

The Strategic Role of Women in Poverty Alleviation: A Case Study in Johan Pahlawan Sub-District, West Aceh District

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to see how the strategic role of a woman from a poor family who managed to get out of the poverty problem in a case study in Johan Pahlawan District. This research discusses how the role of a woman as a mother, as a wife and as part of society. A mother is the closest figure to her children so that the example of a mother is something that really encourages the motivation and enthusiasm of children to continue to develop and have a passion in education to achieve a better future. As a wife, it is also a very important role as a companion and supporter of the husband in providing for his family so that the husband has a sense of confidence to bring his family out of poverty. A woman who is involved in society will gain trust and opportunities. Access to opportunities through government programs will be easy to obtain through the role of women in their social environment. This study uses a qualitative method with purposive sampling. The results of this study show that women have a strategic role in efforts to improve the poverty status of their families. The existence of women's empowerment through more inclusive policies can help improve the welfare of poor families and reduce poverty overall.

Keywords: Women's Role, Empowerment, Poverty Alleviation

Introduction

In the current era of globalization, everyone has the same opportunities in all fields, both men and women. Likewise, in terms of role taking, women are also able to carry out roles in various fields well without eliminating their main duties and roles. The country cannot prosper if its women are left behind, marginalized, and oppressed. As expressed by Vivekananda (Muhajir, 2005). The role of women begins with giving birth, taking care of, and raising the next generations of the nation. The role of a mother is very big in realizing happiness and family integrity. In nature, women are indeed prepared by Allah SWT for the task of educating. The role of women in maintaining family welfare is very diverse and includes various important aspects that are interrelated to ensure that the family is in a harmonious, stable, and prosperous condition.

Education for a woman is very important because it affects the mindset and mentality as a mother in managing the family. In the traditional role of a woman as a mother and housekeeper also has a strategic role in efforts to get out of poverty. The role of women in educating and nurturing children well and maintaining children's growth and development to remain healthy, as well as teaching children the importance of having a high education so that in the future it will change family conditions. A woman also needs to have skills in more productive economic activities and must be able to manage herself and her time if she wants to take part in economic activities. Hochschild, a feminist sociologist, introduced the concept of "*second shift*" in his book *The Second Shift* (1989). She pointed out that although women have entered the formal workforce, they are still expected to carry out traditional roles at home, such as taking care of children and households.

One important aspect that often goes unnoticed is the role of women in poor families. Women in poor families are often the backbone of the economy, both as housewives and supplementary breadwinners. Women are often involved in various informal economic activities. Despite their significant contribution, women's role in improving the family economy is often hindered by various obstacles, such as lack of access to information that can add insight and difficulty in accessing economic resources in the form of capital, skills and also the lack of adequate policy support. In the midst of these challenges, women are often the most vulnerable group affected by economic poverty. This is due to limited access to resources, continuous work. As a result, women often face greater challenges in their efforts to lift themselves out of poverty and improve the well-being of their families.

Poverty is an ironic problem that still continues to occur in the Indonesian nation. Not a few programs have been provided by the government in an effort to alleviate poverty, but success has not yet been felt. Various previous poverty programs that were partial, sectoral and compensation in reality often resulted in unfavorable conditions such as wrong targets, the creation of seeds of social fragmentation, and weakening the social capital in the community (mutual cooperation, care, deliberation, self-help, etc.). The weakness of social capital in turn also encourages a shift in people's behavior that is increasingly distant from the spirit of independence, togetherness and concern to overcome their problems together. One of the reasons for the weakening and fading condition of the community's social capital is due to the decisions, policies and actions of poverty program managers and community leaders who have tended to be unfair, non-transparent and irresponsible. As a result, it raises suspicion, indifference and skepticism in the community (Soenayono, 2012).

Poverty alleviation is still the main target in development planning in West Aceh Regency. Although the poverty rate has decreased, nationally it is still in the high category. Poverty in West Aceh Regency not only has an impact on rural areas

but also has an impact on Johan Pahlawan District as the capital city of the district. Johan Pahlawan District, which is the capital of West Aceh Regency, has a geographical advantage with easy access to various facilities and infrastructure compared to other sub-districts in the region. With the availability of good road access, health facilities, education, and economic opportunities, this area should be able to develop rapidly. However, the irony occurred when poverty was still a significant problem in this sub-district.

