



Empowering Kratom Farmers in Strengthening Functions of Family Institutions in Hulu Kapuas District

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ABSTRACT: This research focuses on empowering kratom farmers in Kapuas Hulu Regency amidst uncertainty regarding government regulations regarding legality which have an impact on the planting and buying and selling of kratom as well as decreasing the income of farming families. This was done for four main reasons: first, the need for empowerment for kratom farmers; second, strengthening institutions and improving the family economy; third, analysis of social changes due to shifts in livelihoods; and fourth, the impact of empowerment on the welfare of the kratom farming community. This research aims to answer the challenges, obstacles and empowerment models for kratom farmers in Kapuas Hulu Regency using a Social Welfare and Community Empowerment approach. Research methods include interviews with key informants, documentation, and literature study. The output of this research includes policy recommendations to local governments and publications in the nationally accredited scientific journal SINTA 3 and Simple Patent Rights.

Keywords: Welfare, Kratom Empowerment, Farmers.



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INTRODUCTION

Abundant natural resources make Kapuas Hulu one of the districts in West Kalimantan Province which is able to produce superior products of high value on the international market. These superior products are obtained from forest products which are then processed into certain products such as ornamental plants with economic value, plants for basic medical ingredients, and so on. The existence of abundant natural resources from forest products makes it an advantage for the people and government of Kapuas Hulu Regency in managing the results. Moreover, forest products have been an asset from ancient times until now which still supports the economy for most of the people of Kapuas Hulu Regency ([Fleming et al., 2023](#); [Kim et al., 2023](#); [Leksungnoen et al., 2022](#)).

There is a type of forest plant which in recent years has become an economic support for the people of Kapuas Hulu Regency which is known as the purik plant in local people's name or in scientific language the kratom plant (*Mitragyna speciosa*) is one of the herbal plants originating

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from Southeast Asia. the others are from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand (Hassan Z et al. 2013). The most widely used part of this plant is the leaves. Local people know kratom leaves as purik leaves ([Saingam et al., 2023](#); [Sengnon et al., 2023](#)). Generally, kratom is consumed by chewing, smoking, and brewing like tea ([Sanagi, 2013](#)). The existence of the kratom plant, which is in great demand by foreign markets, has apparently been able to replace rubber trees, which have been the main livelihood for the community, including rice farming communities. This shift in livelihoods has even turned rubber farmers and rice farmers into kratom farmers by planting in gardens and even around people's yards. In fact, according to Anita in ([Wahyono et al., 2019](#)) who said that they also cultivate kratom plants and the results are able to divert income from tapping rubber, which they have been relying on for so long([Chunyan Zhou, 2018](#)).

As an illustration of the area of kratom plantations, according to data from the Agriculture and Plantation Service of Kapuas Hulu Regency in 2018, the area of kratom cultivation land was 46,769.6 Ha. This area is only 7.73% compared to the area of rubber plantations throughout West Kalimantan. The kratom land area is almost the same as the rubber plantations in Kapuas Hulu Regency, namely 47,673 hectares.

Purik or kratom is generally found in the Kapuas River watershed (DAS) as well as in the Betung Kerihun National Park and Lake Sentarum (TNBKDS) areas. Even though it is found in forests, many people cultivate this plant using cuttings or seeds taken from kratom fruit ([Cadzow & Binns, 2016](#); [Lähdesmäki et al., 2019](#); [Yang & Chang, 2023](#)). Even in its care, the kratom plant is also a plant that does not die easily and is easy to grow anywhere and does not take long to produce leaves that are ready to be harvested ([Chen et al., 2014](#); [Khalid et al., 2023](#); [Ramachandram et al., 2023](#)).

Considering the large demand and the high selling price of kratom on the market, it is popular for kratom to be planted by the majority of the Kapuas Hulu community. In fact, the production of kratom plants in the Forclime (Forest and Climate Change Program) Kapuas Hulu assisted villages generated billions of rupiah in 2019. This production, when sold to kratom collectors or entrepreneurs, generates very profitable income for farmers in 22 villages. Farmers' monthly income varies according to the harvest they produce. The community harvest results in 22 villages collected by Forclime Kapuas Hulu show a harvest pattern from January to July 2019 with the highest peak in July, namely 76,541 kg, whereas in January 2019 it was only 26,606 kg. If you look at the total income of farmers, the figure obtained for 7 months in 2019 is IDR. 2,793,619,300.

