Unearthing the Role of Female Breadwinners in Family Resilience During a Crisis: A Case Study in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Community in Tewang Pajangan, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 can negatively impact family resilience as the pandemic causes social disruptions and mental distress, whether due to financial insecurity, physical distancing or confinement. Based on previous studies, such impacts were disproportionately felt by vulnerable families, including those with female breadwinners. This study is based on the impact assessment of aid deployment to the most marginalized families in Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) communities in Tewang Pajangan Village, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, twenty-five households, some of whom have women as their main breadwinners. This study aims further to understand the family resilience of the aid recipients. Qualitative data gathering method was employed, which were mostly conducted through interviews with four female panners and village head, along with field observation. It is found that the family of female panners being studied experience financial insecurity due to more competitive working environment, a decline in income and increase in the price of daily needs as the supply chain is disrupted by the large-scale social restrictions. Some families are more vulnerable due to physical illness, children's mental health status and spouse's drug addiction. These contribute to the family dynamics and resilience, seen from many aspects, namely emotion, control, meaning and maintenance. However, despite these adversities, the female breadwinners play a central role in their family resilience during the pandemic. Among their emerging characteristics is a determination to survive and investment to the family.

Keywords: Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining, Family Resilience, Female Breadwinners.

1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 leads to various social disruptions and mental distress, mostly due to job loss, financial insecurity, social distancing and confinement. In Indonesia, the development of COVID-19 cases pushed the government to implement Large-scale Social Restrictions (Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar-PSBB) since the end of March 2020. Although the PSBB had been eased during what the government called as PSBB transition (intended to be a transition phase from strict PSBB to the new normal era) from July to August 2020, it was then again being reinforced due to the concerning increase in the number of cases during the transition period. Implementation of PSBB was seen by many as not being able to keep the infection rate down, while at the same time also hurting the economy. The country's economy deteriorates, projected to contract up to 1.6% in 2020 with further down to 2% if confinement continues [1]. The unemployment rate was predicted to reach 9.2% by the end of 2020, the highest rate in more than a decade [2]. The trend is also predicted to be persistent up to 2021 [3]. Low-income groups, those who are vulnerable to poverty, and workers in the informal sector are reported to be the ones who are the most severely impacted by COVID-19 [1].

School closure during PSBB is implemented nationally, although some re-openings have also been indicated in some regions during the PSBB transition phase. Ministry of Education and Culture advises sub-national government to maintain a study at home policy if the trend of COVID-19 transmission increases within their area [4]. Yet, many found online studying as more challenging due to a lack of social interactions with peers and additional assignments. For some
households, access to device or internet connection is scarcer, furthering the effectiveness of the online school arrangement [5]. Study at home also means additional responsibility for the parents in adapting their children with the online educational mechanism. Most of the time, mothers are the one who bears the new responsibilities [6], heightening the risk of mental distress among caregivers.

Women's vulnerabilities during the confinement period can also be seen from the increase in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) during PSBB period. Indonesian Women Association for Justice (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan-LBH APIK) – an organization that provides legal assistance for women and other marginalized groups in society, along with working towards legal reform at the local level – reported 110 cases of domestic violence for three months PSBB period, from March 16 to June 20, 2020 [7]. This number is already half of the total reported cases in 2019. Based on its online survey on Changes in Household Dynamics during the COVID-19 Pandemic Period, National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) found that women are more vulnerable to domestic violence, particularly those who earned less than IDR 5 million per month, worked in the informal sector, aged 31 to 40-year-old, had been married, and resided in 10 provinces with high COVID-19 cases [8].

At the family level, the pandemic can negatively impact family resilience. Family resilience defines as the capacity of the family to overcome and rebound from adversity [9]. Pinpoint three family subsystems [10] that are vulnerable during this crisis, namely marital, parental and sibling relationship. In terms of marital relationship, stressful events heighten the risk of marital dissolution. A current pandemic can also exacerbate pre-existing marital problems, particularly if accompanied by other issues, such as parental issues, partner's illness and financial insecurity [11]. Caregivers' mental distress, in turn, can disrupt their parenting style [10], heighten the potential of parent-child conflict. Moreover, during confinement, there might be changes in routine, rituals and rules, some of which were not a problem before the pandemic. The conflict between spouses, along with favouritism, can also interrupt the sibling relationship [12] [13].