Many families in Johan Pahlawan are still trapped in difficult economic conditions, especially in the informal economic sector. Despite being at the center of the district's government and economy, locals, especially women, still face limited access to sustainable economic skills and resources, which ultimately slows down the process of improving their well-being. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency, the poverty rate is spread evenly in almost every village, making the problem of poverty one of the crucial problems. Difficult socio-economic conditions demand an effective empowerment strategy to increase income from poor families.

The solution to the problem of poverty also needs to be seen culturally referring to the condition of poverty that is influenced by culture, norms, or mindsets that are ingrained in a certain group or community. This poverty is not only measured from financial or material limitations, but also from cultural factors that affect the perspective and behavior of individuals or groups in dealing with poverty itself. The role of a woman in strengthening individual perspectives and behaviors in the family is greatly influenced by her educational background, experience and insights. The role of women in society is also important through participation and being active in empowerment activities in the community. So that women are able to have a role in society even with the status of poor families.

Therefore, it is important to further examine how the role of women in the family through empowerment so that it can play a more effective role in poverty alleviation and government programs related to empowerment can support women in carrying out this role. In connection with this, women's participation in development has been increased, which used to be only an object of development, now they are included as development subjects. The involvement of women in planning, implementation and evaluation of development has become a new idea along with the increasing gender awareness in society, gender *mainstreaming* in development has become a must (Rinawati, 2010). West and Zimmerman in their article *Doing Gender* (1987) argue that gender is not a fixed characteristic, but something that is done in social interaction. Gender, according to them, is the "performance" that people perform every day based on social expectations and norms.

In several previous studies, the role of women in poverty alleviation looked at the ability of a woman to carry out economic activities so that she could increase family income. This study focuses on further exploring the strategic role of women in

changing family culture and behavior so that family members are able to think positively, have education and skills to be able to get out of poverty. This study also identifies the existing supporting factors both from government programs and independence programs in the community in the context of women's empowerment. The results of this study are expected to be a reference in poverty alleviation, that poverty needs to be solved not only from the economic side but also from the cultural side by maximizing the role of women in the family. It can also provide input for more inclusive development policies, especially related to women's empowerment.

Research Method

This research on the strategic role of women in poverty alleviation uses cultural theory using qualitative methods through a case study approach, and combined with quantitative data collection to further enrich the results of the analysis. With qualitative methods, research can use in-depth interviews and discourse analysis on women from poor families to explore how cultural values, social norms, and power structures influence women's participation in improving family status to overcome poverty. Meanwhile, quantitative methods are used to compare research results on the extent to which women's roles influence the level of welfare and poverty in a particular society, for example through surveys to obtain statistical data on education, the role of women in society and ownership of skills in improving the family economy. The combination of these two methods provides a holistic understanding, both in terms of concrete quantitative data and qualitative insights into the background and roles that women can play.

Literature Review

The discussion of women is one of the important things to discuss, in addition to looking at the social reality conditions, women also have different roles and functions from men, both physically and psychologically. Women are often considered to have weaknesses, limitations, dominance of feelings and illogical. Therefore, women are often considered less suitable to work in the public sphere that is full of competition and rationality. So that having a career and competing for women is considered taboo and against nature. This condition is not entirely true, but sometimes women's inability to manage dual roles makes them unequal in their roles so that they seem unable to compete in the public sphere. Cultural factors, social, economic and political values of a region greatly affect the condition of women in the community, both the status and the role and rights of women. The realization of gender equality and justice is characterized by the absence of discrimination against both men and women. So that with this everyone has access, opportunity to participate, and control over development and obtain equal and fair benefits from the development.

Theories about gender equality are divided into several theoretical studies, including:

Nurture Theories

According to the nurture theory, the difference between women and men is essentially the result of socio-cultural constructions that result in different roles and tasks. These differences cause women to always be left behind and neglect their roles and contributions in the life of the family, society, nation, and state. The struggle for equality was spearheaded by people who were concerned about fighting for the equality of women and men (feminists) who tended to pursue "equality" which was later known as perfect equality.

Nature Theories

According to the theory of nature, the difference between women and men is natural so that it cannot change and is universal. These biological differences give indications and implications that between the two types have different roles and tasks. Humans, both women and men, have different natures according to their respective functions. In social life, there is a division of labour, as well as in family life because it is impossible for a ship to be commanded by two captains. Talcott Parsons and Bales (1979) argue that the family is a social unit that provides different roles for husband and wife to complement and help each other. Harmony in life can only be created when there is a harmonious division of roles and duties between women and men, and this starts from an early age through the pattern of education and parenting in the family.

