
Madurese Sugarcane-Farming Women: One Face with Multiple Roles

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to identify the roles of female farmers in all stages of production and harvesting of the sugarcane agriculture and determine the opportunities, constraints, and factors of women's participation in the Madurese community. It also examines the role and degree of involvement of female farmers in terms of economic and social aspects as well as local wisdom in the sugarcane agriculture by comparing the roles of female and male smallholder farmers in terms of the allocation of time, labour, and the wage system. In addition, the article also discusses the influence of female farmers in the household decision-making for improving the productivity and family income in the Madurese community. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study as its approach. Qualitative research seeks to describe in-depth how the roles of female farmers in the sugarcane agriculture in Madura operate. The results show that they want to have an active participation and involvement in sugarcane farming activities. They want to contribute actively to the welfare of their families by offering some alternatives for their economy so that economic welfare and more empowerment for themselves as women in particular can be achieved.

KEYWORDS- female farmers, Madurese community, sugarcane, agriculture

I. INTRODUCTION

The women's role in agricultural sector in Indonesia becomes an important aspect that cannot be separated from the history of agricultural development. Various studies show that rural women always have a significant contribution to the agricultural development as showed in a study conducted by Muliawan (2002). He found that agricultural innovators are mostly women who create jobs in agriculture. In the context of sugarcane agriculture, women also play an active role. As a study by PSG STAIN Team of Pekalongan City (2010) in Pekalongan district stated that farmers are usually male, but in reality, women are also heavily involved in land cultivation in rice fields and plantations. One of the examples is in Sragi subdistrict, Pekalongan district, the women are involved in the cultivation of sugarcane plantation owned by PTP Nusantara IX - Pesero Pg Sragi.

There are many activities that are usually carried out by the women in the production process. Sugarcane farming and daily laborers on a sugarcane plantation in the Sragi district is a common occurrence because the majority of the community members work as cultivators of their plantations. This is also supported by a wide area of plantations in Sragi. In the Pekalongan district, the largest sugarcane plants are located in Sragi subdistrict with an area of 541.13 ha or 19.53%. Plantation commodity is a source of foreign exchanges in the agricultural sector which is classified as a plantation sector.

In a similar vein, Afif (2007) found that Madurese women have double roles; in addition to doing reproductive work, the wives should also perform productive works, including in agriculture. The wives are involved in financial management due to the stereotype that women can manage finances better than men. Nevertheless, the wives (women) do not have access to credit loans from cooperative institutions and banks. In addition, the wives also do not have access to agricultural information through extension services. Decision-making on tobacco agriculture is done by the husbands. Madurese sugarcane peasant women have a very important role. However, due to cultural reasons, their roles are often 'swallowed' or overwhelmed by masculine cultural dominance in the Madurese community.

Khoirul (2012) revealed that Madurese women have high work ethos. However, the decision-making remains in the hands of husbands or at least all important matters are decided together. This is not separated from the culture in which the man acts as the leader in the household. In addition to the belief that man is the leader of family, other matters causing Madurese peasant women to be marginalized are: Madurese patriarchal culture, the wrong interpretation of religious teachings about man-woman relationship, cultural understanding that the wives just carry out the works in the kitchen (domestic chores). This is still inherited in Madurese. These beliefs lead to bad household management. Although any peasant women can access information about credit loans, prices, and needs, but the decision is still dominated by the husband or at least a decision is made upon husband approval.

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II. MADURA SUGARCANE-FARMING WOMEN

Madurese sugarcane-planting women are not ordinary women. They not only work as housewives, give birth, clean houses, educate children but also have roles in supporting the economies of their families. They plant sugarcanes, apply fertilisers on them, harvest and sell them and have a role as 'bank' in their families as well. This is really amazing.

Despite their complex and important roles, Madurese women are still under the shadows of cultural masculinity in Madurese society. A number of dogmas which are still maintained and in fact established are that men are the household heads. Women must ask for permission to their husbands if they need to leave their houses. They must also obey their husbands. Defying husbands is perfidious and denying their orders is a big disaster that may lead to divorce.

