

Women and Gender Discrimination in the Management of Arabica Coffee Plantations in North Sumatra

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural sector is synonymous with works done by men; however, along with the time passes, more and more women are active working in the agricultural sector although their roles are considered different as that of men in the coffee farming system. This study aims to analyze the role of women in the *adat* society to support the management of Arabica coffee (*Coffea arabica*) plantations in North Sumatra. This is descriptive research with a qualitative approach and uses a survey method. Data collection techniques were carried out by interviews, observation and documentation and used descriptive analysis. The research results show that the majority of women play almost all roles in the agricultural sector to support plantation management and their roles are very important (they bring major positive impacts on developments of Arabica coffee management) since eight out of ten coffee management jobs are dominated by women. Their works have also improved family welfare. However, their roles in the agricultural sector--in terms of coffee management--do not make them get gender equality, both from the wages earned and the results obtained.

Keywords: Agriculture, Coffee management, women's roles

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural sector is one of the dominant sectors in Indonesian economy,^[1] and, so

far, plays strategic roles so that the attention and development should be focused on the agricultural sector by many parties, both the government and the wider communities. Arabica coffee is one of the mainstay products in the agricultural sector in North Sumatra and in the world markets. There is no doubt about the superiority of coffee from North Sumatra; several well-known names of coffee products are Sidikalang, Tarutung, Mandheling, Linthong, and Simalungun coffee.^[2] Seen from production, North Sumatra becomes the largest producer of Arabica coffee in Indonesia, reaching 29 percent.^[3] Several provinces producing Arabica coffee in Indonesia are North Sumatra (29.99%), Aceh (26.96%), South Sumatra (12.96%), West Sumatra (9.27%), NTT (4.19%), and others (17.30%).^[4]

The women's roles in managing coffee plantations are vital, where 70% of works in coffee plants management is mostly done by women who prove that they are independent in the agricultural sector. However, in terms of women's rights in agriculture, they often receive injustice in utilizing agricultural products.^{[5],[6],[7],[8]} Hence, Indonesian government has issued presidential instruction No. 9 of 2000 concerning gender equality in national development.^[9] Strengthening the women's roles in the world can be seen from the international

demands in the Millennium Development Goals which had to be met by 2015, and Indonesia was one of the countries that has participated in declaring the MDGs as part of achieving national progress.^[10] A country that does not respect its women will never become a great country, either now or in the future.^[11] The equality of women's rights in farm business encourages them to be more optimistic in managing their farm business. Good tenure systems will support sustainable agriculture.^{[12],[13],[14],[15]} Therefore, it is important to respect women's roles and functions in the farming system.

In North Sumatra the *adat* role is important, especially in terms of Batak's *dalihan natolu* concept in which customs play their roles in the agricultural business regulation and in the women's positions in the plantations. Batak's women are termed central in the agricultural business; hence, the problem is: what are the women's roles in the *adat*-based plantation management in North Sumatra?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Farm Business

Farm business is a science that studies how a person allocates existing resources appropriately and efficiently with the aim of obtaining large profits in a certain period. Farm business is said to be appropriate and effective if farmers can allocate the resources they have well. To be efficient means to use resources to produce output that exceeds input. Based on the scale of the business, farm business can be grouped into two, namely large-scale and small-scale farm business. Farm business, in a broad or macro scale, generally has large capital, high technology, modern management or is commercial in nature, while small businesses generally have small capital, traditional technology, and are subsistent or only to meet their own needs.^[16]

Farm business is said to be successful if it meets five conditions:

1. Farm business must obtain sufficient income to finance the necessary tools.

2. Farm business must be able to generate income to finance interest in capital used in farming.
3. Farm business is able to provide farmers and their families with decent wages.
4. Farm business must be able to reach the break-even point.
5. Farm business must be able to pay farmers as managers.