Teori Equilibrium

In addition to these two schools, there is a compromise concept known as equilibrium which emphasizes the concept of partnership and harmony in the relationship between women and men. This view is not in conflict between women and men because they must work together in partnership and harmony in the life of the family, society, and nation. Therefore, the implementation of gender equality and justice must pay attention to contextual (which exists in a certain place and time) and situational (according to the situation), not based on mathematical calculations (number/quota) and not universal.

There are 2 important aspects that describe the condition of women, namely education and opportunities. First, the aspect of education, although the world of education has provided equal opportunities between men and women, there is still a gap in rural areas and developing countries. This inequality can limit women's role in and improve skills to supplement the family economy. Women with good education will have good knowledge and insight so that they can maximize their role as wives

and mothers for their children, easily socialize with the environment and society. For this reason, education for a woman is very important, because education can influence a good mindset so that it will provide good parenting for future generations.

Education for a woman can be obtained from formal institutions or non-formal activities in the form of seminars, training, recitation and other positive things. Both aspects of opportunity, in gender equality, mean providing equal opportunities for men and women in various aspects of roles, both work, politics, health and social roles. This equality of opportunity is a respect for the rights and potential of every individual. Women can also provide roles according to education and their abilities both socially and in the family. To make their contribution, women need social support or through government policies as a form of women's role in improving the status of poor families.

Many poverty alleviation efforts have been carried out, but the poverty rate is still high. Poverty in West Aceh was recorded in March 2024 at 17.60%, down about 0.26% from 2023 which was at 17.86%, and nationally this figure is still in the high category. Poverty is one of the concepts that is endlessly discussed in terms of the causes and efforts to solve it. Structural poverty states that poverty is a condition caused by the social structure of society so that certain groups cannot take advantage of available sources of income. Poverty is seen in structural theory according to Anthony Giddens as a dynamic relationship between social structures (rules, norms, institutions) and individual agencies (the ability to act). Where individuals or groups of poor people have to struggle to face government structures or regulations that oppress them and are impartial, thus limiting access to resources, education and jobs.

However, in the midst of unsupportive social structures, individuals or poor people can still take action to change their situation by utilizing community empowerment, informal economic activities and social movements.

Cultural poverty is poverty that is formed because of the habits of the community that have become a culture, be it from the values carried, thoughts, and ways of working. Max Weber's theory of social action refers to the idea that individuals act based on the meaning they assign to social situations, which is often influenced by their knowledge and experience. According to Weber, the study of sociological concepts is very important in reviewing ideas related to social action and not in empirical concepts. The concept does not emphasize on what to do but says what can be done under certain circumstances. Weber has a great interest in social action theory related to motivation, intention and behaviour issues. Weber also included his sociological problems that were emphasized on the sociological type that characterizes his rational and positivist understanding of understanding. A person's poor condition can be solved through education, empowerment and social support.

The strategic role of women in the family is very important, including as a female wife plays a role in the development and welfare of the family, both physically,

psychologically, and socially. As a mother, women play the role of educators and role models for their children. As a child companion, women play the role of accompanying children to learn at home and maintain children's health. In improving the family economy, women can help their husbands in increasing family income by working, such as gardening, farming, trading, or becoming factory workers. In family health, women can become nurses to always maintain the health of their families. The role of women in the family can also be associated with the role of women in society. Women also have social responsibilities as part of society. By playing a role in society, women can open up insights and get easy social access that can improve the condition of family status.

Discussion

The role of women in the family and society

Women are the root of the generation that will continue the relay of the struggle of a nation so that their position is very important. Apart from women's position as producers of superior generations, women can also be dedicated wives. A dedicated wife has a very broad meaning ranging from the ability to educate children, family management and even be able to manage financial expenses as well as financial input or income. Dedication leads to superior character, able to manage various things related to family problems well. The family is the most important social environment for a child's personal development and formation. It is from the family that it is hoped that a good life will be created in society. Talking about children's education, the role of a mother has a very big influence. Education in the family can have a broad meaning, namely faith, moral, physical/physical, intellectual, psychological, social and sexual endeavour.