This is a paradox of two faces which fold against one another; they are important but powerless at the same time. Results of the focus group discussion (FGD) involving female sugarcane farmers in Bangkalan, Sampang and Pamekasan regencies highlight the fact that women do have significant roles in developing sugarcane plantation in Madura. However, they are just 'things' which from cultural and religious viewpoints are fully under control of their husbands.

However, this is where Madurese female sugarcane farmers exist. They realise that they are women and also wives who should play such paradoxical roles without any regrets or mental pressures. This constitutes a good deed for their husbands as advocated by the religion. Husband and wife must work together. This is probably what Emeil Durkheim refers to as Division of Labour in the family. For Madurese sugarcane women, there is no such a term as male domination toward themselves. What happens is in fact a division of labour and a cooperation between husbands and wives to create harmonious families under the umbrella of Islamic values. This is what we can observe from Madurese sugarcane women. They have high work ethos, they are tough and resilient but still obedient to their husbands, whom according to the belief of Madurese people women must listen to and obey. This has to be this way as long their husbands' orders do not go against the values in Islam, a religion which they believe will lead them to heaven. In short, the FGD results show that the roles of Madurese women in the three regencies cannot be negated especially in their efforts to increase their family welfare. This can particularly be seen in their roles in the agricultural sector (sugarcane or non-sugarcane plantation) and outside the agricultural sectors such as finance, utilisation of sugarcane harvest as well as their expectation for the economy of sugarcane plantation in Madura. In the following sections, we discuss some of the roles of Madurese sugarcane women.

III. ROLES IN INCREASING FAMILY INCOME

In an effort to increase family income, Madurese sugarcane women have significant roles. As wives, Madurese women participate in economic activities in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors alike. In the agricultural sector, sugarcane-planting women in Bangkalan, Sampang and Pamekasan do a number of economic activities to increase family income by among other things planting sugarcanes, rice, corn, eggplants and tobacco plant. Some of them also raise livestock. Outside agricultural sectors, they sell groceries, make crafts and crackers, sew and even work as civil servants.

In Bangkalan regency, sugarcane-farming women increase family economy in the agricultural sector by planting green bean and cooking for field workers (Surahma, 35), planting peanut, corn and sugarcane (Holiyah, 45), helping husbands plant sugarcane (Saniyah, 40), growing corn (Rokaiyah, 27), planting peanut (Farida, 33), growing rice (Rohiyah, 35), farming corn (Romsiyah, 25), farming rice (Munira, 40), planting rice (Atika, 45), and cooking for workers in the farming field (Suwarti, 34). Their activities outside the agricultural sectors include keeping a grocery store (Juminah, 25), selling retail gasoline (Sumaiyyah, 25), selling food/female praying clothes (Iin, 19), working as a part-time civil servant and selling mobile credit (Vida, 22), raising chicken (Nilam, 50), selling food (Marilah, 35), looking for grass for feeding cows (Maryam, 40), selling sugar, salt and working as a government school teacher (Jamilah Arofiqa, 35).

In Sampang regency, sugarcane-farming women increase family economy in the agricultural sector by planting corn (Umatum, 60), helping husband work in fishpond (Fatimah, 60), growing corn and sugarcane (Mahyuroh, 45), planting corn and sugarcane (Maufiroh, 43), planting cassava (Behah, 50), growing corn (Sainiyeh, 45), growing corn (Hananah, 25), growing corn and sugarcane (Saripah, 35), planting rice (Naila, 21), planting corn (Sainiyeh, 45), growing corn (Wamah, 50), planting rice (Hapsah, 40), planting rice and sugarcane (Fauzan, 30), planting sugarcane and cooking for sugarcane workers (60), growing corn (Fatimah, 35), growing rice (Nur, 25), planting sugarcane (Musnani, 27). Their activities outside the agricultural sectors include working as building coolies (Maufiroh, 43), looking for grass for cow feed (Saripah, 35), looking for grass for livestock feed (Wamah, 50), looking for grass for cow feed (Hapsah, 40), making salt (Fauzah, 30), selling shellfish and working in fishpond (Nurul, 60), working as building coolie (Mayasa, 23), making salt (Nur, 25), renting out trucks, making paving bricks and working as government school teacher (Musnani, 27).

