

Work Condition, Gender Relation and Violence Against Women Migrant Domestic Workers

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Abstract. The research aims to analyze the social conditions of working women migrant domestic workers and gender relations in home and workplace, and to describe the violence experienced by women migrant domestic workers. The research method used is case study in two villages, namely village of Majangtengah Malang Regency and village of Junjung Tulungagung Regency as sender of migrant worker. The research informants are migrant workers who have returned to their home villages and migrant families work. This study uses a qualitative approach through in-depth study of 32 migrant workers. Data analysis technique is descriptive qualitative. Research results show that women migrant workers are encouraged to work away from the village and families by socioeconomic factors. They have different working conditions in the destination country. The employer factors are crucial to urge the success of the migrant workers. They contribute economically to households and surrounding communities, but this work is very at risk of violence. Violence can occur from departure to destination country. Therefore, protection of women migrant workers is very important.

Keyword: Working Conditions, Violence, Migrant Workers

Introduction

The household is the smallest unit in the community where all members, male, and female, in their status as father-child-mother-and other members build a social, economic-based culture relation to survive. Based on sociological view, household is functioned in production, consumption, reproduction, dissemination, education, and affection (Phillips, 1979). The functions are built through relationships among social members and established by social rules to become one unified system. The traditional division of labor sexually put women takes responsibility to do the domestic work, while men have a responsibility to do public work. Rogers (1980) called these symptoms as the process of domestication of women that put women in the domestic sphere and put men in the public sphere, bounded by gender ideology which is firmly rooted in the community. The gender ideology then penetrated into various areas of life. Rogers mentions that put women in the domestic sector is unfair, because of their unworthy in the job market, therefore it impacts the

women quality in the development process.

Women are often faced with two choices of roles in life, namely domestic role and public role. The claims against the multiple roles are difficult to avoid, often the women get dilemma getting through it. The women are not only required to work in the public sector, but they also need to keep running the household tasks or domestic sector (Jamuati, 2001). Assessment of the women's work as a household makes them unrecognizable as the breadwinner. Market oriented as a working concept is very detrimental to the women as domestic workers (PRT) that has an important role not only for families but also for the social-economic life of the community in general. Although household work does not earn income, it is worth to help others.

Household work makes other members of the family have opportunity to earn money. In fact, the work of household generate benefits, with the limitation that the role of PRT become invisible, not taken into account, and does not described the real condition. This is called as gender bias and discriminatory.

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This condition is worsened with the formation of patriarchal gender ideology. Women are not the main breadwinner in the household, and women are "caring mother, serving mother, and sacrificing mother. The entrenched gender norms put the PRT as a second-class in the community.

When it is examined deeper, household chores such as caring for or nurturing a baby, cooking, washing, cleaning the house, and other are complex which take time, energy, and become a monotonous and repeated activity which burn-out the person who does the work. Sukesi (2018) counts the rural women's working time as 11 hours per day to do housework and farming. These women's working hours allow other members of the family to earn money that can enhance their social-economic status.

Women do not only become the doers of household works, but also in charge over household chores. When housework is positioned in the work market, it becomes a job. The women who do the household helper are called maids and judge as workers. History of the household helper is a colonial legacy, which has been around since the days of kingdoms in Indonesia and Netherlands colonialism era. In Java, the house helper called as *rewang* or *abdi* who works for royal family in Java. The house helper is also named as *babu*, *buruh*, *ngenger*, *koki*, *bedinde*, etc. A household maid can stay settled in the employer's home or stay in her own home. The wages are provided monthly, in accordance with the standards prevailed in the territory of the workplace. In the fortunate instance, a maid who worked in the elite housing gets Rp.1,500,000 - Rp2,000,000 per month. In the modest area, she gets Rp800,000-1,000,000 a month.

In 80's, East Java began a women labor migration to other countries which known as women domestic workers. This work is included in the informal job categories and the most vulnerable job. They work in long hours, drain energy physically with low salaries, limited protection, minimal regulation, and have no protection in the employment law. The traditional view on housework has contributed to the domestic workers as unimportant job, followed by the relations in the family, community, and systematic rules, which manifest in the form of low wages.

