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The Role of Women in Public Sector and Family Welfare

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Abstract: Nowadays, the role of women in the public sector as well as in supporting the welfare of the family is gaining much more attention. The objective of this study is to determine the role of women in the public sector and its impact on the welfare of the family. The study being conducted in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi involved gathering of primary and secondary information using interviews, observations, questionnaires survey and documentation. Perceptions and views of the women's husband and son on the role of women in the public sector were collected as the primary source of data collection. The results showed that the role of women in economic and social activities of community is very helpful in meeting the needs of families and their welfare. A perceived significant relationship between the activity/participation of women in social economic activities to the level of social welfare existed. The role of all stakeholders including the government sector is required to understand the multiple roles of women as an effort to improve the quality of family life amongst the people of Southeast Sulawesi.

Key words: Roles • Women • Public sector • Welfare • Families

INTRODUCTION

In general, the role of women in various development sectors in most countries, including Indonesia is well progressing compared to previous decades. Although there is still some discrimination against women in the public sector as in the case of Nigeria, where women's role is limited to the public sector because of lack of

experience and knowledge [1]. This is one manifestation of the national development goals of most nations aiming at human resource development, including women. With the dynamics of global changes that is occurring, the overall condition of the Indonesian women is also experiencing some changes. This includes the new perspective and mindset of women to financially support and contribute for their family's well being to help

improve their daily needs. The majority of rural women nowadays are also involved in farming and rearing of livestock [2]. Women have the potential to undertake productive activities that can generate and help secure the family's economy and in turn the country's economic sectors [3].

The monetary crisis following several natural disasters that hit Indonesia since mid-1997 and the soaring prices of various types of goods turned out to have raised a number of serious implications in the lives of the people who are still facing the impact today. The implications are quite serious where the sluggish economic activities of the people created a low purchasing power [4]. This motivated the women to actively participate in the economic and social development sectors in order to help achieve the needs of family life and improve the welfare of their families. The quality of women's employment has been improved as reflected in the rise of the number of women with high paying jobs as compared to the low-paying jobs in the agriculture sector [5].

The role of women in development cannot be underestimated. It can be seen that in addition to an active participating role in running government programs, it also play an important role in improving the welfare of the family. This in turn led to quality of the current young women generation to continue the development of the nation's future. The participation of women in various sectors is increasing because they are diligent, conscientious, hard working, patient, honest and tough. The women's sense of responsibility, will power, enthusiasm and discipline are very high [6] to the extent that the local economic development of Sulawesi is getting much better from day to day [7]. For example, Kendari city, the capital of Southeast Sulawesi province continues to experience growth in various sectors of development. The population of capital city Kendari in Southeast Sulawesi was 254,236 in 2008 with 123,995 males and 130,441 females. The larger number of females in Kendari may provide a potential human resource development capital for Sulawesi's economic transformation and development growth. The percentage of female population aged 15 years and above who worked according to the main economic activities in 2008 were agriculture (2.63%), industry (10.38%), construction (0.32%), trade (39.96%), finance (1.94%), services (44.11%) and others (0.34%). A census survey in 2008 recorded that women were also involved as professionals (19.8%), power and energy leaders (0.98%), executive and administrative officials (15.19%), sales force (40.56%),

energy businesses services (9.7%), agricultural workers (2.31%), energy production (10.81%), TNI (0.32%) and others (0.34%) [8].

The woman claimed to be more proactive in public roles both as perpetrators of the economic, social, cultural or political. The role of the women in the country's public sector social transformation is getting more significant with minimal gender inequalities [9]. Women now started to look for work outside their homes besides carrying responsibilities in taking care of their homes and supporting the family's well being. Men and women should complement each other and benefit from each other, not only in the family but also in the society [10]. The increasing role of public sector women is a social phenomenon that shows the dynamics of women to empower potential, but on the other hand takes the outpouring of time, energy and attention to the roles in their families. The study was confined to the study of the impact of the role of women (housewives) who work in the public sector as civil servants, traders and private employees against the welfare of the family. Public role of women (housewives) that often dominate domestic roles (roles in the family) is sometimes looked upon as having conflicting role. Thus, it is interesting to study the impact of the role of women working in the public sector (economic and social) affects the welfare of the family. It is important to note too if working women in the public sector (economic and social) have a significant relationship to the welfare of the family?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was a descriptive survey comprising both quantitative and qualitative data that seeks to explain the role of women as agents in the public sector and its impact on the family life. This research was conducted in Kendari neighborhoods by selecting three districts namely Mandonga, Poasia and West Kendari. These three districts were purposely chosen as they were mostly represented by women population (civil servants, business entrepreneurs and executives) both working in the public and private sectors. However, the sample population in this study was all married women with children working in the public sector (civil servants). A simple random sampling was done by taking 90 women as respondents in each district with a total of 30 samples from 10 different public sectors working women.