In the midst of increasing demand for kratom in foreign markets, problems emerged in 2020 to early 2022 with the imposition of a lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic which occurred globally with many victims dying and affecting the world economy, including Indonesia, and has even spread to the second wave stage. in 2021 ([Ifimie et al., 2021](#)). This condition had become a problem for kratom exports abroad due to national restrictions imposed by the government so that the selling price had decreased ([Clune & Downey, 2022](#); [Nordmeyer & Mußhoff, 2023](#); [Shahab et al., 2022](#); [J.-H. Wang et al., 2014](#)).

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Another problem also emerged, namely the huge losses experienced by kratom exporters due to fraud involving non-payment for kratom by foreign buyers, especially the United States. In fact, according to the news source Pontianakpost.jawa.com (12/09/2022), a number of kratom business actors from West Kalimantan have had to bite the bullet. The reason is that thousands of tonnes of commodities they sent to the United States were not paid for by buyers there. The value is no joke, the total reaches tens of billions of rupiah. "A lot of our kratom players have been affected. "From my calculations, a total of perhaps IDR 25 billion has not been paid since 2020 until now,". This condition also has an impact on kratom entrepreneurs and farmers who cannot be paid by high-level entrepreneurs ([Hasdiansyah & Suryono, 2021](#); [Mwaseba et al., 2015](#); [Narasimhaiah, 2022](#)).

In terms of the rules as stated in the Circular Letter of the Head of the POM Agency No. HK.04.4.42.421.09.16.1740 of 2016 concerning the Prohibition of the Use of *Mitragyna Speciosa* (Kratom) in Traditional Medicine and Health Supplements, judging from the content contained in the kratom plant, it is seen that it produces many side effects that can affect the body of someone who consumes it, and has even been included The kraton plant has been a type of NPS (New Psychoactive Substances) since 2013. In fact, the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) classifies the kratom plant as a type of class I narcotic. Class I narcotics are narcotics that can only be used for the purpose of developing science and are not used. in therapy, and has a very high potential for causing dependence ([Garforth et al., 2013](#); [Hidano et al., 2019](#); [Xu & Huang, 2014](#)).

There are also other differences in the regulations for the kratom plant in Indonesia, where it is actually not clear whether the plant is prohibited or not. If we look at other regulations, as stated in the Decree of the Minister of Agriculture Number 104/KPTS/HK.104/M.2.2020 concerning Targeted Commodities of the Directorate General of Horticulture, it is stated that the kratom plant is a type of herbal plant. Meanwhile, in the Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number 13 of 2014 concerning Changes in the Classification of Narcotics, Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number 2 of 2017 concerning Changes in the Classification of Narcotics, Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number 44 of 2019 concerning Changes in the Classification of Narcotics, and Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number 5 2020 concerning Changes in the Classification of Narcotics does not include Katom or *mitragyna speciosa* and the chemical compound mitragynine in the List of Narcotics Classes I, I, or III.

This condition certainly has an impact on the economic income of families who rely on kratom farming, which has recently been banned by the government, while the existence of kratom plants planted by almost all the people of Kapuas Hulu Regency is able to provide added value to the income of the community itself to support their living. family needs ([Ma et al., 2021](#); [Owens, 2016](#); [Yu et al., 2018](#)).

The kratom agricultural sector is the dominant sector in people's lives in Kapuas Hulu Regency and is the dominant economic structure, because it has quite high competitiveness and comparative advantage in the market. The kratom agricultural commodity of the Kapuas Hulu community is able to improve their welfare. However, this agricultural sector is very dependent on

the level of soil fertility, climate, rainfall, and so on. On the one hand, the existence of government regulations regarding the buying and selling of kratom has an impact on the income of every kratom farming family ([Marvuglia et al., 2022](#); [Mohr et al., 2020](#); [C. Wang et al., 2011](#)).