The problems faced by Indonesian women migrant workers (IWMW) in Hong Kong for example, they got problems in

the beginning, in the middle of working, after working and when they come back to Indonesia. The employers mostly, did not like employees with no skills. According to IWMW, data after migration shows that most of the returning migrants are not ready yet to work back in their place of origin. The money earned are still used for consumptive purposes, they did not used it for productive purposes, or venture capital like farming, trading, craftsmen which lead to further reduce or abolish the dependency of women working abroad (Sukesi, et al, 2012; Wijaya, 2012).

Salary in Hong Kong is relatively high. In 2012, Indonesian labor in informal sector (PLRT) got approximately 3,740 HKD or Rp4,723,200 per month and rose to 3,920 HKD or 4,950,960 on September 20, 2012. In 2015 and 2016, the house helper's salary reached Rp6,000,000 per month (DISNAKER, 2016). It attracts women who are facing financial problems in the village. Besides, it becomes a triggering factor for them to work in Hong Kong and make it as the most promising country, followed by Taiwan and Singapore.

The problems faced by the returning migrant are the diverse capital condition before departing and the consumptive behavior toward the money earned during the working time. There is no institution that helps them manage their properties after returning. The only one effort they can do is enrolling in women joint venture, namely KOPWAN (women cooperative). Potential and local wisdom become internal factors to encourage the development of KOPWAN, or Association of migrant workers who are indispensable in order to avoid economic violence toward women household workers.

In detail, the purposes of this research are to (1) explain how the labor situation faced by migrants, labor relation between migrants and the employers, and relation between migrants and their families; (2) analyze to what extent the role and contribution of PRT for the life and well-being of the family, community or society; and (3) explain the discrimination and violence experienced by migrants of PRT.

Research Method

This study is written based on the results of the research conducted in the Province of East Java, Malang Regency and Tulungagung as the greatest IWMW sender

in East Java, i.e Majangtengah village sub-district Dampit and Junjung village sub-district Sumbergempol. The informants of this research were female migrant as domestic workers who have returned home and household members who were left behind. A qualitative approach was used in depth discussion, documentation, and focused discussions with the household workers that were used during the data collection. The return migrants interviewed were 13 persons from each village i.e Majangtengah and Junjung and 3 household members for the left-behind families. Another interview was also conducted with the PRT stakeholder in the research setting, i.e community leaders. The data were taken since 2014 until June 2017. Thus, descriptive qualitative was used as data analysis.

Finding and Discussion

Majangtengah, Malang has an area of 987.25 Ha for rice and noodle. Sugarcane becomes one of the leading commodities in Majangtengah village. The land area of the cane commodities is 150 ha and produces 100 ton/ha with the production value reaching Rp. 392,000,000. 293 families have agriculture land and 947 families do not have the land. 1,079 families have agriculture land less than 1 ha. Mostly, the food commodity produced is rice covering 131/2ha and the production reaches 7.1 tons/ha. The second commodity produced is corn with an area of 6,5 ha with production results of 4,823 ton/ha.

The total population is 10,191 with 5,170 females and 5,021 males. Most of the population is in the age group of 20-40 with 3,348 people (32.85%). At this age, many of them migrate internationally as migrant workers with different countries destination.

The dominant professions in Majangtengah are peasants and migrant workers, especially for women in 1980's. The problems face by female migrants and their family are remittance which is obtained mainly to build houses, rather than for investment and productive effort; lower skill labor; traditional financial management; lack of entrepreneurial belief; died land; limited job opportunities; and imbalance of landowner, even less than 1 ha per family. These conditions trigger the people to be a migrant (Henny, 2012).

