

## The Role of Women in Supporting the Economic Condition of the Poor: An Analysis of Gender Issues on Farming Families

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### *Abstract*

Basically everyone agrees that women and men are different. Women and men in the household are generally subject to the division of labor. This division of labor led to the development of limited social roles for both sexes and the creation of power differences in some respects that were more favorable to men. This role is seen in poor families in Padang Bolak Tenggara District. Thus, research was carried out to find out more about the role of women in supporting the economy of poor households in farming families in the District of Padang Bolak Tenggara, the profile of women (farmer's wives) who worked, the time spent required by farmers' wives, and what gender issues arose due to the involvement of the farmer's wife in supporting the family's economy. This paper is a gender perspective. The essence of gender perspective research is a study that clearly seeks to express women's experiences and gender relations according to a central issue that needs attention. Data collection methods using observation and interviews. In conducting data processing and analysis, researchers use Harvard analysis techniques. This technique is often referred to as Gender Framework Analysis (GFA), which is an analysis used to look at the gender profile of a social group and the role of gender in development. Based on observations in the District of Padang Bolak Tenggara of the farming family, it is known that the farmer's wife is very involved in helping the family economy. The profile of women (farmers' wives) in the District of Padang Bolak Tenggara can be seen from the average age of 40-50 years, 65% have a junior high school education background, only 3 people who have makeup/salon and sewing skills, besides farming. The intensity of time spent by women (farmer's wives) working outside is quite high at around 8-10 hours per day. This still does not include homework, i.e. doing homework and caring for children. This makes the workload and working time span of farmer's wives much longer than men. Thus, the gender issue that arises is injustice in the division of labor.

*Keywords:* Gender, Gender Role, Gender Inequality

### *Abstrak*

Pada dasarnya semua orang sepakat bahwa perempuan dan laki-laki berbeda. Perempuan dan laki-laki di rumah tangga pada umumnya dikenai pembagian kerja. Pembagian kerja ini menyebabkan berkembangnya peran-peran sosial yang terbatas bagi kedua jenis kelamin dan terciptanya perbedaan kekuasaan dalam beberapa hal lebih menguntungkan kaum lelaki. Peran ini terlihat dalam keluarga miskin di Kecamatan Padang Bolak Tenggara. Dengan demikian, dilakukan penelitian untuk mengetahui lebih dalam tentang peran perempuan dalam menunjang perekonomian rumah tangga miskin pada keluarga petani di Kecamatan Padang Bolak Tenggara, profil perempuan (istri petani) yang bekerja, curahan waktu yang dibutuhkan para istri petani, dan isu gender apa yang muncul akibat keterlibatan istri petani dalam menunjang perekonomian keluarga. Tulisan ini merupakan tulisan berspektif gender. Esensi penelitian berspektif gender adalah suatu kajian yang secara jelas berusaha mengungkapkan pengalaman perempuan dan hubungan gender sesuai isu sentral yang perlu mendapat perhatian. Metode pengumpulan data dengan menggunakan observasi dan wawancara. Dalam melakukan pengolahan dan analisis data, peneliti menggunakan teknik analisis Harvard. Teknik ini sering disebut sebagai *Gender Framework Analysis (GFA)*, yaitu suatu analisis yang digunakan untuk melihat profil gender dari suatu kelompok sosial dan peran gender dalam pembangunan. Berdasarkan pengamatan di Kecamatan Padang Bolak Tenggara terhadap keluarga petani, diketahui bahwa istri petani sangat terlibat dalam membantu perekonomian keluarga. Profil perempuan (istri petani) di Kecamatan Padang Bolak Tenggara dilihat dari usia rata-rata 40 – 50 tahun, 65% berlatar belakang pendidikan Sekolah Menengah Pertama, hanya 3 orang yang memiliki keterampilan merias/salon dan menjahit, selainnya bertani. Intensitas waktu yang dipergunakan perempuan (istri petani) untuk bekerja di luar cukup tinggi yaitu sekitar 8 – 10 jam perhari. Ini masih belum termasuk pekerjaan rumah yakni mengerjakan pekerjaan rumah dan merawat anak. Hal ini membuat beban kerja dan rentang waktu kerja istri petani jauh lebih panjang dari laki-laki. Dengan demikian, isu gender yang muncul adalah ketidakadilan dalam pembagian kerja.

