

# The Husbands-Wives Relation Model of Long Distance Marriage Farmer Households

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## Abstract

Somah orientation within family institutions shows that a father serves as the head of a family and a main worker of the family living together with his nuclear family has changed. The changes are not only in economic-social aspects, but also cultural aspects. The change occurs as a consequence of Long Distance Marriage (LDM) carried out by farmer families to meet their life needs. The study focused on the relationship model between husbands and wives in the farmer families whose husbands work in the city temporarily. The study shows that keeping husbands out of the village does not change much of the construction of patriarchal culture and the ideology of familialism in Tanggulangin community. The construction of the role of men and women in the LDM farmer families still exhibits the strong influence of patriarchal culture and familialism ideology that distinguishes the roles of men and women in the dichotomy of public and domestic roles as well as the patterns of senior-junior partner relations both at the theoretical and practical levels. Meanwhile, in the aspect of income earning and decision making, the relational model that is built in LDM farmer families LDM also depicts strong influence of patriarchy and ideologies familialism.

## Keywords

husbands-wives relation model; farmer family; long distance marriage

## INTRODUCTION

The issue related to gender is not new. The relationship between women and men is studied from various perspectives both from the small scale to the complex one and from domestic affairs to public affairs. Everything is related to gender issues and associated with domestic issues as well as development contexts. This study attempts to explore and identify how women in farmer households with their femininity are able to move, survive, and become a wheel in agricultural production. Further, the authors

convey the relations of wives and husband in the pattern of farming work in the fields and family affairs. This strategy will create a relationship model that exists between husbands and wives in households where the husbands mostly go to the city to earn a living.

The high demand for life, the uncertain agricultural yields, the high cost of production in the agricultural sector

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and low value of production on the market leaves a problem in the resilience of the farmer family. The problems are mitigated by the men to work outside the agricultural sector in the city, even abroad. The married men are forced to leave their families to migrate to other areas (cities) to get a higher income. Meanwhile, men also leave out their agricultural fields that are ready to be cultivated during the rainy season. At times like this, there is a relationship between husbands and wives that does not go as it should. The family which is originally oriented to *somah* (where a father plays a role as the head of the family and the main worker within a nuclear family), is now run with *Long Distance Marriage* (LDM). This situation means that there is a relationship with an imbalanced inequality between men and women. Men have chosen to go abroad, which indirectly leave their main roles and important responsibility as husbands. All the responsibilities are charged to the wives, especially as the heads of household and agricultural production centers.

In a situation like this, women must handle all the work left by their husbands in the village. The women should be able to play the same roles as men and also as housewives in a family in accordance with the demands of the community. Besides being able to run their position as housewives in the family and agricultural production, the women are also required to be able to carry out the role of the husbands in agricultural activities. According to Kin G Sley, rural and agriculture sector as a buffer for the economy cannot be separated from the contribution of women's work. A survey conducted by Kingsley (1998) mentions that more than 50% of the workforce in agriculture in Indonesia is done by female workers. Here, the women play a very important role in agricultural production activities. After their husbands migrate, the women must automatically play dual roles as men and women. The issue is investigated by researchers by looking at the relationship model that is formed between the husbands and wives of the LDM farmer families.

Several studies that discuss the re-

lationship between men and women have been carried out and published in several scientific journals. Some of these studies are like what Maria Brandén (2014) conducted. In her study, Brandén explained the conjugal relationship in Sweden, where the gender roles that occur in the families of migrants are not much influenced by gender roles with traditional concepts. The results show that the wives follow their husbands to migrate for the opportunity of their husbands' career development. Gender ideology and the division of household responsibilities do not explain the gender differences in migration behavior by the married couples. This condition is also conveyed by Nawangningrum (1995) regarding to the careers of women in the Indonesian Army (*Tentara Negara Indonesia-TNI*). The study shows that female soldiers who are married and have children must refuse external duties lasting for five days or more without returning home because they need to take care of their children. Therefore, this hampers their careers. Women's nature to get pregnant and give birth is also considered to hinder the career of female soldiers, not men, because maternity and maternity leave reduces their time for a career. Likewise, as part of their role as the husbands' companion, they usually are forced to apply early retirement because they must lead the wife's organization in their husbands' workplace (Nawangningrum, 1995: 88-89). In line with Nawangningrum's findings, Azis's study of the career development of female civil servants at the North Sulawesi Level I Regional Secretariat also shows that female civil servants tend to consider families and sacrifice their careers to carry out their obligations as wives and mothers in the family (Ruspita, 2008: 20). In this context, the husbands and wives still run the family in one house (*somah*).