Junjung village is a village located in Tulungagung district with width 705.944 ha/m² in form of land. Most of the land,

316.25 ha/m², is used for rice paddies, while 277 ha/m² is used for settlement and other public infrastructure. 512 people do not have farmland, so they work as farm laborers. Most of the agricultural land in the village is owned by the inhabitants from outer village. The population of the village was recorded 6,237 people, with 3,103 men and 3,134 women. Most of the people are in working age (54.39%) and the people of this village have lower education level. It is depicted with 1,704 people (27.32%) are graduated from elementary school, 1,681 people (26.95%) are not graduated from high school, and 1,302 people (20,88%) are graduated from junior high school. The highest education level occupied by the people is undergraduate level of 68 people (1.09%). Most of the participants in this research are graduated from Junior high school and senior high school in accordance with the work requirement as a foreign household helper in informal sector.

There are various professions exist in Junjung village, but most of the population work in agricultural sector. 37.67% population works as farmers, workers for 20.32%, and freelancer of 25.16%. The vast acreage of rice field is 276.25 ha/m², planted with rice in rainy season, while corn plants or vegetables such as cucumber, chili, tomatoes, and onions were planted during the dry season. In general, the conditions of Majangtengah village and Junjung village are considered advance and have potential for the agricultural development.

Women's Working Culture

Junjung Village is a cultural village with an existing migration since long time ago. All the informants explain that the existing culture in the village encourages women migration.

"After I come back to Tulungagung, I was shocked because there were many migrants. As far as I know, when I was in Surabaya, there was few number of people work as immigrant. At that time, my salary in Singapore was bigger than my salary in the village.in 2000-2002, I migrated to Taiwan to be a house helper and child caring. In 2002-2009, I became a women labor migrant in Hong Kong and had a job to look after an elderly. I can say that all the people in this village are hard worker" (Kun, June 2016).

Working culture of high spirit of work and work ethos possessed by people in

Junjung Village becomes a supporting factor to work abroad. There is no gap between women workers and men workers. These conditions make the villagers think that becoming a migrant is common profession. There is no stereotype about the migrant. In line with this, Chief of the Junjung Village states.

“For long time, the villagers have been known as perseverance and hard workers, men and women like to work. They are embarrassed if they do not work. Perhaps their predecessors also liked working, high spirit and always want to work in any circumstances, though it is out of the country.”

That explanation strengthens an entire migrant workers’ statement that the culture in the village supports the occurrence of international migration. Similar result is also found in Majangtengah which is the population consisted of Javanese and Madurese. Migration is a culture that historically done by Madurese men. The migration of women first appeared with the reason to follow her husband. Opportunities to work for household work in Saudi Arabia became the fascination of women with the permission from her husband or parents. From year to year, the number of women migrant workers grew rapidly.

Working Condition of Women Migrant Workers

The majority of women migrant workers from Majangtengah village and Junjung village come from farming family. From 20 household informants in this research, 10 people come from farmer family, 5 people are peasants and 2 people are farmer and seller, 2 people are chips sellers, and one person is a tailor. However, most of them stated that household work is a normative expression. The work pattern of a farmer family is they wake up in the morning when dawn, boil water and prepare breakfast, and set out to the rice fields when the child go to school. Women farmers work until noon and men work until afternoon. After arriving from the fields, the women cook for lunch, wash clothes, and shop from pitchman or in the market of the village.

For young unmarried farm girls, their main activity is doing household work when their parents work in the field. A farm worker’s child helps the parents since she was a girl. They work in the modest kitchen with traditional equipments. Ironing clothes and sweeping the floor are done every day.

For the girl with a child, the baby is cared by herself. The one who is still unmarried helps the parents to take care her siblings. The caring baby is done in simple way. All the skills must be possessed by the girl as a preparation to build her own household. With the preparation, women in the two villages are registered as migrant. For Majangtengah village, the majority country destination is Middle East with a few weeks training process.

“Before departing to Saudi Arabia, I lived at a shelter for a month to learn Arabic cooking, cleaning the house with electric broom, while waiting for clearance letter. When the letter was prepared, I was ready to go. Firstly, I felt worry, but my employer was kind. In the house I was taught to do the housework. I cleaned the house, cooked, babysit, washed clothes, and ironed them. I only did indoor household works and go out when my employer invited me” (Sum, Agustus 2016).

