

IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN WORKERS IN PLANTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Women workers who are called daily workers in the estate usually get a bad rating because of the type of work that is hard and not optimal in carrying out their roles in the household. However, this assessment must be correct because there are many factors that cause women to work to increase family income. This study aims to determine the perceptions of the people in Greenan Village towards women daily laborers who work for plantation companies in Greenan Village. This research is a quantitative descriptive study with a sample of 30 informants, 15 people from the community inside the estate and 15 people from outside the estate. The results show that the community has a positive and supportive perception of women (housewives) working in the estate as daily labourers, even though it looks like their work is rough, heavy and full of risks such as fertilizing, chemistry, etc. but it is known that they do it voluntarily, want to help the family economy, improve family welfare. Their husbands don't forbid them because their roles in the household as mothers and wives are not neglected. Even with work, their social interactions in the community are still good, so that the negative opinion that is usually received by women workers in the plantations is refuted.

Keywords: *female workers, plantation workers, perceptions, housewives, social community*

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) recorded the largest area of smallholder oil palm plantations in North Sumatra, namely 440 thousand ha with production reaching 7 million tonnes. Asahan Regency is the center of oil palm plantations with 77.14 thousand ha of land and production of 1.62 million tons. Next, the area of smallholder rubber plantations is recorded at 369.39 thousand ha with production reaching 310.02 thousand tons in 2020. The North Sumatra rubber production center is in Nias Regency, which has a land area of 4.9 thousand ha and production of 52.4 thousand tons. Meanwhile, the people's coconut plantation area is 110.46 thousand ha with production in 2020 of 99.5 thousand tons. Asahan Regency is a coconut production center with a land area of 22.1 thousand ha and production of 22.9 thousand tons. A total of 2.203 tons of plantation commodities in North Sumatra were exported to various countries in 2020. The export value was IDR 53.8 billion. There will be an additional ten plantation export commodities and 7 new export destination countries in 2020 (Katadata.co.id, 2022) (Central Statistics Agency, 2018)

There are many state-owned and private companies that play a role in contributing to the production of palm oil in North Sumatra. One of them is the company PT. X in Greahan Bangun Purba Village, Deli Serdang Regency. The existence of an oil palm plantation PT. X is an advantage for the community around the plantation. One of them is as a provider of employment opportunities for residents around the plantation. Large areas of land definitely require daily labor apart from permanent plantation employees which can be obtained from the

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people who live in the plantation area. PT. X provides wide opportunities for the people around the plantation to work as daily workers, especially women. Guided by household income that can be generated by husband and wife,(Elizabeth, 2008).

Companies appearing in the community indirectly contribute to building the macro economy for the country and micro for the communities around the plantations so that socially they will also experience lifestyle changes. The community also finds it helpful to increase family income if the husband and wife work for a plantation company established in the area where they live(Susanto & Effendi, 2018) (Laing, 2016)

Based on the results of the author's observations, it is known that women around PT. X became part of plantation activities because it was easier for them to work in the garden where they live and to work close to their families. The majority of female workers at PT. X is a housewife who comes down to the garden to help with the work of her husband, who has previously worked as a freelance daily worker at PT. X. The work that is generally done is picking loose fruit, clearing weeds, managing TBMs in nurseries, fertilizing and maintaining plants. But their duties as housewives and wives can still be carried out so that their work in the garden is not neglected because the location of the house and place of work are close together.

Working time provided by the company starts from Monday to Saturday 06.00 to 11.00, rest at 12.00 and will return to work at 13.00 to 14.00. However, the company gives permission to female workers if there are important household chores to do between working hours, so it is permissible so that working time is more flexible as long as the work targets can be done correctly. Contrary to the income of the community, which generally interprets work in the garden for women as menial work, making them spend more time at work than at home and have no time to socialize with the Greahan Village community.

