

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF HOUSEWIVES IN THE RURAL SETTINGS

2.1 INEQUALITY HOUSEWIVES FACE IN THE RURAL SETTINGS

In rural areas, housewives encounter substantial inequalities in their daily lives, impacting their economic and social well-being profoundly. These disparities stem from a complex interplay of social, economic, and cultural factors that disempower women and hinder their economic progress. A primary concern is the disproportionate employment of women in low-quality, poorly protected jobs. Many women, often unpaid family members, experience reduced labor income, heightened stress, and fatigue. Moreover, in numerous rural regions, the local informal job market is disorganized and underdeveloped, depriving women of income sources and markets for their products. This lack of employment opportunities exacerbates poverty among women, denying them the chance to earn a livelihood (“Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in the National Development of Indonesia,” 2020).

Gender imbalances also contribute significantly to perpetuating poverty among rural women. With husbands typically serving as primary breadwinners, women are left responsible for the household's economic welfare. This situation is worsened by unequal access to economic resources between men and women, resulting in a feminization of poverty. Social institutions and customs further marginalize rural women by constraining their activities and impeding their ability to compete equally with men. These norms, including the expectation for women to focus on domestic work and limitations on property and inheritance rights, reinforce gender disparities (“Gender and Economic Reform,” 2002).

The global economic crisis has exacerbated the burden of unpaid work for rural women, particularly in low-income households, and increased their likelihood of being offered precarious employment with poor prospects. Consequently, both women's and their children's health may suffer. Addressing these inequalities requires revising policy frameworks to enable greater female participation in economic activities. Rapid investment in physical and social infrastructure, alongside fostering stable microeconomic sector development and repealing legislation restricting women's access to economic resources, are essential steps toward promoting gender equality in rural areas (Horn, 2010).

Moreover, housewives residing in rural areas frequently encounter a multitude of inequalities that significantly impact their lives and overall well-being. These disparities stem from various factors, including socio-economic gaps, entrenched gender roles, and cultural norms. A notable issue revolves around the unequal distribution of resources and wealth within rural communities. Land ownership, for instance, often remains concentrated among higher caste groups, resulting in limited access to resources for other segments of the population. This historical pattern of land distribution continues to contribute to wealth disparities in rural regions, reflecting legacies from colonial eras or even earlier periods (Indolabourdatabase, 2024).

Gender roles also exert a significant influence on the inequalities experienced by rural housewives. Women are typically assigned roles centred around reproductive and domestic tasks, constraining their opportunities for education and economic empowerment. This dynamic often leads to a lack of autonomy and decision-making authority within households, further perpetuating inequalities. Additionally, the capability approach, which emphasizes individual freedoms and social development, underscores the importance of acknowledging the interconnected dimensions of capabilities within households. Domestic power dynamics frequently exacerbate inequalities and shape opportunities for achieving well-being among household members (Ali et al., 2011).

In summary, rural housewives contend with a complex array of inequalities that impede their access to resources, education, and decision-making autonomy. Addressing these disparities necessitates a comprehensive approach that considers the interplay of socio-economic divides, gender roles, and cultural norms.

2.2 THE ROLE OF HOUSEWIVES WHOM ARE ALSO *BURUH TANI* (FARM WORKERS)

The role of housewives as agricultural laborers is crucial in sustaining the economic livelihood of farming families. Housewives working as agricultural laborers contribute to fulfilling daily needs and aspire to attain a decent standard of living. This is because husbands' incomes typically constitute a significant portion of the family's earnings, and housewives can earn additional income by working as agricultural laborers on others' farmland. A housewife can also enter the public sphere as an agricultural labourer, thereby not limiting her work to domestic or household chores alone (Sabar, Rahim, & Bato, 2023).

Housewives who work as agricultural laborers can assist their husbands providing for the family by working on other people's farmland. Additionally, they can contribute to meeting the family's economic needs. Thus, with wives working as agricultural laborers, women laborers also become the backbone of their families in fulfilling their economic requirements. The role of female agricultural laborers in family economics helps meet daily living expenses, prompting these housewives to work outside the home as agricultural laborers. They can also assist husbands with limited incomes, thus enabling them to contribute to meeting the family's economic needs. To elaborate more on the roles of housewives whom are also farm workers, the writer would also like to explain the inequality that these women also face (Rantika & Ernawati, 2023).

2.1.1 LACK OF EDUCATION

Rural housewives who work as agricultural laborers often face significant challenges stemming from their low educational backgrounds. This educational deficiency not only impacts their ability to gather crucial information about market dynamics but also presents various hurdles in their daily lives (Lewis & Witoelar, 2021). One of the primary challenges faced by homemakers engaged in farming with limited education is time management difficulties. Without the necessary educational foundation, they may struggle to effectively organize their time, balancing household chores with their work responsibilities in the fields (Hanum, 2017).

