



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**WIVES' WORK IDLE AMONG PADI -FARMING HOUSEHOLDS  
IN TWO VILLAGES IN MALAYSIA**

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WIVES' WORK ROLE AMONG PADI-FARMING HOUSEHOLDS  
IN TWO VILLAGES IN MALAYSIA

by

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in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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Abstract of thesis submitted to the Senate of Universiti Pertanian Malaysia in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

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The main purpose of this study was to determine wives' work role among padi-farming households in two villages in Malaysia. The specific objectives were: a) to ascertain wives' home and farm work roles, b) to determine the factors related wives' home and farm work roles, and c) to determine wives' satisfaction in their home and farm work roles.

Data collected from 101 wives of padi farming households were analyzed using the following SPSSx subprograms: Frequencies, Crosstabs, Reliability, T-test and Regression.

The findings of the study were:

1. The amount and degree of work participation among wives of padi farming households were concentrated to home and child care tasks. The amount of farm work role was low and



confined to cocoa and poultry rearing. These findings support Beneria's reproduction and production theory that women's productive activities tend to concentrate to those which are compatible with their child bearing and caring functions.

2. Results of the regression analysis revealed that padi farming household wives' aggregate work role (home + farm) was critically determined by three factors, namely: agricultural diversification, the size of land operated and work-role related beliefs.

Further regression analyses showed that home and farm work roles were maximally explained by different sets of predictor variables. The important predictors for wives' home work roles were presence of children below seven years old, work-role related beliefs and household income. Presence of children below seven years old and work-role related beliefs were positively related, while household income was negatively related to wives' home work roles.

For farm work role, the important predictor variables were: agricultural diversification, age of husband and size of farm operated. Agricultural diversification and age of the husband were positively related to wives' farm work roles, while size of land operated had negative relationship.



3. Padi farming household wives were generally satisfied with their home and farm work roles. Satisfaction in performing home tasks was primarily due to the belief that it was their responsibility to take care of their home and children. Helping husband support the family gave satisfaction to wives in their farm work role.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Pertanian Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian daripada keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains.

**PERANAN SIRI RUMAH DIKALANGAN ISI RUMAH PENANAM PADI  
DI DUA BUAH KAMPUNG MALAYSIA**

oleh

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April 1989

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Tujuan utama kajian ini ialah untuk menentukan peranan suri rumah di kalangan isi rumah penanam padi di dua kampung di Malaysia. Objektif khusus kajian adalah: a) untuk mengenalpasti tugas-tugas yang dimainkan oleh suri rumah untuk keluarga dan kerja ladang, b) untuk menentukan faktor yang berkaitan dengan peranan suri rumah di kalangan keluarga penanam padi, dan c) untuk menentukan kepuasan suri rumah dalam kerja rumah dan kerja ladang.

Data diperolehi daripada 101 orang suri rumah yang berasal keluarga penanam padi. Data ini dianalisis dengan menggunakan sub-program SPSSx: kekerapan, jadualsilang, kesahihan, ujian-t dan regresi.



Hasil kajian ini adalah seperti berikut:

1. Jumlah dan darjah penglibatan kerja di kalangan suri rumah ini adalah tertumpu kepada tugas-tugas keluarga dan penjagaan anak. Penglibatan kerja ladang adalah rendah dan hanya terhad kepada penanaman koko dan penternakan ayam. Hasil kajian ini menyokong teori reproduksi dan produksi yang disarankan oleh Beneria yang mengatakan bahawa aktiviti produktif kaum wanita adalah selalunya bertumpu kepada kerja yang berkait secara langsung dengan fungsi reproduksi dan penjagaan anak.
2. Keputusan dari analisis regresi menunjukkan bahawa peranan kerja keseluruhan (tugas keluarga dan tugas ladang) untuk suri rumah penanam padi adalah secara kritikalnya ditentukan oleh tiga faktor, iaitu: mempelbagaian pertanian, saiz tanah yang diusahakan dan kepercayaan yang berkaitan dengan peranan kerja.

Analisis regresi selanjutnya menunjukkan bahawa peranan kerja rumah dan kerja ladang dipengaruhi oleh beberapa angkubah ramalan. Angkubah ramalan yang utama yang mempengaruhi peranan kerja rumah bagi suri rumah adalah mempunyai anak di bawah umur tujuh tahun, kepercayaan yang berkaitan dengan peranan kerja dan pendapatan isi rumah. Kehadiran anak-anak di bawah tujuh tahun dan kepercayaan yang berkaitan dengan peranan kerja



mempunyai perkaitan yang positif; sebaliknya, pendapatan isi rumah pula berkait secara negatif dengan peranan kerja rumah untuk suri rumahtangga.

Angkubah ramalan yang utama bagi peranan kerja ladang adalah mempelbagaian aktiviti pertanian, umur suami dan saiz tanah yang diusahakan. Pempelbagaian aktiviti pertanian dan umur suami mempunyai hubungan yang positif terhadap peranan suri rumah untuk kerja ladang; manakala saiz tanah yang diusahakan mempunyai perhubungan yang negatif dengan peranan kerja ladang suri rumah.