*Kata Kunci:* Gender, Peran Gender, Ketimpangan Gender

## INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy in society throughout the developing world is no exception to the Batak society (the Southeast Padang Bolak society) Gradually from the role that developed in pre-modern culture, where the physical size and muscle tone

of men were superior, together with the biological role of women who gave birth to children, resulted in a division of labor based on sex, which is still valid today. Men become providers of necessities of life and protectors in the face of the world outside the family. Such deep responsibility can provide relatively great autonomy and opportunity. This division of labor led to the development of social roles that were limited to both sexes and the creation of power differences in some ways favoring men (Nawal, 2011, p. 84).

The uniqueness and distinctiveness of the Batak culture, especially the Southeast Padang Bolak society, cannot be separated from the patriarchal culture which originates from the kinship system of the Southeast Padang Bolak community in the form of patrilineal. According to Holleman and Koentjaraningrat in the Sudarta, the patrilineal kinship system is the following characterized traditional pattern (Sudarta, 2017): 1. Kinship relationships are calculated through fathers' lineages, children being fathers' rights; 2. Parents' property or wealth was inherited through male lines; 3. The newly born bride and groom live in the center of their husband's residence (patriarchal customs); 4. In other words, a married woman is considered to have broken off from her own family, without the right to move into her husband's family and not to have any rights or property.

These features portray that in the male patrilineal kinship system, the male position is higher than that of women, both in the household and in the community's life. This has led to inequality or inequality in women's rights and obligations. Puspa states that the consequences of a patriarchal culture that is largely confined to the homeland, cause women to sometimes become subordinated men (Puspa, 2008, p. 129).

Thus, it can be said that a patriarchal society is a society that has a reference system based on the agreement of men, where in that society the condition of women is very marginalized and marginalized through domestic work. The marginalization of women in a patriarchal society is seen from the position of the pattern of division of labor between men and women is manifested very clearly, where men dominate the public sector more, while women in the domestic sector.

In a patriarchal society, the relationship between the division of labor does not show a pattern of balance. In work, men are more valued than women's work (Budiman, 2005, p. 91). The work done by women received very little

appreciation. This is caused by social construction based on the bodies of women and men. This unequal distribution is felt by many women and creates a workload. Thus, the condition of women is intimidated by the patriarchal system.

If you look at the lives of the farmers of the Southeast Padang Bolak community, they have worked hard but their economic life is still lacking. In connection with the mobilization of economic resources owned by poor households, it has demanded women as wives to be able to support the economic resilience of the family. This condition is a strong incentive for women to work outside the home. Women in poor households, on average, have a relatively low level of education due to the underlying economic conditions.

Efforts to increase the role and contribution of women in development, including supporting the family economy, have been fully realized by women to improve their standard of living and progress, so that spiritual and material needs are fulfilled. The potential of women who are quite large in number has meaning and takes an active part in development and improving the family economy.

In connection with the above explanation, a study was conducted to find out more about the role of women in supporting the economy of poor households in farming families in the Southeast Padang Bolak District, with the reasons: 1. The people of Southeast Padang Bolak are still very strong with patriarchal values. Whether these values are still maintained in peasant families in the Southeast Padang Bolak District, North Padang Lawas Regency; 2. The people of Southeast Padang Bolak are mostly farmers who are classified as poor, so many family members are involved in working in the informal sector. With the involvement of all family members, whether the division of labor is done fairly or there is gender discrimination in fulfilling the family's economy.

