

# Muara Tanjung Women's Group Challenges in Optimizing Social Networking Collaboration

Ratih Baiduri<sup>1</sup>, Nur Ainun<sup>2</sup>, Sulian Ekomila<sup>3</sup>, Supsiloi<sup>4</sup>

{ratihbaiduri@unimed.ac.id<sup>1</sup>, nura43783@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>, Sulianekomila@unimed.ac.id<sup>3</sup>,  
supsiloanifis@unimed.ac.id<sup>4</sup> }

Universitas Negeri Medan, Jl. William Iskandar Psr V Medan Estate<sup>1</sup>, Universitas Negeri Medan, Jl. William Iskandar Psr V Medan Estate<sup>2</sup>, Universitas Negeri Medan, Jl. William Iskandar Psr V Medan Estate<sup>3</sup>, Universitas Negeri Medan, Jl. William Iskandar Psr V Medan Estate<sup>4</sup>

**Abstract.** This paper aims to analyze the various challenges of the Muara Tanjung Women's Group in optimizing their group's social network collaboration. Based on research results using a qualitative descriptive approach in Sei Nagalawan Village. Information and data through in-depth interviews with selected informants, as well as observation and documentation. Selected informants for the study included group founders, active members, and outside groups. The results of the study show that now this women's group has developed group activities that initially only focused on preserving mangrove forests and then progressing to mangrove ecotourism. This development is inseparable from the implementation of social networking cooperation. However, this has several challenges, including internal and external group challenges. Based on research findings, internal group challenges are more dominant. This is because of the phenomenon that so far group membership has only consisted of family. This could be a potential conflict of interest within the group.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Social Networks, Muara Tanjung Women's Group

## 1 Introduction

The emergence of women's groups in various organizations enables processes of cooperation, communication and social networking. This aims to expand the group both in terms of skills and knowledge. Women's organization groups certainly have differences between one group and another. These differences can be seen in terms of form, goals and group networks. Social network organizations are the main thing needed to understand ongoing activities and deepen problems in the community [1]. Communities also need strong social networks and relationships so that they are able to be independent [2]. Apart from the network that exists between members of one community network with other communities, it is also very necessary in creating harmony between communities. Many organizations or groups certainly

have their own networks within their groups. One group that has its own group network is the Muara Tanjung Group which is located in Sei Nagalawan Village.

Sei Nagalawan Village, Perbaungan District, Serdang Bedagai Regency is a village that is rich in beach tourism attractions and the majority of the population works as fishermen. Starting from the destruction of the function of the mangrove forest, the women of Sei Nagalawan Village took their own initiative to establish a group called Muara Tanjung. This group is a women's conservation group in Sei Nagalawan Village which actively contributes to preserving mangrove forests. The Muara Tanjung Group was formed in 2005 by Mrs. Jumiaty as Chair of the Muara Tanjung Group. The formation of this group began with the destruction of mangrove forests caused by fish ponds.

The group led by Mrs. Jumiaty not only focuses on activities to preserve mangrove forests, but the Muara Tanjung group also carries out empowerment by utilizing the surrounding nature as an alternative to improving the community's economy. The Muara Tanjung Group currently has its own UMKM (Micro Small and Medium Enterprises) products which highlight the characteristics of Sei Nagalawan Village which is a water area, namely launching products typical of Sei Nagalawan Village such as chips, syrup and tea using mangroves as ingredients. In promoting products, the Muara Tanjung Group is also able to use social media.

The empowerment of women in the Muara Tanjung Group certainly cannot be separated from the social networks that exist within the group. Things that cause women's interest in joining the group and also the relationships that exist, both inside and outside the group. This of course has its own influence on the group, both negative and positive impacts. Through social networking, this certainly provides a relationship and a sense of trust for the group. There will be different reasons between individuals for joining the group which causes various kinds of characters in the group.

Apart from internal networks, the Muara Tanjung Group also has external networks that help in developing the group. There are several external networks that collaborate with the Muara Tanjung Group, such as P3MN (Village Community Development and Empowerment Program), KIARA (People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice) and also PNI (Indonesian Fisher Women). These external networks aim to help groups improve their knowledge, abilities and skills. Through training carried out by external networks, the quality of Muara Tanjung group members can be improved.

