



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE SALE OF BORAN RICE IN LAMONGAN INDONESIA

Dea Hernawati Yuniar¹, Edi Dwi Riyanto², Nadya Afdholy³

Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Airlangga^{1,2,3}

dea.hernawati.yuniar-2020@fib.unair.ac.id

Artikel info:

Submitted: 7-06-2024; Review: 8-07-2024; Accepted: 19-11-2024

Abstract

Women's empowerment and equality in the economic sector have become widespread due to the successful implementation of the feminist movement. In socialist feminism, the oppression of women in the world of work was rampant, and this has slowly diminished with the empowerment of women in the social and economic sectors. The selling of boran rice by women only in Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia, has a uniqueness because it is one of Lamongan's traditional foods. This research aims to discuss women's empowerment and gender equality in the production and selling practice of boran rice in Lamongan. This research uses descriptive qualitative methods and a phenomenological approach. The data taken in this study is from interviews with boran rice sellers in Lamongan. The results of this research suggest that boran rice sellers do not mind being supporters of the family economy. The women empowerment act is found in the association that houses boran rice sellers in the west of the Lamongan plaza. The gender equality found in the opportunity for women to have a job. This reflects that women and men have their own roles, and their skills are equally useful.

Keywords: *Boran Rice; Gender Equality; Women Empowerment*

Abstrak

Pemberdayaan dan kesetaraan perempuan di sektor ekonomi berkembang pesat karena adanya Gerakan feminisme. Dalam Gerakan feminisme sosialis, penindasan terhadap perempuan di dunia kerja merajalela perlahan-lahan berkurang dengan adanya pemberdayaan perempuan di sektor sosial dan ekonomi. Nasi *boran* merupakan makanan tradisional Lamongan, Jawa Timur, yang telah menjadi sebuah komoditas. Keunikan dari komoditas ini ialah penjualan nasi *boran* hanya dilakukan oleh perempuan di Lamongan, Jawa Timur yang tidak dapat ditemukan di daerah lain. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendiskusikan pemberdayaan perempuan dan aspek kesetaraan gender dalam penjualan nasi *boran* di Lamongan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dan pendekatan fenomenologi. Data yang diambil dalam penelitian ini berasal dari hasil wawancara dengan penjual nasi *boran* di Lamongan. Hasil wawancara penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penjual nasi *boran* tidak keberatan menjadi salah satu pendukung ekonomi keluarga. Upaya pemberdayaan perempuan ini terdapat pada paguyuban yang menaungi para penjual nasi *boran* di Lamongan, dan penyerahan tanggung jawab penjualan nasi *boran* sepenuhnya kepada perempuan. Hal ini mencerminkan bahwa perempuan dan laki-laki memiliki perannya masing-masing, dan keterampilan yang dimiliki masing-masing memiliki manfaat yang sama.

Kata Kunci: Nasi Boran; Kesetaraan Gender; Pemberdayaan Perempuan

INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, there are opportunities for women to do what they desire, such as becoming an influencer, someone who has an audience on social media and has a significant impact on their followers (Anjani & Irwansyah, 2020), becoming a politician, or becoming a business owner. Social media has become a good platform and influence for women to express themselves. Along with this, the opportunities for gender role equality are opening and giving women more freedom to do many things in this digital era. Commerce is one of the activities that can be done by anyone, both men and women. This supports the opportunity for women in Lamongan to run their own businesses.

Women empowerment aims to support women to have their own activities, separate from the demands of domestic work, so that women can have a sense of ownership. In the idea of being a good mother, women are often expected to only be caretakers of husbands and children, which strongly opposes the efforts of mothers to have jobs that are separate from domestic affairs (Dewi, 2011). Whereas in the idea of female individualization by McRobbie, it explains that women today must have their own choices and goals, including choosing activities or jobs that they like (McRobbie, 2008). Wibowo also stated that women's empowerment can be supported by emphasizing individuals or providing opportunities for women to make their own decisions or in a group or association (Wibowo et al., 2022). The socialist feminism movement is a movement that supports women to get equal income and treatment in employment (Armstrong, n.d. in Naples, 2021). The feminist movement that supports women having their own activities encourages the creation of socialist feminism.