The lack of education can impede skill development among these farmers, hindering their capacity to enhance productivity and the quality of their work. Without access to proper education, they may encounter difficulties in acquiring the necessary expertise and knowledge for successful agricultural practices. Furthermore, the educational deficiency may limit their skillset, affecting their proficiency in executing both household tasks and work assignments on the farm. This constraint not only impacts their individual performance but also hampers the overall productivity of their agricultural activities. (Hanum, 2017).

The absence of education poses obstacles in the development of essential communication skills for managing both household affairs and work-related interactions. Effective communication is vital for coordinating tasks, resolving conflicts, and fostering cooperation, but without proper education, rural housewives may struggle in this regard. Additionally, the lack of education may impede the acquisition of experiential knowledge crucial for agriculture. Practical experience and hands-on learning play a significant role in mastering agricultural techniques and adapting to changing environmental conditions, but without educational support, homemakers may face setbacks in this aspect.

To address these multifaceted challenges, it is imperative for governments and educational institutions to recognize the pivotal role of farmers in society and develop tailored educational programs. These programs should not only focus on imparting agricultural skills but also emphasize the development of communication abilities and experiential learning necessary for effective household and work management. By investing in education tailored to the needs of

rural housewives engaged in agriculture, we can empower them to overcome barriers, enhance their productivity, and contribute to sustainable rural development.

2.1.2 LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Rural areas lack comprehensive infrastructure, including poor roads, poor electricity connections, and poor transport links, limiting women's opportunities to collect raw materials and establish businesses (Ramani and Hirschman, 2022). Lack of infrastructure in rural areas can cause problems for village women who work as agricultural labourers. Without proper infrastructure, many challenges arise that disrupt daily activities and life as a whole. Firstly, due to the lack of adequate roads and bridges, it is difficult for agricultural workers to transport agricultural produce to markets or processing areas (Alobo Loison, 2015). These restrictions not only limit your ability to sell your products, but also affect your income and financial stability.

In addition, the lack of infrastructure, such as the lack of drinking water facilities and public goods, hinders access to basic services (Bangser, 2022). Housewives may have difficulty obtaining basic necessities such as drinking water or access to health care, affecting their health and that of their families. In addition, the lack of road infrastructure hinders the access of agricultural workers to essential services such as education, health and financial support (Buvinic et al., 2020). These restrictions do not affect personal development, but hinder the ability to improve the economic situation. In addition, the lack of information structures represents a barrier to accessing the information needed to improve productivity and work quality (Misaki et al., 2018).

Without adequate means of communication, farm workers may have difficulty receiving information about market conditions, price information, and new agricultural technologies. Finally, the lack of road infrastructure hinders market access, reducing opportunities for agricultural workers to sell their products and earn a living (IFAD, 2021). These restrictions exacerbate their financial problems and contribute to their economic vulnerability.

2.1.3 WAGE GAP

The wage gap, which refers to the difference in income or wages between women who work in agriculture, is a major problem that is influenced by various factors such as the type of work, type of work and other economic factors (Amo-Ado et al 2022). Income inequality has a negative impact on the lives of these people, especially in rural areas. There are several key factors that contribute to this price. First, human capital plays an important role. Female entrepreneurs often struggle to find increasingly better-paying jobs due to their limited education and work experience (Tzioumis, 2018). Second, gender discrimination deepens the wage gap. Women farmers face problems related to their income, including patriarchal norms related to crops and differences in treatment between male and female farmers (Raghunathan et al., 2022). The division of labor and wage structures in the agricultural sector perpetuate wage differentials. Free labor systems with unfair or inefficient wage rates and insufficient leave, vacation or sick leave requirements contribute to the income gap among women agricultural workers (FAO, 2021).

In addition, the lack of infrastructure in rural areas is a barrier for housewives engaged in agriculture to access markets and sell their produce effectively (Smye and Lam, 2021). The lack of opportunity widens the cost gap.

2.1.4 INVOLVEMENT IN AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT HOUSEWIVES

Women engaged in agricultural activities face significant challenges in assuming agricultural management responsibilities. These challenges stem from gender norms that force women to focus on domestic work and support their husbands in overseeing agricultural work (Kabeer, 2020). As a result, women are often absent from decision-making and have limited access to leadership positions in the agricultural sector (Bikkina et al., 2022). In farm households, women often contribute to family income through off-farm work, which provides some form of financial security associated with farm enterprises. However, despite their economic contributions, women

are often excluded from farm management due to cultural and social norms that emphasize male leadership and dominance (Peterman et al., 2014).

Women working in agriculture face a variety of barriers, including limited access to education, land ownership, financial resources and infrastructure. These barriers limit their ability to participate in farm management and influence agricultural decisions (Akter et al., 2017). In addition, discriminatory attitudes towards women who receive financial support for agricultural enterprises prevent them from playing leadership roles (Quisumbing et al., 2022).