FGD Results show that Madurese women especially farmers' wives provide substantial contributions to increased family welfare and income. This fact highlights that they are tough and resilient in building the welfare of family economy. Those values also make them as women with high work ethos, spirit and resilience. They will do anything for the welfare of their family as long as it is not morally and legally forbidden. This is indicated by the fact that some even work as building coolies, a job which requires more physical strength. Some Madurese women with good qualifications also begin to work as civil servants or businesswomen, professions that used to be considered as only belonging to men.

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Even though many Madurese farmers' wives work to help support family economy, they do not forget their important role as housewives. Cooking for family and being loyal, submissive and obedient to husbands are values that are always upheld by Madurese women. For them, men are the household leaders who must be respected and obeyed although in some cases women appear to be marginalized. Strength and submissiveness among Madurese women discussed above cannot be separated from Islamic values which are held and believed by Madurese people. According to one Islamic teaching, working is a form of worship which has individual, social and transcendental dimensions in it. That is why welfare has to be achieved by working hard. However, serving and obeying husbands is also a form of worship that can also bring women to heaven.

IV. ROLES IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

While working is a form of worship that underlies Madurese female farmers to have work ethos in any field, working in the agriculture sector for them is a necessity. Indeed, working in this sector becomes a ritual and spiritual routine for their daily lives. Their real roles they play in the agriculture can be seen in the FGD results in three regencies in Madura. In Bangkalan regency, their roles in sugarcane farming include planting and peeling sugarcane leaves, weeding out, applying fertilisers and providing food for workers. Their roles in rice farming include planting, applying fertilisers and harvesting rice while for peanut farming they include planting, applying fertilisers, harvesting and selling the crop.

Job in this sugarcane farming includes applying fertilisers, peeling the leaves, providing food for workers, weeding out and harvesting sugarcane. After that they will get money. Husband does the hoeing because women cannot hoe. Husband also applies fertilisers and makes water paths.

Farida (33) said, "My role in this sugarcane farming includes planting, applying fertilisers, weeding out and peeling sugarcane leaves while my husband makes water paths and harvesting the crop." Those roles were shared by other FGD participants including Rohiyah (35), Rokaiyah (27) and Surahma (35). A quite different role was experienced by Jamilah Arofiqa (35) who had a relatively complex and dominant role as a wife in sugarcane farming. Her role also includes managing finance and supporting everything related to it. "Previously I just managed 3 hectares of land for sugarcane plantation. My role includes seeking funding to rent the land and also everything related to sugarcane farming," Jamila, who holds a bachelor degree, said. She continued, "My husband's job includes looking for workers, watching over the sugarcane field and paying workers. However, he gets all the money from me. So, my role in this farming is more on funding and supporting my husband."

Similar roles are also performed by Madurese sugarcane women in Sampang and Pamekasan. In Sampang, their roles begin at home such as cooking for workers, looking for workers, renting land, planting, applying fertilisers, peeling and harvesting sugarcane. They also do the same thing in corn farming where they plant, apply fertilisers and harvesting the crop. However, we can also find families in Sampang where women's roles in sugarcane farming only have something to do with logistics. As said by Saripah (35), "I myself do not work in the sugarcane field because my husband has employed some workers in our field." She continued, "My job in sugarcane farming has more to do with preparing food for workers and send it to them. However, this job is quite energy- and time-consuming because there many things I have to deal with while I do not have household servants." Such a role was also performed by Nurul (60). "Cooking and preparing food for sugarcane workers is my job," Nurul said. "I also have to participate in renting land and also look for workers," Nurul, who also sold crabs, added. A similar job was also done by Musnani (27). This young lady not only worked in the field but also sought funding. "I also participated in this sugarcane farming by working in the field, looking for workers, seeking funding and buying fertilisers," Musnani, who also worked as a government schoolteacher, clarified.

All of the roles played by women in the agricultural sector in Bangkalan and Sampang mentioned above are also performed by their counterparts in Pamekasan. Their roles in tobacco farming include planting, applying fertilisers and taking care of tobacco plants every day. Not to mention, cooking is also a spiritual routine for all Madurese women. In sugarcane farming, their roles include planting, applying fertilisers, peeling sugarcane leaves, cooking for workers and cutting the sugarcane. The roles are certainly done to support their husbands in sugarcane farming activities.

