

Diversification of Labor Fishermen's Work in Meeting the Basic Needs of Families Post-COVID-19 in Kelantan Village, Langkat Regency

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Abstract

This article or paper aims to find a form of diversification of the work of labor fishermen groups in meeting the basic needs of exit after COVID-19 in Kelantan Village, Lalat Regency. The problem is focused on the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of fishermen in Kelantan Village, Langkat Regency, who are experiencing difficulties in meeting the basic needs of their families, so an adaptation strategy is needed to meet these needs, one of which is by diversifying work. To approach this problem, reference to adaptation strategies and the concept of job diversification, as well as the *Precariat* Theory of Guy Standing, is used. The data of this study were collected through in-depth observation and interviews with labor fishermen and then analyzed through the Miles and Huberman Interactive Model. This study concludes that diversification is an alternative livelihood choice by fishermen in the fisheries and non-fisheries sectors. The variety of jobs that fishermen can do highly depends on the resources available in their living environment. In Kelantan Village, labor fishermen diversify their work using boats as boat taxis. They work to meet the local transportation needs of remote coastal areas without road access. This service helps people deliver goods, school children, or transport tourists who want to explore the coast's natural beauty.

Keywords: Job Diversification; Fishermen Labor; Fulfillment of Basic Family Needs.

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INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2019, the world community was shocked by the outbreak of a virus originating from China, and then this virus was called COVID-19. (Azamfirei, 2020; Zhang, 2020). One of the impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic is economic fluctuations and changes in life patterns and work systems. (Chen, 2022). This impact also affects the food production sector, especially fisheries.

The number of restaurants that have stopped operating and the delay in fish delivery due to the enactment of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) or lockdowns have caused the prices of fish caught by the fishermen to decrease. (Ferdin, 2020; Saragi, 2022). Saputra et al. (2022) explained that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which fishermen most felt, was a drastic decrease in fish prices by up to 50%, and this was not comparable to the operational costs of going to sea, which did not decrease. The labor fishing community in Kelantan Village, Lalat Regency, also feels this condition.

Kelantan Village, West Berandan District, Langkat Regency, is where most of the population has a fisherman's livelihood. Fishing communities are communities that live and develop in coastal areas or coastal areas. (Fanasa, 2014). These geographical conditions shape the social construction of the community, especially in the field of livelihood, where most of the people who live in coastal areas make a living as fishermen, pond farmers, and/or aquaculturists. This situation significantly influences the formation of coastal communities' cultural identity, which is all systems of ideas, actions, and activities that have implications for daily life. (Hasanah et al., 2021).

Kelantan Village is one of the villages in West Berandan District, which includes a coastal area with an area of 63.24 Ha; Kelantan Village has three hamlets, of which 128 families inhabit Hamlet I, Hamlet II 161 families, and Hamlet III 173 families, and a total of 460 families. Fishermen in Kelantan Village are highly dependent on seasonal natural conditions caused by erratic weather, so the fishermen's economy is experiencing instability. The COVID-19 and the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) policy set by the Indonesian Government economically affected fishermen. Although they can still go to sea, the sales of their catch fish are disrupted due to the cessation of financial activities. This is also revealed from the results of research conducted by Bennett et al. (2020), who stated that the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the small-scale fisheries sector includes the cessation of fishing activities, the emergence of health risks, the disruption of market access, and the increase in illegal fishing. In addition, the closure of several regions has caused the fish supply chain to be disrupted a lot (Jehamat et al., 2024).

These situations make many small fishermen in Indonesia adapt to the economic sector by looking for new sources of income, some of which are opening small shops, raising livestock, becoming manual laborers, and so on (Ramdani et al., 2023). Labor fishermen in Kelantan Village, Lalat Regency, also carry out adaptation forms. These adaptations occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and continued until after the COVID-19 pandemic. The uncertain economic situation and the increase in necessities after the pandemic have made many labor fishermen in Kelantan Village adapt to the job diversification pattern to meet their family's basic needs.

Therefore, this study is interested in how labor fishermen in Kelantan Village, Langkat Regency, diversify their work to meet families' basic needs. Few research results have discussed the diversification of fishermen's work, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the research focuses on the form of diversification of fishermen's work during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the research conducted by Hamzah and Nurdin (2021), which focuses on adaptation strategies carried out by fishermen during the COVID-19 pandemic by diversifying, intensifying, and utilizing social networks, and mobilizing family members to be able to meet economic needs. The same thing can also be seen from the research carried out by Samudera (2021), which explains the survival mechanism of fishermen during the pandemic, Where one form of survival is to manage the loan yield (debt) they obtain.

