



The Implementation of Tri Dharma of Higher Education in Strengthening MSMEs Sector During The Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the contribution of the implementation of tri dharma of UIN Alauddin Makassar in the context of strengthening the MSMEs sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. The data analysis technique employed was a qualitative method using an analytical instrument of Likert scale, categorization with three criteria, tracing and analyzing documents of the implementation of researches and services carried out by UIN Alauddin Makassar. In this study, the sample was MSMEs in collaboration with UIN Alauddin Makassar. The research findings indicated that MSMEs were facing a decline in revenue and required support to adapt to the pandemic situations. Meanwhile, the form of empowering MSMEs through implementing research results and community services carried out by the academic communities of UIN Alauddin Makassar was still very few or in the adequate category. The implementation of tri dharma ended with the preparation of outputs, but the outcomes were still few. The implementation of the tri dharma of higher education, namely education, research, and community service, must develop MSMEs and be directed to be more responsive to the needs of contemporary society.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the global economy, particularly in Indonesia. This pandemic impacted various industrial sectors, with several commercial sectors experiencing a significant drop in revenue. These sectors are tourism, finance, transportation, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), automotive, construction, and mining. MSMEs are one of the areas that have been negatively affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. In reality, most of the jobs in Indonesia are created through MSMEs. Data of the Ministry of Manpower per April 20, 2020, reveals 116,370 business entities affected by Covid-19. Around 2,048,593 employees got layoffs and terminations. In Indonesia, there are 84,926 formal sectors with 1,546,208 employees. About 1,304,777 were put off from 43,690 companies, and 241,431 employees were laid off from 41,236

businesses. Informal sectors of MSMEs are 31,444 business enterprises, and 538,385 workers have lost their jobs.

Data for several cities and regencies in South Sulawesi reveals that 11,809 employees have been put off, including 7,893 in Makassar City, 1,616 in Tana Toraja Regency, and 839 in Sinjai Regency. Furthermore, 397 employees have been put off, including 224 in Makassar City, 65 in Gowa Regency, and 64 in Palopo City. Based on data from Merdeka.com, there 40% of MSMEs are unable to operate regularly as a result of the pandemic. The negative impact on MSMEs includes the emergence of Work from Home, which results in a slowdown in business activities that can reduce MSMEs' income. Logistics distribution lines have been disrupted due to regional limits and large-scale social restrictions. As a result, there are delays and an increase in transportation costs in the distribution of goods, resulting in high production costs. Therefore, many MSMEs minimize production costs by lowering pay and laying off their employees. Employees who got layoffs and terminations cause a decrease in their income and even experience sudden job losses—this loss of employment results in a fall in people's income.

MSMEs are very vulnerable and need to be protected. Losses of MSMEs may be noticed on both the internal and external aspects. Internally, MSMEs fail due to difficulty managing finances, inadequate and unprofessional human resources (HR), inability to change, etc (Umran, 2021). Meanwhile, the external aspect was driven by pandemic issues, a declining economy, and the emergence of failure risk that was not handled and prevented beforehand.

Despite its vulnerability, MSMEs are one of the sectors that can maintain the Indonesian economy. This sector is typically classified as informal, particularly if it is a home industry. Entrepreneurial soft skills are required to handle business activities that are not managed through a company or what is usually referred to as an informal sector. This sector has a simpler business model and a smaller size, which allows for the intake of a huge number of employees. The informal sector is extremely available to ordinary people due to its low entry requirements. Thus, this sector has the potential to attract a lot of workers.

Working in the informal sector has increased annually from 1886 to 2017, whereas the formal sector has stagnated since 2010. Setiawan (2020) stated that the impact of industrialization and the expansion of the service sector, which grew until 1997, attracted people in the formal sector. Along with macroeconomic stability, the formal sector began to develop slowly, with fluctuations but has maintained a steadily increasing trend till now, although it tends stagnant. At the same time, the informal sector has continued to grow every year. It indicates that the informal sector can sustain the economy and employ a sizable workforce that continues to expand.