Gender equality in the economy has been championed since after the First World War. Women workers from western countries such as Canada sought to establish an ideal environment for women as a form of resistance to the injustices experienced by women (Moynagh & Forestell, 2011). The struggle for women's position to get the opportunity to work has gone through many processes to shape the current conditions where women get equal rights with men in employment, such as getting paid at work, being able to own their own business, and getting leave rights. In terms of socialist feminism, socialist feminists seek to unify feminist analysis of gender inequality, social reproduction, and economic reproduction. They develop a broader view of economic roles, social reproduction, and gender oppression as interactive contributions to gender oppression as an interactive contribution to women's oppression (Armstrong, n.d. in Naples, 2021).

This then led to this research, which raises the issue of women's empowerment and gender equality in the sale of *boran* rice in Lamongan. All the *boran* rice sellers in Lamongan are women, and sometimes they sell *boran* in different shifts. From 7 a.m. in the morning to 11 p.m. at night, *boran* rice can be found in every corner of Lamongan city, in different places, and with different chili sauce flavors for each person.

Lamongan has various traditional cuisines that can be used as a source of income for its people, one of which is *boran* rice. *Boran* rice is one of the traditional foods that can only be found in Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia. *Boran* rice is one of traditional food commodity that has been recognized as an icon in Lamongan. In its marketing, the sale of *boran* rice has been carried out for generations and has even become a batik motif that represents the originality of Lamongan's identity (Ramadhan, 2021). *Boran* rice sellers

in Lamongan are women only. *Boran* rice can be found in various places in Lamongan City; they usually sell communally or in groups in different clusters. *Boran* rice has been sold for generations, from generation to generation, which makes the taste of *boran* rice unique to each person (Pamungkas, 2015). This also supports the existence of *boran* rice in Lamongan until modern times.

In the previous study, Rochmania, (2018) suggested that most of the *boran* rice sellers are women. This statement supports the purpose of this research to examine women's empowerment and gender equality in the sale of *boran* rice in Lamongan. The *boran* rice sellers, which only consist of women, are one of the interesting things that can be witnessed when visiting Lamongan City. With the above background, a question can be formulated: "How are women's empowerment and gender equality portrayed in the sale of *boran* rice in Lamongan?" This research will focus on discussing the attempt to empower women and elements of gender equality that exist in the sale of *boran* rice, which is dominated by women in Lamongan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. *Boran* Rice

Boran rice is one of traditional foods in Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia. *Boran* rice consists of many components in one portion, namely rice, rempeyek (crackers made from rice flour), urap-urap (consisting of chili sauce made from grated coconut and vegetables (usually cassava leaves) that have been steamed), as well as the typical sambal *boran* and various side dishes such as chicken, milkfish, tuna, sili fish, chicken offal (liver, intestines, eggs), omelet, salted eggs, otak-otak, tofu, and tempeh (Farrinabhan, 2016). The sale of *boran* rice has spread to various areas in the city of Lamongan, making this food quite popular within the city of Lamongan. The popularity of *Boran* Rice is also influenced by the purchase of *Boran* Rice. Research conducted by Syaikhudin (2021) stated that the purchase of *Boran* Rice is influenced by internal and external factors. In marketing *Boran* Rice itself, according to Alfirmansyah, it has four important factors, namely the level of spiciness, packaging, net weight, and concentration of the sambal (Alfirmansyah et al., 2022). In another perspective, *boran* rice has also become the identity of Lamongan; apart from being the inspiration for batik motifs, *boran* rice has also inspired a new traditional dance, the *boran* rice dance. The *boran* dance is inspired by the daily activities of people who sell *boran* rice, including the cooking process and the selling process (Rochmania, 2018).