Thus, the focus of the problem in this paper includes: 1. Profile of women (farmer's wives) who work for a living to support the family economy in the Southeast Padang Bolak District, North Padang Lawas Regency; 2. The role of women (farmer's wives) in supporting the family economy in Southeast Padang Bolak District, North Padang Lawas Regency; 3. The time spent by women (farmers' wives) on work activities to earn a living and household work activities in the Southeast Padang Bolak District, North Padang Lawas Regency; 4. Gender

issues/issues that arise as a result of the dual role of the farmer's wife in the Southeast Padang Bolak District, North Padang Lawas Regency.

## **THEORETICAL STUDIES**

### **Gender Meaning**

Gender is a property inherent to both men and women formed by social and cultural factors, resulting in preconceptions about the social and cultural roles of men and women (Budiman, 2005, p. 5). The term gender was introduced by social scientists to describe the difference between women and men that is innate as a creation of God, and that is a culturally conditioned being studied and socialized since childhood. This distinction is especially important, as it has often confused non-gender traits of humans.

This gender role difference is very helpful to rethink the role-sharing process that has traditionally been attached to women and men to build pictures of dynamic and appropriate gender relationships in keeping with the reality of society. Social differences in the concept of gender have led to differences in the roles of women and men in society. Gender has given rise to differences in roles, responsibilities, functions, and even spaces in which people engage.

According to Hilary M. Lips, gender is distinct from sex, gender being a cultural expectation of males and females (Lips, 1993, p. 4). This is in line with feminist opinions, such as Linsey, who considers all societal definitions of whether a person should be male or female, including gender studies (Lindsey, 1990, p. 2). H. T. Wilson defines gender as a basis for determining the influence of cultural factors and collectivistic life to distinguish between men and women (Wilson, 1989, p. 57). This statement is somewhat in line with Showalter's Moses, which implies gender as more than male or female distinction as seen from the socio-cultural construct, but emphasizes gender as the concept of analysis in using it to explain things (Mosse, 2007, p. 102).

Further, gender is understood as a mental and cultural interpretation of male and female sex differences. Gender is usually used to indicate the division of labor that is considered appropriate for males and females (Rahmawati, 2013, p. 64).

As such, the issue of gender is not only concerned with the differences between males and females, it is more important for domination both in terms of power relationships and distributions (Badan Kependudukan dan Keluarga

Berencana Nasional, 2002, p. 43). These conditions are either consciously or not, often giving birth and instituting various gender injustices.

### **Gender Injustice**

Women are subordinated by socially constructed factors. Many myths and beliefs make women's standing inferior to men's. This is solely because women are viewed through sex, not through skill, opportunity and the universal human aspect, i.e. as intelligent, sensible and sentient human beings.

This manifestation of gender injustice cannot be dissociated, as they are interrelated and interconnected, affecting each other dialectically. Manifestation of gender injustice socialized steadily among men and women, who gradually became accustomed to and eventually assumed gender roles as if they were natural. In time, a system of accepted gender injustice was created and no longer felt was wrong.

In society, gender division involves power and differential status. The men's work has greater social power. Males, in most cultures, have access to a stronger public position than females. Some societies often correct for division of labor with reproductive roles. Women as child-bearing subjects, not only for delivery, but also for rearing. In addition, women were burdened with the duty of caring for their homes.

Gender discrimination is a defining feature of almost every society, especially in patriarchy. Patriarchy or patriarch (patriach), literally means the power of the father. The term patriarchy is used more generally to refer to male power, power relationships with which men rule women and to refer to systems that keep women in control through a variety of ways (Bhasin, 2006, p. 90).

There are generally four problems that stereotype women: The first is through subordination that women must submit to the male. The leader (imam) is only a man, while the woman is only allowed to be a limited leader of his people who functions as a supporter of the main activities of men, for example in *Dharma Wanita*, *Muslimat*, *Aisyiyah*, *Fatayat* and so on; Second, women tend to be marginalized, that is, positioned on the margin. In the community's work, the highest female is only the consumption section or guest recipients. In the household, women were only given duties of taking care of the household rather than the decision-maker; Third, women are weak, so women are often the target of violence by men. In society, that form of violence started from being seduced,

abused, beaten, abused until raped; Fourth, because of gender injustice, women must receive a heavier and longer workload than men do. In terms of work, most active men work an average of 10 hours per day with women working 18 hours per day. This burden is generally considered to be underestimated by men, as it is economically considered less significant (Hasan, 1990).