“When I want to work in Hong Kong for the first time, I got job training for 3 months. For the second migration, I only got a month for the training and all the documents (Visa and passport) were prepared, I got interview via Skype. In the shelter, I learned Mandarin, cooking, babysitting, and ironing clothes. First time I arrived in Hong Kong, I was confused with different environment, different cooking method, and my job of taking care an elderly. I was confused, but I ought to do it. The most fearful and sad condition was when I told to bathe a dog. On the weekend I was allowed to go out. I used that day to joining with my friends and eating out in the garden near the house. I did not go to Victoria Park because it would spend my money” (Pri, Juni 2016).

Daily work patterns in the workplace are totally different with the work pattern in the original village. The tools used are also different. This makes them feel depressed at the beginning of working abroad. *Sum* felt that she was lucky getting a good employer in Saudi Arabia so that she held out the working period as stated in the contract. Otherwise, *Pri* feels depressed with the work that is not imagined before.

“The job was exhausting, but I must do it. For five months I worked for my employer, then the elderly was passed away. I was offered to choose, between keep working in Hong Kong or return to Indonesia. I

decided to stay there in order to pay off the seven month salary for working agent. Every month, I only received HK \$200 after deducted by the working agent. After the seven months, I extended my working period, one month to get full salary; then I come back to Tulungagung. My employer was very talkative; all my works were considered incorrect. I got stress during the working time, but I had to finish seven months to return the money" (Pri, June 2016).

In Hong Kong, working relationship between the labor gender and the employer is more flexible.

"For the first time I came, my employers gave an explanation about my job as a household helper. When I did not understand with the explanation, I asked to them. I have worked for two working period because my workers believe me. The entire household work was handed over to me. I was allowed to arrange shopping, cooking, cleaning the house, washing, and ironing clothes as far as all of them were finished" (Yay, December 2015).

Pri also states that her second working contract is better because she got a good employer, even she had a good relationship with the elderly and she is considered as a daughter.

"He is a religious figure. I was often advised to be careful while working, and save my salary. He also states that I can talk to him when I need something. The female employer is also good. I was also let to do praying at home. That is the different compared to my first employer. I did not want to work there, but I have to, so that's why I had a tiny body" (Pri, December 2015).

Although staying in different country, both *Yay* and *Pri* still communicate with their parents, children, and husband. *Yay* regularly sent money to her son, and sometimes she also sent money for her husband through his parents. *Pri* as a single parent sent money for her son's need and for building house.

The Contribution of Women Worker for Life and Family's Welfare

It is true if women migrant considered as money giver, a fairy that granted family's wish to have a nice house, and a bank account

to pay the debts. Here are the women workers' experiences in Majangtengah Village:

"Before becoming a migrant, the main source of family financial comes from parents. After migrating to Saudi Arabia, I married, bought land, and goats. Farming and goats are managed by my husband and Mrs. Emi manages the income. After being a migrant, she got income Rp. 4,500,000 for the daily needs which spends Rp.40,000 per day because her children have not schooled yet. For the health aspect, she estimates Rp.30,000. Then for endowment to mosque is estimated Rp.20,000 per month. Then for other needs such as milk for the children and new clothes are estimated Rp.300,000 per month. The remaining salary is saved and after collected for certain amounts, buy a new motorcycle" (Emi, Mei 2017)"

The high salary for women migrant can directly established family welfare which is shown by the good house with windows, wall, ceramic floor, good sanitary, and enough food. The children can also get education from elementary level to secondary level and get a health service.

Contribution to Society

Most of the migrants from Majangtengah Village do not work again after they come back to Indonesia. They do not have a plan on what they do next. Many migrants do not want to work abroad for the second time, but because of the limited work opportunities and low salary, they have to work as a migrant again and again. If the migrant do not want to be a migrant again, agricultural activities become the most choice chosen. Some migrants from Dampit begin their new job by opening beauty salon, beautician, shop, gas seller, chip seller, or land investor. Unfortunately, there are many returning migrants who do not work or unemployed. Low education, skilled, and capital become the main factor contributed to that situation. It implies that return migrants were not be able to manage their income well during the working contract.

