

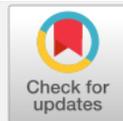
Role of Rural Women in Sustaining the Fish Crackers Business: A Case Study in South Sumatra

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ABSTRACT

The rural woman is a valuable human resource, especially in fulfilling the economic functions of the family and the home alongside males. In rural families, women perform not only a reproductive but also a productive and social role. This research is original because it examines the contribution of women in rural areas, particularly in villages with local potentials, such as river and swamp fish. Women transform fish into crackers, which they sell to increase the family's income. This study examines rural women's contribution to the fish crackers business. The qualitative research was conducted in Tebing Gerinting Village, South Indralaya Sub-district, Ogan Ilir Regency, South Sumatra. Data collection technique involving in-depth interviews with the informant. Using qualitative analysis methods, the collected data were analyzed. Women perform a variety of roles in the production of crackers fish, including dough preparation, crackers fish formation, boiling, drying/drying process, roasting, packaging, and sales. Fish crackers are a commercially produced item that incorporates the contributions of women. Women in the manufacturing crackers fish business have difficulty finding laborers. There is no business capital because the raw materials for making fish crackers are supplied by fixed-supply agents. The agents of the fish were from Palembang, while the agents of tapioca flour were from Lampung. All family members are involved in the marketing of fish crackers. They sold to the market in Tanjung Raja, Indralaya, and even to outside areas such as Pendopo, Kayuagung, Komering, Sungai Pinang, Ketapang, Tanjung Enim, Lahat, Prabumulih, Palembang and up to outside the cities, such as Lampung. Additionally, they sell fish crackers on the road next to their home. The contribution of women to economically productive activities

can ensure the survival and growth of venture fish crackers. It can increase their family's nutritional security.

Keywords: Economic Contribution; Fish Crackers Business; Rural Women; Women's Contribution

1. Introduction

Women in rural areas are typically associated with housework and physical labor, but her intellect was also engaged in various economically productive activities (Ahdiah, 2013). Economic factors affect women's participation. As domestic, women are typically responsible for arranging household matters, such as the nutritional health of the family, the children's education, and the payment of educational fees. Women are the first to experience a lack of fundamental needs, so when they participate in productive economic activities, at least a portion of their family's needs are met (Yunindyawati, 2016).

In this instance, rural women in the village of Tebing Gerinting are actively involved in various fish cracker-related commercial activities. Women's participation in productive economic activities can contribute to family food security by increasing the family's income (Yunindyawati, Sumarti, Adiwibowo, Hubbeis et al., 2014). In addition, women's contribution to the business of fish crackers ensures that they continue to exist, and it is known to the public even today, not just in the community surrounding the village of Tebing Gerinting, even though its existence is already well-known outside reach Lampung. Women can gain autonomy and independence and increase their family's income through hard work in the fish cracker business.

Women are famously multitalented. Its ability to conduct commerce is comparable to the capabilities of men. Thus, a business allegedly moonlighting could generate hundreds of billions of rupiahs. Women have a "typical use." The right hemisphere of the brain is thus ideally suited for entering the business world, and the fact that women also possess a strong moral compass makes them a crucial element of a business's success. The defining characteristics are patience, intelligence, emotional maturity, and superior communication skills (Siswanto, 2009).

The economic contribution of women in the family would result in an increase in family finances, ownership of luxury products, a higher standard of living, and a greater sense of security, thereby impacting the family's social standing. Referring to the Declaration of Rome, food security is a condition in which every family member has access to physical and affordable food for physical and mental health, respectively (Puspitasari et al., 2013).

On the contribution of women to the existence of the fish crackers business, similar research has been conducted by (Puspitawati et al., 2012). The average economic contribution of women to family income, as determined by their research, was 51.0%, and multiple roles fall under the category of being. Subjective happiness is generally included within the category of being. The wife's education is well-balanced between work and family-related subjects, contributing positively to her subjective happiness. Subjective happiness is affected by the education of spouses and the ability to balance work and family responsibilities.

This research discusses women's role in producing fish crackers in the community of Tebing Gerinting. In addition, this study investigates the characteristics that encourage women in the Tebing Gerinting Village to become involved in the business of fish crackers, to enhance

both the financial well-being of their families and their sense of safety regarding their food supply.