3. Secara amnya suri rumah dari isi rumah penanam padi berpuashati dengan peranan mereka dalam kerja rumah dan kerja ladang. Kepuasan melakukan kerja rumah ini adalah disebabkan oleh kepercayaan mereka, iaitu, penjagaan anak dan keluarga adalah tanggungjawab mereka. Sebab utama kepuasan suri rumah dalam kerja ladang ialah keupayaan mereka untuk membantu suami dan keluarga.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Development in the 1950s and 1960s was seen as an economic phenomenon in which rapid gains in overall and per capita Gross National Product (GNP) growth would either "trickle down" to the masses in the form of jobs and other economic opportunities, or create necessary conditions for wider distribution of economic and social benefits of growth. During this period, a large number of Third World nations did achieve the United Nations (UN) growth targets; however, the levels of living of the masses remained for the most part unchanged. Todaro (1982:95) says that the experience in the 1950s and 1960s signalled that something was very wrong with the narrow definition of development. Stewart and Streeten (1981:148) strongly assert that GNP growth, conventionally measured, is unsatisfactory as the target of development strategy and as the criterion of its success and failure. Redefinition of development concept among less-developed countries was then deemed necessary. The meaning of development is best contained in the statement of Professor Dudley Seers, (1969:3) who posed the following:

The questions to ask about a country's development are therefore: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has



been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result "development" even if per capita income doubled.

It is, therefore, apparent that the focus of development should be the welfare of human beings.

Women constitute a significant portion of the human population. Their role in development has been increasingly appreciated. These roles are best captured in Nici Nelson's (1979:5) statements:

Women's role in development is obviously not a simple one; it relates to a complete range of socio-economic activities. Women are not only users of basic economic services, bearers and socializers of children, and keepers of the home, where they are underemployed or inefficient and overworked; they also represent a productive potential which is not being tapped. Women form half of the population and the development of a country cannot be realized if half of the people lagged behind.

Failure to include women in the development process runs counter to the true essence of development and invariably hinders the process itself. Development programmes, which do not take into account the cooperation and participation of women, may be slowed down and made less effective than could have been had the aspects been considered.

In Malaysia, the meaningful role of women is reflected in the Fifth Malaysia Plan 1986-1990:

Women who account about one-half of the population and constitute one-third of the labour force, play an increasingly active role in the socio-economic development of a country, through their involvement in the mainstream of economic activities. They have and will continue to contribute towards developing a united and self-reliant society. Equal opportunities will continue to be given to women with respect to employment, education and access to other social benefits (Malaysia, 1986:28).

The population of Malaysia in 1985 was 15.8 million, 7.8 million or 49.62 percent of whom were women. Majority of these women were found in rural areas engaged mainly in agricultural activities (Malaysia, 1986:130-131). In 1984, rubber smallholders, padi farmers, coconut smallholders and other agricultural households constituted a total of 748,200 households or about 46 percent of the total number of rural households. Out of these, 116,600 (15.6 percent) were padi farming households with 57.7 percent incidence of poverty (Malaysia, 1986:86). The Malaysian government has placed high priority on the development of the padi sector because it constitutes the majority of the farming population and where there is high incidence of poverty.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The household as a primary unit of production, consumption and socialization is a meaningful focus of development efforts. It is a recognized fact that household members are differentially involved in household, farm and off-farm tasks. This variation in work roles affects the productivity and

social interaction of the husband, wife and children in the family and in the larger society.

Meaningful development programmes aimed to benefit rural women should be responsive to the realities women are in. Traditionally, Southeast Asian wives have been conceived as confined to housekeeping and child care roles, with the provider role assigned to the husbands. These roles have been changing as reported by Nye (cited in Wheeler and Arvey, 1981:10), who say that there is a growing tendency for wives to share enactment of the provider role and for husbands to share the housekeeper and child care roles.

Development programmes for women are usually designed based on the traditional view of women's roles. Heyzer (1985:1) reports that in Malaysia planners often focus their attention on women's presumed family-related responsibilities. Similarly, Maznah, Lockhead and Vasanthi (cited in Heyzer, 1985:3) report that in the Malaysian context, it has been amply demonstrated that development programmes, especially in the agricultural sector, tend to concentrate on men. Farm wives' work roles have gone beyond the confines of the four walls of the house. Mohd. Yusof Hussain (1983:131) in his study on farm wives' involvement in household and farm decision-making in Malaysia, found that there was significant sharing of decisions between husbands and wives in household and farm tasks. Moreover, studies in Malaysia pointed out that

women were greatly involved in padi production especially in such tasks as transplanting, weeding, harvesting and threshing (Purcal, 1975; Fredericks, 1977; Kim, 1982; Maznah, 1982; and Ng, 1985). However, due to the mechanisation and high level of technology adoption in padi farming, women's labour was displaced from their traditional padi production work roles. The Malaysian padi farmers are basically smallholders, hence, agricultural diversification is the most viable alternative to increase income.

Scarce attempts were made to capture the actual participation and role of padi farming households women in non-padi agricultural activities. Failing to account the range of roles women actually perform in farming will lead them to lose out in terms of their access to agricultural resources, education and training.