The same thing was also done by Zainah (50). Because her husband has passed away, she has to do most of the job herself. "I apply fertilisers myself, but I cannot do the closing. I ask other people to do it for me. Applying fertilisers is easy for women," she said. "Because I do not have a husband, I have to pay other people to do the closing," she added. Zainah explained that she had to spend around Rp. 60,000 (around US\$4.5) for workers to do the closing for every half-hectare of her sugarcane field.

The complexity of women's roles in the agricultural sector reflects that Madurese women have a very important role in agriculture in Madura especially in sugarcane farming. In order to play the double role as housewives and sugarcane women, they need almost a full day every day. Their life begins early in the morning from 03.00 am cooking as their first activity. They cook themselves because they do not have household servants. At this hour, their husbands are still sleeping soundly. They only get up to do prayers and after praying they usually go back to sleep. Indri (40) said, "After cooking we as wives have to do prayers. After that we have to clean the house and sweep the floor until around 06.00 am.

At 06.00 am, Madurese sugarcane women go to the field to work and bring with them some food such as rice, fried fish, and drinking water. They bring all of the food themselves and even their husbands do not give a hand. They work in the field until 11.00

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am. At 11.00 am, they go back home to take a rest for about one hour. At 13.00 pm, they return to the field to work again and they just go home at 16.00 pm. Arriving home, they do not take a rest because they have to wash their dirty clothes and their husbands' as well. After that, they still have to clean the house and sweep the floor. At 17.00 pm they prepare food for their children and husbands. At 17.30 after the dusk prayers, they gather together with their children and husbands. This is a special and meaningful time for them. At this time, they really enjoy having a real break such as watching television, chatting with children and husbands and sleeping until they have to get up again at 03.00 am early in the morning.

From a Gender Sociology perspective, the data showcases the complex roles and responsibilities of Madurese women in the context of agricultural activities, particularly in sugarcane farming. Gender Sociology focuses on the social constructs, norms, and roles associated with femininity and masculinity within a society. Division of Labour by Gender: The data reflects a distinct division of labour based on gender roles. Women are involved in both household chores and agricultural work, portraying a dual role as homemakers and active participants in farming activities. There's an indication of the "feminization" of certain agricultural tasks, where women predominantly engage in specific activities such as planting, applying fertilizers, harvesting, and cooking for field workers. This feminization of labour refers to the concentration of women in particular agricultural tasks.

The roles women assume in the agricultural sector are influenced by societal expectations and norms. They are expected to manage household duties alongside contributing significantly to farming activities, reflecting societal norms that assign caregiving responsibilities to women. Despite women's active participation in various farming tasks, there are instances where men maintain more dominant or managerial roles, particularly in decision-making or financial aspects. However, there are exceptions where certain women take on significant managerial roles, challenging traditional gender norms.

The data highlights the extensive workload carried by women, starting from early morning household chores to labour-intensive farming activities and back to household duties in the evening. This workload reflects the intersection of gender roles and labour, where women are engaged in both productive and reproductive labour. Women's contributions to agriculture, particularly in sugarcane farming, are indispensable for family income generation. Despite their substantial involvement, there might exist unequal access to resources and control over the generated income. The experiences and roles of women vary based on factors such as marital status, education, and economic situations, illustrating the intersectionality of gender with other social identities. Paragraphs must be indented. All paragraphs must be justified, i.e. both left-justified and right-justified.

V. DECISION-MAKING ROLES: FROM PLANTING TO MONEY MANAGEMENT

Even though the husband-wife relationship does exist in Madurese society, men are always at the forefront in providing public ideas which have considerable effects including in sugarcane farming. This fact is to some extent influenced by Madurese belief and cultural systems which tend to be so patriarchal. This can be found in Bangkalan, for example, where the idea of planting sugarcane mostly come from husbands. It is true, however, that the final decision on whether to plant sugarcane or not is jointly made by husbands and wives.

"It is my husband who has the idea of planting sugarcane," Saniyah clarified (40). "When we were watching television, my husband asked, 'Do you want to plant sugarcane, my wife. Let's plant sugarcane so that we know how to do it.' I said yes," Saniyah continued telling where the idea of planting sugarcane came from.

