

Opportunity and Challenge for Empowering Indonesian Former Female Migrant Workers Living in Coastal Area

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Abstract: Studies of transnational domestic workers have been conducted in varied disciplines with different focuses of discussion such as women's studies, international development, human rights, and social welfare. To figure out the life of female migrant workers living in coastal areas is crucial since the women and community examine some more issues. This study specifically explored the main questions of how is the life of women in the coastal community of Prapag Lor village, the district of Brebes in Central Java Province of Indonesia; how are life's episodes (before, during, and after working) of the women that worked previously as female migrant domestic workers (FMDWs), and the proposed solutions to improve their lives as FMDWs. To explore all of the points, this study collected data by conducting observation, secondary data analysis, and focus group discussions (FGDs) involving 50 female participants (n=50) aiming to explore the dynamic life of women and people living in coastal areas, life as migrant workers, and efforts to improve the living condition of the women, family and the whole community members.

Keywords: Female Migrant Domestic Workers, Coastal Community, Women Empowerment

Abstrak: Kajian terhadap pekerja rumah tangga transnasional telah dilakukan dalam berbagai disiplin ilmu dengan fokus diskusi berbeda seperti kajian perempuan, pembangunan internasional, hak asasi manusia, dan kesejahteraan sosial. Mengetahui kehidupan buruh migran perempuan yang tinggal di wilayah pesisir sangatlah penting karena masih banyak permasalahan lain yang dikaji oleh perempuan dan masyarakat. Penelitian ini secara khusus mengeksplorasi pertanyaan pokok bagaimana kehidupan perempuan masyarakat pesisir desa Prapag Lor, Kabupaten Brebes, Provinsi Jawa Tengah, Indonesia; bagaimana kehidupan (sebelum, selama dan setelah bekerja) perempuan yang sebelumnya bekerja sebagai pekerja rumah tangga migran perempuan (FMDWs), dan usulan solusi untuk meningkatkan kehidupan mereka sebagai FMDWs. Untuk mendalami keseluruhan poin, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data dengan melakukan observasi, analisis data sekunder, dan diskusi kelompok terfokus (FGD) yang melibatkan 50 partisipan perempuan (n=50) yang bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi dinamika kehidupan perempuan dan masyarakat yang tinggal di wilayah pesisir, kehidupan sebagai pekerja migran, dan upaya untuk meningkatkan taraf hidup perempuan, keluarga, dan seluruh anggota masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: Perempuan Pekerja Rumah Tangga Migran, Masyarakat Pesisir, Pemberdayaan Perempuan

Introduction

A significant impact of poverty in developing countries has led to an increase in the number of women who work as migrants. Another problem that is also often associated with migrant workers is the problem of unemployment that occurs due to an imbalance between the labor supply and market needs. In other words, the emergence of unemployment is an aspect that arises from a change in labor orientation (Moreno, G. & Chammartin, F., 2008).

As one dimension of globalization, transnational domestic work globally channels people and affects the massive development of communication, transportation, and technological accessibilities (Anthias, F., 2011). This international mobilization allows many people to have the opportunity to leave their home countries and find work in other countries. The actors of this multi-billion dollar business are states, private sectors, and people (Stiglitz, 2005). According to Barker and Feiner (2004), globalization creates winners and losers, dependency and exploitation of the workers.

Female migrant workers from Asia tend to be channeled into certain low-wage and low-skilled types of work, which are categorized in the domestic service sector. It is not recognized as a 'type of work' in the regulations or legal aspects (Mudzakir, dkk., 2010). Many female domestic workers are often less protected and rarely empowered. Several studies have investigated this phenomenon (Anggraeni, 2005; Novirianti, 2009; Raharto, 2002; Silvey, 2001; Tandos, 2018).

Indonesian women living in coastal areas are involved in the transnational domestic work industry. The work could help increase their family incomes (Moniaga, R., 2008). Similarly, many women living in Prapag Lor village, a coastal area in the Brebes district, have experienced working domestically in overseas. They went to the Middle East (United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia) and Asia (Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Malaysia) as destination countries of work (Kimura, K., 2006).