Another study that has examined the relationship between husbands and wives is done by Sophia Huyer (2016). Huyer further explains on the aspects of natural resources by women in the agricultural sector with the involvement of the technology and the female empowerment which will increase the

capacity and access to the agricultural sector. Hence, husbands and wives relations in carrying out their roles in the agricultural sector can be run in a balanced manner. Huyer, in the case of the role division in the agricultural sector by husbands and wives, shows the relationship between them by discussing the agricultural context and agricultural production. Both the results of research conducted by Branden and Huyer still investigate the relationship between husbands and wives in the family household. Therefore, the model of conjugal relations is still not undergone many changes. Meanwhile, when husbands and wives run the family by doing LDM, it is assumed that they undergo a relational model which has implications for inequality in the role division, both for husbands and wives especially in a culturally strong context such as in rural communities of Java.

Kusujarti's (1995) study of women working in rural areas related to hidden power in gender relations in rural women in Java finds that the lives of Javanese women centered on their status as wives and mothers. Their economic activities are interpreted in the context of that role and are influenced by cultural views that perceive women as lacking in spiritual potential and power, both in families and in societies. Women have longer working hours (domestic and productive hours) than their husbands. In the agricultural sector, women's wages are smaller than the wages of their husbands, and most women consider their income to be just an addition. Whereas in the trade sector, the wives' income is greater than that of their husband does not make women's bargaining position increase. Women still have difficulties when trying to oppose the value of gender relations. Women should obey with their husbands, because if women oppose their husbands' will, they are said to be stubborn. Women with low education levels work in low sectors with low skills. If they have a small family land ownership, they spend time to take care of domestic work less than women who work in a skilled sector, are highly educated, and have spacious land. This is because unskilled workers

spend more of their productive work time than others, so the time for domestic work is limited. Besides, the value that emphasizes the importance of housewives and the role of mothers is more important among educated women and the middle class, so they spend more time on domestic work.

A research which has studied the model of LDM relations are carried out by Antari Ayuning Arsi, et al (2016). The research has a lot to say about the relationship model that occurs between husbands and wives of LDM family with two careers where both husbands and wives have jobs in public sectors. Arsi *et al.* explain that the relational model of LDM family where both husbands and wives have careers and higher education is heavily influenced by the social construction – as well as culture and education aspects within LDM family, although the division of labor in domestic affairs is practically more flexible such as childcare and house cleaning. Another research on long-distance marriage to the two-career couples is conducted by Bunker et al. (1992) by comparing the quality of life (level of satisfaction and status) of couples with two careers living separately and two career partners living at the same house. Bunker et al. find that compared to couples living at home, couples who live separately are reported more satisfied with their career and time for themselves, but are less satisfied with family life and relationships with their partners and overall life satisfaction. Couples who live separately also report less overload and stress than couples who live in one house. Bunker et al. also find that there is no significant relationship between gender and the level of satisfaction or stress in the two-career couples.

Long before, Gross (1980) conduct research on long-distance marriages regarding the advantages and disadvantages faced by a partner. The advantage they feel from long-distance marriages is primarily about the freedom given to each partner to continue working. The consequence of this freedom is that there is no disruption to long working hours because they have to adjust the schedule with their partners. Wi-

ves feel the loss of emotional protection they expect from their husbands, and they feel that this is the cost of their freedom. Women also lose their emotional closeness with their partners. Even though husbands also feel the same way, they are not accustomed to expressing this. For couples who have children, conflicts mainly occur with regard to their childcare and domestic work. While those who do not have children, they feel freedom from domestic behavior. In conclusion, it is stated that older couples who get married longer with one partner has an established career and are free from the task of raising children have less stress. Women are more comfortable with this long-distance marriage arrangement because of their recognition of their rights.

Based on the previous analysis and the author's knowledge, there has been no article that discusses the relationship between husbands and wives in long-distance marriage farmer families. Therefore, the focus of this paper is directed to the LDM relationship model of husbands and wives by not ignoring the socio-cultural construction and education from them and their environment in the process of socializing gender roles. To analyze the relation model in question, the author employs the concepts offered by Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1981) by looking at the marital structure in the family which is divided into four models, namely (a) *Owner-Property Marriage Pattern*, (b) *Head-Complement Marriage Pattern*, (c) *Senior-Junior Partner Marriage Pattern*, and *Equal Partner-Equal Partner Marriage Pattern*.