Both primary and secondary data were gathered in this study. Primary data was obtained from respondents and informants through personal observations and

interviews. Meanwhile, the secondary data was obtained from available documents and reports in government agencies related to women’s multiple roles and their impact on family welfare. Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather information about the roles of women working in the public sector and its impact on the welfare family. During the interviews, husbands and children were also present as key informants. All quantitative data were subjected to coding and categorization through cross-tabulations and later analyzed as percentages. On the other hand, descriptive qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using reflective content analysis, combining both techniques of deductions and inductions thinking techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Women: Table 1 showed the age group of the respondents whereby majority (26) of the women surveyed was in the age group 33 -37 years (28.89%), followed by 20 women with ages of 38-42 years old (22.23%), 17 at the age group of 28-32 years (18.89%), while the lowest age group was 23-27 years (3.33%) for only three women respondents. The age of respondents strongly influence the physical ability, the way of thinking and skills acquired, especially in terms of managing time between busy working hours and house care activities. Generally, the old women would be more productive to think how they can play an active role in improving the welfare of the family. Their motivation to increase knowledge and experience is an indicator that shows that they are exposed to conditions that expects women to contribute in improving the welfare of the family. Age of respondents also affect the way of thinking in terms of decision making as a career woman. A more experienced woman should have a better and quick effective decision making policy.

The education level of respondents showed that majority of the respondents (49 women or 54.44%) only had an upper secondary school (SMU) certificate or the equivalent. A total of 17 women were university graduates (18.89%) while all of the respondents at least completed their primary school. The education level of women may affect the mindset and behavior in the process of improving their family welfare. This has been well supported that the higher education level of women is much essential for the growth and development of the family [11]. The education level of respondents can be clearly seen in the following Table 2.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by age group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
23 - 27	3	3.33
28 - 32	17	18.89
33 - 37	26	28.89
38 - 42	20	22.23
43 - 47	12	13.34
48 - 52	5	5.56
53 - 57	7	7.78
Total	90	100

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to the their level of education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Not completed primary school	0	0
Primary school	11	12.22
Junior high school	13	17.45
High school	49	54.44
College	17	18.89
Total	90	100.00

Table 3: Respondent’s feedbacks on the usefulness of a high income to support family needs

Indicator	Type of Work			Total
	Public Sector	Business Executives	Private Employees	
Very helpful	23 (76.67)	19 (63.33)	21 (70.00)	63 (70.00)
Quite helpful	5 (16.67)	6 (20.00)	8 (26.67)	19 (21.11)
Not helpful	2 (6.67)	59 (16.67)	1 (3.33)	8 (8.89)
Total	30 (100)	30(100)	30 (100)	90 (100)

Role Women in Economic and Social Affairs of the Family Welfare: In Table 3, majority of the respondents (73.33%) who worked as a civil servant has a level of income above Rp. 1.5 million per month. Meanwhile, 14 respondents (46.67%) who were traders predominantly earned as much as between Rp. 810,000 - Rp. 1.5 million per month. A total of 18 (60%). Of the respondents who worked as an employee/private employees have an income above Rp. 1.5 million per month. Out of the total 90 overall respondents, as many as 49 women (54.44%) earned Rp.1, 500,000 per month. Results showed that the level of income of the respondents turned out to help and support the daily family costs and expenses. Majority of respondents (70%) confirmed that their high income working in the public sector is helpful in fulfillment the daily needs of the family such as paying school fees, clothing, food and health treatment (Table 3).

A qualitative interviews conducted on a few individuals also supported the fact that a working women did contribute to the family household income. For example, among others, (a) FD, J, ML (husband), said: "My wife's income is helpful in meeting the needs of everyday family both for school children as well as the

cost for family treatment if we got sick, (b) DF, G, SB (son), said: "moms work quite helpful in supplementing the family income so it is very helpful in meeting our needs, for example in paying school fees and other school needs.