Social networks themselves provide good benefits for providing mutual information between actors. Apart from that, with the existence of social networks, individuals and groups will find it easier to interact with each other which can bring benefits to both parties. Social networks themselves are formed on the basis of mutual curiosity, reminding each other, informing each other and helping each other in carrying out things [3]. Social networking in the Muara Tanjung group itself does not only occur between group members but also occurs outside the group. So that the relationships established by the Muara Tanjung Group become wider and have their own impact on the group. Starting from groups with small members and minimal knowledge and skills, making the Muara Tanjung Group widely known by the public for its better quality. This group, which only consists of family members, is able to become a group that can be known not only within the village but also outside the village.

Therefore, social networks have an important role for the Muara Tanjung group, because they can make it easier for the group to expand the quality of its group members, both in terms of knowledge and skills. This is one of the author's interests in studying how the social networks that are formed can have a big influence on the Muara Tanjung Group.

Based on the results of initial observations and research gaps that have been presented in the discussion of the background to the existing problem, the writing team sees that the efforts of the Muara Tanjung women's group are inseparable from the challenges and obstacles they experience as a group that wants to preserve mangrove forests. As for the problems raised in this research are: (1) What is the strategy of the Muara Tanjung women's group in conserving mangrove forests in Nagalawan village?; (2) What are the challenges faced by the Muara Tanjung women's group in optimizing social network collaboration?

## **2 Research Methods**

This writing uses a qualitative type of writing with an ethnographic approach. Qualitative writing is writing that intends to understand the phenomena experienced by informants by understanding behaviour, perceptions and views as a whole by utilizing natural methods. Ethnography is an explanation of culture with the aim of understanding life from the informant's point of view [4]. By therefore, ethnography involves the activity of learning to see, hear, speak and act from the perspective of different individuals. Qualitative writing with an ethnographic approach is a writing method to answer questions about phenomena directly observed in the field (field research) in depth.

As for the informant is an original source who speaks using words, phrases and sentences using his own dialect as an imitation model and source of information [5]. The criteria for informants determined in this study are: (1) The founder of the Muara Tanjung Group, namely Mrs. Jumiati, as an informant who knows the background to the formation of the Muara Tanjung Women's Group; (2) Active members in the Muara Tanjung women's group; (3) Outside groups that have cooperation with the Muara Tanjung women's group.

The location of the research conducted by the author was in Sei Nagalawan Village, Perbaungan District, Serdang Bedagai Regency. The data collection techniques include using participant observation techniques, in-depth interviews and documentation. The data analysis technique used is Spradley's 5 stages in writing ethnography. The first stage is choosing a problem. The second stage is collecting cultural data. The third stage is analyzing cultural data. The fourth stage is formulating an ethnographic hypothesis. The fifth stage is writing the ethnography [4].

## **3 Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Strategy of the Muara Tanjung women's group in conservation of mangrove forests in Nagalawan village**

The Muara Tanjung Women's Group, located in Nagalawan Village, is a group that has been established since 2005. The success of this group in continuing to exist in mangrove forest conservation to this day certainly has its own strategy used. The strategies used by the Muara Tanjung Women's Group in conserving mangrove forests in Nagalawan Village are as follows:

### **1. Conserving mangrove forests through the process of planting mangrove trees which is carried out consistently and sustainably**

Initially, the mangrove forest area in Nagalawan Village experienced damage caused by the cultivation of tiger prawns. The form of cultivation carried out is in the form of making ponds spread across Sei Nagalawan village. The emergence of shrimp ponds has resulted in the existence of mangrove trees being threatened because business actors have cut down the existing mangrove trees. As stated by Mrs. Jumiati (43 years) during an interview:

“So in the 80s, people said there used to be a lot of mangroves here, but that's because "There are tiger prawn ponds and the mangroves have all been cut down" (Interview on May 18, 2023).