MSMEs are one of the informal industries that are relatively easy to enter for the community. Generally, these MSMEs are businesses that are highly capable of surviving an economic crisis. MSMEs are powerful factors of economic growth and development since they contribute significantly to income for low-income areas and employment opportunities. They can help Indonesia develop and grow its exports, particularly

manufacturing (Aribowo, Iswati, & Putra, 2018). Thus, substantial efforts are required to expand MSMEs significantly.

MSMEs have been unable to adequately anticipate the challenges inherent in a highly dynamic industry. Although Indonesia has great potential for enterprises in the massive informal sector, it has a low level of competitiveness in the MSMEs sector. This lack of competitiveness is a result of low-quality human resources and a lack of entrepreneurial ability. These abilities cover management, organization, technology, marketing, and all other skills necessary for business management (Dhamayantie & Fauzan, 2017; Dipta, 2012; Susilo, 2010). Furthermore, Budiarto et al. (2015) state that MSMEs' primary issues are finance, marketing, natural resources, technology, organization, and management. It means that MSMEs are currently experiencing excessive pressure as a result of external factors, specifically the pandemic, and also incompetence of internal factors.

Based on the descriptions and data, MSMEs must survive, adapt, and improve their quality. Human resource qualities and entrepreneurial competencies require the involvement of various stakeholders, including the government, associations and communities, financial institutions, and universities (Pagalung, 2021; Rendra, Sulaksana, Haryanto, & Sulastri, 2023; Wibowo, 2021). Meanwhile, MSMEs must explore new opportunities and improve their digitalization to survive the pandemic period. From a market perspective, Indonesia has the opportunity to become ASEAN's largest e-commerce market, with a total value of 21 billion dollars. With these prospects, MSMEs can establish themselves as the core sector necessary to relieve the pressures of Covid-19. Indonesia announced the 2021 National Economic Recovery Program, allocating IDR 63.84 trillion to support MSMEs, corporations, and State-Owned Enterprises or BUMN. Thus, collaboration from various stakeholders is useful in assisting MSMEs to continue growing and supporting the Indonesian economy (Idris & Nursita, 2022; Pagalung, 2021). One of the stakeholders is universities. As institutions develop into centers of knowledge, universities gain the community's complete trust as centers for knowledge transfer. To comprehend all of these aspects, universities must play a role in strengthening MSMEs, which may be performed through structural empowerment, institutional strengthening, capital support, and educational infrastructure.

The role of universities in strengthening MSMEs is to give power or authority to manage an economic activity independently (Pagalung, 2021). To give ability or enable implies to provide MSMEs with the capabilities to do anything for them to survive the pandemic (Pagalung, 2021). Human resource qualities and entrepreneurial competencies require the involvement of various stakeholders, including the government, associations and communities, financial institutions, and universities. Universities have a role in the development or growth and the competitiveness of MSMEs. To enter a competitive market due to the growth of the informal sector nowadays, each entrepreneur must significantly expand their skill. Universities are capable of developing innovations that lead to the development of programs that support MSME players. They can reinforce entrepreneurial knowledge and play a critical role in generating business ideas and profit on business

prospects. Baried, Septarini, and Rahman (2012) said that universities are responsible in the educational field to carry out social responsibility that can be integrated through the implementation of tri dharma of higher education.

Universities can contribute solutions to the problems of entrepreneurship soft skills management and participate in creating new business players in MSMEs sectors through the implementation of tri dharma. UIN Alauddin Makassar is one of the largest Islamic universities in Eastern Indonesia. As with other universities, UIN Alauddin Makassar also participates in tri dharma of higher education by implementing educational, research, and community service activities. This implementation should be able to influence the current empowerment of MSMEs.

Apart from generating new business players, UIN Alauddin Makassar's involvement in empowering MSMEs must be genuine, which is fascinating research considering the shifting economic conditions, market behavior, and marketing throughout the pandemic. As a higher education institution, UIN Alauddin Makassar is expected to contribute to the strengthening of MSMEs and to participate in the 2021 National Economic Recovery Program. The effect of this empowerment is interesting to study to determine whether the efforts made in this process positively affect MSMEs and can enable MSMEs to survive this pandemic issue. Therefore, this study aims to examine the contribution of UIN Alauddin Makassar as a higher education institution in strengthening MSMEs, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of this study are useful to know how a model of university involvement in strengthening MSMEs and its outcome for MSMEs.

