

## **STRENGTHENING LOCAL ART THROUGH THE TOR-TOR ELAK-ELAK SANGGAR IN SIMALUNGUN REGENCY, NORTH SUMATERA, IN THE PANDEMIC TIME**

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### **ABSTRAK**

Pandemi Covid-19 banyak mengubah berbagai aspek dalam kehidupan masyarakat. Di bidang kebudayaan mayoritas generasi muda yang mengabaikan kebudayaan bangsa seperti tarian tradisional dan lebih senang dengan tarian modern semakin marak akibat arus globalisasi dan media sosial yang berkembang. Hal ini menjadikan pentingnya strategi penguatan sanggar tari sebagai wadah pengembangan kreativitas dalam kebudayaan tradisional di Indonesia, khususnya Sumatera Utara. Oleh karena itu, dalam kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini telah dilakukan upaya penguatan sanggar tari untuk memperkuat kebudayaan lokal Sumatera Utara. Kegiatan ini berupa Focus Group Discussion (FGD) dan pelatihan tari pada 30 orang pemuda/pemudi anggota sanggar tari tortor elak-elak di Kabupaten Simalungun yang dilakukan selama tiga bulan. Selain memberikan pelatihan tim pengabdian kepada masyarakat telah memfasilitasi peralatan pendukung dalam kegiatan penampilan tari tradisional untuk anggota sanggar, berupa pakaian, aksesoris dan media pelatihan lainnya. Dalam pelaksanaannya digunakan pendekatan metode ceramah, tanya jawab, demonstrasi dan drill. Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat ini telah menghasilkan luaran berupa jasa menumbuhkan kepedulian masyarakat pada kebudayaan tarian lokal Sumatera Utara dengan pendampingan pelatihan untuk meningkatkan kreativitas, inovasi, serta kemampuan anggota sanggar dalam bidang seni budaya, yaitu tari tradisional.

***Kata Kunci: Tortor Elak-Elak Simalungun; sanggar; penguatan kebudayaan lokal***

### **ABSTRACT**

*The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of people's lives. In the field of culture, most of the younger generation ignores the nation's culture, such as traditional dances, and prefers modern dances due to globalization and growing social media. This makes the strategy of strengthening the traditional art group/studio (sanggar) important as a forum for developing creativity in traditional culture in Indonesia, especially North Sumatra. Therefore, in this community service activity, efforts have been made to strengthen sanggar to strengthen the local culture of North Sumatra. This activity was in the form of a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and dance training for 30 youth members of the sanggar Tortor Elak-Elak in Simalungun Regency, which was carried out for three months. In addition to providing training, the community service team has facilitated supporting equipment in traditional dance*

*performances for sanggar members in the form of clothing, accessories, and other training media. The lecture, Q&A, demonstration, and drill method approaches are used in its implementation. This Community Service has produced outcomes in the form of services to raise public awareness of the local dance culture of North Sumatra with training assistance to increase creativity, innovation, and the ability of sanggar members in the field of culture, a namely traditional dance.*

**Keyword: Tortor Elak-Elak Simalungun; Sanggar; strengthening local culture**

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic impacts the social and economic aspects of the world community and impacts the development of traditional culture. Culture is one of a country's identities because it is the collective knowledge of humans as social beings, containing tools or knowledge models that are used to collectively comprehend the environment in which they live as a reference point for action. As one of Indonesia's central provinces, North Sumatra is home to people from a variety of ethnic groups, including the Malays and Bataks. North Sumatra is also home to a variety of icons, symbols, and cultural indexes (Takari 2010, p.1). There are also other ethnic groups, such as the Javanese, Aceh and others. This condition makes there are also various kinds of culture from each tribe in North Sumatra. One of them has unique culture such as dances, performing arts/folk theater, traditional ceremonies, and much more.

However, what is currently developing is that most people have started to ignore and even forget the nation's culture and traditional dances. Teenagers who prefer modern dance to traditional dances are not petite. Over time, traditional dances have begun to be covered by modern dances. However, not all traditional dances are no longer ogled; even children and young people are now more familiar with modern dances than traditional dances. If

observed together, these traditional dances have an attraction for foreign tourists. Not a few other countries wanted to claim the dances that Lita has, such as the example some time ago, the *Pendet* dance originating from Bali claimed by the Malaysian state; it all shows that our dance culture has a significant influence.