This research differs from others in focusing on women's roles in processing fish into processed fish products, specifically fish crackers (*kemplang*). Women also serve an important ecological function by turning the plentiful fish in rivers and swamps into crackers. As a result, women in South Sumatra have played a role in expanding the variety of fish products available to consumers.

2. Literature Review

Women's entrepreneurship can help families financially by creating jobs and expanding existing ones. Women's economic contributions to raising family income, which is highlighted in the study, are crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty (Raharjo et al., 2015), and the productive economic efforts of women are also an endeavor to increase the realization of women's economic rights within the family.

According to Lasswell and Lasswell (1987), women's participation in the household economy raises the family's net worth, allows for more luxuries, and improves the family's overall quality of life and safety.

Research by Begum & Chakraborty (1995) states that women's economic activity contributes significantly to family survival and well-being. The contribution of women to the household, both in terms of domestic and financial responsibilities, plays an important role in sustaining household income. Women's participation in the productive sector is anticipated to alleviate family economic difficulties. It is anticipated that the role of women in the domestic sector to manage their family's resources will promote family welfare.

Families in rural areas have problems, namely limited economic income caused by erratic rice yields and frequent crop failures. Therefore the women in the family try to find additional income by processing local potential, namely river fish, into processed fish crackers (*kemplang*). The fish cracker business then became a rational choice to increase family income in Tebing Gerinting village, South Indralaya Sub-district, Ogan Ilir Regency. The fish cracker (*kemplang*) business is mostly carried out by women in the village of Tebing Gerinting; women can keep the fish crackers' existence and improve their family's food security.

3. Research Methodology

The research site is Tebing Gerinting Village, South Indralaya Sub-district, Ogan Ilir Regency, South Sumatra, Indonesia.