The physical condition of women is also considered inappropriate for working in the garden. Heavy work that is not in accordance with the condition of the body and strength of women and compared to the wages received is also a problem because it is considered inappropriate. Guarantees of work protection and safety are also often ignored. Women who participate in earning a living are still neglected because men are considered as the main breadwinners so that the above problems are considered not too important to be resolved.(Kusumawati, The Dual Role of Tea Picking Women. Community, 2012).

Women workers are generally casual daily labourers, so there is no work contract and the salary is lower than regular workers working according to the company's request. The work carried out is high risk (spraying, fertilizing, clearing) and neglects the use of occupational health and safety protective equipment, so you have to bring your own. No work accident insurance, no health services, no bonuses, THR (unless it reaches sixty working days continuously until Idul Fitri or Christmas)(RSPO, 2021)

There are quite a lot of problems for women workers in the plantations, which are the opinion of the general public, not only those living around the plantations, but also the general public who are outside the plantations. Society's perception of women is indicated by the condition where men have a dominant position compared to women. One of the dominant positions is indicated by the freedom of men to choose social roles in society, a freedom that women do not have. The perception that emerges is the cognitive process of the community in

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absorbing and understanding information about the existence of plantations and women workers in their area.

Based on the observations and problems found by the author, through this research, we want to know the description of the socio-economic life of women workers in the plantations of PT. X Greahan Village and identify the views of the Greahan Village community on the socio-economic conditions of women workers at PT. X Greahan Village which plays a dual role as a freelance daily worker and a housewife (wife) and has an impact on social activities in the community. The author considers this research important in order to obtain a clear picture and the right public perception of the socio-economic conditions of women workers, especially at PT. X Desa Greahan remembers the many problems and negative perceptions about women workers in plantations.

It is hoped that this research will become input and information that supports or assists the existence of women as workers on plantations which not only have a positive impact on the family, but on the community and the company.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Community Perception

Perception is a direct response or acceptance from someone. According to (Rachmat, 2011) perception is the experience of objects, events, or relationships that are obtained by inferring information and interpreting messages. (Chaplin, 2011) argues that perception is a process of knowing or recognizing objective objects or events that use the senses and awareness of organizational processes.

Factors that influence perception are strongly influenced by one's knowledge, experience and insight, so the better the knowledge, the more insight and experience the better the perception one has, so as to be able to give a positive response to the stimulus received (Ahirman, 2009).

Social Conditions

Changes that occur as a result of the establishment of oil palm plantations will have a social impact that has been established by several public facilities such as building mosques, employee housing, building schools for children. Social impact is the impact that arises as a result of an activity that can pay for building public facilities and repairing roads around Paya Pinang countryside. (Laing, 2016)

Economic Conditions

Palm oil at PT Karya Hevea Indonesia is a palm oil-producing commodity that supports the economy of women workers around the Greahan Village community (Fauzi, et al., 2012). According to Basrowi & Juariyah (2010), economic status is a condition or position that is regulated economically in the structure of society, accompanied by a set of rights and obligations that are only fulfilled by female workers, so that the economy is one of the factors that can determine whether the economic condition of women workers is high or low. in oil palm plantations. According to Winarso (2012),

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Female Worker

The opening of job opportunities, including for women workers in plantations, has resulted in women being attracted to work as laborers in these companies. Even though women workers in oil palm plantations work to help their husbands all day from morning to evening after that, women continue their work doing household chores such as cooking, washing, cleaning the house, caring for and educating children. not economically profitable. Some women state equal rights as the reason why they work, because the reason women work in oil palm plantations is to fulfill some of the family's economic needs.(Augustine, 2019).

The role of women workers in oil palm plantations in supporting the family's economy is increasingly difficult to deny, women currently do not only play a single role but play multiple roles. The involvement of women outside the home indicates that women have tried to reconstruct their life history, by building a new identity for themselves, not only as mothers or wives, but also as women workers in oil palm plantations. Women also have the power to work in oil palm plantations. But women are still often neglected until now (Amiruddin, et al, 2012). With the inclusion of female workers in oil palm plantations, women carry out dual roles, in the household and also as workers in oil palm plantations as breadwinners to fulfill the family's economic income.(Supartiningsih, 2003).