## METHOD

The subjects who became the analysis of the study were the LDM families in Tanggulangin Village. From the group who underwent long-distance family, they had four informants consisting of one male and three females. To be able to reveal how informants construct the roles of men and women that have implications for decision making, division of labor, and the model of relationships that are formed, the study was carried out comprehensively on a number of research

focuses. Hence, the results of the study could be drawn holistically. The study also looks at how the relationship between the construction of the families in LDM family, the factors of education, and their understanding of the nature and role of men and women based on culture and religion, especially in LDM families in the midst global economy.

Data collection techniques began with literature studies, observations, and interviews. The data collection system that researchers used refers to one principle of saturation. If the data obtained from the informant did not provide information novelty or was already saturated, then the interview was stopped because it was considered sufficient (Schensul, Schensul, & Le Compton, 1999: 262).

In the process of data analysis there are major components that must be truly comprehended, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification (Sutopo in Rachman, 1999: 34). To analyze various existing data, researchers used descriptive analytical methods. Data analysis was performed inductively and qualitatively along with the data collection process. Furthermore, in the analysis process, it would use an analytical ethnographic approach with thick description.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Construction and Division of the Farmers Roles in the Long Distance Marriage Family

Female farmers are the figure of rural women who play roles as wives and mothers in the farmer household. They are the wives of farmers or farmer family members who are involved directly or indirectly with permanent or part time jobs in farming activities and other business associated with livelihood of the farmer family in rural area. The participation of women in earning living is because men's income is not enough to meet the needs of their families and social demands in the countryside. The participation of family members to earn the money is an effort to increase the income in order to

overcome the problem of household living needs. The role of women as the supporting role of the husband has consequences for helping the husband's work. This has been passed down from generation to generation in Javanese culture. The position of women is in domestic affairs and helps the husband's activities in farming in addition to domestic affairs they already have. In this case, the husbands have jobs as a farmer. Therefore, their wives also help the husbands' work in the field after their domestic activities are done. Such a view is a reflection of the roles of men and women as a result of the socialization of family institutions in the community. But when the husbands decide to go out of the village because of economic conditions, the situation becomes different. Initially, women only help their husbands' production activities in the agricultural sector. Now, male production work must also be replaced by women when they decide to migrate out of town and even abroad. Hence, women must cover the productive role of men in the agricultural sector, both directly and indirectly.

Here, the role of female farmers becomes very dominant for agricultural production activities. Various types of businesses and strategies are implemented so that agricultural activities can still be carried out just like when their husbands are at home. If possible, the results should be better, or at least as good as when men are in charge. In this position, the construction of the Javanese community that women are only as helpers of agricultural activities seems to be reversed. This is because everything that is done becomes dependent on women (wives) although what is done usually remains discussed with men (husbands) through long distance relationship. The rest, women must play an important role in because women deal directly with the field (agriculture and domestic affairs). Therefore, women in terms of agricultural production have higher access when the husbands go make a living outside the city. The approach is followed by decision making in the family as well as in agricultural production. Women's participation in

agricultural production makes women have a great responsibility given that they also carry out the role of housewives. In other words, women here experience *double burden*.

Running a role in domestic activities (family), mothers are usually assisted by their children, both boys and girls. But many complaints of boys who do not want to help their mothers in domestic activities such as sweeping, washing dishes and so on. Because indirectly, boys have been controlled and influenced by the social construction of Javanese society that men's work is in the public affairs such as in the fields. Girls can help their mothers in both the domestic and public spheres in the agricultural sector. Besides helping their mothers to cook, the daughter will also go to the fields to help their brothers and mothers to work in the fields such as planting, and plowing the land for corns (turn the soil around the corn so that oxygen is able to enter and seep into the ground) and fertilize the plants, even up spraying the plants with insecticidal substances.

Therefore, the wives who are left by their husbands to migrate out of town are very important in domestic and public production activities (farming). However in their activities, the wives often hold communication with their husband through the device to overcome everything that has not been understood about domestic or public activities or for the appreciation of the wives to their husband as the head of the family.

### **The Relationship Model of Men and Women in Earning Livelihoods**

Before men decide to go out of town and even abroad to make a living, all public activities in farming are controlled and run by men. Even domestic affairs are indirectly controlled by men, although it is only in verbal form, which means that women who carry out domestic work under men power. This situation happens because the construction of socio-cultural society demands society like that. Javanese people view men as more powerful than women. The power control is

followed by other fields that are also controlled by men, while women do activities as if only they are the executors of male power. This context also happens because the Tanggulangin village community is still in the Java region and inherits Javanese culture, including its patriarchal culture. However, women still have the responsibility of helping their husbands in male activities in the agricultural sector by plunging directly into the fields after all domestic activities are considered complete.