Based on the above reasoning, it is understood that gender is a cultural social construct that distinguishes between masculine (male) and feminine (female) characteristics that affect attribute-sharing and employment.

### **Women and Family Economics**

Gender analysis in economic activity cannot be separated from studies of the family. The economy and the family are two interrelated institutions, though they appear to be separate from one another. Women have the potential in contributing household income, especially poor households. Increased participation of women in economic activities because: Firstly, changing community views and attitudes about equal importance of education for women and men, and increasingly the need for women to participate in development, secondly, the willingness of women to be independent in the economic sector, namely to try to finance their lives and perhaps also the needs of those who are dependants with their own income. Another possibility that is causing an increase in women's participation in the workforce is the greater employment opportunities that can absorb women's workers, such as handicraft work and snack industry.

Research conducted by Mariun shows that of 53.44% of women working, 72.79% were full-time workers, meaning women were guaranteed income (Mariun, 2004). Yuniarti and Haryanto suggest that the income of female workers in the sandang industry has contributed significantly to the increase in household income (Yuniarti & Haryanto, 2005). The contribution of women can be said to be savers or supports for poor households to fulfill basic daily needs.

Indonesian women especially in rural areas as human capital are quite evident, especially in fulfilling household and family functions with men. A number of recent studies have shown that the role of women in a variety of industries in a number of areas is quite large and decisive, with independent business management (Lestari et al., 2007).

The potential that women have to sustain the family economy is considerable. However women do not concern themselves or claim that they are a major pillar of the family economy. The research findings by Wibowo to traditional traders in Semarang show that the women do not want to keep a high profile or claim that their main (staple) activities are only supportive of the husband's activities, although they do not necessarily represent their earnings much greater than their husbands' (Wibowo, 2012).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is a gender-oriented field study. The essence of gender perspectives is a study that clearly seeks to express the experiences of women and gender relationships in accordance with central issues that need to be addressed (Handayani, 2017, p. 45). The approach that is used is a qualitative approach. Furthermore, the methods used in this research are descriptive methods. To obtain the necessary data, the methods of observation and interviews were used. Furthermore, to process and analyze the data, the author uses the Harvard analysis technique. This technique is often referred to as Gender Framework Analysis (GFA), which is an analysis used to see the gender profile of a social group and gender roles in development. This analytical technique expresses the need for three components and their interrelation with each other, namely; activity profile, access profile, control profile and benefit profile (Handayani, 2017).

## RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### **Profile of Women (Farmers' wives) in Southeast Padang Bolak District, North Padang Lawas Regency**

The profile of female farmers in the Padang Bolak Tenggara sub-district in terms of age varies quite a bit from the age of 21 to 60. Meanwhile, the majority of women's education levels (68%) are at the junior high school level, 20% at the elementary school level, and 12% high school level. Based on the results of interviews with researchers, from all informants only 3 people have sewing and make-up/consoling skills, 15 people are skilled at weaving mats, salak sacks, and dodol wrappers. Apart from that, it can only be *marsabah* (farmer) and *mengguris* (gardening in slashing rubber tree trunks).

Furthermore, it is seen from the income that is quite varied, starting from an income of 500,000 to 2,500,000 per month, and even then, it depends on the rice harvest or the rubber and oil yields they get. Based on the results of searching data in the field, information was obtained that all informants (women/farmer's wives) were involved in supporting the family economy by participating in farming and also becoming farm laborers, as described in the following article.

### **The Role of Women (Farmers' Wives) in Supporting the Household Economy.**

#### *Activity Aspect*

This aspect of activity is used to identify who carries out activities in all farming activities and also work in the household between men and women. Based on the results of observations, below is an explanation of the division of labor between women and men during farming activities in the Southeast Padang Bolak District.

