

Conference Paper

The Problems of Women Education in Rimba Tribe and Solutions

Kasful Anwar¹ and Sri Marmoah²¹State Islam University, Sulthan Thaha, Jambi, Indonesia²Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta, Indonesia

Abstract

The exploitation of forest production has caused ecological crisis and undermining social order-economic-community cultural custom and indigenous forest community at Bukit Duabelas National Park (BDNP) Jambi Province Indonesia, well-known as the Rimba tribe. This critical paradigm research using case study approach aims at describing and analyzing the problem of women education of Rimba tribe in BDNP, the empowerment practices of the Rimba women, and finally providing some solutions to deal with education for Rimba women. To gather the data, the researchers occupied in-depth interviews, participatory observation, documentation studies, and field notes that were analyzed by triangulation techniques. Based on the observation and interview, the problems of women education in Rimba tribe were poverty, view of the tribe community, inequality between males and females, ignorance, early marriage, religion, custom, and culture. Therefore, the researchers came up with some solutions to overcome problems in Rimba tribe women education, terminate early marriage, empower the Rimba women, provide equal opportunity for education, change their mindset, provide scholarships, establish government policy for Rimba education, cooperate with private companies, and build a good communication with the leaders of Rimba tribe. Finally, it can be concluded that the government must be serious in designing education policy for Rimba tribe especially for women, and the Rimba tribe leader should understand how planning, organizing, leading, and controlling are applied to achieve purpose of life.

Keywords: problems of women education, Rimba tribe, Jambi Province, solutions

Corresponding Author:

Sri Marmoah

marfuah_pt@yahoo.co.id

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1. Introduction

The existence of the tribes in Indonesia is divided into three groups, namely; nation, minorities, and isolated societies. The Ministry of Social Affairs (1989) defined an isolated society as a group of people who have limited ability to communicate with other people who are more advanced, so that they become an underdeveloped community of economic development, political, socio-cultural, religious, and ideological life.

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Bukit Duabelas National Park (BDNP) in Jambi is a relatively small park, compared to other Indonesia's large national parks. Covering only 60,500 hectares, the park was officially named in year 2000, mainly to grow secondary forests and to protect the housings of forest people known as *Anak Dalam* tribe or Rimba tribe. They are an isolated tribe who have lived in these jungles for years and have continued the simple lifestyle from nature. They live in and around the forest and survive through hunting, gathering, planting, and fishing.

D. Sambangi (2009:47) said that education is a potent tool in the emancipation and empowerment of woman. Based on this statement, education is a tool for empowering women especially in education. Besides that to support for perspective for empowering women in the Hamburg conference, CONFINTEA V (1997) declared 'a women is empowered when she is literate, educated, and has productive skills, has access to capital and self-confidence'.

The fortunate Rimba people at BDNP could go to some schools though in difficult conditions. Rimba girls could enroll in elementary schools close to their settlements, but some problems needed to tackle. 1) geographical factors such far housing which cause a very distance to reach schools and far from transportation, 2) social factor such limitation to interact with outside communities, 3) cultural factor that still hold strong cultural customs that have been inherited from their ancestors, 4) economic factors, children help their parents to hunt, gather, farm, and other activities related to the necessities of life, 5) is a safety factor, their parents are very concerned about the safety of their children, 6) external factor, they are not free to follow education because of many school rules.

Based on the issues outlined earlier, the main question is: what is the issue of women education in Rimba tribe and how to overcome their educational problems. The purpose of this research is to find out the problems of women education in Rimba Tribe and how to solve their educational problems in the district of Bukit Duabelas National Park (BDNP). This article discusses the background to our interest in rural education, analyzing the educational problems of Rimba tribes living in remote areas, and finally providing alternative solutions to the educational problems experienced by the tribe at BDNP.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Women education

Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development, and peace. Non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and this ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. Equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change. ([9], p.1)

Woman education functions as a force multiplier in international development, yielding economic and social returns at the individual, family and societal levels [18]. Education should have a positive effect on women's cognitive skills [17]. Greater cognitive skills, and especially literacy, should benefit maternal health by increasing women's ability to seek information about their own health and by assuring that women are better able to follow written instructions (for example, understanding directions on a box of medication) [1].