Addressing the problems described above makes this phenomenon interesting to research. Considering that the socio-economic impact on society will be disrupted by the lack of clarity in government regulations ([Jensen et al., 2022](#); [Sembiring et al., 2022](#); [Zuo et al., 2015](#)). Especially for people who depend on kratom as their main income. It is hoped that the research activities carried out by a team of lecturers from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at Tanjungpura University will produce information and output products in explaining the problems of kratom to support the family economy ([Palomo-Campesino et al., 2021](#)).

METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach. Main data was obtained through interviews and observation of sources. Secondary data obtained from relevant previous research.

The informants consisted of the Head of the Kapuas Hulu Regency Community and Village Empowerment Service. (Main Informant), Residents who are directly involved in a policy or development target. (Additional Informant).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Transition of Community Livelihoods Traditionally, kratom is used by the community as a traditional medicine to treat diarrhea, fatigue, muscle pain, coughs, increase body endurance, reduce high blood pressure, increase energy, overcome depression, anti-diabetes, and a sexual stimulant. Kratom has become a secondary economic commodity for people in Kapuas Hulu Regency apart from rice farmers and fishermen.

The distribution of Kratom in Kapuas Hulu Regency, the use of kratom leaves is currently experiencing such a high price increase that it is widely cultivated by the people of Kapuas Hulu Regency, including in other districts in West Kalimantan. Kratom from West Kalimantan is currently the main source of income for every community when compared to other provinces in Indonesia. Data from the West Kalimantan Plantation Service taken from the Pekrindo association (Indonesian kratom entrepreneurs) shows that the potential for kratom plants to become a form of smallholder plantations is carried out by the majority of farming communities.

The use of Kratom is divided into 2, namely: In the world of health, the use of Kratom was first recorded in 1836 and was used as a substitute for opium in Malaysia. Since 1900, scientific literature has reported that kratom can relieve opioid withdrawal symptoms. Traditionally, kratom has been used to treat malaria, coughs, high blood pressure, diarrhea, stress, reduce fever and relieve pain. The use of kratom has a long traditional history in Thailand and Southeast Asia. Information obtained from the community in Kapuas Hulu Regency, West Kalimantan, states that kratom trees produce high quality wood which can be used as raw material for furniture. Meanwhile, in South

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Putussibau, kratom leaves are used to increase stamina, treat pain, rheumatism, gout, high blood pressure, diabetes, insomnia, wounds, diarrhea, coughs, cholesterol, appetite. The decoction is boiled in the form of fresh leaves or powder and then drunk. Some respondents added honey and/or lemon juice, as informed by a kratom user in South Putussibau District named Mr. Edi (35 years). And the Use of Kratom in Ecology As a forest plant, the kratom plant lives and grows well in the Kapuas Hulu Regency area, where it is often found near river watersheds (DAS). With the characteristics of forest plants, the kratom plant is resistant to tropical climate conditions with large volumes of water. Kratom, as a plant that grows well in wet soil, is said to also have benefits as an abrasion barrier if planted on river banks. Kratom plants that grow abundantly in forest areas in Kapuas Hulu also provide benefits to the ecosystem in the forest and provide benefits for the need for clean air. Therefore, in an effort to increase the amount of clean air in Kapuas Hulu, it is necessary to pay attention to the relationship between kratom cultivation and its ecological quality. As stated in the Brantas Watershed research, accelerating economic growth can be done by increasing investment, technology and expertise as well as improving human resource skills by considering the conservation of existing natural resources.