Table 1. Division of Labor Between Men and Women in Farming Activities and Farm Workers

NO	ACTIVITIES	MEN		WOMEN	
		Adult	Children	Adult	Children
<b>1.</b>	<b>Rice-Fields</b>				
a.	Cultivating Soil	√	√		
b.	Sowing Rice			√	
c.	Planting rice	√		√	
d.	Fertilizing/caring for plants	√		√	
e.	Harvesting rice	√		√	
f.	Cleaning up rice			√	
g.	Hanging The Rice		√	√	
h.	Selling Rice			√	
<b>2.</b>	<b>The Gardens and the Herds</b>				
a.	Clearing Land	√	√	√	
b.	Cleaning up the garden	√		√	√
c.	Slashing rubber tree trunks	√		√	
d.	Taking palm	√			
e.	Planting Vegetables			√	
f.	Growing Vegetables & Crops			√	
g.	Weaving mats			√	√
h.	Taking care of Buffalo/cow	√			

i.	Taking care of Goats	√	√	
j.	Taking Care of Chickens/Ducks		√	√
k.	Cleaning the Cattle Cage	√		
<b>3. Work for Wages/Salary</b>				
a.	Looking for wages in other people's fields	√	√	
b.	Slashing rubber tree trunks in other people's fields	√	√	
c.	Clean the garden		√	
d.	Slimming palm fruit and rubber		√	

Based on the table above, both women and men are equally involved in almost all types of activities, except weaving mats. However, the involvement of women in farming in the District of Padang Bolak Tenggara is more dominant than the involvement of men. Furthermore, the activities carried out by farming families including husband, wife and children in managing the household can be seen in the following table:

Table 2. Division of Labor Between Men and Women in household activities

NO.	ACTIVITIES	MEN		WOMEN	
		Adult	Children	Adult	Children
<b>1.</b>	<b>Receive Water</b>				
a.	Draw Water	√		√	
b.	Lifting Water	√		√	
c.	Boil water			√	√
<b>2.</b>	<b>Preparing Fuel</b>				
a.	Looking for Wood	√		√	
b.	Cutting Wood			√	
c.	Bringing Wood from the Garden	√		√	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Receive Food</b>				
a.	Shopping for Kitchen Supplies			√	
b.	Picking Vegetables from the Garden			√	√

c.	Cooking Rice	√	√
d.	Cooking Meals	√	
e.	Serving Food	√	√
<b>4. Parenting</b>			
a.	Bathing The Child	√	√
b.	Feeding The Child	√	
c.	Babysitting	√	
<b>5. Clean up</b>			
a.	Washing clothes	√	√
b.	Drying clothes	√	√
c.	Folding clothes	√	√
d.	Rubbing Clothes	√	√
e.	Sweeping the House	√	√
f.	Mopping the House	√	√
g.	Washing dishes	√	√
<b>6. Health</b>			
a.	Health Check		
b.	Taking A Medical Kid	√	
c.	Maintaining Family Health	√	

### *Access Aspect*

This aspect is used to determine who is more dominant in getting opportunities related to farming, both men and women working as farmers. Observations and interviews have shown that men are more dominant in gaining opportunities for all types of access than women. When the authors browse for the reason, it is known that men have more information and opportunities to undertake the training because they have longer leisure times (K. Nasution et al., personal communication, September 22, 2019).

### *Control Aspect*

The control aspect is to look at the authority that men or women have in making decisions and using resources.

Based on the above analysis of control aspects, it shows that women are already involved in decision-making within the enterprise. Women's access to

the land remains maximum from the time of planting to the harvest period, even though the land is not theirs.

### ***Benefits Aspect***

The aspect of benefits is the opportunity to benefit or benefit outcomes which are gained in doing business such as knowledge benefits, skills and income.