Saniyah admitted that planting sugarcane does not always make profit; there was a time when she had to face some losses. "Sometimes we make profit, sometimes we face losses. We face losses particularly when our sugarcane field is on fire. We also make profit but not much," she said. "I don't know for sure anything related to profit, Sir, but I know exactly when the field is on fire and we experience losses because my husband always tells me about it," she continued.

Although the profit is not a lot, it is still worth doing. If this happens, they get their own money in hand. "The main job of a husband is to look for money (livelihood). He also decides what the money is for in relation to sugarcane farming activities," Saniyah clarified. "However, it is I who always manage the money so that we won't lose it," she continued. Saniyah also said, "The decision on what the profit from sugarcane farming is used for is made between husbands and wives. Saniyah said that they built a house and jewellery from it. "The profit that we made yesterday was used to build a house because we didn't have one. We also bought some gold," she said.

Money management which involves husbands and wives in deciding on what it will be used for indicates that there is no arbitrary action done by either side. Building houses and buying gold become rational choices for most Madurese female farmers. This is because the values of investment such as these will never go down. Again, this illustrates how wise and smart Madurese sugarcane women are in managing money.

Unlike Saniyah who buys houses and gold from the profit, Faridah (33) uses it for fulfilling primary needs. Holiyah (45), Romsiyah (25), and Surahma (35) also do the same thing. "I use it for my children's education," Surahmah explained. Vida (22) uses the profit for building a house because her children are still little. "I use it for building a house, a dwelling," she said. "Where can I live if I don't have a house? I used to live with my parents-in-law and I want to have our own house," she continued. Jamilah Arofiqi (35) has a different story. She said that the profit from sugarcane farming is used for supporting the educational foundation she manages. "I use the profit for supporting my educational foundation because without it I don't think the foundation will run,"

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Jamilah said, "All the profits from sugarcane and salt farming as well as from renting chairs are used for the welfare of the foundation," she said passionately. Jamilah exemplifies how Madurese sugarcane women with a bachelor degree have some concern toward their society which are still far away from welfare in terms of economy and education. However, a woman like her is very often marginalized by cultural and religious interpretations which are sometimes not fair to women.

The FGD results in Sampang demonstrate more or less similar results to those in Bangkalan. We found that the idea of planting sugarcane firstly comes from husbands, but the final decision is based on agreements between husbands and wives. If one side does not agree, planting sugarcane in Madura will never materialize.

In terms of the use of the profit, female farmers in Sampang are more concerned with their religious needs. They mostly save it for the cost of doing hajj or umrah. Saripah (35) said, "The idea of planting sugarcane came from my husband. He said, 'Do you agree if we plant sugarcane?' The reason why he thought about planting sugarcane is because we have planted corn and peanut but we haven't really made good profits from them," she added. Saripah and her husband hope that they could increase their profits by planting sugarcane. The early discussion about the idea was done when they were watching television with their children. "My husband knew everything about sugarcane; I just followed him," Saripah clarified.

Nurul (60) clarified, "The decision of planting sugarcane was made after I had an agreement with my husband. We did it following the visitation of one of the PTPN X's officers telling us about sugarcane farming." She continued, "Because sugarcane is sweet." Because sugarcane is sweet, they keep planting it although the results are sometimes far from their expectations. The profit will be used for the cost of doing hajj and umrah. "The profit from sugarcane harvest will be used for hajj and umrah," Nurul said. "The decision was made together with my husband," she continued. Nurul has an important role in money management, either the money they get from sugarcane farming or other sources. "I usually take the responsibility of collecting all the money we receive from sugarcane farming or other sources," Nurul explained. "After that we go to the bank together to deposit it," she continued. And how they use the money is decided by both of them.

In terms of money management, Indri said that she took the role more as the money keeper. "I am the treasurer. After harvesting, my husband receives the money from PTPN X and he then gives it to me," she continued. She is also active to ask her husband whenever the money is not as much as expected or whenever it is not received for a while. "If I haven't received the money for a while, I ask my husband where the money is. He usually responds to me by saying that the delay is caused by PTPN X," she said. Indri also keeps and manages all the money in her family. "I keep the money because I also work," Indri said. "If I don't keep it, I am afraid my husband will marry again. If that happens, it will be a disaster leading to physical fights," she continued. However, if her husband just takes out Rp. 20,000, it should not be a problem for her.