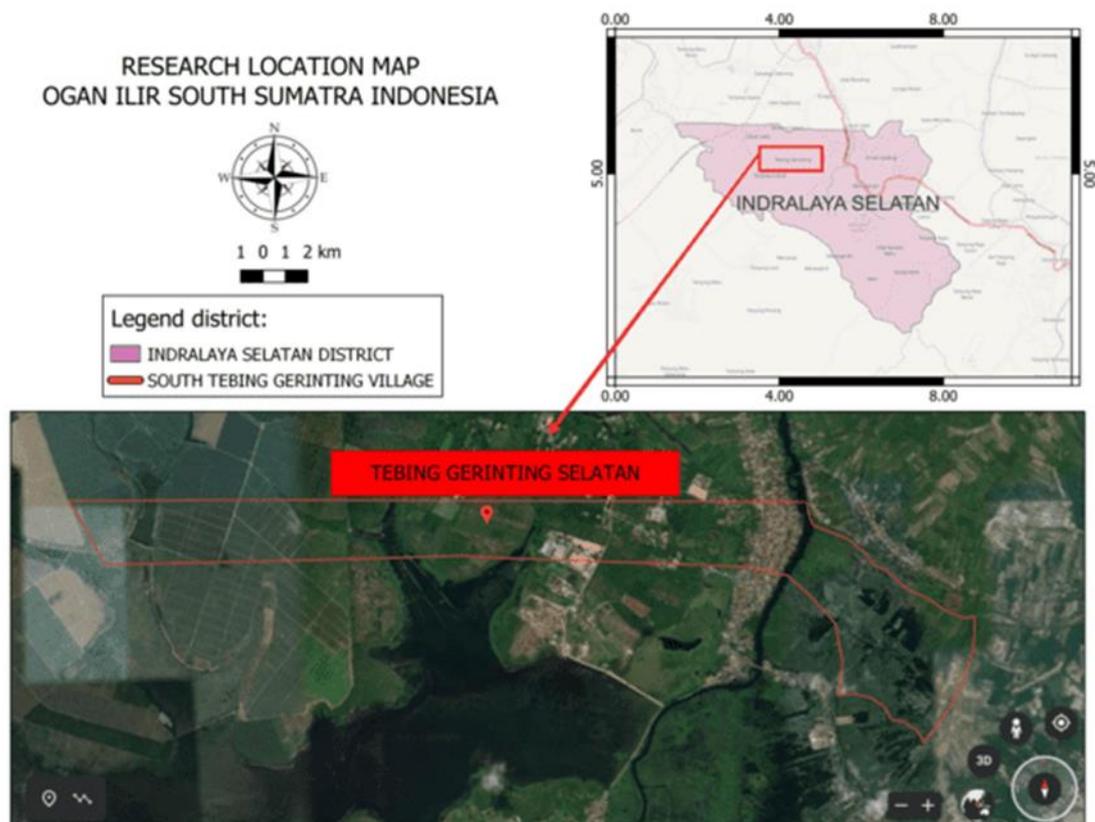


Figure 1. Location Map of Research

The present study employed a qualitative approach. This study utilized qualitative methodologies of investigation. According to Creswell & Poth (2016), a qualitative method is a technique for investigating and constructing meaning about a phenomenon or social or humanitarian issue based on the participants' perspectives. This study has a descriptive focus. According to Bungin (2007), descriptive qualitative social research seeks to describe various phenomena of social actuality that exist in society and are the subject of study.

This study adopts a qualitative approach because we must collect data and information over an extended period. Several methods were used to collect data, including observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. We collect the required data from image files, video, and audio recordings.

This study's unit of analysis is women in the fish cracker business. Therefore, this study conducted structured interviews with five informants representing a group of fish businesswomen to strengthen the data collected through interviews.

This study re-evaluated and re-recorded certain queries to ensure the informants agreed with the conclusions. The audio recordings were then compiled into a singular document after the interview. Most of this study time is spent observing the informant's conversation and the women's activities as they go about their daily lives. As a research instrument, researchers will interact directly with informants.

From the original data collected from sources, research transcripts were created. The subsequent process of grouping is based on how diligently individuals attempt to answer study queries. Next, researchers will link categories and determine the significance of their findings. The following phase analyses the research findings by comparing them to the concepts and findings of earlier studies.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Role of Women in the Existence of the Fish Crackers Business in the Village of Tebing Gerinting

Tebing Gerinting Village was well-known as where many women-owned fish cracker businesses were. Making dough, forming fish crackers, boiling, drying out, roasting, packaging, and selling fish crackers comprise most women’s production processes (Ariansyah et al., 2012).

Similar steps are taken in producing fish crackers in the settlement of Tebing Gerinting Village. Still, there are some key differences in measurement and the assortment of ingredients. The process of making these fish crackers is straightforward, although it does take some time, as follows:

Table 1. Types of Fish Cracker Production Activities

Activity	Description
Dough Production Process	To produce vibrant and colorful fish crackers, the process begins by boiling water and adding a few drops of food coloring. Subsequently, salt and seasoning are incorporated into the boiling water to enhance the flavor. The next step involves carefully mixing tapioca flour, fish, boiling water, and cold water to achieve the desired taste and consistency of the dough.
Formation of Dough	Shape the dough about 50 centimeters long and diameter 3-4 centimeters. Use a tube-shaped wooden or iron to form the dough until it resembles fish crackers. Then cut the dough above a board into pieces of fish crackers.
Boiling/Steaming	The pieces of the dough fish crackers were compiled into the trays and then steamed until cooked.
Drying	Fish crackers already steamed, then moved into trays made of rattan or bamboo for drying under the blazing sun. The drying process takes approximately 5-6 hours, depending on the weather.
Baking	After drying, the dried fish crackers are ready for baking above the coals using traditional baking.
Packaging	Fish crackers are packaged in plastic packaging of various sizes and supplied to meet customer orders. Additionally, fish crackers accompanied by vinegar or sauce are individually wrapped in transparent plastic, with quantities ranging from 10 to 50 pieces per package.
Marketing	Fish crackers are marketed in various locations, including Verandah, Tanjung Raja, Indralaya, Kayuagung, Pendopo, Komering, Sungai Pinang, Ketapang, Tanjung Enim, Palembang, Lampung, and Tebing Gerinting. Upon placing a deposit, customers receive their fish crackers. Some customers even purchase directly from the Village of Tebing Gerinting. Baked fish crackers are sold in roadside stalls as culinary souvenirs, with prices ranging from IDR 10,000 to IDR 50,000 per pack. Traditional marketplaces like Indralaya and Tanjung Raja also serve as marketing venues for these fish crackers.