Data analysis suggests that benefits derived from activities performed outside of the dominant household work are shared by both men and women. Of the five benefits, the most benefit is the benefit of income. With the involvement of women (peasant wives) in farming or farm hands, the income of farmers, especially household income, increases, so it can support the household's basic needs daily.

### **Time Intensity Of Work (Female Farmers' Wives)**

Based on a research interview with several farmers' wives, whose main job as farm laborers is to work every day in the oil palm and rubber plantations of another man with an eight-hour workday (E. A. Siregar et al., personal communication, July 23, 2019). While the wives of farmers who devote their work time to farming, the intensity of time devoted is also quite high (R. Harahap, personal communication, August 4, 2019). However, there are also wives who only assist their husbands in working in the fields, whose time is less intensive (H. Harahap & H. D. Siregar, personal communication, June 29, 2019).

In addition to working in the fields or farms, many women (peasant wives) work side-by-side on mats. The time used is usually at night or after the harvest before the harvest returns. They spend about four hours weaving. For a single new type of webbing, two to seven days are completed, depending on the type of webbing they are working on and the free time they have.

Meanwhile, housework was a routine duty for peasant wives and was mostly assisted by their daughters. From the field findings, information was obtained that the time devoted to cooking, washing, and water collection, and searching for firewood was generally quite high.

d. Problems Related to Gender Issues in Women (Farmers' wives) in Southeast Padang Bolak District, North Padang Lawas Regency

Research has also shown that cooking, washing, housecleaning and housekeeping are women's jobs. These thoughts are especially present in societies that are still very strong in patriarchal culture; they still consider that it is natural for women to have a job in the kitchen. Thus the call for the married woman is called "*oppu ni api*" (I. Harahap & K. Siregar, personal communication, 2019).

This thinking has an effect on husbands not wanting to help their wives do their homework. While the wife takes part in helping the husband's work earn a living. This leads to injustice in terms of workload. However, the problem does not seem to be a problem for women in Southeast Padang Bolak District, as they do not feel it is an injustice. To them it is already natural and should be accepted (R. Harahap, personal communication, August 4, 2019).

In addition to the injustice of the division of labor, there are still 14 (56%) farming families that do not involve their wife in making decisions and giving authority to manage their finances. Subordination or numbering to women can be seen from the absence of wives in the family deliberations. While women in agricultural matters have largely been authorized to make decisions, in the case of public or familial interests, women's decisions are still deemed to be unimportant and thus are not asked (T. Harahap & P. H. Siregar, personal communication, August 24, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the description of the findings, the conclusion can be drawn: 1) A profile of women (peasant wives) in Southeast Padang Bolak District seen from the average age of 40 - 50 years, 65% of people from a Junior High School background, only 3 have skills in makeup/console and sewing, and others are farmers; 2) Women (Peasant wives) 98% are active in farming, both farming and farming. The income of farming families varies from Rp.500,000 to Rp.2,000,000. Apart from employers, women in the Southeast Padang Bolak District also maintain livestock and craft weaving mats, chopsticks or salak sacks; 3) The intensity of time used by women (peasant wives) to work in the fields both on their own land and work on the fields of other people is quite high, which is around 8 to 10 hours a day. Besides the considerable outdoor work, the farmer's

wife also does household chores, such as cooking, washing clothes, washing dishes, finding wood to raise water and take care of children and husband; 4) Gender-related problems involving injustice in the division of labor. Women, in addition to working as wives and mothers, should also be working to assist their husbands in the fields or plantations, which should only help turn out that women are predominantly in the fields or in the fields, and women are also more likely to have a female job intensity than men. As well as women's involvement in family decision-making, there is still discrimination against women. Women's positions are still not counted in decision making.

Based on the problems these research findings should be recommended for: 1) To organize training, workshops and popular education on women's rights as part of human rights for women's institutions; 2) To utilize village fund assistance by providing facilities and capital rolling for women's economic empowerment through home industrial development; 3) To conduct productive business training with the benefit of natural resources.

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