After men decide to migrate out of town even abroad, it is as if there is a shift of male to female responsibility (husbands to wives) both their social and cultural roles as well as their work job in the agricultural sector. Women’s responsibility becomes heavier and experiences multiple roles. In one hand, they must run as a mother in the family, on the other, women must also be able to carry out the role of husbands in the agricultural fields.

Nowadays, the husbands earn a living outside the city and leave their major role to their wives. What is done by men does not mean giving up family responsibilities because the husbands claim that they also send the money every month to meet the needs of families at home. This is so that the wives can use agricultural services from other workers and the wives do not have to carry out the work by themselves. However, from the wives’ point of view, it is indeed implemented but not all. They argue that they can still do it by themselves and the money can be allocated for the other needs including for food and children’s educational needs. This is similar to the confession of Mr. S (45 year):

“I go to the city for the family, not for my

own sake ... every month, I also send money to meet the needs of my family, especially when the planting season arrives, the wife’s money can be used to hire services and labor to cultivate rice fields. So, my wife is not too burdened doing activities in the fields ... if she wants to help, it’s only for the light work ...

In some ways I also often contact the family to just greet and ask how they are doing or problems when my wife feels any problem or anything else”

While Ms. Si (43 years) the wife of Mr. S admits with the following statement:

“..... if I can still work on the fields, I will do it by myself and with my children ... the money sent by my husband can be used for other family needs ... if indeed it is really necessary, I will send workers to work on my rice fields... but I will do the rest of the works such as *getting rid of the grass, cultivating, mendangir* ...

It’s troublesome and hard ... since my husband went to town ... but because it’s been around 5 years already, I think it’s normal ... it’s just that sometimes my husband calls to ask or tells me what to do related to home activities and rice fields ... Me, as a wife sometimes can’t directly decide because I am afraid to make mistake and so I sometimes call him to ask for his judgment and decision... “

Based on the description that has been explained, it can be seen that the pattern of the division of roles of men and women farmers in earning a living is shown in the following Table 1.

The dualism of the role of women in this context is a reflection of the pattern of the role division between male and fema-

**Table 1.** The Role Division between Men and Women

No.	Aspect	Role Distribution Pattern	
		Man (husband)	Woman (wife)
1.	Domicile	Outside the city (Overseas)	At home (in the village)
2.	Activity	Make a living in the public sector outside agriculture	Caring for children (domestic) and managing rice fields (agriculture)
3.	Income level	Permanent from their superiors (main income)	Non-permanent (helping husband)
4	Workload	Focus on public works outside agriculture	Double burden (family affairs and agricultural production at once)

le farmers in earning a living. When contrasted with the views on the construction of Javanese society, the men must be able to make a living for his family and the women must be capable, skilled, responsive and careful mothers. The implication of such pattern of the role division places women as wage earners in the public sector while men work outside agricultural sector.

The construction within Javanese community about the role of men and women in the household is a tradition practiced over generations. If the existing livelihood system on agriculture intersect with the construction of the Javanese community, the role division pattern is deemed reasonable by the community in Tanggulangin village because of higher life's demands. While the paradigm of the community outside the village of Tanggulangin dealing with such pattern is considered unusual because it can give an excessive burden for the family left behind, especially for the wives. This is also not in accordance with the philosophy of Javanese *mangan ra mangan sing penting kumpul* (not being able to eat is not important, being together is what matters). The aspect of gender construction in the families of farmers who practice LDM in the Tanggulangin community can be seen in Table 2.

Further analysis shows that the pattern of role division between husbands who migrate and their wives is one of the farmers' family strategies to meet the increasing needs of family. Women play a significant role both in the family and agricultural production. However, because of the social and cultural construction within a Javanese life, the women left by their husbands also

do not have the authority to decide everything about family matters, especially concerning to public affairs. On the other hand, men with their awareness run their role by communicating remotely through devices. Communication that is built is a strategy of men and women to share tasks left by the husbands. In addition, this communication is a form of husbands' control over their wives and families.