The economic impact for the society can be seen from the people houses which are better than before. 22 new home industries are established to open a new job opportunities which are promoted by women return migrant. The negative impact of women migration is the gap created

among wife, husband, and children, even the migration may leads to divorce.

"The economical impacts of women migrant are helping to feed the family needs, helping other by lending money, and opening a new shop or furniture. Besides, she can rent agricultural land, buy 5 goats. In addition, she enrolled in entrepreneurial training held in Hong Kong for 3 months so it is allocated to open a new business and lend money" (Emi, Juni 2017).

There is an improvement in the village financial aspect made by returning migrants or their families. Shops, markets, and stalls are opened in every rural area. Shopkeeper, beautician, catering, driver, seller, technician, rice milling, and milling flour are some jobs that do not exist before, but it is developed recently. In the social-religious aspect, there are mosques constructions in every village. Source of the funds comes from the contribution of women migrant workers and their family. There are also a good boarding house and religious institution which are developed by remittance from Saudi Arabia. The informant (*Mrs. Nur*) states that she wants to establish her faith, do small hajj, or even do hajj through working in Saudi Arabia. There is a significant difference about the physical appearance of the village compared to the few years ago. My house was once in bad conditions and now changed into a good one due to the contribution of women migrant (Sukesi, 2008).

Various businesses are also appeared, such as coffee shops, shops, traders, and pitchman. For the farmers, they enhance their quality in managing the land. Building a house is the first remittance before establishing a business. Some of the migrants used the remittance to school their children, buy a motorcycle, and buy jewels as saving. The transformation of social, economic, and cultural center in both villages with different typology has been established through the women migrant worker. They, who used to be farm laborers or only housewives, become principals of social and economic transformation in their village.

Forms of Violence Faced by IRT in Their Home and Working Place

Domestic violence is invisible violence to women. The domestic violence is an action that committed by other people in the

family which resulted in suffering physically, psychologically, or sexually for the victims. The government passed a law on the ban of domestic violence, aimed that the victims, especially women have a legal protection (Yulia, 2004). The women in the village, who are girls/married/has toddlers, have never before gone to Jakarta and abroad. Besides, they have never taken a trip by plane. Those conditions depict the last condition of the women migrant before migrating. The migrant's departure needs a very strong impetus to live and leave their families for long distance (Sukesi, 2007).

"If I can choose, I prefer to stay at home with my family, work in the village with enough salary" they said. It implies that there is no choice. For some reasons, the domestic violence, economic violence, and psychological violence forced them to migrate.

Wid, Mei 2017 stated that:

"When I was in second class of senior high school, I have a girlfriend called Suk. Our parents forbid us to have a relationship but we were desperate and even asked to be married and I was drop out my school. After getting married, I lived in my family's house until I have a son. Sukarni who was a lazy one was forced to work as a farm worker in the village. I manage the income, but unfortunately it was not enough for our daily needs since I had to give my mother-in-law too. Some of the income was saved and for the daily needs were still provided by my parents. The saving money was used to buy a calf. Unfortunately, when the cow grows, it was sold by my husband because his parents need money. I only could cry, sad, and shame of my parents. I recollected my husband's income as farm laborer. Sometimes, I bring my son to go to work in the farm. We built a house, a house made from bamboo, behind my parents' house (after she was in the Brunei Darussalam, this house was moved into another village by her husband). I learned how to build a good family. This condition urges me to migrate and to earn much money for the sake of my son's future life".