Regarding coastal areas, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries estimates that Indonesia has a foreign exchange potential of 82 billion US dollars from the sea each year. At the same time, the ability of the maritime sector to contribute to the national GDP is currently 92.22 trillion Rupiah (roughly six and a quarter million US dollars). This is an indication that marine resources need to be optimally utilized. Even so, with this amount of revenue, the maritime sector has contributed 2.9% of the total national GDP of the non-oil sector. At this point, 16.2 million can be attributed to the major role of the fisherman. However, the reality is that 90 percent, around 14.5 million fishermen, live beneath the poverty line. Coastal areas, in general, are 'pockets of poverty'. The people are socially and politically placed in a marginal position and are economically classified as the poorest of the poor (Loveband, A., 2003).

Recently, President Joko Widodo has developed programs to improve the maritime sector and the living conditions of the people. The President has the vision to develop maritime resources as Indonesia is well-known as an archipelago country consisting of 16,056 islands, five of which are the biggest ones (Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua). Considering this potential, comprehensive efforts have applied people-centered or community-based development approaches. Then, the empowerment efforts for fishermen need to encourage the country to protect and empower coastal communities (Lyons, L., 2006).

Law Number 7 of 2016, concerning the Protection and Empowerment of Fishermen, Fish Cultivators, and Salt Farmers, was approved by the Indonesian Parliament and the Government on March 15, 2016. In fact, after the passage of the Fishermen's Protection and Empowerment Act, there were several cases of seizure of fishermen's living space and structured impoverishment in various coastal regions of Indonesia. Another issue is dealing with sea-level or reclamation projects that have taken place in 16 coastal areas and are judged to have taken the living space for 107,361 households (Mantra, Ida Bagoes, 2002).

The controversial reclamation project hurts the lives of coastal communities and the destruction of socioeconomic life (Piper, N., 2005). Data and Information Center recorded 30 fishing arrest cases of fishermen forced to go to sea over 12 miles to meet their family's living needs (Parrenas, S.R., 2001). In addition, the difficulty of women accessing fisherman cards due to the need for more government knowledge about the definition of women fishermen, especially so far, the profession of fishermen is only synonymous with men (KIARA, 2016).

As mentioned previously, Indonesia is a developing country actively sending workers abroad. From the data in 2015 on the placement and protection of Indonesian workers, 166,771 women were served and sent abroad to work. Female workers still dominate domestic work with around 80% (BNP2TKI, 2012). From January to August 2017, the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BNP2TKI) succeeded in placing 148,285 Indonesian Migrant Workers in several countries. The migrant workers are spread throughout Asia, America, the Middle East, and Europe. Compared to the numbers from August 2016, there was a decrease of 8,316 migrant workers from the total placement of 148,285 people in August 2017. Based on the available data, the number of migrant workers placed abroad from January-August 2016 reached 156,601 people. The BNP2TKI data center noted five main sources of migrant workers, namely West Java (31,027 people), Central Java (29,394 people), East Java (27,381 people), West Nusa Tenggara (23,859 people), and North Sumatra (11,952 people). In addition, of the many jobs abroad, the five most common positions for migrant workers are domestic workers (29,465 people), 35,512 caregivers, 16,934 general workers, 23,366 operators, and plantation workers (22,334 people).

Raharto (2002) states that migrant workers are motivated by the availability of promising jobs, income and social status obtained by relatives and friends who migrated

before and encouragement from local agents or intermediaries (or worker recruiters). In addition, patriarchal and household ideology combining both 'local' and 'global' actors and formations affects the flow of women working as domestic workers overseas (Silvey, 2004; Tandos, 2018).

The high demand for migrant domestic workers does not require a certain standard of education or skills, and the jobs are easy to access. Therefore, migrating and working domestically overseas has become an answer to the problems of poverty, unemployment, and lack of resources to support their lives. Besides the success stories, many other women failed to reach their dreams. While working overseas, the women were abused verbally, physically, and sexually. Additionally, their rights as workers were often ignored or not fulfilled by agents at the destination countries. The findings of this study of the women living in the coastal area of Prapag Lor village explored the two sides of life of migrant domestic workers (Robeyns, I., 2003).

From all the points above, the study has main purpose is to comprehensively understand the life of a maritim or coastal community with its specific group that worked as female migrant domestic workers (FMDWs) that contribute significantly to family and community lives by listening to the participants' point of views. In addition, it develops the discussion of the topic and theoretical usage and improves policies and practices concerning local development and transnational domestic work.