METHOD

This research was conducted for 6 months in 2022 at PT. X in Greahan Village. This research is a type of quantitative descriptive research that aims to objectively describe the condition and perceptions of society about women workers from a socio-economic perspective so that a clear picture of the condition of women workers from a socio-economic perspective as workers at PT. X Greahan Village Gardens.

The total population is known to be 300 people living around the garden in Greahan Village. As for the sample, 30 people were taken randomly using informants directly because they were believed to know clearly and accurately the socio-economic conditions of the women workers at the PT X Plantation in Greahan Village.

Table 1. Research Samples (Informants)

No	Informant Category	Amount
1	Community within the company	15
2	Society outside the company	15
Total		30

Source: Data Processing Results, 2022

The type of data taken is primary data in the form of data on the number of female workers and other data that supports the research analysis. The author also uses secondary data in the form of a questionnaire given to the community accompanied by a brief question and answer accompanying the filling out of the questionnaire to obtain information on their perceptions of the socio-economic conditions of women workers at PT X Kebun Desa Greahan.

The data obtained was analyzed in a quantitative descriptive manner which could clearly describe the community's perception of the socio-economic conditions of women workers in

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the plantations of PT. X Greahan Village. Data analysis using the standard excel application. Then the results of the community's answers are explained so as to illustrate the conclusions. The method used with the Likert Scale is used to measure attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of a person or group of people about social phenomena. Perception measurement can be done using a Likert scale, with the following categories:

Table 2. Research Samples (Informants)

No	Class Criteria	Perception category
1	$X < M - 1SD$	Negative
2	$M - 1SD \leq X < M + 1SD$	Neutral
3	$M + 1SD \leq X$	Positive

Source: Suparman, 1990

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Respondents

Respondents within the company are known to have an age range ranging from 20-60 years. And dominated by workers aged 21-40 (54%) for implementing workers and aged 51-60 (27%) who act as leadership workers such as assistants or heads of sections and garden managers.



Source: Data Processing Results, 2022

Figure 1. Respondent Criteria in Companies Based on Age

Based on the education category, it is known that the respondents who were selected were dominated by workers with high school education, the remaining 53% were dominated by SMK, D3 and S1 (39%).



Source: Data Processing Results, 2022

Figure 2. Respondent Criteria in Companies Based on Education

Another category is the type of work of the research respondents, namely executive employees (53%) and general administration staff (20%).

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Source: Data Processing Results, 2022

Figure 3. Criteria for Respondents in Companies Based on Type of Education

Respondents outside the company are known to have an age range of 21-70 years. Respondents were dominated by ages 31-40 years (53%) and 41-50 years (20%).



Source: Data Processing Results, 2022

Figure 4. Criteria for Respondents Outside the Company by Age

Based on the type of education it is also known that most of the respondents outside the company have high school education (67%) meaning that in general it can be interpreted that the research respondents who are part of the community in PT. X in Greahan Village has limited knowledge and ability to absorb information based on their education and the environmental conditions of the community so that the work that can be done is also more technical in nature due to limited skills possessed.



Source: Data Processing Results, 2022

Figure 5. Criteria for Respondents Outside the Company Based on Education

Based on the type of work, it is known that people outside the company who are research respondents are entrepreneurs (60%), IRT (20%) and traders (13%).

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Source: Data Processing Results, 2022

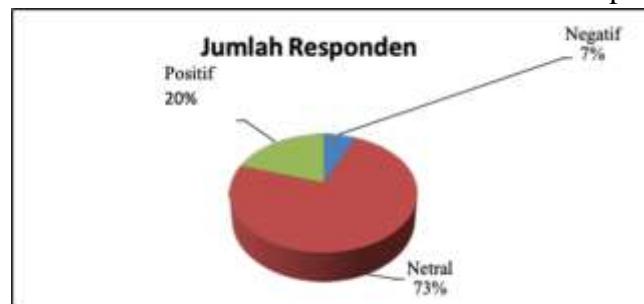
Figure 6. Criteria for Respondents Outside the Company based on Occupation

PT. X in Greahan Village has an area of 1.4.87.97 Ha, which consists of 3 afdelings. Where the entire plantation area is used for oil palm plantations. Female workers in PT. X Greahan Village is quite large with a population of around 47% of the total number of daily workers including permanent employees in the plantations. In general, women who live around the plantations are housewives who choose to work in the garden because they want to increase household income.