Many farm, home and other social activities are shared by husbands, wives and children. Work roles of husbands, wives or children have a somewhat uniform pattern according to location and time factors. Farm wives' contribution in rural development could be primarily traced to their work both in the home and in the farm. Development programmes designed to improve the productivity and efficiency of farm wives can only be relevant if the programmes are responsive to wives' actual work roles. It is, therefore, logical and appropriate that the work roles of wives among padi farming households be adequately and

accurately understood. Thus, this study tried to capture and quantify the range of activities that the padi farming households wives' perform both in the home and in the farm. Specifically, this study was conceived to answer the following questions: What are the work roles of wives among padi farming households? What factors determine the work roles of wives among padi farming households? Are wives among padi farming households satisfied with their home and farm work roles?

#### Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine wives' work roles among padi farming households in two padi villages in Malaysia.

The specific objectives were:

1. To ascertain the home and farm work roles of wives among padi farming households;
2. To determine the factors related to home and farm work roles of wives among padi farming households; and
3. To determine the padi farming household wives' satisfaction in their home and farm work roles.

(See Figure 1 for the research conceptual framework)

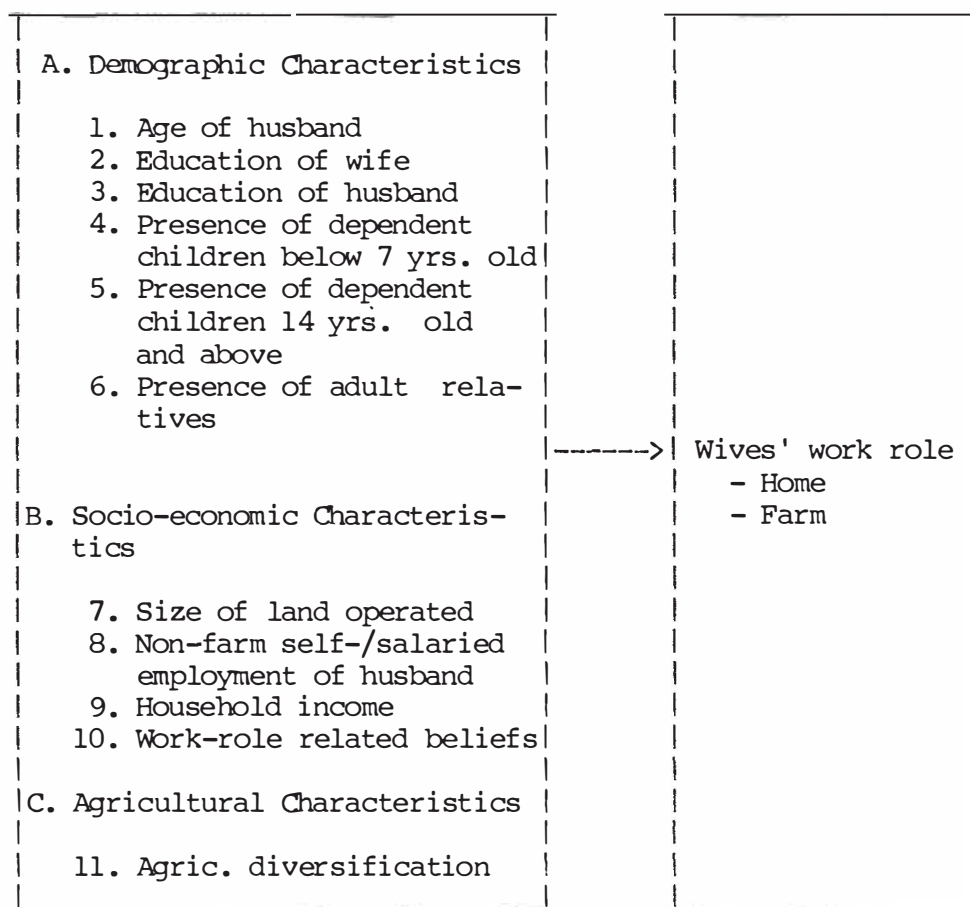


Figure 1

Conceptual Framework for the Study



### Significance of the Study

The contribution of women in national development is undoubtedly known to policy makers, politicians, academicians and lay persons. Lockheed and Vasanthi (cited in Heyzer, 1985:5) reported that in Malaysia, projects developed for women were frequently ill-conceived and poorly-organised, and more often than not, they were mere appendages of larger development schemes for men. To enhance women's participation in development, the programmes directed at them should be tailored to their work roles. Thus, the findings of this study will provide more insights for development planners in their efforts at designing development programmes for rural women, particularly the padi farming household wives.

The findings of this study may also prove useful to academicians, extension workers and students who want deeper insights on the work roles of padi farming wives.

### Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focused on the work roles of padi farming wives in two villages at Tanjung Karang, Selangor, Malaysia, where farm mechanisation and/or modern padi technology and existence of cocoa as a major secondary crop had been practised and adopted by the farmers. The findings of this study could only then be generalized to other groups of padi farming household