According to Bernard^[17] there is a disparity in the division of labour in farm business between men and women. Men contribute 458 hours (47.32%) while women do 510 hours (52.68%). The decision-making process is generally influenced by the dominance of involvement at each stage of the farming system carried out. Access and control over resources (education and health) no longer characterize disparities based on sex, except for access and control over land resources which refers to the number of sons and access to low capital sources.

Gender Theory and Gender Role Concepts

Gender is a character inherent in men and women which is constructed socially and culturally.^[18] Changes in characters and characteristics that occur from time to time and from place to place are called the concept of gender. Furthermore, Santrock^[19] stated that the terms gender and sex have differences in terms of dimensions. The term sex refers to the biological dimensions of a man and a woman, while gender refers to the socio-cultural dimensions of a man and a woman. Gender is a social variable to analyse the differences between men and women related to roles, responsibilities and needs as well as opportunities and obstacles. Because it is formed socially and culturally, gender is not natural or determined by class and race. For example, when they know the sex of the child being born, parents tend to prepare everything for baby according to the sex of the child, for example pink for girls, blue for boys. Since birth, culture has attached it to us that blue is the colour for boys and pink is the colour for girls.

There is different formation of roles between women and men; women are in the home and men outside, as described in the various perspectives:

1. Social construction explains how the initial process of the domestic and public sectors is formed, including
 - a. The externalization process is a value produced by an individual from nothing to something.
 - b. The objectification process, namely existing agreements become social reality or the process of rejection and acceptance so that reality is formed.
 - c. The internalization process comes from the individual himself because he is actually part of the social community.
2. Social reproduction refers to the differences when the domestic and public spheres are actually strengthened through:
 - a. using symbols such as the formation of 'Women's Dharma' which actually strengthens the position of women in the domestic sector and men in the public sector.
 - b. reproduction of women's biological status, for example, women are weak creatures, women are concerned with health, giving birth, women who are menstruating are more emotional so it can harm women in the world of work.
 - c. reproduction of women's cultural status, for example, women are more painstaking and neat so that women are given jobs that do not require high skills. Gender equality has not yet emerged optimally, coupled with the continued patriarchal culture that continues to make women in subordinate groups vulnerable to violence. Here men are in a dominant or superior position compared to women. The assumption that a wife belongs to her husband and that a husband has higher power than other family members, makes men more likely to commit violence.

Adat society

In North Sumatra, the Batakese concept of *dalihan na tolu* is well-known since it arranges customary system which strictly adheres to male to own property ownership (strong patrilineal). This customary system has undergone several changes and there are at least three regencies, like Simalungun, Toba, and Mandailing-Angkola, while Karo and Dairi regencies use the *sulang silima* customary system. Land management of coffee plantation is basically related to these customs. Therefore, understanding the local custom-based coffee plantation management model is important to encourage sustainable management efforts on community lands in North Sumatra. Women or *boru* in the *dalihan na tolu* traditional community are unequally patriarchal due to society's gender construction of women, making it difficult for them to obtain their rights.^{[20],[21]} Therefore, it is necessary to reconstruct the system of control so that women gain equality in a non-exploitative manner.^{[21],[22]}

MATERIALS & METHODS

The research used a descriptive survey method taking samples from one population by questionnaires as data collection tool.^[23] There were five research locations, such as, Karo, Dairi, Humbang Hasundutan, North Tapanuli, and Mandailing Natal regencies in North Sumatera province. The regencies were chosen purposively because they have coffee plantations. All female farmers were included as population and there were 50 female farmers selected as samples. In this study, the variables to be examined included land preparation, planting, maintenance, eradication of plant pests, harvesting, harvest cleaning, and marketing. The data on these variables are analysed using the percentage method and compared with the workload or the number of working hours according to the labour law.