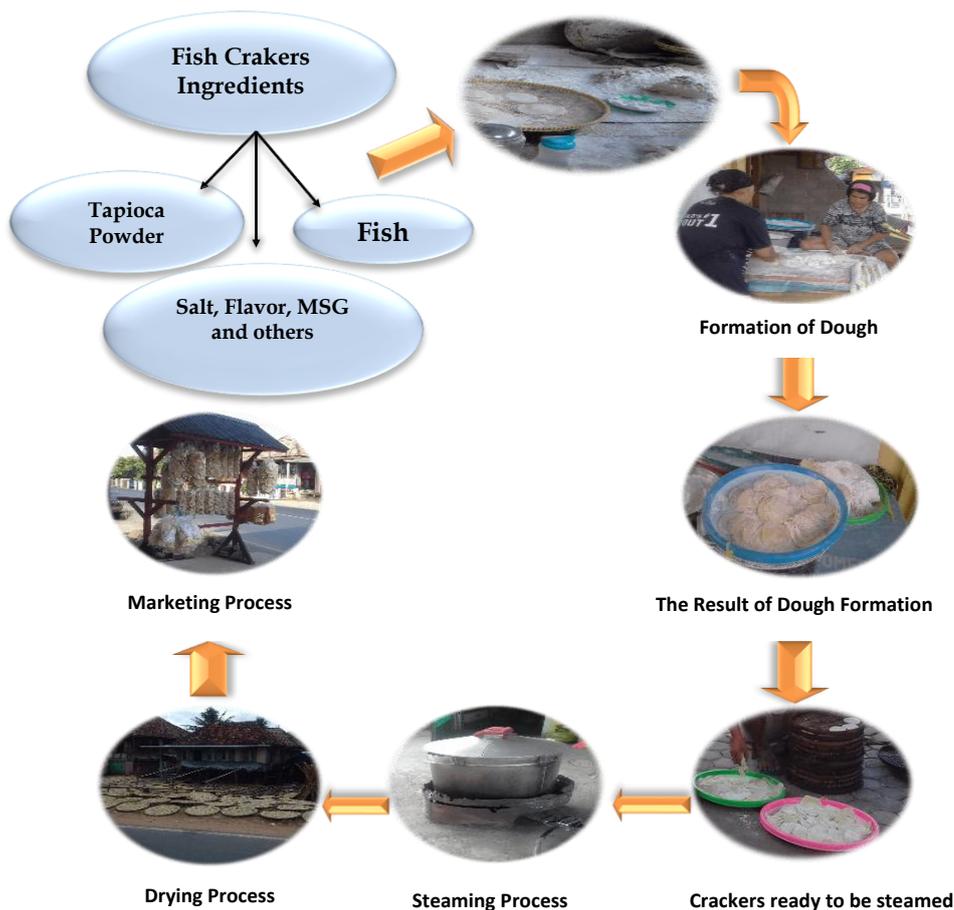


Figure 2. Processing, Production, and Marketing of Fish Crackers (Kemplang Ikan)

Source: Primary Documentation (2022)

4.2. Factors that Motivate Women to Develop the Fish Crackers Business in the Village of Tebing Gerinting

Several factors, including the capital, the availability of raw materials, production processes, production sites, and prospective fish cracker revenue, influenced the fish cracker business in the village of Tebing Gerinting.

4.2.1. Does not require a significant amount of venture capital

In-depth interviews with the informant revealed that women in Tebing Gerinting selected the fish crackers business due to the modest opening capital required to produce fish crackers. Capital is essential to the management of fish crackers. The minimal capital required to produce fish crackers encourages villagers to run this enterprise. Capital could be utilized instead of credit or advances from other parties, such as loan sharks or banks. The greater the capital the business owner owns, the greater the income the fish cracker business generates. As disclosed by informant R:

"I went to this business with its capital and did not dare to borrow capital from the banks, and there was no cooperation for savings and money. Anyways, if open a business of fish crackers, with capital at all, as long as there is a will can. Because we

are facilitated by agents of raw materials suppliers that give credence to the owners of fish crackers business” (Interview with R, 2022).