Applying Social Welfare Theories

In analyzing the issue of female migrant workers living in coastal areas of Indonesia, social welfare offers a holistic approach covering areas of micro (individual, family), mezzo (groups, community, organizations), and macro (state level). These points help see problems analysis and finding solutions for a better life of the women and communities.

The study applied feminist perspective, empowerment and systems theories. These theories help focus on the life episodes of the participants (before, during, and after) who worked overseas, specifically the impact of the work. In addition, they help analyze policies, programs, and services available to the women and coastal community.

Feminist Perspective

Gender, in general terms, is defined as a social construction supported and maintained by social, economic, and political systems. The notion aims to create equality and justice for women and men in carrying out their rights and obligations, such as equality in the division of labor, political participation, and economic improvement, even in the domestic area.

In coastal community life, the wife's position is almost equivalent to the husband's in carrying out economic responsibilities and household tasks (Kusnadi, 2006), particularly in the life of female migrant domestic workers. In other words, there is a relatively equal distribution of responsibilities between a husband and wife to contribute to improving the family's economy. Women in Prapag Lor village contribute to filling and optimizing work

opportunities in their villages. However, their main responsibilities remain in their homes or the domestic sphere. Furthermore, working abroad changes the pattern of taking care family to the husband's responsibility or that of other family members. However, their salaries alone cannot fulfill family needs (Ife, J., 2001).

In analyzing women's workload in the Third World, Caroline Moser (1993) found the concept of triple roles. This concept refers to the double burden in women's daily lives to simultaneously handle domestic work, production, and community management (Dewayanti and Chotim, 2004). Concerning Moser's findings, women living in coastal areas have played these three roles simultaneously (Kusnadi, 2006). The social role carried by coastal women is rooted in the labor system based on sexual divisions prevalent in coastal communities. This system was formed due to the characteristics of the potential of natural resources and the economic activities of capture fisheries, which are the main foundations of coastal community life.

Coastal women must undertake the second obligation of productive roles. Productive roles are the roles of coastal women to obtain incomes to meet daily household needs. Efforts by coastal women to obtain incomes include selling their husbands' catch (fish), working for other people as maids, laboring in a fish-serving business, or having their businesses such as small shops or groceries, as intermediary traders, and owners of processing businesses for fishery products. Fish trading activities (fresh or processed) are jobs that are occupied by men (Peet, R., & Hartwick, E., 2009).

The third obligation is to participate in managing the potential of the community. The results are also for economic interests and social investment. This role is manifested in the form of women's involvement in social gatherings, savings and loans, mutual reciprocity, and other mutual assistance activities. By entering these institutions, coastal women participate in managing the potential socio-economic resources of the community, which can one day be used to support household needs, such as when the income from fishing goes down, illness, family expenses, buying children's school needs, preparing children's daily needs, or other sudden needs. Coastal women are creative in creating various types of socio-economic institutions in response to economic fluctuations from fishing activities (Jureidini, R. & Mourkarbel, N., 2004).

The three types of responsibilities above have placed the social position and economic role of coastal women, which are quite strong and dominating at the household and community levels. At the household level, coastal women become "one of the economic pillars" of the household, in line with their husbands. The functional relationship of husband and wife in meeting household economic needs is complementary (Hugo, G., 2000).

Similarly, Kusnadi (2006) explained that the economic position of women is quite strong and affects their social position in family life. The wife also controls most household economic resources' management and expenditure. Furthermore, the phenomenon of many coastal women becoming migrant workers reflects a patriarchal culture where they continue to dominate the domestic arena. However, migrant workers have participated

through remittances or money sent to their families and have played a role in increasing state income (foreign exchange for development).

Empowerment perspective

Empowerment is defined as changing power relations supporting the lower levels of the hierarchy; through this process, access and control over resources are increased (Presser and Sen, 2000; Inaba et al., 2001). The empowerment process is a development that takes place at various levels, individual group development and community organizing, partnerships and advocacy or political action (Rissel, 1994). Changes at the intrapersonal level must be followed by changes at the socio-political level (Wallerstein, 1992). The empowerment perspective is ideal for understanding empowerment efforts for migrant workers or *Tenaga Kerja Wanita* (TKW) because there is a need for systematic and comprehensive interventions, which are expected to facilitate empowerment at the individual and institutional levels. Moreover, empowerment also works specifically for a certain group, such as those who live in maritime or coastal areas in which characteristics of people, territory, natural resources, facilities, and organizations support the community need to be involved and developed as well (Huang, S., &Yeoh, B., 2003).