Gradually the process of cutting down mangrove trees has had an impact which is bad for the environment people's finances and income. The community, most of whom work as fishermen, experienced a decline in catches after mangrove trees were cut down. Damage to the mangrove ecosystem can result in many losses and disasters such as flooding, coastal erosion, sea water intrusion and loss of fisheries resources that live within it [6]. Jumiati as a local community thinks that the decline in fishermen's catches caused by the destruction of mangrove trees so that fish and other marine biota do not have a place to breed. Therefore, Jumiati started taking steps to preserve mangroves by inviting her husband to plant mangroves on riverbanks. The planting process begins by planting mangrove propagules that come from existing parent plants. Initially, this activity was only carried out by Jumiati and her husband.

In 2004 Aceh region there was a natural disaster in the form of a tsunami. This disaster not only caused damage to the Aceh region but also to other countries and regions. However, Nagalawan Village, which has a mangrove forest area, experienced damage that was not as severe as other areas. Starting from this momentum, Jumiati started educating the local community about the benefits of planting mangroves, one of which is preventing abrasion.

Educating people about the benefits of mangrove trees starts by inviting members of Mrs. Jumiati's relatives. The process of recruiting people to care about preserving mangrove forests certainly does not go smoothly. There are many challenges faced, one of which is receiving criticism from the public who believe that this activity does not produce significant benefits, especially in terms of economic income. The head of the Muara Tanjung Women's Group, Mrs. Jumiati, at that time did not have sufficient funds for the process of encouraging the community to participate in mangrove planting activities. As a result, only close relatives were willing to join because recruitment efforts lacked capital.

The recruitment process for mangrove conservation finally reached 20 members who joined. Members of the Muara Tanjung women's group started the process of planting mangroves in stages in an area of 2 hectares which does not include the coastal environment, while the total area planted including the coastal environment has an area of 5 hectares. The initial planting

process took quite a lot of energy because the area being planted had a lot of mud, so extra energy was needed to walk in the mud. The members began the process of consistently planting mangroves in the area of Nagalawan Village. The successful planting process then made members think about educating other village communities living in coastal areas. This was stated by Saniah (50 years) during an interview:

"We have also had the program for planting mangroves, which I know about, we have also done planting in other villages, to encourage other villages that we are planting good mangroves apart from adding to our economy by going to the sea and these mangroves. also good for fish breeding. We socialized it out, even to Pari City, there were a lot of people to Bedagai there" (Interview on July 1, 2023).

Activities to educate other villages on mangrove conservation not only provide benefits to these other villages but also provide benefits to the Muara Tanjung women's group. The members of the Mura Tanjung women's group are increasingly motivated to carry out preservation and conservation of mangrove forests in their own villages. Mangrove planting is continuously carried out and members even consider this activity not to be a difficult and risky activity but rather a useful and productive activity. This is because group members have a great sense of concern for mangrove forests, so carrying out mangrove planting activities is considered a fun activity. The sustainable planting process is carried out as evidenced by the fact that when mangrove plants die due to pests, the members quickly replant the dead mangroves with new ones. This was stated by Nurlia (48 years) during an interview:

"If it's personally risky to plant these mangroves, that's okay. Only if we plant, we really need energy, because it's there planting and insertion. The insertion, for example, means the mangroves died because pests, keep planting more because there are seeds" (Interview on 08 July 2023).

Based on the results of the interview, it can be understood that group members do not consider mangrove conservation to be risky and only need to prepare sufficient personnel to replant mangroves or insert dead mangroves so that there is no land vacancy if the mangrove plants die. Consistency is something. It is important to conserve mangroves, because mangroves, which are living creatures, are limited in their existence and the group must try to ensure that conservation continues in accordance with its initial goal, namely that this group exists as a form of movement that cares for the environment through mangrove conservation.

Strategy implemented in mangrove forest conservation by the Muara Tanjung Women's group who consistently plant and insert mangroves has provided many benefits to the environment and also to the group. The planting process continues to this day, although the amount planted is not as large as when mangrove conservation activities were carried out at the beginning. This is in line with the explanation from Jumiati (43 years old) during the interview, namely:

"I have formed a conservation group myself, but maybe it won't be like that. Formerly, what I mean is that today, because we just need to maintain it, yes, it's possible that breeding is still being carried out, although not much. How many years has it been? We have no longer building a network regarding funding" (Interview on May 18, 2023).