4.2.2. Obtaining raw materials from the supplier agent is very convenient

In addition to its modest initial investment, the raw materials for fish crackers are also readily available in this village, where supplier agents continue to exert their efforts, particularly for fundamental ingredients like tapioca flour and fish. Fish supplier agents are from Palembang, while tapioca flour agent suppliers originate from Lampung. The agents of these two suppliers give the business owner of fish crackers full confidence in owing them the raw material. The average fish crackers business owner demands raw materials from its agent in advance. These basic raw materials can be paid for after the finished fish crackers have been sold. It corresponds with the information disclosed by the informant:

“Tapioca flour and fish (fish crackers base raw material) is a specialized supplied by agents in this village. Tapioca flour was imported directly from Lampung, while the fish as material comes from Palembang. We take the ingredients in advance from the agent (debt) and pay later if fish crackers are already sold” (Interview with one of a fish crackers business owner, 2022).

4.2.3. The production process was assisted by family members as well as some employees

The production process transforms raw materials or raw materials into ready-to-sell products at the expense of various direct or indirect production costs (Bunsaman & Taftazani, 2018). A factor that encourages women to develop venture fish crackers is the absence of advanced technology in the manufacturing process, which can be accomplished with basic and conventional technologies. Business owners can make fish crackers without special training or advanced education if they have sufficient knowledge and skills obtained orally or from neighbors without a course. They know the recipe and see the process of making fish crackers.

The number of persons producing fish crackers ranges from three to eleven. Even in the production of fish crackers, most of the labor is managed by a family member. Thus, the labor is neither paid nor performed by salaried personnel, so there is no additional cost associated with paying workers:

“I learned to make these crackers fish from my mom ten years ago; the recipe. Yes, as ordinary people make, we use tapioca flour, fish, salt, flavor enhancer, and food coloring; we do not have any special recipe. I opened the fish crackers business was supported by my mother, and my husband has also assisted the fish crackers business. Usually, the husband helps when boiling and drying out fish crackers and selling fish crackers to the consumer” (Interview with one of a fish crackers business owner, 2022).

As well as information provided by the informant R:

“I have four employees who help-help here. They work from 03:00 AM, from making the dough drying out to fish crackers.. I pay each IDR 50,000” (Interview with R, 2022).

The business owner of fish crackers are women with only elementary and high school educations. The equipment used to manufacture fish crackers is also quite straightforward, such

as trays for mixing the dough and a utensil for cutting the dough. Tube-shaped milling was used to reduce the size of the dough fish crackers. A large steamer tray for steaming batter, a gas stove/furnace brick with wood fuel, a container for steaming uncooked fish crackers, and a tray for drying fish crackers.

4.2.4. Do not require extensive endeavor place

Observations from the field indicate that creating fish crackers does not require a special location. Businesswomen can make fish crackers at home. Typically, fish crackers are made in the kitchen or the backyard by installing a tarp so as not to be subjected to the sun's heat or rain.

4.2.5. A Promising Revenue

The resulting income or profits then encourage the businesswomen in the fish-cracker industry to maintain and expand their operations. Customers outside the region who order fish crackers are more likely to do so if they have extensive marketing chain connections.

The consumers pay the business owner in advance, and the new fish crackers are produced/delivered to them. Thus, they do not fear loss due to instances of consumer deception. Fish crackers are also sold in traditional Indralaya and Tanjung Raja markets. The marketing of fish crackers extended up to the Kayuagung Pendopo, Kayuagung, Komerang, Sungai Pinang, Ketapang, Tanjung Enim, Lahat, Prabumulih, Palembang, has even been up to Lampung. As disclosed by the source:

"Fish crackers are sold in the market of Tanjung Raja and the market of Indralaya; there was also a message from outside the region, such as the Pendopo, Tanjung Enim, and Lampung. Booker fish crackers usually pay first before fish crackers are delivered"
(Interview with one of a fish crackers business owner, 2022).