The lack of public awareness of the love for traditional dances makes traditional dances gradually diminish or even become extinct. Moreover, what has developed recently is that our country is experiencing a strong current of globalization affecting the entire younger generation, such as the emergence of modern dances such as K-Pop dances that make them more interested in learning it. Not even a few people make videos about the dance and upload them on social media such as YouTube, Instagram, etc. It is sad to see the community, especially the younger students or students who do this dance. As the next generation, the younger generation should filter the culture that enters our culture, instead of enjoying the dance, even enjoying the culture that they may not know about the origin of the dance. This situation is increasingly becoming a result of the pandemic, making it easier to have free time at home and access foreign cultures with the internet. On the other hand, the cultural contents of the country (Indonesia) are not as numerous and interesting as foreign

popular culture.

If seeing this phenomenon, it cannot be blamed on the people who prefer to dance modern dances over traditional dances in Indonesia. Moreover, the intensity of foreign dances such as Korea's ones is prevalent on social media and is widely accessed during the pandemic. There needs to be a strategy of strengthening and inculcating love for Indonesian culture, especially art in North Sumatra, such as introducing traditional dances. After they get to know them, they are interested in learning. For this reason, the role of *Sanggar* (traditional art group/studio) is vital as a place for traditional arts to take shelter. In this place, the art performers gather, practice, and discuss the arts. *Sanggar* can also function as a place to prepare and organize strategies. (Purnama, 2015, p. 462).

There is a *sanggar* in Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra, more precisely in Nagori Dalig Raya, Raya District. The *Sanggar* is self-managed by the community. This *sanggar* is quite active in terms of providing a forum for residents of the sub-district to learn and practice traditional dances. On several occasions in

## METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

To strengthen the local culture of Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra, during the pandemic for members of the Tortor Elak *sanggar*, the community service team has carried out FGDs and traditional dance training activities for new members of the *sanggar*. The training was conducted for two months involving 30

a local event, the dance team from this *sanggar* danced as a dance offering in events or entertainment. However, like the global phenomenon of the lack of youth interest in traditional culture, this also impacts this *sanggar*. For example, regeneration problems. The lack of youth interest in joining and programs that are ineffective in attracting interest from youth groups to join.



**Figure 1.** Tortor Elak-elak Simalungun *sanggar*

As a result, the team assisted in developing various strategies for strengthening *sanggar* in order to preserve local culture in North Sumatra during the pandemic. This activity is intended to ensure that youth, particularly teenagers in Simalungun Regency, are still interested in learning about their nation's indigenous arts, culture and have a passion for preserving it, even during the pandemic.

members aged 13 to 30 years—determination of participants using interviews conducted in collaboration with service partners. The methods used in this approach to training activities are the lecture method, question and answer method, discussion, demonstration, and drill as the leading training guide.

## FGD

The term "Focus Group Discussion" is also frequently used to refer to a method and technique for collecting qualitative data through group interviews. To gain a better understanding, FGD may be defined as a technique and method for collecting qualitative data in which a group of people discuss a specific focus or topic under the guidance of a facilitator or moderator. (Indrizal, 2017, p. 75; Agustono, Dewi & Pujiono, 2020, p. 309)

FGD is a technique and method for collecting data or information that was developed initially for marketing research. At the time, FGDs were used to ascertain the image of a particular product, the factors that attracted potential buyers or consumers, the design of the product, the size and color choices, the packaging design, and the areas that needed improvement. FGD enables the exploration of perceptions, opinions, attitudes, motivations, knowledge, problems, and expectations of change related to specific problems in a relatively short period of time (fast).

In its later development, the use of FGDs quickly expanded its use in the social sciences and medicine. In particular, the principles of FGDs are also commonly applied through group interviews, and group discussions which mark most of the techniques and tools in participatory rural situation assessment activities and goal-oriented project planning activities carried out in the context of developing community empowerment. The implementation of the FGD consists of preparation before the activity, opening, and closing/concluding.