In Indonesia, COVID-19 is also found to affect family resilience, whether in terms of financial and food insecurity or mental health. Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB) conducted a study on family resilience to 1,337 respondents who were identified as coming from educated and not poor households. The study revealed that only 38.7% of respondents had savings for the next six months, while more than a half (53%) had it for less than two months [14]. In the second month of PSBB, the condition was similar. High unemployment was found to be the cause of the household's financial insecurity. Archives various emotions [15] felt by respondents who resided in the urban area. The result showed that the score on resilience and positive emotions were higher compared to negative emotions.

From studies on family resilience in Indonesia, it can be seen that existing studies focus more on urban societies and those with no financial issues before COVID-19. However, even in this kind of households, families experience economic pressure due to the pandemic. The condition can potentially be more alarming in low-income families as families with pre-existing vulnerabilities might be more severely impacted by the pandemic [10]. With consideration to the lack of data on family resilience in vulnerable households, this study attempts to fill the gap by focusing more on low-income families with female breadwinners that can be considered as even more vulnerable due to unequal gender relations in society. This paper intends to first, understand the family resilience in specific Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) communities that reside in Tewang Pajangan Village, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, and; second, identify the role of female breadwinners in the family resilience of such households.

**Context: ASGM in Tewang Pajangan Village, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia.**

Tewang Pajangan is a village in Central Kalimantan. The population consists of indigenous Dayak and migrants from various ethnicities, such as Banjar, Java, Batak, and Toraja. Nowadays, more migrants reside in the village due to involvement in mining activities or placement as civil servants. Over three-quarters of the population (80%) is Christian, most of whom are Dayak. The rest is Muslim (15% and mostly migrants) and Hindu Kaharingan (5% and indigenous people). People in Tewang Pajangan commonly speak Dayak, Banjarnese, Javanese and Indonesian. The nearest village is...
approximately one km from the mining site. The available transportation mode includes motorbike, car (for mining equipment), by foot and ferry. Mobile network is available but flaky coverage.

Early and primary education facilities are also available in the village, such as early childhood education, kindergarten, elementary school and junior high school. Public health service, such as the Community Health Center, is available in the village and equipped with medical first aid, outpatient, and maternity service facilities. For those who need to be hospitalized, they are commonly referred to the regional hospital in Kuala Kurun (about 27 km away, 40 minutes by car), Palangka Raya (about 177.6 km away, 4 hours by car), or those in another province (Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan Province, about 370 km away, 8 hours by car). Electricity is available 24 hours from the state electricity enterprise. Water is available from refilled water sellers/shops in the village and well; no piping service available.

Before gold mining activities are rampant as the current stage, the local communities mined gold by panning in the rivers. Migrants then introduced more advanced mining technology from outside the village in the mid-1980s. As a result, the community began to mine with dredges along the Kahayan River. Mining activities on land have been active since the early 1990s up to today. In the last three decades, the community’s livelihood and economic activities have been dominated by the ASGM sector, along with other types of livelihoods, such as agriculture and civil servant. The number of local miners commonly increase during gold rush and school holiday. The number of migrant miners, on the other hand, often spikes after Eid holiday as they bring families from back home.

Miners in Tewang Pajangan Village are dominated by men, with approximately 500 people aged 20 to 40- year-old. The number of female miners is only 10% of men, the majority aged 25 to 40-year-old. Child labour can also be found in Tewang Pajangan Village in mining areas, but the number has never been documented. Young men commonly help their parents in operating mining equipment. On the other hand, young women and infants are less likely to be found in mining sites. Extended families commonly take young children to care at home.

Full-time miners are miners who work in river dredges or performing hydraulic mining. The owner of the technology is the mining company in the area Tewang Pajangan. These types of job pay them up to IDR 2.5 million per week. Men and women are paid a similar amount of money, except for mower. Miners who work in mowing activities will usually get IDR 300,000 to IDR 800,000 per 3 days, depending on the gold they collect. For women, another source of income is by working as a cook in the mining site. They will be paid between IDR 50,000 to IDR 150,000 per day. As a comparison, the minimum regional payment in the area during 2020 is IDR 2,936,816 per month or IDR 97,894 per day.