The profits that they receive from growing sugarcane are primarily used for their children's education. "We use the profit from sugarcane farming to pay our child's tuition fees," Indri, who has a child studying at PGSD (a program for elementary school teacher training) University of Trunojoyo Madura, said. "We use the rest of the profit for our day-to-day life needs," she added. The decision regarding the priority of using the profit is always made by speaking with her husband. "In our family, there is no such a thing as husband's money or wife's money. What we have is joint money. That's why we have to have an agreement first regarding its use. This also includes things related to sugarcane farming needs where my husband will always talk with me," she said.

For Indri, child's education becomes the top priority with regard to the use of the profits from sugarcane farming. "I don't want my children to be farmers like their parents. I hope they will have better jobs and livelihoods in the future," she hoped. The same thing is also experienced by Maimunah (53). She said that the decision of growing sugarcane and everything related to the use of the profits is decided by her and her husband. "We have to agree with each other. Everything must be done together because this is what a family is about," Maimunah stressed. She also keeps and manages the money. "Every spending has to be clear. And anytime my husband wants to spend the money, he has to ask for my permission. If he doesn't do that, I won't cook for him," she said with a laughter.

Another interesting thing is the fact that most Madurese female farmers use the profits from harvesting sugarcane for their children's future rather than only for consumption. It is true that some of them may also use it for building houses and for daily needs, but they have a really good control on such spending. The purchase of gold cannot be considered as consumptive because they do it as a kind of saving as gold can be sold anytime they need money for their children's tuition fees and other important needs. All of the facts indicate that female farmers in Madura are very smart and rational in terms of spending money. They want their children to have better futures and livelihoods. They do not want their children to be like them who work as farmers who do not always make profits. They all want their children to be smart, have certainties, understand, have brighter future and most importantly not played by fate. From a Marxist gender sociology perspective, the decision-making process in Madurese sugarcane farming underscores the pervasive patriarchal structure that influences the roles and agency of women within the family unit. The decision-making process regarding sugarcane farming predominantly stems from husbands, emphasizing their dominance in initiating ideas and making final decisions, even though there is some level of joint decision-making between husbands and wives. This reflects the entrenched patriarchal norms where men hold the primary authority in public ideas and financial decisions within the family.

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While husbands often decide on the utilization of profits, women, mostly wives, play a crucial role in managing the household finances. They actively participate in the management of money earned from sugarcane farming and other sources. However, their control over this money is often contingent on maintaining an agreement with their husbands. The utilization of profits varies among women, reflecting their diverse priorities. Some prioritize long-term investments such as houses or gold, seen as assets for the family's future security. Others prioritize immediate needs like education expenses for their children, displaying a concern for their offspring's future prospects. The decisions concerning the allocation of profits are generally made jointly by husbands and wives, signifying a level of cooperation. However, the ultimate decision-making authority often lies with the husband, with wives needing their consent for larger financial decisions.

Notably, a significant portion of the profits is dedicated to children's education, indicating a strong desire among women to ensure their children have access to better opportunities and livelihoods beyond agricultural work. This reflects their aspiration for their children to attain higher levels of education and better career prospects. The purchase of gold, often seen as a form of savings, reflects a strategic approach to money management. Women view this as an asset that can be liquidated during emergencies or used for their children's needs, highlighting their foresight and rationality in financial planning. The overarching theme emerges from the narrative, indicating a desire among women to break the cycle of agricultural labour for their children. They aspire for their offspring to attain professions beyond farming, highlighting their aspirations for their children's socio-economic advancement.

The Marxist gender sociology lens highlights the enduring influence of patriarchal structures on decision-making and resource control within Madurese sugarcane farming households. Despite women's active role in financial management, their autonomy remains constrained within the bounds of cultural and gendered norms, where the ultimate decision-making authority largely resides with husbands. However, their strategic financial planning and investment priorities reflect a strong commitment to securing their children's future beyond the limitations of agricultural labour.

VI. ROLES IN HOUSEHOLD CHORES

How good Madurese sugarcane women are, they remain wives for their husbands. They cannot dismiss the fact that they become wives with household-related chores such as preparing food for workers, cooking, cleaning houses, washing, educating children and taking them to school. In addition to domestic work, they also help their husbands work in the field every day. If they have some time left, gossiping is an activity which can alleviate problems and life burdens they face.