### 1. The Preparation

(1) During the preparation phase, the facilitator must arrive on time prior to the arrival of the participants (invitations). The facilitation team should initiate informal communication with participants, which contributes to the development of trust and a sense of community. (2) The facilitation team must set up the room in such a way that participants can participate in the FGD to the fullest extent possible. It is recommended that participants form a circle around the facilitator, who will facilitate the discussion. The disabled are typically seated outside the circle but still within it. The facilitator must make every effort to avoid interruptions from the outside world and to ensure that all participants sit in a circle.

### 2. Opening of FGD (Warming and Explanation)

The following steps were taken to open the FGD. (1) The discussion guide should begin by establishing a context for the discussion and explaining several points: remarks, meeting objectives, meeting procedures, and introductions. (2) In your opening remarks, express gratitude for the informant's presence (participant). Emphasize their presence while explaining the FGD's overall meaning. Justify the current FGD meeting's purpose and objectives. (3) Introduce yourself (facilitators' names and their assigned roles). Following that, invite participants to introduce themselves. The guide must quickly recall the participants' names, which is necessary for leading the discussion. (4) Describe meeting procedures, including how recording devices are used, how confidentiality is maintained and only for this study, how

participants do not need to wait for their opinion to be solicited, how to speak one at a time so that it can be recorded, and other meeting rules. (5) Emphasize that the meeting is not intended for participants to listen to lectures and that the facilitator wishes to learn from them. Additionally, emphasize the importance of each participant's opinion, and that each participant is expected to be able to express their opinion. As a result, the facilitator asks several pre-prepared questions. (6) Begin the meeting by asking general, unrelated questions about the problem or subject of discussion. After that process is complete, begin guiding the statement using the provided guide reference. The discussion guide must be able to master the questions and present them in a systematic manner without constantly reading out the question guide rigidly.

### 3. FGD Concluding

The FGD's concluding stage considered the following points. (1) To conclude the FGD meeting, it was explained to the participants near the end of the event that our discussion of the problem and or topic would be concluded shortly. If the guide already contains some general conclusions that are considered to be sufficiently strong, summarize the key points. As such, ask each participant if they have any additional opinions or comments to convey or add. Appropriate comments can be investigated further. (2) At the conclusion of the meeting, express gratitude to the participants for their participation and emphasize once more how valuable their perspectives were. After the FGD concludes, the facilitator team must immediately reconvene to complete the field notes on the FGD's results and process.

### **Lecture Method**

The lecture method explains basic knowledge about various traditional dances of North Sumatra and the basic concepts of traditional Batak dance movements. This method also emphasizes efforts to motivate participants to have the will and increase understanding.

### **Discussion and Q&A Method**

The discussion and Q&A format is used because it is critical for participants to understand their capacity for accepting explanations about traditional dances. This method enables participants to gain as much knowledge about traditional dance as possible.

### **Demonstration Method**

The demonstration method is a technique for presenting lesson material to trainees by demonstrating or demonstrating to them a particular process, situation, or object under study, either actual or fictitious, accompanied by an explanation. (Suryani, 2012, p. 60). The demonstration method is a way of presenting lessons by demonstrating or demonstrating to students a process, situation or object being studied either in its actual form or in an imitation form that is shown by teachers or other learning resources who are experts in the topic of discussion (Roetiyah, 2001, p. 82). According to another thought, the demonstration method is a method of instruction in which an instructor or a group of instructors demonstrates or demonstrates a process. (Sudjana, 2002, p. 289). As can be seen from some of the opinions above, the demonstration method is a method of presenting learning that involves directly demonstrating the process of a learning process and accompanying it with an oral explanation.