The gender and development approach also draws in the impact of a country's socio cultural context. Traditional ideas about the household division of labor signify women as responsible for non-paid care tasks ([3], Lyberaki, 2011) and across the world gendered norms on paid and unpaid labor exist [2].

Rimba women at BDNP is limited to informal education for their children in the family, they just educate their children through family education, starting from the newly born baby until adulthood. Informal education can be grouped into seven sections, namely: household education, social education, economic education, skills education, religious education, cultural and arts education, and health education.

2.2. Rimba tribe

The physical appearance of Rimba tribe is included into the Mongoloid race, the first migration of humans Proton Malay. Generally, their looks are medium height, brown skin, slight-curly hair, thick soles, and specifically for adults Rimbanese they chew betel nut. The everyday appearance of male Rimba people is wearing loincloth (*kan-cut*). Adolescents wearing sarongs attributed to cover their tops for girls, meanwhile adult women with open tops that their breast is coverless. The characteristics of non-physical, the level of intellectual ability of Orang Rimba still low and their personality are generally loud and shy. Although it was still limited, but it has to happen a social interaction with the outsiders (non-Rimba tribe communities). It means that they are

welcome to outsider values and culture more visible. The empowerment of Rimba Women at Bukit Dua Belas National Park did not specifically focus on their need. [11].

3. Methods

The purpose of this study is to analyze the issue of women education in Rimba tribe. The research design was descriptive qualitative research. Nunan (1992:3) stated, qualitative research assumes that all knowledge is relative, that there is a subjective element to all knowledge and research, and holistic, *ungeneralizable* studies are justifiable. To researchers' point of view, an *ungeneralizable* study is one in which the insights and outcomes generated by the research cannot be applied to contexts or situations beyond those in which the data were collected). Meanwhile, Bogdan & Biklen (1982) suggest that qualitative research considers several aspects such as; (1) natural environment as source of data, (2) researcher as key instrument, (3) process as more important aspect than result, (4) inductive data analysis, (5) participants backgrounds to respond to a phenomenon as essential aspect. This research was conducted by in-depth interviews, participatory observation, documentation studies, and field notes which were analyzed by triangulation techniques. The research was carried in the district of Bukit Duabelas National Park, Jambi province which is located in Sumatra Island Indonesia.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The problems of women education in Rimba tribe

The communities of Orang Rimba in Bukit Duabelas National Park are divided into two groups: the first group is a Rimba tribe who lives in the forest without wearing any cloth. This community is more likely to interact with outsiders who are already educated in schools close to their settlements. The second group is a Rimba tribe that lives in the middle of the forest, this group only interact with their fellow tribes who have not had access to education at all.

The tribes live in a group, but the existence of this group is not limited to certain residential areas. They are free to live with the other groups. In fact, it is not easy to change groups because there is the rule of their traditional law. If there is an inter-group marriage, the men (groom) will follow a group of wives (bride). The structures of Rimba tribe organization consists are as follows:

1. *Tumenggung*. The leader of the community.
2. *Wakil Tumenggung*. The vice of the leader, if he is absent for some occasions.
3. *Depati*, the supervisor of *Tumenggung* leadership.
4. *Menti*, to convene people indigenously.
5. *Mangku*. The judgment of decisions in meeting/customary assembly.
6. The tribes' people, pick up the *Tumenggung* to the meeting/customary assembly
7. *Debalang Batin*, the guide of *Tumenggung*
8. *Tengganas/Tengganai*. The highest decision maker in meeting/assembly

The leadership of Rimba tribe is not absolute. Their leader is now selected based on the recommendation of previous leader. If the selected is agreed, the person then can occupy the position of leader and passed through the customary meeting in a ceremony. The position of *Tumenggung* which seemed to have considerable power was still limited by some other positions such as *Tengganas* that able to reverse the decision of *Tumenggung*. This fact shows that the Rimba's people have known the atmosphere of democracy greatly.