2. Gender Equality

Gender equality is a theory that supports equality in rights and obligations for both genders, women and men. In line with this definition, Fraser says that gender is not only limited to social class or status but a combination of both. In this case, Fraser explains that equality in gender roles also includes justice in economic inequality and recognition of a culture (Fraser, 2014). Gender equality in the economy supports women's own prosperity in employment. After the end of the First World War, the feminist movement to provide work opportunities for women increased drastically. This

period also saw an emphasis on raising universal working standards for women as well as rules to regulate women's income for equality in employment, such as severance pay while on maternity leave (Forestell, 2012). This has supported women to still have the freedom to work and earn income until modern times.

3. Women Empowerment

Women empowerment movement refers to the supportive act towards women for their right of freedom of choice (Reshi & Sudha, 2022). The women empowerment movement aimed to empower women to have their own justice and chance to bear activities including the empowerment in the economic sector. The women empowerment in economic sector ensuring women to have the chance to work, and get their own allowance. Women's economic empowerment includes equal ownership of the marketplace, resource control, decent labor, and control over their personal time, lives, and bodies. This strengthens women in decision-making, household decision-making, and political participation (Mahbub, 2021).

METHOD

This research will use a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative methods are usually used to analyze experiences of individuals and how they respond to those experiences, while phenomenology is an approach in qualitative methods that focuses on the relationship between a person and their experiences (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The data sources in this research are the results of observations and interviews, while the data analyzed in this research are the results of interviews with respondents who are sellers of *boran* rice in Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia. The data collection technique is carried out by observing in the field and then the results of these observations are analyzed in depth and interpreted.

This research was conducted in Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia, with a specific focus on Lamongan City. The city was especially chosen due to the high concentration of *boran* rice sellers compared to other areas, particularly smaller outskirts of Lamongan. Lamongan Regency, located in East Java, is predominantly known for its maritime commodities, as its northern border lies along the Java Sea. Being 49 kilometers away from Surabaya makes Lamongan a key site for cultural exchange and interactions among residents from diverse regions, especially the drivers of heavy loads. This strategic location also places Lamongan along important connecting routes, such as the Pantura (coastal) road, which links Surabaya to Lamongan in a long-distance track. These well-established connections make Lamongan a great place for thriving businesses. As a result, *boran* rice is influenced not only by the maritime culture, but also by various cultural elements brought in through exchanges and interactions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Women in Selling *Boran* Rice in Lamongan

Researchers conducted interviews with three *boran* rice sellers that researchers could find in Lamongan City. The first respondent is Mrs. Nasri, one of the *boran* rice

sellers in the west of Plaza Lamongan. Mrs. Nasri is also a member of the Plaza West *boran* rice association which has developed since 2016 as a place for *boran* rice sellers who sell at that location. Mrs. Nasri has been selling *boran* rice for approximately 10 years, replacing her mother who passed away. Bu Nasri's *boran* rice recipe is a hereditary recipe from her family. Mrs. Nasri explained that the reason she sells *boran* rice is because selling has been done for generations. In the processing and selling process, Mrs. Nasri explained that she is assisted by her children and husband. Her husband is responsible for processing the fish, from buying, cooking, to processing it so that it is ready to be cooked with *boran* sauce. Mrs. Nasri's son oversees making rempeyek, while Mrs. Nasri is in charge of continuing the processing of the fish to be cooked with the seasoning she has made as well.