The same condition also happened to female farmers working on agricultural plantation of PTPN IX Merbuh in Kendal. In the research paper of Asma Lutfi (2010), the role of women in agriculture has a considerable contribution, especially in improving the family's economy. However, this role is not balanced with their opportunities and authority over agricultural resources and other public facilities. For physical resources such as arable land and gardens, men and women have the same opportunities to work on their land. There is no significant difference in accessing physical resources. However, in the aspect of sales and distribution of agricultural products, the role of men seems to be more dominant. This is indicated by the lack of opportunities given to women to directly negotiate with traders or buyers who will buy their agricultural products.

In addition, the results of the study states that if there are sources of information in the form of education, counseling, training or brochures, then people who get greater authority are adult men (husbands). Their dominant authority cannot be separated from their assumption that the knowledge of women about public affairs

**Table 2.** Role Distribution of Men and Women in Public Construction

Construction Aspects	Characteristics	Family	Relationship Model
Division of household affairs	Domestic affairs are held by women , men in the public	I, N, S, Si	senior-junior partner
Income Earning	The role of main worker is focused on men, women are only additional income from their husbands	I, N, S, Si	senior-junior partner
Decision Making	Women have a role in discussions, but men are the one who take the decision	I, N, S, Si	head complement

is lacking. Even on a number of occasions, if there are things that are actually oriented towards women, then men (husbands) must know it first. More important conditions in the study indicate that there is no involvement and attachment of women's names on the deed of land cultivation and garden certificates, even though they have the same activities as men on the land. This problem is quite significant even though women (wives) sometimes don't realize it.

The role and participation of women in the activities of agricultural production is apparently not proportional to the authority they have. In some cases, women are involved in decision making, but in other cases, women are not involved in the decision-making process even though the decision has a significant connection to household welfare matters. Furthermore, the agricultural product distribution system also marginalizes women's roles. The wives are only involved in the initial communication to determine the form of selling agricultural products.

Access or opportunities owned by women in the process of agricultural production and distribution is actually very large, but it is not accompanied by the control or provision of proportional authority for women. Husbands often consider the existence of a wife only as a companion without having to be involved in determining a final decision on their agricultural activities. In addition to the domestic and public affairs, the wives still have to experience a double burden. This is what causes the gender relations that exist in the lives of smallholders on PTPN IX land to be unequal.

The condition is related to the control and decision making investigated in this study. The control and decision making remains on the male side, while the wives are the technical implementer in the field. The control by the husband to their wives and family is not the same when the husbands live in one house. The husbands also give concessions to their wives and families to carry out their roles when the husbands are abroad. The concession is specifically addressed toward agricultural production in the village, for example choosing wor-

kers to help plowing the fields and the use of chemicals in producing agricultural land. According to husbands who are migrating, the important thing is when the farming is run and the family is safe. Regarding to the implementation of agricultural production, the wives are the one running the agricultural sector. However, they find it problematic. They feel that everything that will be done must be reported and discussed first with the husband, while husbands and wives communication is very limited. When communication can still be done, the wives will discuss it with their husbands. Under the wives' view, the decision making remains in the hands of the husband, the wives only follow and implement the decision for their field.

In this context, the burden of women who are left by their husbands wandering into the city becomes heavier, although, the women's participation to work in the agricultural sector is greater. Formally, men as family heads are responsible for the family economy. However, in fact, women have a big role in sustaining the life of the family because the main work is farming. According to Mahanani (2003: 7), the dual roles of women in agriculture are largely influenced by the norms adopted and practiced, ultimately placing women in a lower position than men. These norms are basically a pattern of discrimination against women in various forms due to differences in the sexes of men and women. The magnitude of the role of women in the farmer families shows the existence of gender injustice.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above explanation, it can be said that keeping husbands out of the village does not change much of the construction of patriarchal culture and the ideology of familialism in Tanggulangin community. The construction of the role of men and women in the LDM farmer family still shows the strong influence of patriarchal culture and familialism ideology. Such view distinguishes the roles of men and women in the dichotomy of public and domestic roles as

well as the patterns of senior-junior partner relations both at the theoretical and practical levels. Meanwhile, in the aspect decision making, the relationship that is built in the LDM farmer family still seems to have strong patriarchal influence and familism ideology. Analyzing from the aspect of decision making, the relationship that occurs in the LDM of the farmer family is the pattern of partner and head-complement senior-junior relations, in which the wife's income is only considered as the result of the husband's additional income.

Given the increasing number of long distance marriage phenomena that occur among farmer families in Tanggulangin Village, it is necessary to conduct a study on various problems that may arise as a result of the LDM phenomenon. Studies that need to be carried out are related to various aspects, including reproductive health, family and children's welfare, family vulnerability and resilience, as well as the impact on child socialization.

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