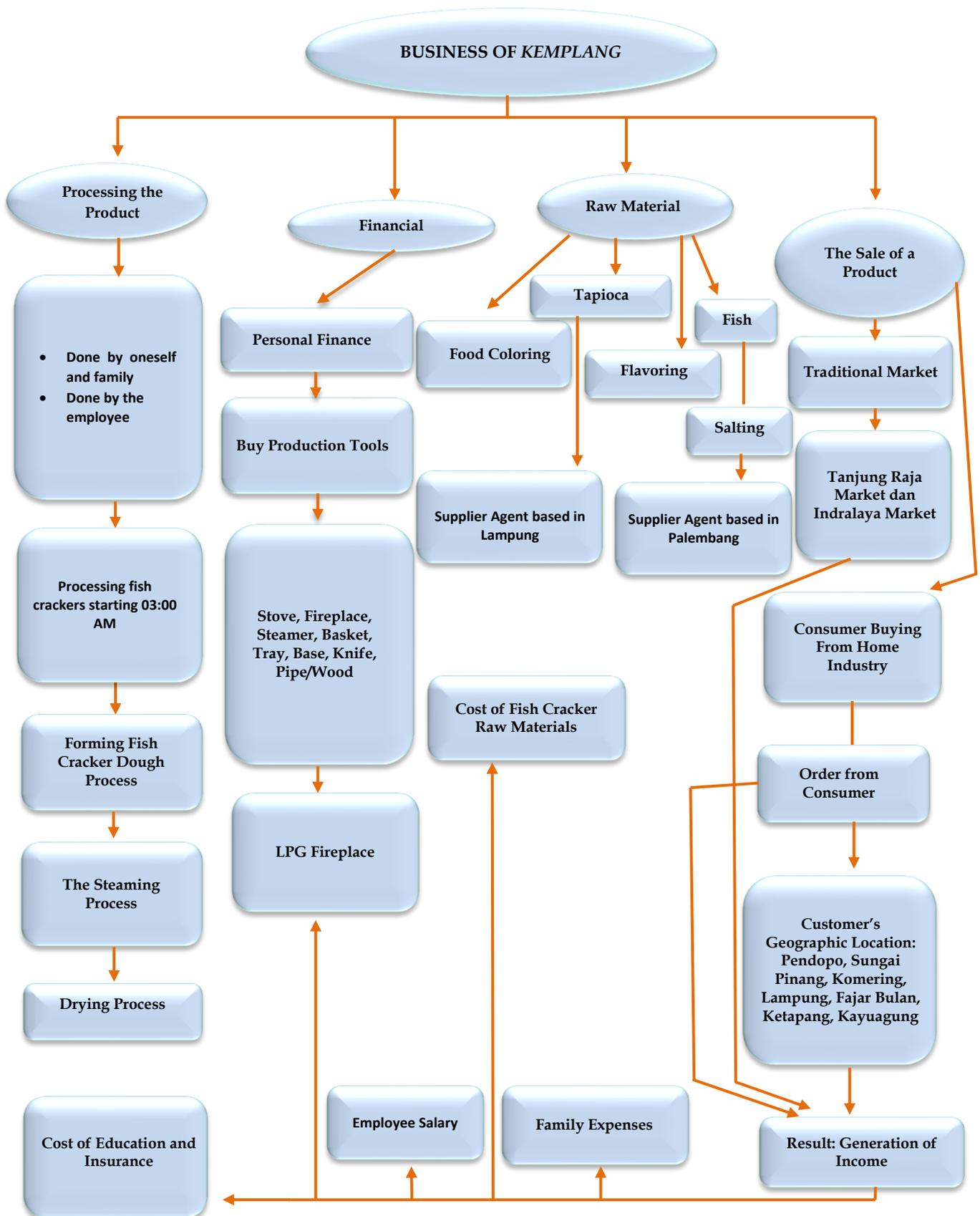


Figure 3. The Industry of Kemplang (fish crackers) in Tebing Gerinting village
Source: Primary Documentation (2022)

4.3. The Contribution of Women to improving the Economy of the family and household food security

Women's participation in economic activities of productive endeavor in the village of Tebing Gerinting results in the revenue of fish crackers business specifically for family income so that family needs can be met. In addition, with the fish cracker business, women can own businesses and be independent in larger work. Even with the presence of these businesses, new employment opportunities will be created for the villagers of Tebing Gerinting, particularly for women. More women who establish a fish cracker business are involved in the labor consumed by fish cracker business activities. Thus, fish crackers can reduce unemployment in the village of Tebing Gerinting due to their existence.