The work carried out is collecting loose fruit, seeding and maintenance such as fertilizing, injection, weed control, budding and others. The results of a brief discussion with the leadership staff found that female workers were considered to work better, disciplined and neater than male workers. Even though they sometimes work half a day because they have duties as a wife (housewife) to do, they can still carry out their duties in the garden well.

Community Perceptions of the Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Workers in the Gardens

Communities within the company expressed different views on the social conditions of women workers in PT. X Greahan Village. It is known that there were 20% who agreed or gave a positive response to the conditions of women workers working in the plantations, 73% of the people in the company expressed a neutral view or did not comment on the social conditions of women workers in the plantations. But there were also those who expressed a negative response, 7% of the people in the plantations stated that women workers in the plantations were considered unable to interact well with their social conditions in the plantations.



Source: Data Processing Results (2022)

Figure 7. Responses of the Community in the Garden to the Social Conditions of Women Workers in the Plantation

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Women workers are considered to still have good social conditions, are still able to interact with the community around the plantation and have good communication with their families and the community. This positive response also saw that women workers felt helped by the presence of plantation companies so that they could work in the plantations. Even by working in the garden they also get assistance from health facilities, are able to get a place to live and even the women workers feel happy because the company is helping to repair the roads around their homes.

Women workers also received a positive impact because apart from being able to work in the garden, they can earn additional income, they can also run small businesses such as food stalls and small shops selling daily necessities. This condition also helps to increase family (household) income. This increased income also has an impact on the ability of families to provide better education for their children. Not only that, even families are also able to improve health facilities for their children.

Susanto & Effendi (2018) stated that the community's perception of the socio-economic conditions after the establishment of the oil palm plantation company in Muara Bengkal District, East Kutai Regency was included in the positive category so that it was in line with this study that the community within the company gave a positive perception of the social conditions of women workers. The condition of women as workers is one of the flexible change efforts so that wives get the opportunity to actualize themselves by working, based on a social conflict perspective, women as wives must be able to be freed from the shackles of the family which makes them more independent, responsible with themselves and their families. (Nasaruddin, 2000).

The socio-economic conditions of workers can reflect the livelihoods of workers. It also refers to habits, communication patterns, social relations and work behavior. Subsystem production is that part of agricultural production that is consumed by the household itself. Working families are considered as independent families if they can only meet their daily needs. Livelihood stability due to low socioeconomic conditions encourages people to adopt different strategies to survive and overcome life's problems. The conditions of salary/wages are paid on a daily and piece basis which makes their life subsistence so that they have socio-economic conditions that are still lacking.

Casual daily worker who is female at PT. X Desa Greahan works fully in the garden, especially at harvest time in collecting loose palm fruit. For companies, women workers are needed in large numbers because they think women are more painstaking at work, more obedient to orders. Women workers are also better and more disciplined in carrying out pre- and post-harvest maintenance in the garden. This research is supported by Wulandari, et al., (2012) who also stated that women workers side by side with male workers in the harvest process, women are better at work because they are more patient and disciplined during harvesting and maintenance than male workers. The male workers are in charge of transporting and supplying equipment which rely more on the physical as men do.