After the rice and *boran* sauce and other equipment are ready, Mrs. Nasri will go to her selling place, Mrs. Nasri said that she sells from 2pm to 11pm. During this *boran* rice selling activity, Mrs. Nasri does not object to being a woman who works and supports the family economy. Mrs. Nasri's feelings of happiness and satisfaction come from days when she sells out, as well as days when she gets a lot of orders. Ms. Nasri also does not mind if sometimes her sales are not always in demand, because according to her, this is one part of selling. Mrs. Nasri also explained that she felt happy doing this selling activity because she could have her own income, and of course it could support the family economy. When the researcher asked why *boran* rice sellers were dominated by women, Mrs. Nasri explained that this was an effort to empower women, "Instead of doing nothing at home, it's better to just sell, make a profit." was Mrs. Nasri's explanation. Mrs. Nasri also said that Paguyuban *boran* rice Barat Plaza Lamongan is also one of the places to empower the women *boran* rice traders in the Kaotan area, Lamongan, and to preserve *boran* rice culinary.

The second respondent is Mbok Nduk. Mbok Nduk sells at the east side of Lamongan Town Square, in front of Toko Gresik. Mbok Nduk sells from 5pm to 11pm. Mbok Nduk's initial motivation for selling *boran* rice was her desire to help her family's economy. She has been selling for three years ago, in 2019. Mbok Nduk also expressed her reason for selling *boran* rice was because she wanted to help the family economy, helping her husband in contributing to providing support in the economic aspect. "Instead of just staying at home, I saw other women selling *boran* rice, the profit was promising, so I joined in selling *boran* rice." is Mbok Nduk's expression for her reason for selling *boran* rice.

Mbok Nduk also said that selling *boran* rice is an effort to empower women and a means for women to have their own activities and income. Mbok Nduk said that she prepares the *boran* rice by herself, from shopping, processing the fish, to cooking the *boran* sauce. She will be assisted by her husband and children if they have a day off. According to Mbok Nduk, the reason for the dominance of mothers in the sale of *boran* rice is because the structure of *boran* rice is more complex than fried rice or wrapped rice. Starting from the contents of the *boran* rice itself to fulfilling customers' wishes for the side dishes they order. Mbok Nduk also said that she doesn't mind doing this job at all because she feels happy to be able to help the family economy. Apart from selling,

Mbok Nduk also said that she still takes care of the household such as cleaning the house and other domestic work.

Furthermore, researchers also interviewed Mrs. Ti'ah, one of the *boran* rice sellers in the eastern part of Lamongan Square. Mrs. Ti'ah said she has been selling *boran* rice for around 15 years, and her *boran* rice recipe is a hereditary recipe. In addition to being hereditary, Mrs. Ti'ah also said the reason she sells *boran* rice is because she wants to help her family's economy. For the preparation of selling, from cooking to marketing, Mrs. Ti'ah is assisted by her siblings or children, while her husband's role in this process is to help deliver the shopping. Like others, Mrs. Ti'ah also said that she also did not mind being one of the family's economic supporters and working to sell *boran* rice. She also explained that this activity was carried out so that she had activities other than at home. Like Mbok Nduk, Mrs. Ti'ah also expressed why the sale of *boran* rice is dominated by mothers because according to her, the structure of *boran* rice is too complicated because of the many components in the *boran* rice.

DISCUSSION

The three respondents answered the researcher's questions well and responsively. The three respondents explained their reasons for selling *boran* rice and explained their willingness to work as *boran* rice sellers and explained that they had no problem working and becoming career women who earned income, to support the family economy. This can be attributed to the results of Herawati's research that women who work in the media interpret themselves as someone who is not negatively valued in contrast to male roles, and feel they are equal to men.

In this case, Herawati also suggests that women are treated fairly in their surrounding environment such as family. (Herawati, 2016 in Stellarosa & Silaban, 2019). This can also lead to the third respondent's statement that they feel happy to be able to help the family and husband's economy with their own income. The *boran* rice sellers feel they have ownership of something if they sell. After marriage, women tend to rarely feel personal ownership. It is stated in the research of Rosita that after marriage, the main power in the household is the husband, thus the wife tends to become housewives who only take care of their husbands and children at home (Rosita et al., 2021).