The role of women in the family is an important task. As a wife, women become encouragement, supporters and companions who always provide input, motivation and become a strength for their husbands. So that the husband has a passion in seeking a better livelihood. The role of a mother who always provides the needs of children, both the need for healthy food even with a simple menu, providing clean and decent clothes even though it is not luxurious, as well as the need for the enddid love of a child that can only be given by the mother and father in full so that the child continues to feel that he has the warmth of the family even though they are in economic limitations. The role of a mother as an example, a child as an imitator will see and imitate the behavior of those closest to him, namely his father and mother, parents who have an understanding of parenting will provide an example of perseverance in fighting for the welfare of their family, through the patience and perseverance of a mother who strengthens and motivates children to continue to be enthusiastic in fighting for their future so that they will be better than their parents in the future. Mothers are also stimulators for the development of their children

Women need education because education has a fundamental role in improving women's quality of life, building independence, and strengthening the role of women in society. Education as an improvement in the quality of life of a woman, to gain knowledge and increase insight women can learn informally. For a woman, informal enhidings can be obtained from counseling, taklim councils, Islamic studies, seminars on parenting and other women's competency improvement. Women can also participate in self-development through empowerment programs from the government. The form of programs that have been running in the district government is training in sewing skills, cooking and family economic empowerment. Women's activeness in social activities will have a positive impact. Their involvement in the community makes it easier for women to participate in empowerment activities and other training. With experience and knowledge, women from poor family backgrounds will be able to rise economically because their existence in the community has been recognized.

The concept of cultural poverty was first introduced by Oscar Lewis who saw that poverty can arise as a result of the values and culture embraced by the poor themselves (Effendi, 1992: 30). According to Lewis, poverty is not only seen as an economic problem, namely the lack of control over the sources of production and distribution of economic goods and services by the poor, nor does it see it in a macro way, namely within the framework of the theory of interdependence between countries and does not see it as a class conflict. Lewis sees poverty as a way of life or culture and the target unit is micro, namely the family, because the family is seen as the smallest social unit and as a social institution that supports the culture of poverty (Suparlan, 1988:XVIII). However, the criticism in this Lewis concept is that the culture that is formed comes from the family, due to the pressure of conditions so that a culture is formed that easily gives up on endid, apathetic, and stays away from the institution.

The form of cultural poverty in Oscar Lewis's book about the Story of Five Families in Mexico tells the story of five families in their daily lives, where there are different patterns in each family with different incomes, as well as with different classes. There are families that live on a level just to sustain their lives, where the husband becomes an authoritarian and powerful male endid accompanied by his wife who approaches the ideal figure of modesty and obedience, and children who meet the requirements of rural norms, harsh, respectful, and obedient, although their endid become older they begin to change in response to external changes. There are families living in cities where their children help the family's livelihood, religious life is becoming more important, the system of adoptive fathers or guardians is still functioning, they still maintain their relatives who are in the village and maintain beliefs and customs, but there is a very noticeable change where the mother becomes

the dominant figure in a family, greater freedom for their children, a standard of living that continues to increase with the purchase of goods in installments.

There are the poorest families in the city, where their children do not get much better enderides than their parents. Wives have a great deal of influence and they use them even though they still show obedience to their husbands. In assessing the relationship between parents and children in the five families, the children had a closer emotional connection with their mothers, all children respected their fathers and had endemic-loving feelings, all mothers were devoted, self-sacrificing, and very child-oriented. Fathers are more authoritarian, less oriented to their children and spend a lot of time outside the home. The younger generation in this tale of five generations enjoys greater family stability and a longer childhood compared to those experienced by brand parents.

The role of women is urgently needed in changing children's patterns and characters. A mother has a very big role in providing a motivation that has a long-term effect. Where children's education is number one so that the family poverty line can be cut off with good endidid. Financial management that is not wasteful, expenditures are only prioritized which are basic first. The use of government programs in terms of educational assistance is a supporting factor for poor families.

The picture of poverty in West Aceh district is mostly due to low education. Efforts to alleviate end-term poverty are through education. A poor family whose life is more religious and harmonious, as well as a balanced division of roles between husband and wife and able to socialize well in society will change their poverty status more quickly. For children from poor families, they can take advantage of the government program for free registration. For a mother and father, they can take advantage of informal activities in the community. The following table illustrates poverty from the education factor in West Aceh district.