The Socio-Economic Impact on the Community and the Kratom Regulation Polemic are divided into 2, namely: The Socio-Economic Impact on the Kratom Farming Community. Kratom plants that grow well will have the ability to produce leaves that can be harvested once every 2 weeks or around 2 times a month. Kratom can be harvested once a month with an income of around IDR 500,000.00-4,000,000.00 per harvest depending on the area of land. The growing period for kratom from the seeds until it can be harvested is 6 (six) months, while waiting for the harvest period of 6 (six) months, kratom farmers work as daily laborers for IDR 150,000/day if there is work (on jobs, odd jobs). The change in livelihood from the majority of rubber farmers to kratom farmers has occurred since 2009. And the Kratom Legality Polemic is divided into 2, namely; Polemic on the Legality of Kratom in Various Countries Concerned about safety and potential for abuse/addiction, several parties have proposed classifying kratom, mitreginine, and 7-hydroxymitreginine as narcotics. The chemical structure of mitrazine is similar to opium. The compound is registered as a New Psychoactive Substance by the National Narcotics Agency (BNN). As with any psychoactive substance, there is a need to regulate its use and distribution. Despite its development, there has not been much scientific research on the benefits of kratom, making it difficult for the government to take steps towards the legality of kratom. Supporters of kratom use point out that there are many health benefits from using kratom and the actual side effects experienced by users are not known for certain. Meanwhile, the Polemic on the Legality of Kratom in Indonesia, regulations related to kratom are more about the health aspect. As mentioned, the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) has classified mitginine as a substance. new psychoactive and has recommended kratom in class I narcotics. The definition of narcotics according to Article 1 point 1 of Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics, namely "Narcotics are substances or drugs derived from plants or non-plants, whether synthetic or semi-synthetic, which can cause decreased or changed consciousness, loss of taste, reduction to elimination of pain, and can cause dependency, which are differentiated into categories as attached in this Law."

Empowering Kratom Farmers by the Government, the KPH program for communities in protected forest areas includes various coaching programs, such as coaching coffee farmers, mentoring banana farmers, mentoring rattan farmers, and mentoring kratom farmers. The work

program carried out by KPH focuses on managing non-timber forest products (HHKB) for the community. On the one hand, the coaching program is only in protected forest areas and is not carried out in other areas that are not protected forest areas.

Involvement of the Community and Kratom Buying and Selling Entrepreneurs The recovery of farmers' economic income cannot be separated from the involvement of the community and the private sector in the world demand for kratom and the buying and selling and export processes carried out by kratom entrepreneurs. In Kapuas Hulu Regency, what we are focusing on is primarily the process of community involvement in kratom farming business activities. Stakeholders include various private parties who contribute to purchasing kratom from the public to collectors and collectors sell kratom to entrepreneurs. The results obtained by kratom entrepreneurs resell on a large scale abroad, especially in the form of kratom powder.

Opportunities and Obstacles for Empowering Kapuas Hulu Kratom Farmers, Opportunities for empowering Kapuas Hulu kratom farmers are the potential for abundant natural resources such as kratom to be able to grow the economy of the people of Kapuas Hulu Regency, the establishment of private and community partnerships for kratom products which are able to penetrate the international market, the existence of government support in pursuing kratom farming, especially the West Kalimantan Environment and Forestry Service, there is a proposal from the Governor and regional government regarding the trade system through the RPJMD Musrenbang. As for the obstacles to Empowering Kapuas Hulu kratom farmers, namely: From the regulatory aspect related to the legalization of kratom, there is still overlap between sectors, there is no cooperation between the government, the private sector and the community regarding kratom management, there is no supervision over the export of kratom sales so that several entrepreneurs and the public suffer losses due to fraud in purchasing kratom. , The regional government and DPRD have been slow to propose kratom as a commodity with economic value. There has been no research from various scientific studies as a reference in kratom regulations.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the analysis carried out in the research entitled "Empowering Kratom Farmers in Strengthening the Function of Family Institutions in Kapuas Hulu Regency" is that there are five conclusions: (1) The potential for kratom which is spread throughout most of the Kapuas Hulu Regency area means that the area is rich in resources. natural resources that produce high economic value, (2) The potential of kratom in Kapuas Hulu Regency has not been utilized optimally in buying and selling kratom while international market demand is very popular, (3) Kratom has replaced people's livelihoods from rice farming and rubber plantations to becoming kratom farmers which is considered more profitable for the community, (4) The lack of empowerment and governance carried out by the regional government means that the potential of kratom cannot be maximized in improving the economy of the kratom farming community in Kapuas Hulu Regency, (5) There is overlapping sectoral regulations regarding the regulation of kratom, making the presence of kratom in Indonesia weak so that efforts to develop business partnerships in order to increase the income of kratom farmers as well as to open up opportunities for local revenue (PAD) are not running.

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