Boran rice is one of traditional foods in Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia. Mrs. Nasri stated that the association of *boran* rice sellers in the west of Plaza Lamongan is one of the strategies to empower women in Kaotan. This is because in the association, activities such as gathering or arisan are useful for strengthening relationships between members. This association is also a means for each member to receive empowerment such as assistance from PT Pasar in collaboration with the association, because according to Mrs. Nasri's testimony, this association has been included as one of the *boran* rice associations recognized by the government and *boran* rice has been chosen to become Lamongan's culinary icon. The preservation of this tradition is carried out by passing down the *boran* rice recipe and through traditional cooking methods (Pamungkas, 2015). Pamungkas also suggested that *boran* rice spread across other islands must be sold by Lamongan natives. The Association of West Plaza Lamongan *boran* rice sellers are also the same, which provides a means for *boran* rice sellers to become a forum full of support for fellow

women. Wibowo, stated that women's empowerment can be done by forming a community or association based on the same pleasure (Wibowo et al., 2022).

Equality in the *boran* rice sales process is associated with *boran* rice sellers, the majority of whom are women, being treated as men work, which is a common thing to find in Lamongan society. In the process of selling *boran* rice, the statements of the respondents were that their husbands only helped with some parts of the manufacturing process, but this was only stated by Mrs. Nasri, where she said that her husband helped process the side dishes, while for Mbok Nduk and Mrs. Ti'ah, their husband just helped to take the ingredients on the market, because their husbands had a main job to do. The reason why men do not participate directly in *boran* rice sales was stated by all three respondents, namely because of the complexity of making *boran* rice such as processing side dishes, making chili sauce, and the structure of *boran* rice which has various components. All three respondents said that men tend to sell simpler things such as fried rice. Although stated in this way, this research is only limited to identifying aspects of women's empowerment and gender equality in the process of selling *boran* rice and does not mention the role of women in a social condition. Further research on the role and representation of women in society in terms of the economy needs to be done to deepen the understanding of the perspectives of working women in representing their position.

With the influence of socialist feminist movement, women have gained more equality in employment, including cases where men assist with traditionally women's work. However, *boran* rice sellers face significant challenges especially since they typically operate in small clusters. One major challenge for *boran* rice sellers is securing a steady customer base. They often rely on loyal buyers to sustain their business due to fluctuating demand. To address this issue, they adopt a collaborative strategy, when faced with bulk orders, they seek help from fellow *boran* sellers within their cluster to fulfil the order. This not only ensures efficient service but also promotes the businesses of other sellers in the group. On the other hand, sellers who operate independently and outside of such clusters usually lack the same level of interaction and mutual support, which can limit their ability to adapt to challenges and grow their customer base.

Another major challenge is the rising cost of ingredients of *boran* rice, which forces sellers to raise their prices. This often leads to a loss of buyers, adding financial strain to their already precarious livelihoods. Through the lens of the socialist feminist movement, this challenge highlights the intersection of economic struggles and gendered labor. The *boran* sellers, who predominantly bear the burden of this trade, navigate these hardships by relying on community-based support system, such as sharing resources or collaboration. This cooperative approach embodies principles of collective resilience, a key aspect of socialist feminism, as it aims to reduce systemic inequalities by fostering solidarity and mutual aid among women.

CONCLUSION

With the culture of selling *boran* rice by women is being passed down to the next generation, it is also a testament that the commodity of selling *boran* rice in Lamongan contributes to women's empowerment and provides opportunities for women in Lamongan to work. The difference in women's and men's expertise in selling this type of