When the researchers asked the *Tumenggung* what had happened, he stated:

Orang Rimba who need education are those who settle on the outskirts of the forest and near the villager's settlements. This group of Orang Rimba is known as 'berdiom' that is Orang Rimba who has lived like a resident of the village (the local). Education is useful for them to interact and trade in the sale and purchase of forest products and agricultural products so that they do not feel cheated again by the outside world. The Orang Rimba in this group partially has allowed their children to attend education. Orang Rimba who live in the middle of the forest of Bukit Dua Belas National Park area that do not interact with the outside so they do not need the education. All needs have been fulfilled and available within the forest. Thus, they have no need to interact and trade with the outside, so they do not need reading, writing, and counting.

Besides that, the Vice of *Tumenggung*, added;

The problem Rimba people in BDNP is poverty. In most households, when mothers were forced to provide their families need, it is the girls who must assist their moms. In most female-headed households of Orang Rimba, daughters

are expected to possess similar tasks as their mothers and to provide all the needs of the family.

Using ethnographic research methods and in-depth interviews, Seeberg (2011, 47-48) assesses how these young women value their education and whether their self-expression demonstrates a process of empowerment. Another expert, Shah (2011) examined young women in an Indian residential school, seeks to investigate how empowerment is fostered in the specific setting of the school. She also utilized ethnographic field work, including participant observation and interviews, to establish the link between the education of young women and self-identified feelings of empowerment.

However, the condition of Rimba women in BDNP regency was unfortunately no empowerment that specifically focused on them. This can be seen from some facts in the field, if reviewed from economic aspect, Rimba's women were still in the poverty. It could be seen that many Rimba women mainly searching for the seeds palm to meet the needs of their life. From social aspect, they are still closely attached to their limited group only. It can be seen from the difficulty of people outside to communicate directly, such as taking pictures, and other types of communication. From cultural aspect, they still strongly protected their custom and culture that it is difficult to accept the influence of the outside. From health aspect, the health level of Rimba women in average is low, this can be seen from the life style clean in the dress, keep the body health, the high number of deaths during childbirth, and the illness. Reviewed from the aspect of education, there are still a lot of Rimba women who are illiterate, unable to read, to write, and to count. The fact is that many young Rimba girls did not go to school.

Murphy-Graham and Lloyd (2016, 561) argue that the attainment of these competencies for empowerment revolve around a set of necessary conditions: (1) the setting must be 'physically, materially, and socioculturally conducive to learning'; (2) the nurturing of girls' dignity and equality; and (3) education 'requires action, or learning by doing'. Murphy-Graham (2012, 3) mentioned an additional perspective on empowerment, it must embody recognition and action. Empowered individuals come to recognize their inherent worth, the fundamental equality of all human beings, and their ability to contribute to personal and social betterment. They develop the capacity to critically examine their lives and broader society and to take action toward personal and social transformation. Lloyd (2013, 7) notes that this 'conception of empowerment demands even more of education than is typical' and that 'many who voice a desire

to see education become more “relevant” hold similar views. Recognition of self-worth is analogous to the concept of dignity that Rowlands (1998, 24) argues is a core dimension of empowerment.

About Rimba’s women, one of Rimba people was reported as saying:

The life of the Rimba’s women tends to be closed and very rarely revealed out of their community. They are members of the community who are appreciated that they must be protective from various lives from outside their community. Based on their views, the outsider life their community represents a lot of life with illness. So they must keep the distance from outside world and people.

Based on the interview, most Rimba women didn’t have role in an education sector, even in health sector. It can be observed from some conditions. First, Rimba women in psychology are more cautious, they hide their face when they are speaking with the other people outside Rimba community, even sometimes they run away if they meet someone from the outside of Rimba. Second, Rimba women in social are still afraid to have some interaction, they feel uncomfortable when they have interaction with other people from the outside considering the rule that talking with someone from the outside the Rimba is prohibited. Third, Rimba women in economic sector are not independent yet. They are still poor and hand over their life to the man in their area. Fourth, in political they are still subordinate, and they cannot make the decision themselves. The specific characteristic of Rimba Women is summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1: The characteristics of Rimba women.