The psychological benefits of the demonstration method include the following: participants' attention is more focused, the trainees' learning process is more focused on the material being studied, and the trainees' experience and perception of learning outcomes are more embedded. (Suprijanto, 2005, p. 143)

### **Drill Method**

The instructor implements the dance learning process through the drill/exercise method. Exercise or drill is a technique that can be interpreted as a method of teaching in which participants engage in training activities to develop dexterity or skills beyond what has been learned. The drill/practice method is used to assess both motor and cognitive abilities. (Roestiyah, 2008, p. 125)

The team believes that the drill/practice method is very effective in applying the dance learning process, because with this method the trainees can dance the dances that are taught by doing the exercises repeatedly. The dance material given is the local traditional dance of North Sumatra.

### **1. Result & Discussion**

The pandemic constraints that caused the implementation of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) in the North Sumatra region made activities that should have been directly held at the *sanggar* location hampered. However, this was overcome by intense communication between the team and partners through virtual meetings to discuss community service programs. The team also held meetings with the *sanggar* members, who were the target of this community service activity.

From the communication network and the programs being run, it is known that the Simalungun Elak-Elak Tortor Sanggar,

which is located in Simalungun Regency, Raya District, has been around for a long time. Before 1994 this sanggar was called Apprentice. However, in March 2010, this sanggar was officially notarized under the name Simalungun Elak-elak sanggar. Young people or anyone who wants to learn Simalungun dance and music can study outside of school hours. This sanggar has activities to preserve Simalungun culture in Tortor Simalungun training and making Simalungun musical instruments. The tortors in the sanggar of evasion are Tortor dihar, Tortor sitalasar, Tortor sombah and others, making chrysanthemums, gonrang, and making Simalungun miniatures. The establishment of the Elak-Elak Simalungun sanggar has played an important role in preserving traditional culture. The establishment of this sanggar also increases the younger generation's interest in getting to know the traditional culture, which is increasingly being forgotten by modern society.

Various information obtained from partners and members of this sanggar became additional references for the team to formulate various needs to strengthen local culture through the Tortor Elak-Elak Simalungun dance *sanggar* during the pandemic. Important things in the form of necessary suggestions and inputs are conveyed online in a virtual room to partners and *sanggar* members to be applied in the FGD and training activities carried out.

### **Community Service Team Visits and FGD Implementation**

On August 21, 2021, a visit to the Tortor Elak-Elak Simalungun dance *sanggar* was held. Activities are carried out with appropriate health protocols. The team was well received by service partners,

administrators and members of the Tortor Elak-Elak Simalungun dance *sanggar*. In this meeting, the team through FGD conveyed various important things related to strengthening dance *sanggars* during the pandemic. The FGD was guided by Dra. Heristina Dewi, M.Pd., member of the team who have expertise in the field of dance.



**Figure 2.** The community service team visited the Tortor Elak-Elak Simalungun *Sanggar*

In this meeting, the dance *sanggar* members also performed the dances they had mastered due to practicing during the pandemic, as suggested by the community service team in a virtual meeting. Then together with the members, the community service team continued the discussion. Here are the things that were discussed and agreed upon.



**Figure 3.** Dance performance by members of the Tortor Elak-Elak Simalungun *sanggar*

#### Conducting Training with Limited Number of Participants

Naturally, during a pandemic,

mobilization and gatherings are not recommended. As a result, group training must be discontinued. However, training can continue with modifications to the government-mandated health protocols. For instance, limiting the number of participants and providing adequate hygiene facilities, such as body temperature monitoring devices, constantly disinfected training areas, and members wearing masks and hand sanitizers, are all examples.

The team had already suggested this in a virtual discussion, but it reaffirmed the commitment to continue practicing throughout the pandemic at this face-to-face meeting.

In terms of providing equipment to support health protocols, the team assisted in the *sanggar's* provision of masks, hand sanitizers, and disinfectants. The team assists partners in providing equipment to support health protocols by distributing funds.

#### Development of Training Materials

The form of training and presentation of dance material must be based on the dance learning process in various ways or more depending on the will and agreement of the members. This is done to maintain the enthusiasm of the *sanggar* members. The members' enthusiasm in the development process of training activities in the *sanggar* will maintain the enthusiasm and expertise of the members so that when there is a performance, the members are ready and able to develop their talents and abilities in the interest of dance itself.