rice in Lamongan was stated by the three respondents who said that *boran* rice has many condiments while men tend to do simpler things such as selling fried rice or packaged rice. This can be represented as men and women having separate roles in the sales sector. The oppression of women put forward by socialist feminist theory, the sale of *boran* rice by women in Lamongan is one way to empower and elevate women's opportunities to have a sense of ownership in the community in the economic aspect, this also helps women foster community-based relationship in order to support each other in the business sector. The research suggestion for the local government is that the government should always actively monitor the development of *boran* rice sales and its association, because *boran* rice has become a recognized commodity in Lamongan. *Boran* rice has also been designated as a Lamongan icon, and it has resulted in developments of sales, as evidenced by selling activities carried out for generations, as well as creating new things such as an association that functions as an empowerment of *boran* rice sellers. This commodity is also one of the things that support Lamongan women to have their own jobs and income. Therefore, the sales and associations of *boran* rice must be preserved by supporting its existence, and increasing the exposure of ordinary people to *boran* rice so that *boran* rice is increasingly recognized.

REFERENCES

- Alfirmansyah, A., Hidayat, K., & Fahkry, M. (2022). Product Development of *Boran* Rice Using the Value Engineering Method. *PROZIMA (Productivity, Optimization and Manufacturing System Engineering)*, 6(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.21070/prozima.v6i1.1561>
- Dewi, E. (2011). Changing Perceptions of "Good" Mothering and Family Roles Among Indonesian Female Domestic Workers. *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*. <https://jarm.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/jarm/article/view/34546>
- Farrinabhan. (2016). *Nasi Boran/Boranan* » *Budaya Indonesia*. <https://budaya-indonesia.org/Nasi-Boran-Boranan>
- Fraser, N. (2014). *Justice Interruptus* (0 ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315822174>
- Mahbub, M. (2021). *Women Empowerment; theory, practice, process and importance*.
- McRobbie, A. (2008). *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. SAGE.
- Merriam, S. B., & Grenier, R. S. (2019). *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Moynagh, M., & Forestell, N. (Eds.). (2011). *Documenting First Wave Feminisms: Volume 1: Transnational Collaborations and Crosscurrents*. University of Toronto Press. <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442664098>
- Naples, N. A. (2021). *Companion to Feminist Studies*. Wiley.
- Pamungkas, R. A. T. (2015). *KAJIAN TENTANG KARAKTERISTIK PEDAGANG NASI BORAN DAN EKSISTENSINYA DI LAMONGAN. 2*.
- Ramadhan, A. F. (2021). TRADITIONAL FOOD AS A CREATION INNOVATION OF BORANAN BATIK SPECIAL IN LAMONGAN EAST JAVA. *Ekspresi Seni : Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Karya Seni*, 23(1), 192. <https://doi.org/10.26887/ekspresi.v23i1.1299>
- Reshi, I., & Sudha, D. (2022). Women Empowerment: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Economic, Business, Accounting, Agriculture Management and Sharia Administration (IJEBAS)*, 2, 1353–1359. <https://doi.org/10.54443/ijebas.v2i6.753>
- Rochmania, D. D. (2018). *BORAN DANCE, BETWEEN IDENTITY AND DANCE OF LAMONGAN TRADITION IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL STUDIES*.
- Rosita, I., Hudiyo, Y., & Hanum, I. S. (2021). *PERJUANGAN TOKOH UTAMA PEREMPUAN DALAM NOVEL IBUK KARYA IWAN SETYAWAN: KAJIAN FEMINISME SOSIALIS. 5*.



- Stellarosa, Y., & Silaban, M. W. (2019). Perempuan, media dan profesi jurnalis. *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi*, 7(1), 97. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk.v7i1.18844>
- Syaikhudin, A. Y. (2021). *ANALYSIS OF BUSINESS COMPETITION ON THE SALES OF LAMONGAN SPECIAL FOOD (STUDY ON BORAN RICE TRADERS IN LAMONGAN)*.
- Wibowo, A., Suwanto, Winarno, Anantanyu, S., & Permatasari, P. (2022). Empowerment of Women Tea Pickers (A Case Study on Lawu Mountainside in Karanganyar Regency). *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 1114(1), 012100. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/1114/1/012100>