Aspects	Evidence
Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feel cautious - feel inferior, - unconfident, - hiding their face, - reluctant when they meet someone from the outside.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feels unsecure, - restricted in their society, - prohibited to interact with outsiders
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dependent on the males - poor
Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have no power to make any decision

Based on the aforementioned description, the researchers withdraw some problems of women education in Rimba tribe. First, about poverty, Rimba tribe families which many children usually do not have the means to send all their children to school. They would not send their female children to school that they become uneducated. Second, view of the tribe community. Rimba tribe disregarded education for especially women.

Only few of Rimba women who received but most of their community still rejected education. Third, inequity that Rimba tribe makes huge discrimination between males and females. With a secondary status, women play but a submissive role in social life. Forth, many of Rimba members live in ignorance of the fact that education is very important for women. They assume that Rimba girls do not need to be educated. Fifth problem is early marriage. All of Rimba girls were arranged to get married soon because of their custom and culture. Sixth is religion. Rimba tribe have strong rules of inner custom, animist beliefs, traditional ways of thinking, and closed from the outsides. Seventh is customs. Customary rules that prohibit children for learning, such as taboo. The last, nomadic culture. *Melangun* is habit of Orang Rimba move from one place to other places when one of their family member is death.

4.2. Solutions for women education in Rimba tribe

Lloyd and Young (2009, 39–40) find that the advantages of furthering a young woman's education often come after she completes her schooling and starts her own family

through safer health and hygiene practices, more time and resources for children's health and education, more exposure to information that can be used to support children in various ways, better child nutrition, the use of contraceptives leading to smaller family size, improved household incomes through greater labor force participation and earnings, greater bargaining power within the household, and greater ability to act on preferences for investment in children.

These benefits are critically important from a development perspective as social and economic advancement will come from a better educated, healthier, and more equal society.

Meanwhile, Murphy Graham and Lloyd (2016, 563) recognize that the competencies 'overlap and are dicult to disentangle'. The first competency, which following Lloyd (2013, 8), we simply denote as core; this includes knowledge acquisition that one would expect a student to learn in school reading, writing, and arithmetic. This is modified to incorporate critical thinking because as Murphy-Graham and Lloyd (2016, 563) reason "thinking critically is key to the empowerment process because this competency will enable girls and boys to analyze gender relations and critique social norms that lead to exclusion." The second competency, personal, includes "self-awareness, self-care, and personal development," and most importantly, for young women to "reflect on their raison, the purpose of their existence," with an expectation that they will recognize

their “potential to positively contribute to society”. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (DUHAM), about Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, state that:

Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International human rights law.

Referring on the finding from the depth interview, the researchers can come up with some solutions to deal with the problems of women education in Rimba tribe. Firstly, increasing the role of Rimba women in the informal education such in the household educations; introducing the household equipment, making a better food, managing the house, taking care of the siblings, and educating in how to well-behave at home. Secondly, the social educations are including as follows; how they should communicate with the other Rimba tribe and the outside people, how they should teach the other Rimba tribe about interacting with their peer, how they should behave with older person such as brother or sister, how they should behave with non-similar gender, and how they should respect to elders or “*tua tengganai*” in Rimba tribe. For the girls, they are also taught how they should behave carefully to the outside people when they visit outsiders. Thirdly, the economic educations are including as follows; education which is connected with livelihood, such as how to hunt, how to seek fish in the river, resin in the forest, how to get some fruits, how to farm, how to tap in the garden, how to mix, and another activity which is connected with daily activity. Rimba tribes life is hard because the men’s jobs is also executed by women. Fourthly, the skill educations are including as follows; how they plait a mat, how they make “*ambung*” (the place of tobacco, filter, household tools storage like plates, cup, pan, crops, and fruits). And how they make the simple equipment which is made by rattan or resin. Fifthly, the religious educations are including as follows; learning the charms for protecting safety and health in order they will be always protected by Gods when they are doing their daily activity. Sixthly, the art and culture educations are including as follows; learning about reciting poems, learning about singing, learning about dancing, and learning about defending themselves which is connected with Rimba tribes in art and culture. Seventhly, the health educations are including as follows; how they cleanse their body, their clothes, their house, and their yard, how they mix the traditional remedies which is taken from roots and plants in the forest.