*Sanggar* is basically a forum for the community, especially the young generation who are talented or strong-willed in the arts, especially dance and music. Guiding members in fostering a sense of self-confidence, creativity through

a work of art as a provision in the future is the main thing.

In developing local arts, training is directed at traditional Simalungun dances and music. The training also provides participants with an understanding of the philosophy and function of these traditional dances and music. This is because the Simalungun community has traditional music that has been used for generations and functions in everyday life. For example, *taur-taur sibuat gulom* (Simalungun song) functions when bathing in a river or shower. From this, the function of *taur-taur sibuat gulom* music (Simalungun's song) is to communicate to people can be seen, which implies that someone is bathing in the river. People who know how to play a musical instrument teach those who don't know how to play a musical instrument. Playing a musical instrument can convey the grievances he has experienced during his life. Musical instruments can also convey their longing for people they leave behind because they are wandering; for example, the song *Taur-taur* (Simalungun song) conveys complaints that can arouse the feelings of both parties. Its function is to communicate to both parties.

### **Other Factors in *Sanggar* Development**

Many factors support the Tortor Elak-Elak Simalungun *Sanggar* in carrying out its role in developing interest in traditional dance and music in the community. One of them is as follows.

#### **1. Collaboration**

Cooperation is a joint effort between individuals or groups to achieve common goals and get quick and good results. Interaction occurs in cooperation because in essence, humans are social creatures who cannot live alone without other people, so they always need other people. Cooperation

is one manifestation of the results of the role played by the *sanggar* on the development of dance that occurs in the community.

#### **2. Creativity in developing dance**

*Sanggar* can create/invent new work innovations or combinations with things that already exist. Creativity is also defined as the ability to solve problems to create ideas for further development. One form of creativity that can be done at the Tortor Elak-Elak Simalungun *Sanggar* is to rework existing dances to make them more attractive.

#### **3. *Sanggar* members as successors in developing dance interests**

The Tortor Elak-Elak *Sanggar*, which has been around for decades, has many members who learn the art of dance in dance training activities in the *sanggar*. Each member has different thoughts in learning dance; some study dance only for personal consumption, and some study it as a provision for life and work. For this reason, each member must continue to develop their interests and talents, which can later be taught back to the next generation to become a profession. The relevance of the training activities in the *sanggar* with the development of local arts is huge because it can make the community more aware of the importance of preserving and maintaining local arts.

#### **4. Utilization of social media**

It is undeniable that modern culture today is gradually making traditional and local culture disappear. One of the efforts to revive local culture can be through the use of social media. Many social media showcase local cultures, such as introduction to local languages, music, and dances. Social media will help make it



easier for people to get information about local culture easily. Social media that can be used for disseminating dance and music works at the Tortor Elak-Elak Simalungun *sanggar* include *Instagram*, *Youtube*, *Tik tok* and others. The application is currently popular. The *Tik Tok* application is a social network that contains videos, in *Tik Tok* it can provide creative opportunities to make short videos by uploading a traditional dance video created using traditional dance music. Anyone can access the video and at any time, both Indonesians and people

## CONCLUSION

This Community Service Activity, in its role, is the answer to the analysis of the situation and problems of partners. Based on the results of the focus discussion activities carried out, several things were concluded as follows.

1. The implementation of strengthening local arts, especially dance at the Tortor Elak-Elak Simalungun *sanggar*, is carried out with FGDs, training, evaluation, and the development of local cultures, which are carried out regularly.

2. The role of the Tortor Elak-Elak Simalungun *sanggar* is a forum for the community, especially the young generation who are talented or strong-willed in the arts, especially dance. Guide members to foster self-confidence, love for local culture, and creativity through a work

outside the country.

As a result, it is becoming increasingly clear that social media can be used to benefit cultural preservation efforts by informing local culture and attracting the interest of a large number of people to participate in cultural preservation efforts. Nowadays, people are easily influenced by the media; incorporating traditional or indigenous dance culture into social media allows a community to be influenced over time.

of art as a provision in the future.

4. The Community Service Team, through discussions and meetings, has convinced the *sanggar* members to continue to be productive in their activities despite the pandemic. Both morally and materially, various assistance has been provided by the team to partners and the community.

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