The community's response stated that they were neutral about the condition of women workers in the plantations who simultaneously carried out their functions as housewives because they thought that it was their choice because the conditions of life's necessities could not be judged as good or bad. The desire to build a better life, provide better education, better

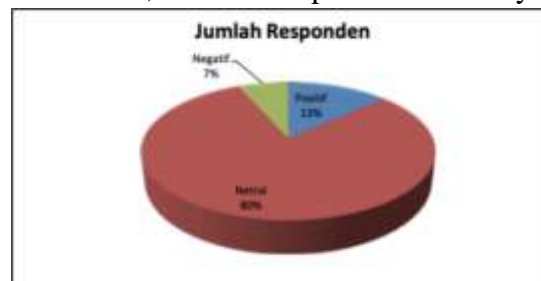
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food and shelter is the background of women, housewives who become daily workers in the garden. Even though they work as daily workers, these housewives can still interact socially with the community, can still be involved in community activities, gather with women workers, as well as with people outside the plantation. Even social interaction can go hand in hand with interaction with fellow family members along with interaction among fellow workers. This is because the location of the place of work is close to the location of the residence which is around the garden.

As for the negative response to the social conditions of female workers, only a few, around 7% were the responses of some male colleagues who thought that women were only good as housewives and wives who were sufficiently at home to provide for the needs of the family. In addition, they assume that men are the obligatory head of the household and have sole responsibility for earning a living. This is in line with (Janah, 2017) which states that in agricultural societies, inequality occurs due to the opinion that men are dominant in controlling production so that women are excluded from economically productive roles, only having a limited obligation to carry out household functions.

The community's perception of the economic conditions within the company also has the same response as their view of the social conditions of women workers in the plantations. 80% of respondents gave neutral answers, 13% stated positive and only 7% stated negative.



Source: Data Processing Results (2022)

Figure 8. The Community's Responses in the Plantation to the Economic Conditions of Workers Woman in the Garden

This condition illustrates that the people in the plantation do not have positive or negative opinions and do not even give specific opinions regarding the income conditions of women workers. According to them, this is due to the fact that housewives have to work as unskilled workers (daily laborers) in the garden is their own choice and willingness without any coercion because they want to improve their lives and improve family welfare. However, in actual conditions whether their life is much better after working with their husbands cannot be stated specifically because the household life needs of daily workers in the garden are relatively uncertain due to their income which cannot be certain depending on the work targets met (wages and premiums).) based on the number of days they work in the garden.

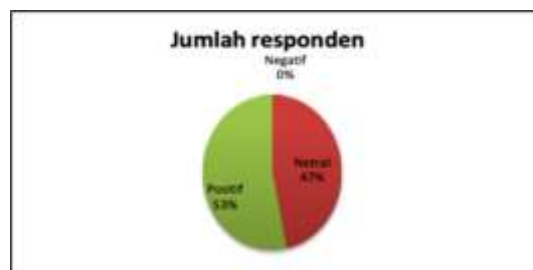
The income of these women workers cannot be said to be neither good nor bad. But all children are strived to have a good education meaning all their children go to school. Workers only have elementary and high school education, while some of their children can attain tertiary education. Kusumawati (2012), also stated the same in her research that the education of laborers in the plantations was very low but their children had started to progress. There is an

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assumption that children who go to high school will easily work better than their parents as laborers, so that children will contribute to better family income. They get the same treatment opportunities or health facilities, they are even able to eat well as a health support.

Different responses regarding the perceptions of the community outside the company regarding the socio-economic conditions of women workers in the plantations. It is known that the majority of responses were positive because it was assessed that the women workers in the Greahan Village garden could still interact socially well in the community and did not abandon their roles as wives and mothers. 53% stated that the women workers in the Greahan Village garden were very active in social activities in the community, and 47% stated that they were neutral so that no one stated negatively about the social conditions of the women workers in the Greahan Village garden.