For the reasons above the research question following this study is what the contribution of UIN Alauddin Makassar as a higher education institution in strengthening MSMEs, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Research Methods

Research methods must provide clear information about how to solve research problems. It generally consists of type and design of the study, the research setting and context, research subjects (population, sample, and sampling), data collection techniques, the validity of the data (if any), and data analysis techniques. Research methods must provide clear information about how to solve research problems. It generally consists of type and design of the study, the research setting, research subjects (population, sample, and sampling), data collection techniques, the validity of the data (if any), and data analysis techniques. (Cambria, 12pt, spacing 1.15)

This research used a qualitative approach by conducting literature reviews, surveys, and interviews to collect data on various samples, specifically MSMEs that have collaborated with UIN Alauddin Makassar and tracing the documentation of tri dharma activities. To identify the phenomenon examined in this study, researchers conducted the following stages:(1) formulating research problems;(2) collecting research data through interviewing respondents who meet the study's criteria;(3) analyzing the data; and(4) finding solutions to research problems. Moreover, the researchers' data were analyzed using an interactive

analytic model developed by Miles, namely: (1) data reduction; the researchers classified the data. At this stage, outliers in the data were removed to ensure that the research results were not biased; (2) data display, the researchers presented the data so that the reader can understand; and (3) conclusion, the researcher concluded the data analysis results to address the research problems.

The instrument in this study used the Likert Scale analysis. The scale was aimed to assist the researchers in discovering respondents' perceptions. There are five Likert scale categories used as follows:

Table 1. Assessment Criteria of Instrument Design

Score Interval	Favorable Category	Unfavorable Category
81-100	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
61-80	Agree	Disagree
41-60	Neutral	Neutral
21-40	Disagree	Agree
0-20	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree

Furthermore, the categorization findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics, which was the process of describing or characterizing statistical data that had been acquired and then applied to analyze data without the intention of drawing general conclusions (Sugiyono, 2014). The data categorizations were based on Azwar (2012) three criteria as follows:

Table 2. Three-Criteria Categorization Formula by Azwar (2012)

Category	Criteria
Low	$X < M - 1SD$
Moderate	$M - 1SD \leq X < M + 1SD$
High	$M + 1SD \leq X$

Notation:

M = Mean Score

SD = Standard deviation

Findings

State Islamic University (UIN) of Alauddin Makassar, one of the largest State Islamic Higher Education institutions (PTKIN) in Eastern Indonesia has begun to advance MSMEs starting from several work programs in strengthening MSMEs to building a central business unit forum by empowering MSME partners. Therefore, UIN Alauddin Makassar is now establishing a Business Development Center or P2B to serve as a platform for managing business units in collaboration with UIN Alauddin Makassar. P2B also manages several MSMEs, including printing, cafeteria, photocopying, and mini market, and also agro-business units (fish farming). Moreover, several departments at UIN Alauddin Makassar have included Entrepreneurship courses as mandatory subjects to develop students' entrepreneurial spirit early.

The results of a survey conducted on 60 MSMEs respondents indicated that there was a fall in monthly revenue both before and after the pandemic. The researchers attempted to compare respondents using the findings of monthly revenue received before and following

the Covid-19, as illustrated in Figure 1. Data statistics in Figure 1 reveal that there seems to be a significant difference in monthly revenue for the same respondents before and following the pandemic. Before the pandemic, only two respondent had revenue of less than IDR 1,000,000, representing only 3% of total respondents. Still, after the pandemic, this number grew to 22, or 37% of total respondents. Additionally, incomes ranging from IDR 1,000,000 to IDR 4,999,999 were 26 respondents or 43% of the total respondents before the pandemic but dropped to 20 participants or 33% following the pandemic. There were 5 respondents or 17% with earnings around IDR 5,000,000 to IDR9,999,999 before pandemic then after the pandemic, growing to 12 respondents or 20%. Respondents who had incomes in the range of IDR 10,000,000 to IDR 14,999,999 before the pandemic were 8 people or 13% of the total respondents, and after the pandemic, it decreased to 2 person or 3% of the total respondents. Respondents who had incomes in the range of IDR 15,000,000 to IDR 19,999,999 before the pandemic were 4 people or 7% of the total respondents, and after the pandemic, it decreased to 2 person or 3%. The same situation happened with respondents whose income was higher than or equal to Rp.20,000,000; before the epidemic, 10 people or 17% of total respondents fell to 2 respondent or 3% of total respondents after the pandemic.