Despite the working wives (63 women, 70%) have successfully carried out their dual roles in managing the family and as public sector workers, only 8% of the respondents still unable to devote themselves in carrying the two duties due to some in-house issues with the husband or having difficulties in managing time (Table 4). Perhaps, the government or private agencies allocated some flexi job schedules for this group of working wife so as they both benefited their office job as well as taking care of their families at home.

Nearly 27.78% of the women were having resistance from their husbands to work either in the public or private sectors. The husbands felt that it is their duty and responsibility to go to work and earn a living to support the family despite the wives may support the family too by working. A total of 43 respondents (47.78%) experienced difficulties in managing time while 22 respondents (24.44%) believed that it is a problem if they work as well as doing housework. However, majority of the respondents (54, 60%) still remain active in their social group or voluntary work such as PKK, gathering, Darma Women and Majlis Ta'lim while working in the various sectors (Table 5). This group of women still manages to find time to socialize with their neighborhood during their leisure times and this activity did not interfere with their core business as a working wife. Only very few working woman (8, 8.89%) never participate in the social community group due to the limited time at home when they got back from work.

Generally, it can be argued that the role of women working in the public sector can also play multiple roles in both economic and social activities. Some of the respondents hold very high positions in the public sector and thus managed to financially contribute to the family welfare and well-being. There was a significant relationship between the respondents as the principal income earner (independent variable) with an increase in the quality of family welfare (the dependent variable). This relationship is evident from the contribution in meeting the needs of families, especially in financing children school education, safety and health and in meeting their daily needs. Based on Table 6, it can be indicated that there is a significant relationship between income and meeting family needs where the higher the income, the more women can contribute to help meet the needs of

Table 4: Difficulties of the different types of working wives towards supporting the family

Indicator	Type of Work			Total
	Official	Merchant	Private employees	
Resistance				
from husbands	11 (36.67)	10 (33.33)	4 (13.33)	25 (27.78)
Difficult to divide time	12 (40.0)	15 (50)	16 (53.33)	43 (47.78)
Household Tasks	7 (23.33)	5 (16.67)	10 (33.33)	22 (24.44)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)

Table 5: Percentage of respondents serving social community group activities (PKK, Arisan, Darma Women and Assembly Ta'lim)

Indicator	Type of Work			Total
	Official	Merchant	Private employees	
Always Follow	23 (76.67%)	10 (33.33%)	21 (70.00%)	54 (60.00%)
Sometimes	4 (13.33%)	16 (53.33%)	8 (26.66%)	28 (31.11%)
Never	3 (10.00%)	4 (13.33%)	1 (3.33%)	8 (8.89%)
Total	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	90 (100%)

Table 6: Relationships of activities versus the family welfare economics

Position	Income Level			Total
	High	Moderate	Low	
Low	9 (30%)	8 (26.67%)	-	17 (18.89%)
Moderate	18 (60%)	8 (26.67%)	4 (13.33%)	30 (33.33%)
High	22 (73.33%)	14 (46.67%)	7 (23.33%)	43 (47.78%)
Total	49	30	11	90 (100%)

Table 7: Relationships of respondent's participation in social work and family welfare

Participation Respondent	Family Welfare			Total
	High	Moderate	Low	
Always Follow	23 (53.49%)	10 (47.62%)	21 (80.77%)	54 (60.00%)
Sometimes	16 (37.21%)	8 (38.10%)	4 (15.38%)	28 (31.11%)
Never	4 (9.30%)	3 (14.28%)	1 (3.85%)	8 (8.89%)
Total	43 (100%)	21 (100%)	26 (100%)	90 (100%)

their families. It has been reported that majority of the women is able to face the challenges in their career path as well as supporting their family household income [12].

Women involved in social activities through social gatherings and assemblies such as Tailem and Dharma had more broad minds and gain additional knowledge in the housing and social environment. The results of the study showed that respondents are increasingly active in community activities and that is expected to have an impact on improving the quality of the family. The high participation of women in social activities were closely linked with the welfare of the family as found from Table 7.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that women play a significant role in the economic and social development of a community especially in the financial support for the family well-being. There is a significant relationship between the activity and participation of women in the social economic and welfare activities in the households. It is suggested that future work should be emphasized on how women should play their role in the private sector transformation towards higher productivity and economic growth of the country.

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