Gender division of labour is indicated within this community. The majority of Dayak men work in ASGM and agriculture, while migrants work as miners and traders. As miners, male miners’ works are often seen as more decadent compared to that of women as they are involved in all mining processes. Dayak women commonly work as farmers, homemakers and miners during the gold rush. In contrast, female migrants often work as household assistants, cooks, traders and homemakers. These women commonly work as hydraulic miners at the mining site, sluicing miners, panners, and cooks. They use mercury in the process and sell it with their husband. Some of them work individually, and others do so in a group.

Considering the gender division of labour and the culture in Tewang Pajangan Village, some gender issues in its ASGM communities are identified below.

1. A low number of female miners since ASGM activities are still considered as “men’s world”.
2. Criticism towards equal pay of male and female miners as women are often less skilled.
3. Female miners have less access to mining capital and equipment.
4. There is no access to basic needs/facilities (e.g. sanitation, child-care facilities and meeting area).
5. Some women (e.g. widows) have less access to credit or fund as they have no guarantee.
6. Women are often not included in the decision-making process related to mining issues.
2. METHOD

This research was divided into two stages. The first stage was based on the assessment of financial aid deployment by an international civil organization society to 25 households in Tewang Pajangan Village, most of whom had female panners as primary breadwinners in the family. Four of them were being interviewed after receiving aid (see respondents' profile in Box 1 below), along with the village head. This stage was conducted in August 2020. Interviews revolved around the testimonies of their household's condition during COVID-19 and the impacts brought by such assistance to it.

Table 1. Respondents' Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Dependents</th>
<th>Other supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lenggai</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Two children aged 9 and 4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bawi</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Husband aged 65-year-old, two grandchildren, aged 16 and 12</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamalak</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Husband aged 73-year-old and three children (with mental health issues)</td>
<td>Children's financial support and Family Hope Program (PKH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kameluh</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Husband and four children aged 13, 12, 9 and 6</td>
<td>PKH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second phase was carried out in October 2020, a series of follow up interviews with the primary respondents, the four female panners. Interviews were conducted via phone due to COVID-19. In this stage, the interviews focused more on the four aspects of family resilience [16], namely family risks, vulnerabilities, protection and adaptation.

Each interview lasted for about an hour and was being taped. Respondents were given verbal and written informed consent before the interview. Among the critical points in the informed consent was using pseudonyms to protect respondents' identities. Chosen names were commonly used by women of Dayak origin in Central Kalimantan. Data being gathered was then analyzed using coding in four stages: initial code, concept, category and theory.

In addition to interviews, it is also made use of field observation previously conducted by a CSO working with these female panners for several years – where one of the authors works at the moment. Their gender mapping mostly became the basis of data in contextualization section. This data, in turn, was also considered when conducting the analysis.

3. RESULT

The result refers to the Family Resilience Model [16]. Based on this model, family resilience is portrayed through four aspects, namely family risk, family vulnerabilities, family protection and family adaptation. Family risk is a combination of various family stressors that can lead to unfavourable adaptation outcomes [17]. Family vulnerability refers to conditions in which a family is more likely to experience hardship [18]. Family vulnerability is often associated with risk, but in some cases, what is seen as the vulnerability can also play a protective role. Family protection is family resources, processes or mechanisms that can prevent the family from maladaptation potentially caused by family risks [19]. Below subsections elaborate each aspect separately.

3.1. Risk

Financial insecurity becomes the main hurdle of all four households. This is mostly due to a decline in income and increased spending as a result of decreased mining activity. However, some households also receive financial aid, whether from the government or civil society organizations. Although such financial assistance is not always received in a routine-basis, it keeps the households floating for some time.

Most households are dual-income families. However, due to COVID-19, some of the respondents stated that their husbands were discharged from their jobs. Take, for instance, the case of Ibu Lenggai whose husband worked as a construction worker. He was unemployed for quite some time at the beginning of the pandemic, “It was difficult for my husband to find a job, particularly at the beginning of the pandemic, because not many people needed construction service. But, it's recently getting back to normal.”
People are beginning to build houses again, so my husband starts working again."