The research findings confirm that revenue has changed, as all respondents reported experiencing a drop in revenue. Based on the observation results, the highest monthly income for respondents before the pandemic was IDR30,000,000, and the lowest was IDR850,000. In contrast, the highest monthly income value for respondents after the pandemic was IDR21,000,000, and the lowest was IDR 100,000.

The pandemic turned out to have a very negative impact on small business players. The interview results indicated that the majority of business players whose earnings were strongly reliant on consumers from the academic community of UIN Alauddin Makassar, particularly in the food/beverage and photocopying/printing sectors. When the pandemic emerged and universities closed students' activities and restricted employee accessibility, their primary consumers departed, causing their profits to plummet. Many have not adapted to the changing consumption patterns of people who used to dining in change to delivery with a payment system that is no longer cash-based but turns into cashless or on e-money. Moreover, marketing strategies were not online or social media verifying that promotions did not reach customers outside UIN Alauddin Makassar.

The survey also investigated respondents' perspectives on the changes they were experiencing due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important to explore so that it can be analyzed further whether respondents need training activities to adapt to the changes that occur during the pandemic. Thus, the researchers conducted a scale range analysis, the scale range being used as the basis for researchers shows in Table 3 as follow:

Table 3. Scale Range of Score Interpretation Criteria

Scale Range	Criteria
30 - 54	Very low
55 - 78	Low
79 - 102	fair
103 - 126	high

127 - 150

Very high

Source: Researchers' data analysis, 2022

Based on the criteria and scale ranges in Table 3, the researchers then analyzed the scale ranges for several questions in the survey relating to respondents' business situations during the Covid-19 pandemic, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The Results of Scale Range Analysis on Respondents' Business Conditions during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Aspects	Mean	Criteria
Decreased revenue happened before and during the pandemic.	116	HIGH
Business players need to adapt to the current situations, such as using cashless transactions, online promotions, and limiting personal selling.	105	HIGH
The average score of all aspects	110.5	HIGH

Source: Researchers' data analysis, 2022

Based on Table 4, the average score is over the criteria level, indicating that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is significant, both in terms of decreased revenue and the urgency of adaptation to survive the pandemic. The survey results indicated that the decline in revenue was partly driven by the limited learning process in classes and the requirement to study online during the pandemic period, reducing the primary consumers of MSMEs. Based on that statement, the researchers attempted to determine the extent to which UIN Alauddin Makassar consumers contribute to the respondents' sales. Therefore, the respondents' perceptions were categorized based on how many academic communities become MSMEs consumers from UIN Alauddin Makassar. The classification depends on an interval scale with mean and standard deviation based on a descriptive statistical analysis of survey data described in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Survey Results on MSMEs Respondents' Perception of the Number of Consumers from Academic Community of UIN Alauddin Makassar

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total of indicator 1	60	12	38	28.60	5.506
Valid N (listwise)	60				

Source: Researchers' data analysis, 2022

The results in Table 5 are then converted into category ranges using Azwar's (2012) categorization method, and the scale ranges are presented in Table 6 as follow:

Table 6. Categorization Scale of Enterprise Players' Perceptions on the Number of Consumers from Academic Community of UIN Alauddin Makassar

Scale	Categorization
< 23	Low
$23 \leq X < 34$	Moderate
≥ 34	High

Source: Researchers' data analysis, 2022

Based on that criteria, the data is then processed to investigate the number of categorizations shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Survey Results of Respondents' categorizations on the number Consumers from the Academic Community of UIN Alauddin Makassar

		Sales Category of MSMEs			
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Low	8	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Moderate	40	66.7	66.7	80.0
	High	12	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total		60	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researchers' data analysis, 2022

The survey results in Table 7 show that the respondents' perception of MSMEs is influenced by the number of primary consumers from the academic community of UIN Alauddin, hence affecting their level of sales. Twenty respondents (66.7 %) responded "moderate" category, six respondents (20%) chose "high" category, and four respondents (13.3 %) selected "low" category. The results indicated that most respondents believed that the academic communities of UIN Alauddin Makassar, consisting of students, lecturers, and staff, were their primary customers. Thus, the limited activities of the university had a significant impact on their sales fall.

