studio, Saifudin also hopes that village information, especially about culture, government, religion, sports or others will be visually distributed through global networks.

The description of the empowerment model of Kasegeran Youtubers can be seen in figure 2

The increase in the income of these Youtubers in the end also encourages independence, which is an indicator of empowerment. Theresia (2014) said that empowerment is the concept most often used in community capacity building activities that emphasize community independence. Community empowerment is an effort to increase the dignity of the layers of society who are now unable to escape the trap of poverty and underdevelopment.

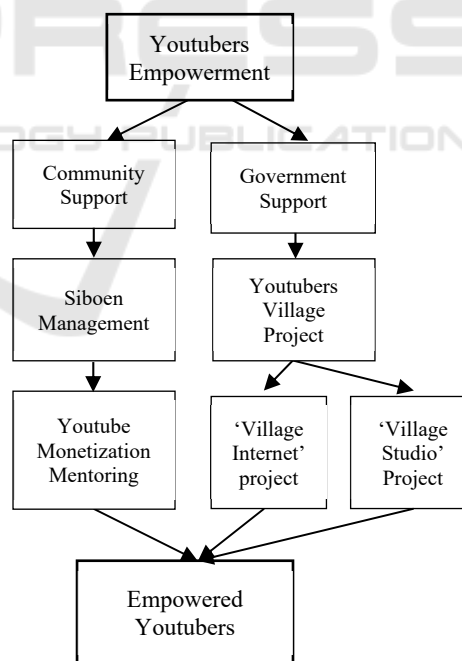


Figure 2: Empowerment Model of Village Youtubers.

Apart from being empowered personally, these Youtubers are also empowered socially. Their existence then has a positive influence on the surrounding community. The village head of

Kasegeran said that these Youtubers had become an inspiration for local youth. Not only inspiring to become a Youtuber, but also inspiring to try. The juvenile delinquency rate has also decreased. Seeing what happened to Siboen and other YouTubers, the young people of Kasegeran are now aware that anyone can be successful.

4 CONCLUSION

The role of village youtubers in empowering the community starts from their increasing economic independence. From growing personally, finally growing socially. Their success has inspired young people in Kasegeran. Their presence helps drive the village economy. With the support of the village government, they pioneered the youtuber village program. Through this program, information technology can be used constructively, especially for rural communities.

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