It is also getting more challenging for the female panners themselves to earn money as much as the pre-COVID-19 period. The influx of miners from other villages during COVID-19 – presumably due to the idea that ASGM activities can provide quick cash during this challenging period – increases the competitiveness in the workplace, "COVID-19 affects my household's income. It is more difficult now to mine as it is more competitive at work. We have more miners from other villages. They commonly work in areas where I usually mine." (Ibu Bawi) For others, COVID-19 only worsens the pre-existing condition, "I get used to living like this. This is how our family's life pre and during COVID-19. It was already difficult for our family." (Ibu Kamalak)

On the one hand, difficulties in finding jobs, lack of demand, and increased competitiveness contribute to the decline in family income. On the other hand, these households experience an increase in spending. They have to spend more on children's education and basic needs. Additional cost for children’s education is mostly due to the change in study arrangement. Students have to study online with the school closure, leading to the need for purchasing internet quota and handphone? for online learning. For most of the families, it affects their household's spending quite significantly. Increased spending is also attributed to the increase in basic needs price. This might be due to the idea that Central Kalimantan still relies on food supply from South Kalimantan. With the current pandemic, mobility restrictions that are being implemented disrupt the supply chain. This, in turn, increases the price of the commodities.

3.2. Vulnerabilities

With the households facing financial constraints, it is also not easy for them to find alternative income-generating activities. Some conditions were considered as putting the breadwinners – who are mostly the female panners – in more vulnerable positions, such as age, physical condition, lack of extended family's support and unequal gender relations (as elaborated in context section). It is getting more difficult for them to get back to work when they are not feeling well, whether due to age or physical condition, "When I got sick, I would not be panning. I'm afraid of contracting COVID-19 as I'm already old. It's easier for the elderly to contract the virus. Before COVID-19, I would go to work even when I was sick. I would not worry about any contagious disease. I could get IDR 3-4 million per month. Now, it is only about IDR 2 million." (Ibu Bawi)

It is also not always easy to find assistance when needed. Ibu Lenggai mentioned that seeking help from her husband's extended family was not always in her option, "There is this extended family from my husband's side. However, we are not that close, so we rarely help each other." When money is hard, some avoid not to lend money from unreliable sources. They are worried about not being able to pay back, except Ibu Kameluh and her husband. They decide to get more money by lending some from her husband's boss. They pay back by letting the next month's salary being deducted, "We often lend money from my husband's boss who will be paid through his salary deduction. We are lucky that it comes with no interest. In some cases, my husband only brings IDR 600,000 home. The rest has already been used for paying back our debt."

3.3. Protective Factors

As mentioned previously, financial aid can help fulfil these households' essential needs during the pandemic, albeit some that are not on a routine basis. Some households receive Family Hope Program (Program Keluarga Harapan or PKH) – a social assistance program by the Ministry of Social Affairs as part of the poverty reduction program. The four household respondents also received aid from a civil society organization that was seen to help them make ends meet. Some have children who have had their income and often sent them some money, a beneficial additional income for the family during the pandemic.

Some respondents mention that their marital relationships are somewhat improved during the pandemic. Take, for instance, the case of Ibu Bawi. Fully aware of her and her husband's age, she mentioned that they take care of each other more during the pandemic, "We care more about each other. When I was just sitting in silence, he would ask if I was sick. He would ask me to take some rest if I was so. I also do the same thing to him. We are both old now, and we have to be able to take care of our health because we are more prone to the virus."

It is also found that support from family and closeness can serve as protective factors during
the pandemic. Although an extended family can also be one of the vulnerability factors, it can also provide emotional support to some household respondents. Nevertheless, the vital role of the nuclear family is unparalleled, "I live with my husband and children. My kids have grown up and married. We have extended families, but they rarely assist. If we have a problem, we are the ones who solve it. No help from them (the extended families)." (Ibu Kamalak)

3.4. Adaptation

Adaptation here is categorized further into four sub-aspects: maintenance, control, emotion and meaning. Maintenance refers to strategies adopted by households to keep the family together and a whole amid challenges during the pandemic, namely financial insecurity, physical health, and change in routine due to COVID-19. In regards to financial insecurity, these households try to reduce spending by being very careful in arranging their spending. The respondents even told their kids not to go outside too often as they understood well that children would tend to buy snacks when playing outside. Some respondents also harvest vegetables from their home garden or seek for ones in the forest, "When we receive less income, I will reduce our spending: seek vegetables in the woods, pick some chilli and spices in the backyard, and purchase cheaper dish." (Ibu Bawi). This by also trying to maintain physical health by taking vitamins or others. For some respondents, their daily routine now also includes accompanying children studying at home.