To identify the contribution of UIN Alauddin Makassar to MSMEs empowerment programs, an analysis was conducted on the following survey results. The researchers categorized respondents' perceptions on UIN Alauddin Makassar's contribution to MSMEs empowerment. Categorization is based on an interval scale using mean and standard deviation based on a descriptive statistical analysis of survey data as described in Table 8.

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of Survey Results on MSMEs Respondents on Enterprise Players' Perceptions on the Contribution of UIN Alauddin Makassar to MSMEs Empowerment

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total	60	8	38	18.17	7.474
Valid N (listwise)	60				

Source: Researchers' data analysis, 2022

The results in Table 8 are then converted into category ranges using Azwar (2012) categorization formula, and the scale ranges are presented in Table 9 below:

Table 9. Categorization Scale of Enterprise players' Perception on the Contribution of UIN Alauddin Makassar to MSME Empowerment

Scale	Category
< 11	Rendah
$11 \leq X < 26$	Sedang
≥ 26	Tinggi

Source: Researchers' data analysis, 2022

Based on the categorization, the data is then processed to determine the number of classified criteria, as shown in Table 10:

Table 10. Survey Results of Respondents' Perception Categorization on MSMEs Empowerment

		Categorization of MSMEs empowerment			
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Low	4	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Moderate	48	80.0	80.0	86.7
	High	8	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total		60	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researchers' data analysis, 2022

The survey results in Table 10 illustrate how MSMEs players perceive the contribution of UIN Alauddin Makassar in strengthening MSMEs. Twenty-four respondents (80%) selected the "moderate" category, four respondents (13.3%) selected the "high" category, and only two respondents (6.3%) chose the "low" category. It indicated that the contribution of UIN Alauddin Makassar to strengthen MSMEs is measured in terms of training, social assistance, and infrastructure reconstruction, such as rebuilding roadways and waterways, which shows sufficient results. Further investigation reveals that the support of UIN Alauddin in the form of training is still adequate, indicating that there have not been many forms of training aimed at empowering MSMEs conducted by UIN Alauddin Makassar. Thereby, reinforcing the lack of training was carried out through knowledge sharing with business players. In addition, other supports such as infrastructure improvement recently carried out by UIN Alauddin Makassar indicated a significant positive impact.

Discussion

In line with the findings, this study also investigated the lecturers' activities of tri dharma of UIN Alauddin Makassar, who conducted researches and community services related to the empowerment of MSMEs and entrepreneurship through analyzing the data or documents. It is known that during the last four years, 2018 to 2022, the number of researches and community service activities carried out by the lecturers of UIN Alauddin Makassar were 35 works. Those are related to MSMEs or entrepreneurship, both in terms of product knowledge, its alternatives, marketing, financing, entrepreneurial management, business interests, etc. Additionally, it is known that 22 of the 35 works were produced during the pandemic period. Those confirmed respondents' perceptions that empowerment in the form of training for MSMEs is still not optimally carried out by the lecturers of UIN Alauddin Makassar.

The result indicated that the lecturers of UIN Alauddin Makassar seemed not optimal in implementing tri dharma of higher education related to the empowerment of MSMEs. Indeed, higher education is a non-financial institution that purpose is not only to produce intelligent individuals but also to contribute to the community, such as strengthening the economy or empowering entrepreneurship, particularly the development of MSMEs.

Universities must support entrepreneurs in obtaining global capabilities. They must play an active role in enabling entrepreneurship, which is aligned with the Tri Dharma activities that universities must undertake, including community service, to prepare small entrepreneurs to compete in the global era (Maryati, 2012).

In line with the explanation above, Murniati (2009) stated in her study that university academics are expected to take a significant role in resolving government-related issues such as economic and social problems of the community. University academics should improve the quality of education as well as contribute to development. Academics are essential in enabling the transfer of information through new technology, innovation, and creativity in their studies. Academics must give continuous education and support for the growth of creative enterprises. Furthermore, Tamba (2017) also states that to increase MSMEs through the role of universities can be stated in the university strategic plan, one of which is to develop a comprehensive program based on a project approach. It was further stated that higher education institutions are required to be able to improve the nation's competitiveness which is based on the autonomy of the implementation of education and a healthy institutional organization with knowledge-based solutions.