Based on interview results. What has been explained shows that currently the group is focused on maintaining mangrove plants and continues to consistently carry out nurseries, although in small quantities. This represents that consistent planting of mangroves in large or small quantities is still carried out so that the mangrove forests, which have now become ecotourism areas, continue to exist and provide benefits.

## **2. Implement a mangrove forest management strategy**

Sustainable mangrove planting will certainly have an impact on society. Now it can be seen that the mangrove forest planted by the Muara Tanjung women's group has spread widely along the coast. The existence of mangroves certainly requires good management and also provides benefits for the environment and society. The mangrove forest located in Sei Nagalawan village has existed since 2013 and is managed by the Muara Tanjung Women's group for ecotourism. The Ecotourism Society explains that ecotourism is the implementation of responsible tourism activities in natural places, which supports environmental conservation efforts (nature and culture) and improves the welfare of local communities [7]. The process of processing ecotourism is certainly not easy, there are many challenges. What must be faced is the same as processing Nagawalan Mangrove Beach ecotourism. As the results of an interview with the head of the Muara Tanjung group, Mrs. Jumiati (43 years), stated:

"The process from the beginning to today is perhaps 4 or 5 years. Today, it may be an easier challenge than in 2005-2012, because the process is that we are just starting to create this place, then we want to introduce people to the fact that this place can be visited, that's all. That's it. "Besides that, there are also people who don't like this, so it's a long process, right? It's like a half-and-half war between people who might be incited by the activities we do, it's considered that this place belongs to all the people" (Interview on July 14, 2023).

Based on the results of the interview, it can be understood that the initial management of this mangrove forest into ecotourism experienced a gap in which there were several communities who did not agree with its management. Even though they have experienced several conflicts, the Muara Tanjung Group is still trying to maintain the management of mangrove forests for ecotourism. This persistence is the main key to success in establishing mangrove forest ecotourism. Through the successful establishment of this mangrove forest, of course it must continue to be managed to improve the sustainability of the mangrove forest itself. The management of the mangrove forest in Sei Nagalwan village is still managed well by the Muara Tanjung women's group itself. However, Before becoming a mangrove forest manager, of course the Muara Tanjung women's group must have a permit through the local government. As mentioned by Mrs. Jumiati (43 years), namely:

"The first time you take care of the permit goes to the village, then goes to the department. Because usually this service has a support group. Later, this department will classify which models are bound and others will give them a certificate. This service is the Fisheries Service. Continue to develop into cooperatives, yes, to the Cooperative Department. This tour goes to the Tourism Office" (Interview on July 14 2023).

The process of applying for permits carried out by the Muara Tanjung group also requires a long journey. Until 2019 after the release of forest types. This mangrove forest is included as a community forest with an area of 2 hectares. HKM (Community Forest) for this mangrove

forest was obtained in 2020 from a long journey in 2001. After this mangrove forest was used as ecotourism, the Muara Tanjung group also formed several businesses such as cooperatives, MSMEs, education, tourism and a coffee shop.

This cooperative, which was founded by the Muara Tanjung women's group, has become capital for their business in managing mangrove forests. The results they get from businesses such as MSMEs, education, tourism and coffee shops will be put into the cooperative. The results of this effort will also become savings for Muara Tanjung group members based on their absence rules. So each member has a list of the number of times they have attended the activity. So the number of absences will be totaled and the results will be given every Eid. In this way, every Eid, group members no longer have to worry about the costs of Eid.

The micro, small and medium enterprise managed by the Muara Tanjung women's group is making chips using jeruju leaves (young mangrove leaves) as food coloring. Apart from chips, other processing carried out by the group is making syrup, tea and also dodol. Knowledge of jeruju leaf management was obtained from P3MN training from Sulawesi. As explained by Mrs. Jumiati (43 years), namely:

"Coincidentally, at that time they were also close to P3MN, which is from Sulawesi, so yesterday they were taught that there are several types of mangroves that can be processed, including jeruju, various types of prepat. Until we were taught about coconut oils, it was just because we don't have many coconuts in our place, so the focus was on the berries that were available. "He taught us that the process of jeruju is to pound it and then boil the water" (Interview on 18 May 2023).