In terms of control, change in roles in the household was rare to be found. Most of these women also conduct most of the housework, although they were also the family's primary breadwinners. Some have their husband helping with the domestic works; some don't as their husband is not physically capable in doing so, and; some have their children assist the tasks, "Some of the chores are carried out by my child. My husband does not help as his right arm and leg cannot be used anymore. All he can do by himself right now is only eating and taking a bath. The rest is for me to do. When my husband was still healthy, he always helped me with child-care and other domestic works." (Ibu Kamalak)

Regarding emotion, emotion-focused coping and seeking others' support are among the family members' two strategies to keep oneself sane during the pandemic. Take, for instance, in the case of Ibu Bawi. Ibu Bawi admitted that in some cases, conditions at home could be stressful for her. At a time like this, she prefers to get out of the house to calm herself down. For her, being productive can be a solution in this kind of situation, "Back then (before COVID-19), when I had a problem with my husband or children, I just went outside. I did not want to make a scene. They were getting off to work, doing panning or looking for some plants in the woods. That is how I dealt with stress. Others might find comfort in recreational activities, but that was not for me. My way of dealing with stress was by being productive." However, things change during the pandemic, "I got more afraid to get out of the house (during COVID-19 pandemic). Even when I got stressed out, I just went to the woods or the backyard."

When it comes to meaning, these women are great believers in their values. To survive the family hardships, most of which have even started before the pandemic, these women turn to their life values, namely perseverance, religiosity, acceptance, and never give up. Another source of strength, for them, is their children. All these values were not corroded despite their difficulty in life, "Still the same. I do believe that the love I have for my children gives me strength and patience. I believe that God will listen to my prayer. The most important thing is never to give up. There is always a way." (Ibu Kameluh)

From the elaboration of the results, the lives in the four households being studied – which are told through female panners' narratives – are not always comfortable. This COVID-19 pandemic then worsens the already difficult situation. Nevertheless, despite the challenges, these female panners strive to survive, mostly through their actual efforts and beliefs in their values: patience, religiosity, acceptance and never give up. Such attitudes are also seen by Walsh (2020) as the important ones to be cultivated during this pandemic. He argued that family shared beliefs are at the heart of family resilience. According to him, fostering family beliefs can be conducted by meaning-making, finding hope (positive outlook) and employing the transcendence/spiritual approach.

These female panners' determination to survive is mostly seen during the deployment of COVID-19 aid from an international CSO through its local partner at the ground working with these women for several years. The financial
aid would be deployed by one of the two alternative schemes: for the international CSO to purchase the left-over gold or by cash for work. The local partner then consulted the village head. Result of the discussion was for the female panners to conduct the cash for work scheme. They were happy with the arrangement, earning money by conducting some service works, such as cleaning public facilities. Previous research has also mentioned how women’s determination to survive contributes to family resilience [20].

Another value mostly seen in these female panners is their love for their (grand) children. Most of what they do and earn, they will give back to their loved ones, mostly in the form of a child’s education and basic needs. This, in turn, becomes among their main motivations to keep going despite life’s challenges. It contributes to family resilience. This finding also confirms previous studies that women often invest back to their families [21].

3.5. Conclusion

COVID-19 has a significant impact on vulnerable families, particularly in terms of financial insecurity. In some cases, this condition has deteriorated when intertwining with pre-existing vulnerabilities, such as age, physical condition, lack of support from extended families and unequal gender relations. In other cases, families are protected by the availability of additional income, the improved marital relationship during COVID-19 and cohesiveness in relationship within the nuclear or extended family. Facing these conditions, each household adopts various coping mechanisms to manage the four categories in family adaptation, namely maintenance, control, emotion and meaning. It is found the vital role female breadwinners play in the family meaning system. Their determination to survive and firm intention to invest back to their families are found to be central in fostering family resilience. Further study should be conducted to explore the impact for the other family members, including the dependants.

AUTHORS’ CONTRIBUTIONS

Susilorini, B. conceived the research idea. Witi, V. conducted the data collection. Herlusia, S. and Paramita, T. performed the analysis and wrote the paper. All authors reviewed and revised the draft.

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