Tamba (2017) highlighted that the role of universities in community development is very important. The level of public respect in universities as higher education institutions with the moral integrity to serve as community role models during the transformation to a global society remains strong. As a result, universities play a critical role in empowering entrepreneurs and MSMEs as drivers of the people's economy. MSMEs are expected to collaborate with government or non-government institutions, be persistent in their efforts to improve and seize opportunities to expand their business potential for trustworthy institutions from outside to provide solutions to their problems. Universities must do new research to produce ideas and solutions to improve the progress of society.

The involvement of UIN Alauddin Makassar in empowering MSMEs is also still in the moderate or sufficient category. Research findings reveal that MSMEs are experiencing a decline in revenue and need assistance to adapt to the current pandemic situations. Meanwhile, MSMEs empowerment through training, research findings, or community service is still a relatively minor part of the academic community at UIN Alauddin Makassar. UIN Alauddin's support focuses on providing essential infrastructure facilities for business operations, such as roadway and waterway maintenance.

In terms of the implementation of education, UIN Alauddin Makassar has included entrepreneurship into its curriculum to contribute to growing students' interest in business through entrepreneurship education. This statement is aligned with Nursita's view (2021) in her paper; she stated that entrepreneurship education increased students' enthusiasm for entrepreneurship. Nasri (2013) also stated that universities play a critical role as sources of expertise for SMEs by educating and preparing graduates with managerial knowledge and skills relevant to SMEs. Despite lack of experience, graduates can develop their capabilities as junior consultants that can be applied to empower SMEs.

The implementation of tri dharma of higher education, namely education, research, and community service, must develop MSMEs. Research and community service must be directed to be more responsive to current society's needs and develop an independent, creative, and globally competitive society.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, based on the findings in the field, the researchers listed numerous steps for increasing the survival of MSMEs as follows: (1) empowering MSMEs through entrepreneurial support, especially technical support in production, financial management, and marketing; (2) facilitating financial access through entrepreneurial empowerment, including bank capability and financial literacy; (3) developing digitalization, which facilitate all transaction processes during the pandemic period. Digital optimization, especially marketing, payment, inventory, and fulfillment, is needed to empower MSMEs; and (4) Expanding the market presence of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Through presidential instructions supported by all government, business, and financial organizations, such as the Proudly Made in Indonesia National Movement and the Indonesian Product Shopping Movement, the marketing of these MSMEs products can be strengthened.

Conclusion

Research findings show that MSMEs are experiencing a decline in revenue and need assistance to adapt to the current pandemic situations. Meanwhile, the number of MSMEs empowered through research and community service conducted by the academic community of UIN Alauddin Makassar is still rather limited and falls into the moderate or adequate category. The support provided by UIN Alauddin Makassar is currently limited to supplying elements of supporting infrastructure for business operations, such as roadway and waterway renovation. However, knowledge transfer has not been carried out optimally. The implementation of tri dharma only stops at preparing outputs, but the outcomes are still few. When external risk conditions develop, MSMEs require empowerment through increased entrepreneurship, expanding financial access, strengthening digitization, and expanding marketing.

The implementation of the tri dharma of higher education, namely education, research, and community service, must provide development to MSMEs. Education must be directed towards improving the quality of the learning process supported by project-based learning media to provide direct experience to students to support the quality of graduates. Research and community service must be focused on being more responsive to the requirements of current society so that the outcomes can be used to develop an independent, creative, and globally competitive society. Tri Dharma must result in social sensitivity and an awareness of contemporary society's requirements. Implementing tri dharma in higher education will enable the community to address economic challenges and expand the economy's competitiveness. Universities, as knowledge-transfer institutions, must reconsider their roles. MSMEs must expand their possibilities for self-improvement, and universities must participate in providing community solutions. This research can be developed by expanding the scope of the study and focusing the analysis of the findings on reaching conclusions on

the role of higher education institutions in empowering MSMEs and strengthening the public's economy.

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