Table 1. Poverty data from education factors

Village	Graduated from PT/Academy	Graduated from elementary school/Equivalent	High School Graduation	Completion of Junior High School	Didn't Finish Elementary School	Grand Total
Blang Beurandang		13	11	10	1	35
Drien Rampak			2	1	1	4
Gampa	1	7	9	3		20
Gampong Darat		15	4	8	4	31
kampung Belakang	1	2	7	2		12
Lapang		13	5	9	3	30

Village	Graduated from PT/Academy	Graduated from elementary school/Equivalent	High School Graduation	Completion of Junior High School	Didn't Finish Elementary School	Grand Total
Leuhan	1	38	21	25	3	88
Padang Seurahet		30	7	18	6	61
Panggong		2		1	1	4
Pasir		1	1			2
Rundeng	1	26	24	14		65
Seunebok		4	1	2		7
Suak Indrapuri			1			1
Suak Nie		3	3			6
Suak Raya		6		3	1	10
Suak Ribee			1			1
Ujong Baroh		1				1
Ujong Kalak		2		2		4
Grand Total	4	163	97	98	20	382

Most of the heads of poor families in West Aceh district have primary school level education, only a few can complete to the university level. This picture shows that education greatly affects a person's ability to improve his or her well-being. The higher the education period, the more the learning process of a person will continue to be an experience in solving life problems. A person's experience will affect actions, if experience as a learning process from the education period passed will give birth to good actions. The level of education will affect a person's social status in society, if this is accompanied by religion and a good attitude, then the trust of the community will be gained and even become a figure even with the condition of a poor family.

The results of observations of poor families in one of the villages, the husband's job as a construction worker who is paid per day with an income that is only enough to feed the family for a few days with the number of two children. However, this family has a mother who graduated from high school and plays a very good role in her family. This can be seen from the way he raised his children, his two children successfully completed their education in college and got jobs as school teachers and radio broadcasters. In addition to playing the role of a mother, she is also active in the community as a village administration worker to help the community's needs for administrative completeness. With his skills, he also accepts catering orders for school children. Through its role, the family can get out of economic difficulties and solve the problem of poverty in their family.

Supporting factors of government programs

The poverty alleviation strategy proposed by the World Bank states that every decade the poverty alleviation strategy has developed starting from job creation, income increase, health and education development, protection to the empowerment of the poor. The strategy to combat poverty put forward by Gunnar Adler Karlsson quoted by Andre Bayo Ala (1981) includes: (1) a short-term strategy, namely transferring resources to the poor in an adequate amount. Improving poverty in the short term includes creating job opportunities, increasing income, and improving its distribution; (2) Long-term strategy by growing local self-help. Long-term improvement by improving and fulfilling the dignity of individual and social dignity. The Poverty Alleviation Strategy implemented by the Government can be divided into two major parts, first, protecting families and community groups experiencing temporary poverty, and second, helping people experiencing chronic poverty by empowering and preventing new poverty. The strategy is then outlined in three programs that are directly directed at the poor, namely: (1) the provision of basic needs; 2) the development of the social security system; and 3) business culture development. In addition, the poor have their own strategies to overcome their poverty. The strategy taken is by borrowing from informal institutions, increasing working hours, family members to work, migrating or saving.

One of the efforts of the West Aceh Regency government is to advance the welfare of the community by implementing poverty alleviation programs. Various poverty alleviation programs have been carried out from the provision of free social assistance, education and health, skills training for prospective job seekers, food subsidies, to the provision of business capital assistance. The latest program implemented is social protection for vulnerable workers where the cost of the risk of accidents for vulnerable workers has been borne by the local government through BPJS Employment. All of these programs are in the context of reducing the poverty rate in West Aceh district. Through these programs, the poor can take advantage of it in order to improve their welfare. It is hoped that the implementation of government programs will be more targeted and based on the identification of community needs. Increasing cooperation with community organizations engaged in the field of religion or empowerment. Considering that cultural factors also greatly affect the success of government programs.

Various government efforts have been made and the expenditure of funds for poverty alleviation has also been very large, it is hoped that the community will be able to utilize this program effectively and in accordance with the expectations of the government. From the community side, starting from the role of women in the family who can change family culture, making families who have the desire to escape from poverty conditions by making efforts to take advantage of education, health, in terms of basic needs, there are subsidies for basic food assistance so that poor people can

save on daily expenses, empowerment in the form of skills training for women to be able to help the economy. If the two sides support each other, synergy will be obtained in the poverty alleviation program.

Conclusion

This study highlights that poverty in the coastal areas of Johan Pahlawan Regency is a complex social problem that requires serious attention, especially because the community in this area is highly dependent on the fisheries sector which is vulnerable to uncertainty. Women in coastal areas are the most vulnerable group, due to limited access to non-formal education that limits their social environment. Although women play an important role in supporting the family and community economy through productive activities such as seafood processing and small-scale trade, their role as mothers and wives in the family will be maximized if supported by information and social opportunities in the community. The existence of role inequality makes the role of women in coastal areas less than optimal.

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