This economic and psychic violence encourage *Wid* to take decision to work in Brunei as a maid in a large restaurant in Brunei Darussalam. She left her son in her

parents' house with her husband's permission. In Brunei Darussalam she worked hard but after she worked for 7 years, she was left by her husband. In the 11th year she worked there, she managed her divorce process. She had persuaded her son to live with her by buying a motorcycle, but he refused the offer. Wid got depressed because he lost her lovely son. *"No other choices, I must accept it because my son chose to live with his father."* She often looks at the previous house which was taken by her husband. Then, she came back to Brunei Darussalam to finish the working contract and save her money to redeem debt of gratitude on her parents. *"Fortunately, during the working contract I save the money and send little money to my son because I was afraid that the money will be spent by my husband"*.

Sit, January 2017 also stated the same experience about economic and psychic.

"At that time, I was 26 years old and have 5 years old child. I got the training program before migrating and my husband accompanied me to go to the shelter. Unfortunately, my husband had an affair with my friend, a candidate of a women worker in Hong Kong. I sent the money to my daughter through my husband, but the money was spent by my husband. Lia, my husband another woman sometimes sent money to her fair, who is my husband. I have worked for one working period, 3 years but I did not get money, I can only pay my daughter's school tuition. When I came back to Indonesia, I was told by my neighbor that my husband had a affair. Finally, I divorce with my husband and let Lia took him".

Sit do not come back to work abroad, but she organizes the women migrants to have businesses, and open a return migrant's joint venture. Years after, she found a new husband and remarried. At the workplace, not all the migrants are lucky. They can get violence either from their employer or other migrants.

"Working in Saudi Arabia as a household worker got Real 800. When my child was still in elementary school, I became a single parent with the credit he left. So, I decided to work there and my child was taking care by my aunt. In Saudi Arabia, I worked for an employer who has 3 wives. There, I only got bad mouthing and did

not get my salary for 3 months. Because I could not bear the same treatment, I escaped to Indonesian Embassy in Hong Kong and requested to come back to Indonesia. When I departed in Jakarta, I was deceit by people who offer me a help to go home from Jakarta to Malang. They told me that they are a travel agent. I must pay for 6 people food and gas from Jakarta to Malang. I estimated that I spent Rp. 3,000,000. I only can let it go and pray that I can go home safely" (Nif, June 2017).

There are various stories from the informants.

"A mother migrated without her husband's permission because she wanted to work in Saudi Arabia. Every month she sent money for her family for 2 years and then back home. After she went home, her husband gave back the money and divorced her. Because she got divorced, she got mental illness and danced like a snake dancer, thus she called as snake dancer." Unexpected working result from the migrant.

Sexual violence experienced by the women migrants (year 2016) was collected by the Indonesia Embassy. *"I was dating a guy from Bangladesh. I got pregnant, and then I attempted abortion, but bleeding so much and finally I was taken to the hospital. After getting out of the hospital, I was handed over to the Embassy and accommodated to come back. The guy never came back to me because he has to come back to his country"*.

Conclusion

The village economy is getting better because of the various businesses run by family or full time-PRT. Shops and market stalls are growing in the village. The development of the village economy is not on the agriculture sector but other sectors. Shops, salons, taxi, cakes, stalls, workshops, rice milling, milling flour are jobs that do not exist before. In the social development, there are new mosques in the whole village and was built in good condition. Some of the funds sources are from migrant family. A big boarding house was built and also an Islamic school as a remittance of the women migrants from Saudi Arabia. Informants told that they want to work in Saudi Arabia because they want to strengthen their faith by doing small

hajj or hajj, if it is possible (Mrs. Nur, Mei 2017). There is a significant appearance of the village compared to 30 years ago. It was poor village with bad houses. It has changed to be better with a nice houses and modern architecture which is built by the women migrants' remittances.

Various businesses are appeared in the village of migrants. There are coffee shops, shops, traders, and pitchman. Sparse population that is unemployed. They who have base for and skill in agriculture establish their farm. Building a house is the first remittance and followed by establishing a business. Some of the women labors and their family used their remittance to school their children, buy motorcycle, and buy jewels as saving. There are social, economic, and cultural transformations happening because of the women migrant labor. Women who used to work as farm labor or housewife, now they become the social agent of change in their village.

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