

Conference Paper

The Role of Papuan Women Trader in Increasing Family Income in Traditional Market of West Papua Province

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Abstract

The aim of the research is to determine the role of Papuan women in raising family income in the traditional market. This research was conducted in traditional markets in West Papua Province with 100 Papuan women as the object of the research. The data was collected using a depth interview and direct observation in some social economic activities at the sites. Afterward, the data were analyzed using qualitative methods with case study approach outlined thematically. The result of the research has shown that the role of Papuan women as traders is extremely crucial in raising the level of family income. Their involvement in economic activities in an informal sector (trading) is largely motivated by family economic necessities, wanting to help their husband, paying children's tuition, a limited and inconsistent employment and income of their husband, the number of dependents in the family, and a limited level of education and skill.

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1. Introduction

Since the ancient time the roles of women have become an important part and a driving force in groups and family life. An improvement in the mindset of today's modern society brings about changes in the role of women in the workforce. Like men, women enter the workforce to support the economy of their family. Limited jobs available in the formal sector have encouraged women to go to work in the informal sector. Working in the informal sector is considered attractive as it gives them an opportunity to earn income without being too attached to the job structure. One type of work most women can do in informal sector is to be a traditional trader and this group of traders can be found in many traditional markets across cities and villages.

Trading is the main option for women since a high educational background and special skills are not necessary for them to have. Also, in the formal sectors, working hours are relatively flexible to allow them do other activities. Moreover, to be able to do trading does not require a large capital and can be done by anyone including women. In the last few years, traditional markets have been increasing in West Papua. Along with the population growth, the role of traditional market as a food and household purveyor becomes very important. Despite this need, there are only a small number

of shopping centers existing in West Papua Province; therefore traditional markets become an important alternative. However, what we see in traditional markets in West Papua province is an irony since most Papuan women traders who are engaged in the trading activities conduct their business on the street. Papuan women traders sell their own crops, such as fruits and vegetables; therefore the variety of the commodity sold is limited compared to other women traders with a stronger capital support. This gap is due to the uneven assistance from the government that provide less capital and trainings to Papuan women traders that make their productivity and skills as traders quite limited. Support from the trader's family is not less important since it can affect their mental status and productivity, which leads to their ability to produce income through trading.

This study is motivated by the uniqueness of Papuan women traders. This study aims to determine the role of Papuan women traders in improving family incomes. Secondly, the study wishes to identify any constraint and obstacle faced by Papuan women traders, and thirdly, to propose an alternative and policy suggestion that needs to be done in order to increase the income of Papuan women traders.

2. Methods

In the family, women play a role as a mother who takes parts to meet family needs in improving family welfare. The role of women in the household is even larger in decision-making processes in the household, especially for the working wife (Nourma 2012). Female labor migration should be reduced so that the women could still play a role in reproductive activities related to childcare and other household management (Widodo, 2009). Workingwomen also contribute in helping their husband to meet family needs, such as daily needs for school and of social nature (Haryanto 2008). Women become street traders to earn income for their families (Hastuti & Suparmini, 2003).

This research was conducted at Pasar Wosi and Pasar Sanggeng in Manokwari regency, Pasar Sentral Tumburuni in Fakfak, Pasar Boswesen in the city of Sorong, and Pasar Baru in Kaimana District, with the research subjects were Papuan women traders. Respondents consisted of 100 women or 25 respondents from each district/city. They are intentionally selected based on a consideration that they have been working as a women trader in the market less than 3 years and work in the market at least three hours per day. Data was collected through depth interviews and a direct observation in the sites. Data were analyzed using qualitative methods with a case study approach. Results of the interviews were analyzed schematically in sub-themes and categories. The qualitative research design used in this study is below.

3. Results

Today, the role of women in helping the family's economy is increasingly important. One of the Papuan women's roles in helping the family's economy is through trade activities in traditional markets. Marital status may indicate the existence and one's

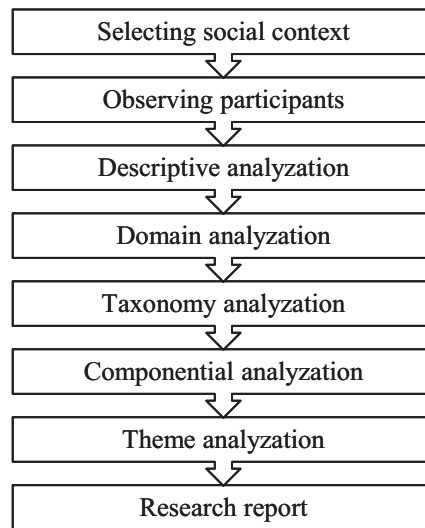


Figure 1: Research design.