This jeruju chips business is one part of the empowerment carried out by the Muara Tanjung women's group. Through the training carried out, they know the types of mangrove plants that can be managed and used as food, and they are given knowledge about how to process them. Marketing of these chips is only carried out in mangrove forest locations, although in the past they have been sold to other places such as workshop markets, unfortunately the results obtained through direct sales by renting a kiosk are not satisfactory or even return on investment. The results of this business will also be put into the cooperative as well as education, tourism and coffee shop money for visitors.

The management carried out by the Muara Tanjung women's group of mangrove forests has certainly produced sweet fruit, but they have also created a mangrove forest conservation strategy as a form of preservation. However, currently the focus is no longer on breeding but more on maintenance. As explained by Jumiati's mother (43 years old), she said:

"I have formed my own conservation group, but maybe it's not like before. What I mean is that today, all we have to do is maintain it, yes, it's possible that breeding is still being carried out, although not much. How many years have we not built any more networks regarding funding" (Interview on 01 July 2023).

The results of the interview above explain that the mangrove area which is still large and dense does not require the group to carry out more nurseries but rather maintain it. However, mangrove planting is often carried out by volunteers, visiting students and organizations that are currently working in mangroves. So when volunteers came to plant mangroves, the Muara Tanjung group no longer needed to participate in the planting.

### **3.2 Challenges of the Muara Tanjung women's group in optimizing social network collaboration**

The results of the research show that the Muara Tanjung women's group has developed group activities which initially only focused on preserving mangrove forests and then expanded to mangrove ecotourism. This development cannot be separated from the implementation of social networking cooperation. However, this has a number of challenges, both from internal group challenges and internal challenges.

#### **1. Group internal challenges**

Based on research findings, internal group challenges predominantly originate from the group structure. This is because the phenomenon is that up to now, group membership has only consisted of family members. This phenomenon can become a potential conflict of interest within the group. A group structure dominated by family members is also a fundamental challenge for groups in developing networks. The formation of social cooperation is generally only carried out by the group leader. This is based on the group leader's ability to create social networks and also the experience the group has in organizing. As explained by Mrs. Sulastri (38 years) and Mrs. Nurlia (48 years) who are the treasurer and secretary of the Muara Tanjung women's group.

... "For those networks, Miss Juamiati is the one who manages them, because Mrs. Jum already has a lot of acquaintances in the organization, so for those networks, it's more like Mrs. Jum who understands, we are the members who are in the processing section"... (Interview in July 8, 2023).

"If there are no members, at least the chairman is. For those networks that handle the chairman, there are no members. A member's job is best if they have been given advice or direction from the new chairman. There is no initiative from the members really..." (Interview on 08 July 2023).

The formation of a social networking collaboration for the Muara Tanjung women's group which is fully controlled by the group leader could create internal challenges for the Muara Tanjung group. Internal challenges that arise can result in separate conflicts for the group. Resulting in a lack of trust from the group leader towards its members in developing the group's social network. This is a challenge for groups in optimizing social networking collaboration with other groups. In forming social cooperation communication is needed to provide advice in forming cooperation [8]. Therefore, communication is important in an organization.

A membership structure consisting of only family members makes the group more closed by accepting members outside of family ties. This is also a challenge for groups in optimizing social networks. Thus, the groups in Muara Tanjung only consist of two ethnicities, namely Banjar and Javanese. Closed groups make it difficult to open social networks with other individuals outside of family members. As stated by the chairman of Muara Tanjung himself, Mrs. Jumiati, regarding membership recruitment:

"As for the members, it was only from Sis's family, initially I was helped by family members, so until now the members are from my husband's family who live here, right? As for outside members, we don't accept any more sis. We are 17 people left



and we won't accept anyone else coming in. We will pass it on to the children at the latest, sis."

From the explanation given by the informant, it can be seen that the Muara Tanjung group only has family members. This is a challenge for the group to expand collaboration with other social networks. Groups that only consist of family members give rise to other people's views that the Muara Tanjung group only focuses on family structures, making it difficult to collaborate.