Likewise, the research findings from abroad only focus on fishermen's situations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bhow et al. (2021), in their research on the resilience of smallholder fishers in Bangladesh, recommend that the Government start thinking about expanding asset creation and

skill development for fishermen. Other research conducted by Bennett et al. (2020) also still focuses on the situation of small fishers during the Covid-19 pandemic and formulating how schemes should be carried out by stakeholders (read: Government, universities/researchers, NGOs, and the private sector) in helping small fishers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Tapung et al. (2020) observed different things, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, which makes the closeness between family members, especially between children and parents, better because there is enough time for family members to interact with each other, which has only focused on sea activities (becoming fishermen).

Therefore, this research is essential to be carried out in order to be able to see and analyze the life situation of fisher groups, especially fishermen and laborers, and the form of strategies carried out to meet the needs of families. Changes in the social situation after COVID-19 and the diversification of work carried out will be an additional reference for studying diversification among the fishing community.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with descriptive analysis. This method is chosen to study a group of people, conditions, objects, thoughts, or an ongoing event (Muhammad Idrus, 2009). In this case, the researcher wants to obtain an overview of the conditions for the diversification of the work of the labor fisherman community in Kelantan Village, Langkat Regency, in meeting the basic needs of the family. The data in this study used primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews, and observations focused on five informants from families of laborer fishermen.

Meanwhile, secondary data is collected through various references to journals, books, and information media related to the research topic. The data obtained is then processed using the triangulation technique, a data validity check technique that utilizes something other than the data to check or compare the data. The triangulation technique used in this study employs the use of resources. In the sense that this technique will compare and reverse check the degree of trust of information obtained through different times and tools, such as comparing interview results with observation data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Diversification of work is one way for many community groups to maintain their lives. Diversification is a way of thinking about finding other job alternatives outside the primary work sector. In the context of this study, the diversification of work carried out by labor fishermen groups is outside the activities of the fishermen themselves. Although groups of fishermen and laborers can do various jobs, job diversification is highly dependent on the potential of existing resources and the skills possessed (Hasriyanti & Hendra, 2021). Job diversification is one way of adaptation for fishermen to continue meeting their needs and their families' needs. By diversifying their work, fishermen can reduce the economic risks of catch fluctuations and erratic weather conditions. In Kelantan Village, Lalat Regency, diversifying work is an integral part of meeting daily needs such as food.

"My main job is fishing, but I decided to pull a boat motorcycle taxi because my income is insufficient for my daily needs. You cannot always go to the sea; from November to January, the sea water recedes. We used to call it a dead tide. Therefore, I have to find another job, namely a boat taxi" (the result of an interview with Abdullah, a fisherman in Kelantan Village)

Generally, the fishing season lasts between April and September, or about six months of the year. In these months, labor fishermen can enjoy making a living from fish caught at sea. Meanwhile, October to March is an unfavorable time because of the high sea waves and strong winds, causing labor fishermen to be unable to operate their fishing gear and causing their income to decrease (Afridania et al., 2022). Weather factors determine fishermen's income because fish catches are greatly influenced by good or bad weather. If lucky, fishermen can bring in a revenue of Rp. 200,000 to Rp. 500,000 every time they go to sea. However,



you can get no income at all if you have bad luck. In addition, there is also a profit-sharing system that is sometimes unprofitable for fishermen because the decision to cultivate depends on the juragan. Hence, the distribution of profit sharing from income is uneven (Widiastuti & Rosyidah, 2018).

In Kelantan Village, job diversification activities by fishermen are widespread, especially for fishermen who can work and are willing to try to earn and support their families. Usually, fishermen in Kelantan Village, Langkat Regency, diversify their work by becoming boat motorcycle taxis, as Abdullah said. This boat motorcycle taxi is carried out by fishermen when the fish harvest season is declining. They do this work to meet the local transportation needs of remote coastal areas that do not have road access. This service is invaluable for the community in delivering goods, delivering school children, and sometimes transporting tourists who want to explore the coast's natural beauty.

The costs or fees usually quoted by labor fishermen when becoming a boat motorcycle taxi vary, depending on the object being transported. If you deliver school children, the cost set is Rp. 2,000 per person. Meanwhile, to transport tourists, a fare of Rp. 5,000 to Rp. 10,000 is charged. With the cost of the set tariff, fishermen can usually get money of up to one hundred thousand rupiah. This income is used to meet daily needs, such as buying necessities and providing children with snacks for school. The rest (under certain conditions), the income is used to pay debts to the ship's owner. Here, the so-called juragan is a person who has the right to own boats and fishing gear. Fishermen in Kelantan Village mostly rent boats to juragan because they do not own boats personally. The relationship between fishermen and fishermen in Kelantan Village is limited to boat rental relationships and other economic relationships. The juragan is sometimes also a place for fishermen to borrow money if their financial condition is not good. This is done so fishermen can meet basic needs and finance their children's schooling.

Another diversification of work that is often carried out by fishermen in Kelantan Village, Langkat Regency, is activities that are still related to the fisheries sector, for example, preserving fish or salting fish, looking for sea cucumbers on the beach or looking for shrimp and shellfish. The low skills of labor fishermen cause them to be unable to do much job diversification, so the object of job diversification is only related to the resources in the coastal or marine area. In addition to relying on these sources, labor fishermen sometimes diversify their work by working with juragan.