4.3.1. Increasing the family income

The business of crackers fish that was only released with resolve, persistence, tenacity, and skills can contribute to the family's income. The produced fish crackers are sold to consumers, generating a substantial profit. As disclosed by informant R, a single sack of tapioca flour (50 kilograms) and five kilograms of fish can yield a profit of IDR 700,000:

"In a day, I can make about three thousand five hundred pieces of fish crackers with basic ingredients, one sack of tapioca flour, and 5 Kg of fish that has been milled. The results of sales could reach IDR 700,000. - (seven hundred thousand rupiah)"
(Interview with R, 2022).

The revenue generated by the women's fish cracker enterprise contributes to the household income. Household income is a living/income received by the household that comes from the family's chief of household and the income of household members. A sizeable portion of a woman's income can be allocated toward meeting the costs of daily food requirements, children's education, insurance for family members, and other domestic needs (Yunindyawati, Sumarti, Adiwibowo, & Hardinsyah, 2014).

4.3.2. Women increase household food security

As a result of the formulation of the International Congress of Nutrition (ICN), household food security is defined as the capacity of households to meet the dietary needs of its members regularly so that they can live a healthy existence and perform daily activities. Stock food, accessibility/affordability, and food consumption are indicators of a household's food security (Hayati et al., 2015).

4.3.3. Food Availability

Women in Tebing Gerinting Village generate income by selling fish crackers, ensuring their families have sufficient sustenance. Since income from the fish crackers business can be used to purchase rice, side dishes, vegetables, and other necessities, food availability for their families will be ensured (Setiawan & Fadillah, 2020).

4.3.4. Accessibility/affordability of food

Household income significantly impacts the household's access to food and other food-related conveniences. Women in the village of Tebing Gerinting have increased their household income by selling fish crackers, increasing their household's access to food, thus strengthening their resilience.

4.3.5. Use of sales proceeds of fish crackers

Some of the profits or revenue generated from the sale of fish crackers are used to purchase food, pay for their children's education, and meet other essential family requirements.

4.3.6. Opening of New Jobs

The crackers fish business in the Tebing Gerinting Village is expanding, and many individuals are intrigued by it. It will provide new opportunities for the unemployed residents of the area. Although it only achieved journeyman status. However, attempting fish crackers can at least create new opportunities for locals and reduce unemployment in the village (Saraswati & Sumedang, 2017).

5. Conclusion

Based on the previous description and analysis, the following points can be summarized: (1) Businesswomen of fish crackers in the village of Tebing Gerinting assume the leading role in the production of fish crackers, from making the dough to forming the crackers to steaming, drying, baking, packaging, and selling. (2) The existence of a fish crackers business in Tebing Gerinting village is influenced by several factors, including a businesswoman's role in the development of fish crackers, the factors of capital, the business's need for limited capital, the ease of obtaining raw materials from agents, the family's participation in the production process, and the business's prospective revenue. Women can contribute to the family's economic income by diligently selling fish crackers. In addition, even the profits from selling fish crackers can improve the nutritional security of their families.

Based on the conclusion, the research offer some recommendations for advancing the fish cracker enterprise in the village of Tebing Gerinting. The following are the suggestions: (1) Business owners of fish crackers must grant a trademark from the product's region of origin, such as "Special Fish Crackers of Tebing Gerinting Village," so that the general public better knows the product. In addition to a diversity of fish cracker shapes, there is also a sense/taste of the variety of fish crackers to attract consumers; for instance, fish crackers may taste like Balado, shrimp, or the flavor of cheese. (3) Avoid dehydrating fish crackers in polluted air when drying. It is recommended to preserve the purity and cleanliness of fish crackers.

Based on the research findings, there is a need for local government policies that are pro-micro and small enterprises in terms of capital and market share expansion, as well as policies that improve the entrepreneurial skills of women.

6. Acknowledgment

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7. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author has declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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