The description of household chores Madurese women does above appears in the FGD results in Bangkalan. Saniyah (40) said that her role in the household is cooking. "I do the cooking. My husband works all day long in the field. If I don't cook, he will be very angry," she said. After cooking, Saniyah takes her child to school. "I take my child to school after I do the cooking. After that, I also have to go to the field," she said. "My child usually goes home alone because the school is not far away. My mother is at home and she also takes care of him," she explained.

In their spare time, however, they usually gather together with other female neighbours. "When we are not so busy, we usually gather together gossiping," Saniyah said. "We chat about anything including farming," she added. They usually do such leisure activities after 10 am up to 12 pm. As a wife, Sumaiyyah (25) also does the cooking. "Cooking is an obligatory job. After cooking, I do the washing and cleaning the house," Sumaiyyah, who also retails gasoline at home, said. "After I've done all the domestic jobs, I sell gasoline. As selling gasoline is done at home, it is just like watching over the house," she continued.

Jamilah Aroiqa (35) has a different role from other women. Women with a bachelor degree is busier than women in general. "I also do the cooking, but if I am very busy my husband does the cooking," she said. She also added, "My husband and I support each other. This is because I am also busy working as a civil servant, managing a school and selling sugar and salt. So, whoever is not busy, they will do household jobs," she continued.

The FGD results in Sampang also found the same roles for female farmers as those found in Bangkalan. Saripah (35) described the role she played in her family. "I do the cooking, washing, and cleaning the house," she said. "After the dusk prayers, I also teach my children," she continued. The same role is also played by other women such as Nurul (60). As a wife, Nurul remains a woman who has to be able to cook. "My primary jobs are cooking and cleaning the house," she said. "Those are everyday chores, so it's not a problem at all. The hard thing is that if I have to cook a lot for workers in the field," she continued. She also said that she has to do all the cooking alone because she cannot pay someone else to help her with the cooking. "I don't have money; that's why I have to do it by myself," she stressed.

Musnani (27) said that she divided the jobs with her husband. "We are all busy, so we always do all household works together," she said. "But it is true that I usually do the cooking," she continued. She also explained that her mother helps take care of their children. "My mother is at home, so she also helps me with the household works," she added. However, Musnani also said that there is a division of labour between herself and her husband. "I'm usually responsible for the work inside the house while my husband is responsible for the work outside the house," she said. What she meant by work outside the house includes working together with neighbours such as cleaning the road and ditch as well as other social activities.

Sugarcane women in Pamekasan also play more or less similar roles to those in Bangkalan and Sampang such as sweeping floors, taking care of cows, cooking, bathing children, taking care of children and taking children to school. Fatma (50) said,

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“Sweeping floors and washing clothes are routine. I also do the cooking”. She also admitted that her husband sometimes helps her with the household work. Maimunah (53) does more than just washing clothes and sweeping floors. “Sweeping, washing and cooking are daily obligations. I also have to take care of the cows and cleaning their dirt,” she said. Both Fatma and Maimunah do all the jobs by themselves because they do not have household assistants. “We don’t have enough money to pay household assistants. This is because the profits that we may get from sugarcane farming are only collected once a year,” they said.

From a Marxist gender sociology perspective, the delineation of roles and responsibilities within Madurese sugarcane farming households reveals the ingrained patriarchal structures that govern gendered roles and domestic labour division. The societal expectation for Madurese sugarcane women to primarily engage in domestic chores, such as cooking, cleaning, washing, and child-rearing, underscores the deep-rooted patriarchal norms dictating the allocation of household duties. Women are expected to fulfil these responsibilities as wives within the familial structure. Economic limitations often constrain these women from hiring household assistants, leading them to independently manage all domestic chores. The limited profitability of sugarcane farming restricts their ability to afford additional help, thereby intensifying the burden of domestic labour on women.