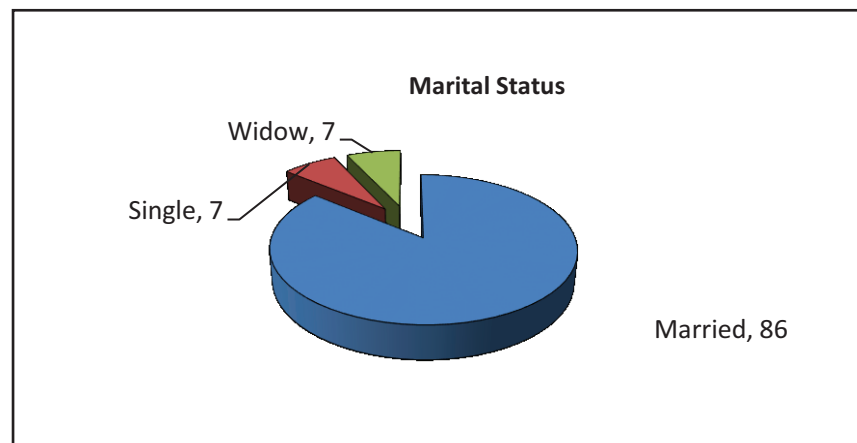


Figure 2: Marital Status of Respondents.

responsibilities to her family in a household. Figure 2 shows that 86 percent of the respondents are married.

Age is calculated from a person’s age from birth to the present, which can be used as an indicator of the level of life experience, maturity and productivity. Figure 3 shows that 86 percent of respondents are in the productive age. The productive age group is physically able to perform routine activities including choosing to help ease the economic burden of the family which has been the responsibility of the husband, through informal micro enterprises and or trade. Respondents who are at the non-productive age category (less than 15 years and more than 59 years) are 14 respondents with respondents of over 59 years old or older are ten and respondents of less than 15 years are four people.

Most people who have a higher education level will have a greater insight and awareness of the importance of productivity, which will encourage them to do relevant productive action. Figure 4 shows the qualification of respondents by education level. 54 percent of the respondents have primary school level education, 17 percent of junior

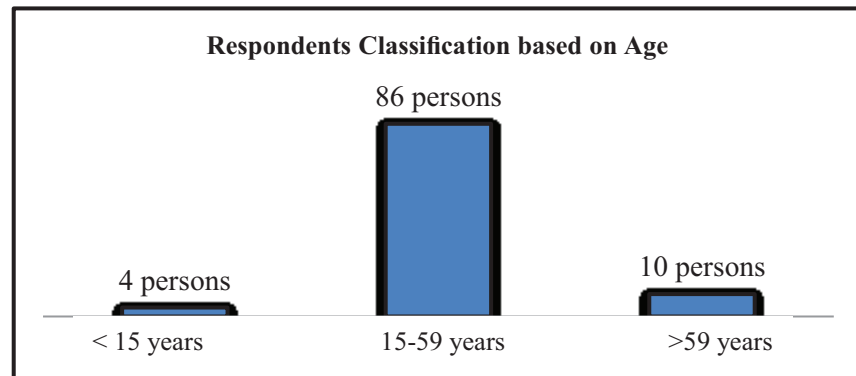


Figure 3: Classification of Respondents by Age.

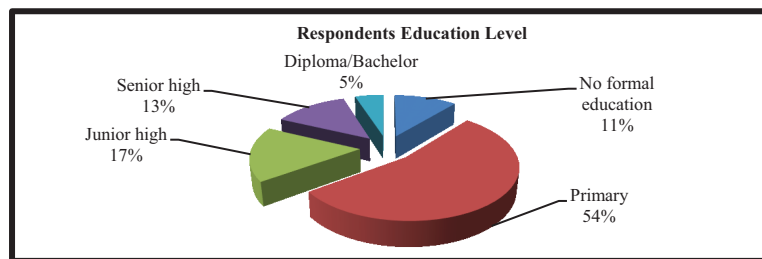


Figure 4: Level of Education Respondents.

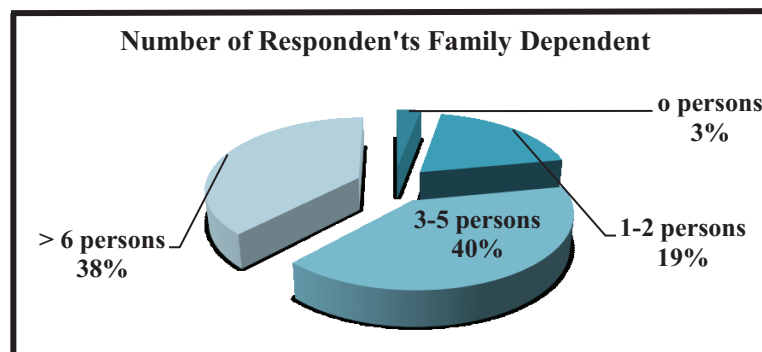


Figure 5: Classification of Respondents by Number of Dependents.

high school, 13 percent of senior high school, 11 percent of informal education, and 5 percent of respondents have a diploma/bachelor degree.