RESULT

Several characteristics of respondents show that there were 4% (two people) aged between 20-30 years, 34% (17 people) aged

between 31-40 years, 38% (19 people) aged between 41-50, 18% (9 people) aged between 51-60 years, and 10% (five people) over 61 years. All respondents were female coffee farmers who had experiences in farming, with an average farming experience of more than five years. Certain land areas have different number of working hours, although the difference is relatively small. Farmers own different sizes of land area, for instance, there were 31 (62%) farmers have 0-1 Ha, 11 (22%) possessing 1.1-2 Ha, and 8 (16%) having more than two Ha. The types of plants cultivated by farmers are coffee plants.

DISCUSSION

The women's roles in the coffee management are often not recognized and, even, not understood, despite their invaluable contribution to the coffee industry. Efforts to empower women in the coffee sector, including education, training, and better access to resources, can help them improve their families and communities and support the sustainability of the coffee industry as a whole. The *adat* women play an important role in coffee management in many agricultural communities, especially in areas where coffee grows naturally. Women's roles in coffee management can vary greatly depend on local culture, traditions, and social context. In North Tapanuli, Simalungun, and Humbang Hasundutan regencies, female coffee farmers have eight out of ten roles in the coffee farming management activities, such as, land preparation, planting seeds, plant maintenance, fruit picking, fruit processing, drying beans, cleaning beans, storage, and distribution; while, two of them are pest and disease control, but seed grinding is carried out by men.

Differences in roles in productive work between husband and wife are caused by cultural values that view women's space as being in the kitchen, so that men are not in their place when participating in this activity. For productive work, the wife does more light work and does not require a lot

of energy. Husbands often feel inappropriate when participating in productive activities. The patriarchal culture in the dominant Batak tribe gives a special place to the husband. Before working on the land, the husband can enjoy a cup of coffee while sitting in a coffee shop. In contrast, his wife, since waking up, has been preoccupied with various household chores to take part in the management of coffee plantations in North Sumatra. The assumption that the husband's degree is higher than the wife makes her only a "servant" for the husband.

Differences in activities cannot be separated from the existence of wrong concepts regarding the definition of women's work. Often, in everyday experience, we find a housewife who states that she "doesn't work". This is in contrast to the fact that in the field, wives mostly work in coffee productive work and are not valued at all by money. The definition of work does not involve what a person does, but concerns what is the background to the work and the assessment society gives to the work. Differences in activities due to natural reasons, such as different biological conditions are of course still acceptable, but differences resulting from socio-cultural constructions need to be reviewed. This research shows that the activities and roles of wives are much greater than those of husbands in managing coffee plantations, where apart from reproductive work, wives also have to take on productive workload.

The gap in household activities is also constructed by culture within the Batak tribe and the concept of housewifery. This concept views the dimensions of women's work as limited to the household sector. This concept has always been held by the community and has been deliberately passed down from generation to generation through various socialization agents, such as family and education. Most respondents understand that men are leaders for women, husbands are leaders for wives. This value develops not only in patriarchal culture in the Batak tribe, causing the assumption that men have a higher degree than women. It is not

surprising that the decision maker in the household is the husband. The wife's involvement in decision making is very limited.

Apart from differences in productive work between husband and wife or men and women, differences also occur in wages in terms of work in the agricultural sector, such as coffee cultivation and management, women are always given lower wages than men's wages for work, even though women can work longer and spend more hours in the field than men, such as land preparation, planting, maintenance, eradicating pests and diseases, planting until harvest, post-harvest such as threshing, harvesting, cleaning the harvest, transporting, sorting the harvest and marketing, but the wages given are still lower for women; this needs to be addressed to achieve gender equality in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

Different activities among husbands and wives can be seen in the dominance of wives in reproductive work and husbands in productive work. Husbands do not involve almost completely in productive works. High level of activity and involvement of wives or women in productive matters is caused by notion that wife is responsible for the agricultural management, but in terms of decision making or policy, husband or man remains play role, due to the lack of recognition of women's abilities and insight. The low level of recognition of gender equality is still not implemented and understood due to the strong paternalist culture (it is still very strongly applied in the society). Differences in activities, access, and wages between husbands and wives exist because of strong patriarchal cultural values.

Declaration by Authors

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