Source: Data Processing Results (2022)

Figure 9. Responses of Communities outside the Plantation to the Social Conditions of Women Workers in the Estates

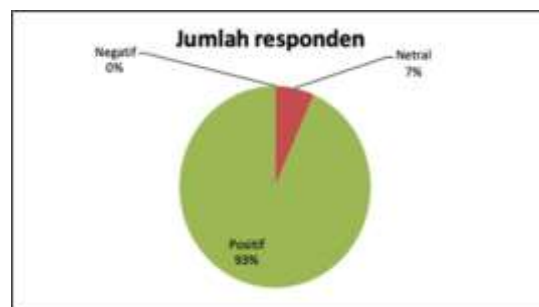
Even in the context of this social activity the scope of the small community in society is referred to as the nuclear family showing good interaction and solidarity relations, in mutual cooperation activities, religious events, and other social events. Even though it is inseparable from conflict, it is something that is considered normal to occur. Therefore, this social welfare is important for women workers in the Greahan Village garden. Apart from having to work to earn a living, helping the family finances voluntarily, they also choose to work as a way to help mutual adjustment between themselves as individuals and their social environment. Work together to improve their economic and social conditions.

When these women are in a position to supplement family income, they must be able to become strong and resilient women. If not, they will get minimal results from their work as palm seed collectors. In carrying out this relatively heavy work, they are able to survive with a work system that must drain all of their energy. And when they return home they also have to carry out their role as housewives. (Samosir, 2017).

It is even known that women's involvement in multiple roles is a behavior that is expected to create family harmony to achieve a level of well-being. There is hope that with a dual role as a breadwinner, the mother or female worker is able to make a better contribution to the family's economy.

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Source: Data Processing Results (2022)

Figure 10. Responses of Communities outside the Plantation to the Economic Conditions of Women Workers in the Estates

There are 93% giving a very positive assessment of women workers in the Greahan Village garden. The condition is due to the fact that some of these women workers are selling food and drinks around the garden, thereby increasing their income. Even though the daily wages given are not large because they are adjusted to the work and targets given by the garden foreman, they feel their social needs are met when they interact with the community of fellow workers and at the same time get additional income from selling (small business). The remaining 7% stated that they were in a neutral position, not rejecting but also not fully accepting because they believed that it was the right and choice of each individual in accordance with life goals and family needs that were different for everyone. These women workers choose to work because they want to help their family's economy without compromising their duties and roles as wives and mothers in their families. Even by working in addition to earning money, these women workers can also carry out social interactions which are social needs that must also be met.

It cannot even be argued that with an increasingly uncertain economic situation, rising prices of basic necessities and being able to provide good education and health for children, housewives are forced to participate in supporting the family's economy. This condition illustrates that women have adapted to changing life history processes by building a new identity, namely not only as a wife/mother, but also as a worker.(Irwan, 2006). But this identity still believes that they are only side workers who help their husbands to make additional economic contributions to the household.

Another opinion is about housewives who work due to boredom as wives/mothers at home who are considered unproductive, have more free time, so they choose to work not only to earn money but also to get social interaction with the wider community (interact with fellow workers). This condition can have an impact on the view that they are economically dependent on their husbands, so that they are given lower wages, lower status and work only part of the time with certain times. The work they do is considered secondary and only as a complement to the husband's work(Jones, 2010).

There is an increase in the role of women as breadwinners because they feel they are acting as actors to increase the position of the family. Thus, women in the Greahan Village garden also choose to work as laborers in the Greahan Village garden, even though they are very vulnerable to pesticide disturbances, work accidents because their physical condition is

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not as strong as men's, bearing in mind that these female workers work as sprayers and fertilizers.(Supriatna, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, the majority of people in Greahan Village Gardens have positive and accepting views and views on the socio-economic status of women workers (women workers) in the plantations who work as daily labourers. Even though they work as daily laborers because there are demands to support the welfare of the family, by joining the work, there is additional income apart from their husbands. They do this voluntarily because by working they can also interact socially with society, meet their social needs as women without having to stay at home.

Social interaction with the community can also work well with fellow citizens and the corporate environment. This working condition does not reduce their role in the household as a wife and mother which can still be carried out well because the location of work and the house are still close together in the same company plantation area. In fact, the company also provides facilities and flexibility for women workers to carry out dual roles as workers and roles in the household.

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