"I do other jobs outside of working with Juragan. I go to sea a month a week to work with a boss. However, if I do not go to sea anymore, I will look for another job to increase my income. I look for shrimp and shellfish around my rash using a simple net, and the result is that I sell to the market. That way, I can finance my family's education and health needs." (Results of an interview with Wahidin, a fisherman in Kelantan Village)

The information provided by Wahidin above illustrates that if he wants to meet basic family needs, such as education and health, he must diversify his work. Efforts or efforts to meet the family's basic needs are certainly in stages or stages. For the level of primary needs, such as meeting food and clothing needs, fishermen in Kelantan Village have been able to meet them through work activities as fishermen. However, other basic needs, such as meeting education and health needs for themselves and their families, are still not available. So that the work diversification activities they carry out are aimed at fulfilling other basic needs outside of food (food). This was revealed from the results of an interview with Rusli, who said,

"Since the beginning of COVID-19, I decided to look for another job besides fishing because my income was insufficient for my family's daily life. Even after Covid-19, I still work outside fishing to provide for my family." (Results of an interview with Rusli, a fisherman in Kelantan Village)

In Guy Standing's view, the social and economic situations experienced by the fishermen ultimately position them in the precarious category. This position characterizes an unstable, low-income, and unpredictable workforce. The limitation of asset ownership positions fishermen in a position dependent on the fishermen (asset owners). This dependence cannot be separated from the difference in class or asset ownership among fishermen. There are at least three categories of fishermen's status based on their asset

ownership, including labor, fishermen, and individual fishermen. Labor fishermen are fishermen who work with fishing gear belonging to others.

On the other hand, a fisherman is a fisherman who has fishing gear operated by another person (in this case, it can be a fisherman). The last is individual fishermen, who have fishing gear and do not involve others in their operation. (Ridha, 2017). In these positions, fishermen's labor is significantly disadvantaged, especially when it comes to assistance programs from the Government, which are sometimes limited in number and only target fishermen with fishing gear.

The dependence of these relationships continues to be produced and forms independent attitudes due to concerns about social positions that do not have bargaining power in the market or the fishing industry. All of this is constructed due to limited capital and mastery of fishing gear. This was directly acknowledged by Abdullah, who said:

"I work for a fisherman because I do not have capital. I have a boat, but if I want to catch my fish, I think it is too risky to sell my catch. Of course, it is not easy, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic, and market demand is difficult, even now. So I decided to work with the capital's owners to meet my family's daily needs." (Results of an interview with Abdullah, a fisherman in Kelantan Village)

The above statement also shows that the dependency continues after the COVID-19 pandemic. The choice to work with toke fishermen is more because of the certainty of income obtained to cover the cost of basic family needs. Moreover, toke fishermen also provide economic loans to fishermen who work with them in certain situations. Social ties in the context of dependency are getting stronger, making it difficult for the fishermen's labor groups to get out of the situation. In Kelantan Village, Langkat Regency, money loans made by fishermen to toke fishermen are given to their wives to be a "handle" for wives when fishing workers go to sea.

"The expenses I spend every month exceed my income, especially for my children's educational needs, pocket money, and other needs such as paying for water and electricity. So, if there is no more income, I am usually forced to borrow money from my employer to fulfill my family's needs and for my wife's support when I am at sea." (Results of an interview with Dani, a fisherman in Kelantan Village)

The data above shows that the diversification of work done by fishermen is very diverse but cannot be separated from their primary source, namely the sea. Again, the lack of skills limits the source of job diversification. In addition, the pattern of patron-client relationships that have been constructed for a long time between fishermen and toke fishermen makes fishing workers more comfortable carrying out work diversification practices by working with juragan fishermen. The high cost of living makes fishermen inevitably depend on those who have better financial capabilities.



Figure 1. Form of Diversification of Fishery Labor Work in Kelantan Village, Langkat Regency

Source: Processed from research results (2024)

In Figure 1, you can see the job diversification carried out by fishermen after COVID-19, namely job diversification by becoming a boat motorcycle taxi and job diversification by working with toke fishermen.

The income obtained from boat motorcycle taxis is usually used by fishermen to meet the family's food needs. Meanwhile, the income from working with toke fishermen meets their families' educational and health needs.

CONCLUSION

The diversification of work carried out by fishermen in Kelantan Village, Langkat Regency, aims to meet the basic needs of their families. At the time of Covid-19, their economic condition was practically experiencing worse than before. So that additional work activities (diversification) are carried out to meet their living needs. Likewise, after COVID-19, they continue to carry out work diversification activities due to the economic situation that has not yet recovered. Diversification activities are generally carried out in two forms: becoming a dairy motorcycle taxi and working with toke fishermen. They use the economic income from this job diversification to meet basic family needs, such as food, education costs, and family health needs.

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