Meanwhile, Dubalang stated:

In the "seloka" or customary laws of the Rimba tribe, women are regarded as "raja nang ditakutko and raja nang dikemaluko" "Raja nang ditakutko" is other people's wife. In this case the women forbidden to speak or walk alone in a quiet place or at home without her husband. "Raja nang dikemaluko" is embarrassed girls, its mean that individuals of the jungle, especially men should be ashamed and keep the self-esteem of girls, men should protect the women. Rimba women are strongly protected from outside influences to maintain and preserve the cultural customs of the jungle.

Strategic management of education at the Department of Education in district of Sarolangun and Batanghari, the regions which where the BDNP is located, mentioned its management for Rimba people education which covers planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling of education. The head of department of education declared,

Educational planning includes human resources such as: head master, teachers, and students. The resource of facilities includes construction and infrastructure. Organizing education includes the recruitment and placement of head master and teachers for rural school. Controlling education conducted by the supervisor of schools in the district education office and head master. However, condition in implementation education for children reality should be integrated with the nearest elementary school. Department of Education will provide stimulus to the children who attend school in nearest elementary school such as: stationeries, school bags, school uniforms, and tuition fee.

Based on the aforementioned description, it can be concluded that the solutions for problems of women education in Rimba tribe are various. First, end the early marriage for young Rimba women. Early marriages should be stopped so as to allow Rimba girls to go to school and become educated. The second solution is empowering Rimba women through psychology, economic, politic, and social. Third, equality between males and females Rimba. There should be no restrictions when it comes to Rimba girls education. They should be seen as having equal right to education as the Rimba boys. Fourth, change the mindset of Rimba tribe. They should be made to understand that Rimba girls education is not an evil, and is as important as educating the Rimba boys. Fifth, provide scholarships from government to Rimba girls especially those who have high motivation to pursue education. Sixth, gender equality; the feeling of gender equality begins from Rimba tribe families. Their families should be treat their children equally boy or a girl. Seventh, designing such policy; the government should be serious

on designing education policy for Rimba tribe especially for the women. Eight, cooperate with private companies, in this case the company in the Bukit Duabelas National Park area. Ninth, cooperate with the leaders, in this case such as: *Temenggung*, Vice of *Temenggung*, *Depati*, *Mangku*, *Dubalang Batin*, *Menti*, *Jenang* and *Tengganai*. They should be together to cooperate in educational management for Rimba girls.

5. Conclusions

The lack of access to education and personnel on education services, lack of promotion to right to education and lack of protection to the rights of children and youth belongs to Rimba tribe resulted in major education problems in BDNP, Jambi province. The education problems such as: poverty, view of the tribe community, inequity, ignorance, early marriage, religion, custom, and culture are generated by living in poor condition. The bad infrastructure and lack of access to the remote areas and villages are also the main problems that lead children and youth cannot reach public education and education services.

The solutions from problems of women education in Rimba tribe, such as: end to early marriage, empowerment of Rimba women, equity of education, change their mindset, scholarships, gender equality, government policy of education, value sharing with private companies, and cooperate with the leaders of Rimba tribe. Also, the researchers recommend some suggestions which may speed up the achievement of the solutions. First, in order to improve the empowerment Rimba women, the Department of Education of Jambi Province and the district of Sarolangun and Batanghari must assist the application of the policy of education for Rimba women. Second, there must be such policy which states that it is compulsory to take education process for both males and females Rimba members. Third, the community especially Jambinese living close to BDNP (outsiders) is expected to be able to play an active role in providing input and support. In this case, the community is required to cooperate with the department of education and the related institutions in improving the empowering women. Some actions as be kind to Rimba people, initiate the talks when meeting them anywhere, and show them that outsiders are caring and nice are worth-trying actions.

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