While women are predominantly responsible for indoor chores, there are instances where husbands assist with household tasks. However, this aid tends to be intermittent, with women shouldering the bulk of domestic responsibilities. The division of labour, if any, typically aligns with conventional gender roles, distinguishing between "inside" and "outside" tasks. Women find solace and relief from their domestic duties through communal activities like gathering with neighbours for leisurely discussions or gossip. These social interactions provide a temporary escape from the demands of their household chores and offer emotional support. Women not only manage domestic duties but also prioritize their children's education by ensuring their attendance at school. This emphasizes their commitment to their children's future prospects, even amid extensive domestic responsibilities.

Some women, especially those engaged in other forms of employment or business, share household duties with their husbands. However, their roles in domestic labour remain significant, indicating that women balance multiple responsibilities with varying degrees of support from their spouses. The cyclical nature of sugarcane farming and its irregular income collection exacerbate the financial challenges faced by these women, often leading to intensified domestic labour efforts due to the absence of paid help. In the context of social events and invitations, the gendered expectations are apparent, dictating whether husbands or wives attend such gatherings based on perceived norms related to gender roles.

The Marxist gender sociology lens highlights the systemic inequalities perpetuated by entrenched patriarchal norms within Madurese sugarcane farming households. Women's overwhelming engagement in domestic chores, coupled with economic constraints and societal expectations, exemplifies the subjugation of women's agency within familial structures, despite occasional collaborative efforts by spouses. The delineation of roles reinforces traditional gender norms, confining women primarily to domestic responsibilities, while men's involvement in household chores remains limited and sporadic.

VII. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Talking about sugarcane plantation in Madura without involving Madurese sugarcane women is like presenting an incomplete story. Without Madurese sugarcane women, sugarcane will never be as sweet; it will be tasteless indeed. Their existence becomes crucial because of the roles they play right in the house and the field. The roles include cooking for workers in the field, planting sugarcane, watering, taking care and harvesting it.

When they are back home from the field, they still have to sweep floors, clean houses, wash clothes, bathe children and take them to school. If they have cattle at home, they also have to look for grass and feed their cattle. For some Madurese women, the roles do not stop there. For example, they also have to sell gasoline, mobile credits, groceries, truck renting and some also work as government civil servants including schoolteachers.

However, these quite complex roles are often ignored due to the Madurese culture which tends to be masculine and patriarchal in nature. The paradigm that women (wives) belong to men (husbands) has made women considered as second-class citizens. Therefore, all decisions made by women with regard to sugarcane farming, money management and family matters must be agreed by husbands. Negating husbands' permissions would make women as perfidious wives, which are bad according to Madurese values.

It is not surprising if potential that Madurese sugarcane women have is lost under the shadows of men. Women become more powerless because they have to face with cultural and religious interpretations deeply ingrained in Madurese society and in fact considered as acceptable practices in Madura. That is the irony of Madurese sugarcane women: powerful but lost under the power shadows of men. Their extraordinary roles in sugarcane farming and other sectors only turn out to be second success stories behind their husbands'. Indeed, the story of Madurese sugarcane women is a story of bitterness in the ocean of sweet sugarcane in Madura.

Understanding Madurese sugarcane women in the midst of cultural injustice would make empowerment as a solution to some of the problems they may face. Making women more independent, autonomous and skilful become cultural ways of minimalizing the injustice that they have experienced so far. Skills related to money management for establishing women cooperatives and skills in making non-chemical fertilisers as well as handicraft have become their dreams. This, however, is not a short cut which can offer cultural change overnight, but at least economic empowerment and creativity such as these can make women have more self-confidence and self-existence. Consequently, this also helps them have a more bargaining power in Madurese culture in the future.

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In addition, the roles of strategic institutions such as the state (local governments), universities, religious institutions for women, religious boarding schools, PTPN X and donor institutions to keep maintaining their commitments in empowerment and development of Madurese sugarcane women are also crucial. In relation to this, PTPN X as a profit-oriented institution owned by the state that has a direct interest in sugarcane plantation in Madura must have courage by using a braver approach rather than a conservative one. Giving their CSR to Madurese people and Madurese women in particular through a variety of empowerment activities will help accelerate the intention of PTPN X to build sugar factories in Madura. Although working very hard, Madurese sugarcane women also encounter problems in playing their roles in sugarcane farming. Some problems related to the farming industry faced by women can be found in almost three regencies across Madura, i.e. Bangkalan, Sampang and Pamekasan where the FGD was conducted.

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