Based on the presentation of the interview results, it can be seen that the main focus of the group's internal challenges in creating optimization of the social networking work of the Muara Tanjung Women's Group is a group that is dominated by a group structure whose membership only consists of family members. In this way, it is able to create a lack of trust between the chairman and his members because in expanding the network, only the group leader plays a role, which can be seen from the lack of intense communication regarding the collaboration formed by the Muara Tanjung group.

## **2. External challenges**

External challenges come from outside groups, both from the same village and other nearby villages who are both developing similar types of ecotourism. Thus, it is difficult to collaborate with other women's groups in Sei Nagalawan village. The conflict that occurred was also caused by a feeling of great jealousy towards the Muara Tanjung women's group, a group which currently still exists and has an impact on jealousy of other groups in Sei Nagalawan village. As stated by Mrs. Jumiati (43 years):

"Besides that, there are also people who don't like us, so it's a long process, right? It's like a half-war between people who might be incited by the activities we do, it's assumed that this place belongs to all the people. Even though we have explained that from the start the management activities here were us and the members, there were no outsiders. Continue until finally they want to spread around and want to take it" (Interview on 01 July 2023).

The social jealousy experienced by the Muara Tanjung women's group makes it difficult for the group to collaborate with other similar groups in Sei Nagalawan village. This is a challenge for the group in forming optimal cooperation with similar groups in Sei Nagalawan village.

Apart from the challenges in forming external social networks of groups with similar groups in the village, challenges are also felt in developing internal social networks outside of Sei Nagalawan village. The challenges felt are distance and communication which is difficult to establish directly. Lack of intense communication in forming collaboration with other groups. As stated by Mrs. Jumiati (43 years):

".....communication too, sis, because if you want to form cooperation with other groups there must be smooth communication. It's a bit difficult to form collaborations with other groups. "Even though we now have gadgets, direct communication is better, sis, so you're more connected and you know we can collaborate, right?"

Based on the interview above, it explains that communication is the main key in expanding the network. The Muara Tanjung group has problems in establishing direct communication, because finding similar groups is only found outside the village area, so it is difficult to carry out direct communication due to distance constraints. The impact of good communication is the establishment of good cooperative relationships between groups [9]. Therefore, in creating good cooperation between groups, good communication is also needed.

Apart from that, it is difficult to find groups that are similar in the field of work programs to the Muara Tanjung group. Work programs and discussions carried out between different groups make it a challenge to collaborate with other groups. As stated by Mrs. Jumiati (43 years):

"In terms of current obstacles, our network is more about finding friends, whether personal or institutional. For example, NGO institutions that concentrate on women's and environmental issues. Well, in the past, our network friends still had programs that they could collaborate with us on. "Only today, friends, the program is no longer focused on that issue" (Interview on 01 July 2023)

Differences in work programs are one of the challenges for the Muara Tanjung Women's group in creating optimized collaboration with other social networks. The basis for the formation of social networks is due to curiosity, informing each other, reminding each other and also helping each other in overcoming things and achieving the same goals [10]. Forming a social network must of course have similarities between groups so that they are able to collaborate. The results of the interview above show that the work program is one of the challenges for the Muara Tanjung women's group in creating optimal social networking collaboration.

#### **4 Conclusion**

A group or organization certainly has its own challenges within the group. Likewise with the Muara Tanjung women's group located in Sei Nagalawan village. The Muara Tanjung Group is a group that operates in the field of mangrove forest conservation. In the process of conserving mangrove forests, the Muara Tanjung group certainly has several conservation challenges. Therefore, there are several strategies carried out by groups to maintain and ensure the sustainability of mangrove forests, namely by carrying out the mangrove planting process which is carried out consistently by the group and carrying out mangrove management strategies.

Apart from challenges in terms of forest conservation, the Muara Tanjung Women's Group also has its own challenges in creating optimal cooperation to form social networks. The challenges experienced were both internal and external to the group. Groups that have a membership structure that only consists of family ties is one of the internal challenges in creating social networks with other groups and individuals. Meanwhile, the external challenges faced by the group are differences in work programs within the group and the existence of social jealousy between similar groups who are involved in the ecotourism sector.

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