The number of dependents indicates the family financial needs. The more dependents they have, the greater costs required to meet their needs. Figure 5 shows 40 percent of the number of dependents in the family of respondents are dominated by 3-5 dependents, 38 percent consist of more than 6 dependents, 19 percent consist of 1-2 dependents, and 3 percent of respondents who do not have dependents in the family. Therefore, the number of dependents motivates women to do trading in informal sectors. This also shows their contribution to help their husband to fulfill family needs.

The main types of commodities traded by Papuan women traders include vegetables, potatoes, fruits, spices, and prepared foods. Figure 6 shows that 37 percent of the respondents sell sweet potatoes as their trade commodity, 34 percent sell

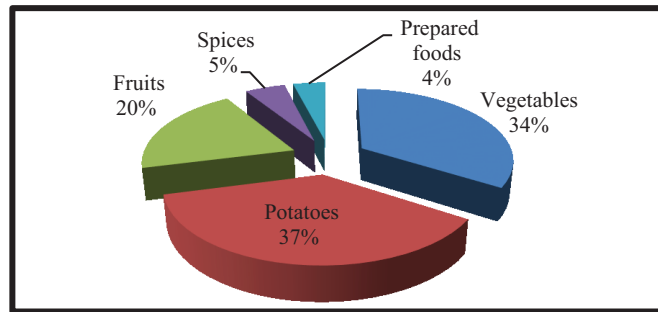


Figure 6: Respondents by Merchandise.

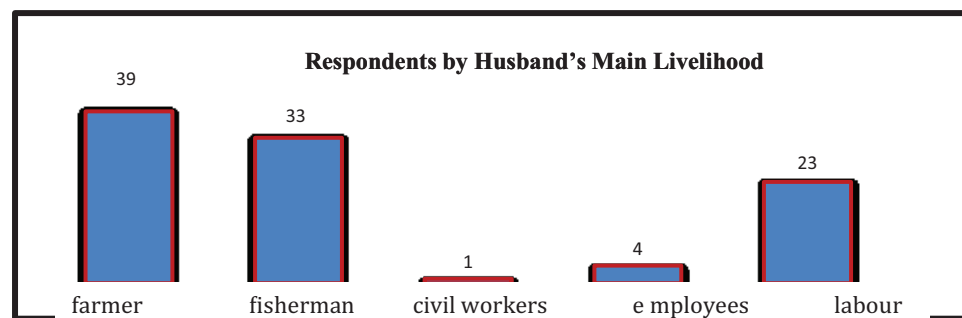


Figure 7: Classification of Respondents by Husband's Main Livelihood.

vegetables, 20 percent sells fruits, 5 percent sells spices, and 4 percent sells prepared food.

Livelihood is human activity to earn a decent living standard. Based on that nature, the livelihood is classified into 2 (two), which are primary livelihood and peripheral livelihood. Primary livelihood can be defined as all everyday activity using existing resources in order to meet their daily needs. While, the peripheral livelihood can be a livelihood other than the primary livelihood. In this study, respondent's husband livelihood is grouped by types of occupation in the research area. In Figure 7 above, it is clear that there are 39 percent of respondents whose husbands are farmers, followed by 33 percent of fishermen, 23 percent as laborers (building and port), 4 percent as private employees, and 1 percent as civil workers.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Role of Papuan Women Traders to Help Increase Family Income

The role of Papuan Women as traders is very crucial in increasing the family income. The involvement of Papuan women in economic activities in informal sector (trading) is largely motivated by family's economic necessities, wanting to help their husband, children's tuition, the limited and inconsistent employment and income of their husband, the number of dependents in the family, and the limited level of education and skill. Financial support given from trader's husband who has limited income is mostly

inconsistent, therefore, women must work in order to help fulfill family needs. The low level of education and limited skills also make them choose jobs in trade sectors.

Agricultural commodities still dominate economic activities of Papuan women. Agricultural commodities include vegetables, fruits, various kinds of potatoes, spices and prepared foods. Commodities are obtained directly from their crops, but a lot of them obtain it through commodity-producing farmers. Despite this, the competition in selling those kinds of commodities is less difficult compared to the competition in selling other kinds of commodities.

Capital is an important element in doing business. Capital covers equity capital and loan capital. Equity capital is a capital that is produced alone or an internal capital in the form of crops that will be used as trade goods in the market. Capital loans are capitals in the form of loan given by credit cooperatives.

For Papuan women traders, they use a simple management based on the experience of being a trader. They tend to manage their business by separating income from capital and income from profits. The business opportunity to become traders in traditional markets for Papuan women is widely open. It requires seriousness and passion in doing it, but it has a very promising prospect. The income earned by Papuan women traders each day ranges between 101,000 rupiah (about US\$7) up to 300,000 rupiah (about US\$21).

The result of the study also shows that the profit earned from trading is not used to increase their capital business, since it is used to fulfill family needs, such as children's tuition and so forth. Therefore, it is clear that the orientation of business continuity is still not a priority for Papuan women traders.

4.2. The Obstacles Faced by Papuan Women Traders in Pursuing their Business and/or Profession

Informal micro-enterprises are an option of occupation for Papuan women traders to be able to do a double role in the family. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that there are many problems and obstacles that they encounter. Those obstacles are classified into 2 (two). Firstly, those that relate to business techniques, secondly, structural political aspects.

In the technical issues of the business, Papuan women traders face the same obstacles as other informal micro business owners in general, which are the lack of capital, lack of mastery of business management and lack of technical production skills. The structural political aspects are the variety of rules that are not conducive to women's business development, such as that the policies are not gender sensitive. Banks and other institutions tend to emphasize the head of family as the beneficiary to receive credit services and other business programs. Other than that, the access to get help through a financial institution is no less difficult.

4.3. Efforts Need to Be Done in Order to Increase The income of Papuan Women Traders in Traditional Markets

Papuan women's involvement in helping families to increase the scope of domestic economy through informal micro-enterprises has clearly made a positive contribution, but various problems faced cannot be separated during our analyses here. Therefore, if possible efforts can be made by parties that directly and indirectly have an interest in empowering women. There is an obvious need in the form of affirmative action in economic policies, also the establishment of Micro Finance Institution (MFIs) that can resolve the lack of capital faced by Papuan women traders.

It is clear that the obstacles faced limit Papuan women traders to develop themselves into an independent business actor. On the other hand it must be recognized that their activities have a tremendous potential within the scope of the household economy. Therefore, it is time for the central and local governments to change their gender-biased policies. Special efforts are needed to reach out Papuan women who generally have a lower educational background, which also has been limiting their creativity and knowledge. Programs and activities designed need to focus on the development of human resource capacity, including knowledge and business management skills, developing self-confidence and their expectations about what is to be achieved from pursuing the profession.

Furthermore, capital-related issues that are often found during field studies and from information obtained through several sources have shown that there is capital provided by various financial institutions. However, financial institutions are not yet fully able to serve groups of informal micro enterprises with a variety of technical reasons, such as the procedures and requirements of banks and so forth. Meanwhile Papuan women traders require venture capital in order to remain present and persist with their economic activities. Some of the women choose to use a high interest loan from 'informal lenders', which leads them to use most of their income from trading to pay it back.

Due to the difficulties in gaining access to capital through banks and the marginalized position of the women, the local government therefore, needs to provide financing through the relevant technical offices for dedicated Papuan woman in various business types. At the same time, they need to continually mentor these women until they become independent in their business. Several reasons why women need to be the focus of the provision of financing and mentoring are because: (1) in general, women are more trustworthy and responsible in managing money or loans, (2) women face a major difficulty in obtaining access to capital through financial institutions such as banks, (3) women tend to be oriented to family welfare, (4) women diligently attend guidance and counseling efforts.

The provision of financing mechanisms can be done through the formation of formal financial institutions other than banks, namely in the form of Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) that can resolve the problem of capital from Papuan women groups. Moreover, in order to achieve the expected goals there needs to be a cooperation between the

local government and banks, universities, and NGOs who are competent to prepare and design the mechanisms, procedures and regulations of the program.

5. Conclusion

The role of Papuan women as traders is crucial in increasing family income. The involvement of Papuan women in economic activities in the informal sector (trading) is driven by economic needs of the family, wanting to help their husbands, children's tuition, a limited and inconsistent employment and income of their husband, a number of dependents in the family, and a limited level of education and skill. The obstacles faced by the Papuan women as traders are business techniques and structural political aspects. There needs to be an affirmative action in economic policies, programs and activities that are designed to focus on the development of human resource capacity of Papuan women as a trader. The local government therefore, needs to provide financing through relevant technical offices for dedicated Papuan woman.

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