In Indonesia, public services such as advocacy, counseling, and physical health care are provided for migrant workers who experience physical or psychological violence (BNP2TKI, 2013; Migrant Care, 2012). However, protection and empowerment programs have not been handled more seriously because of patriarchal culture and socio-economic and political realities that still consider female migrant domestic workers as weak, uneducated classes or second-class groups (Howe, D., 2009).

Oppression and injustice are often accepted, even internalized, by subordinated people because conditions do not change (Mullay, 2002). For example, the women who worked as migrant domestic workers often followed what had been dictated to them, such as the decision to go abroad, their job description, and their job obligations. This imbalance of power causes insecurity in their lives. (Huling, A., 2012). According to Dominelli (2000, 2002), understanding and analyzing the power of relationships is crucial in the feminist theory of oppression and for developing alternative ways that eliminate privileging one group over another. Through empowerment, egalitarian relations can be established between women and men, women domestic workers and recruiting agents and institutions that send them abroad, and their relationships with employers (Fakih, 1996).

Regarding the coastal community of Prapag Lor and the women, empowerment theory in social work helps oppressed groups gain power and authority to pursue the fulfillment of their intervention goals (Lee, 1996; Maton & Saleem, 1995; Rappaport, 1987). According to Cattaneo and Chapman (2010), there is a need to integrate social aspects of individuals in the process of significant empowerment to achieve various goals that serve the interests of individuals, groups, and society (Rubin, A. & Babbie, E., 2011).

Moreover, empowerment programs that are set up for foreign domestic workers may

also consider psychological aspects (increasing cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and relational capacity). Psychological aspects can be obtained through women's participation in community empowerment collaborative arrangements, especially in efforts to change the collective social and political systems (Christens et al., 2012). Finally, the empowerment process aims to develop the women's capabilities and confidence to make decisions and take action in their own lives (Feste & Anderson, 1995; Gibson, 1991; Nussbaum, 2000; Payne, 2005). At this point, the women of Prapag Lor village are expected to develop their involvement as active learners and improve leadership, interpersonal relationships, and networks that support all efforts to improve policies, programs, and services available to themselves, their groups, and their communities. The next part describes the method applied in the study of the women in the coastal community of Prapag Lor village (Esim & Smith, 2004).

Methods

This part discusses the method applied in the study, covering research objectives, data collection, and data analysis processes. The study's primary informants were women who had worked as migrant workers (both those who had decided to stop working abroad and those still waiting for the next call to work). The number of participants involved was fifty former female migrant workers (n=50) living in the coastal area of Prapag Lor village, Brebes district. They responded to the main questions aiming to explore the life of women in the coastal community of Prapag Lor village, the life episodes of the women who worked previously as female migrant domestic workers (FMDWs), the proposed solutions to improve their lives (before, during and after) working as FMDWs (Creswell, J.W., 2009).

The research objectives are: 1) to explore life in the coastal community of Prapag Lor village, 2) to understand the life series of the women (before, during, and after working domestically abroad, and 3) to explore solutions for improving women's empowerment programs. To achieve these objectives, the study also emphasized the participants' contributions in providing information related to research questions and their aspirations for creating fundamental change in the community. Furthermore, this research is expected to enhance understanding and the collective awareness of the issue of female domestic workers, as well as to analyze and recommend improving policies, programs, and services available for the women and community as possibly applied in other coastal areas.

The data collection method used in this study is the qualitative method that was carried out using observations and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The FGD process was carried out so the informants felt free to talk or answer the complete research questions (open-ended). The participants were divided into eight groups in 90 90-minute FGD process with an additional 30 minutes to clarify or confirm some points of their answers. To enrich the data, the study conducted a literature study by examining written texts such as previous research reports, journals, and other online publications.

The data analysis technique for the research results was carried out in two coding and analysis stages. The method commonly used is reflexive analysis. This method indirectly poses a challenge to dialectical reflection on the collected data. The researcher reflected on the findings based on the theoretical framework that had been formulated. I continuously carried out this analytical process to conclude to outline in narrative texts.

In addition, data source documents were analyzed using the content analysis method. Content analysis is a data analysis technique that requires review and examination of each document that supports research, resulting in the clarified contents of the document data being selected and abstracted as concepts for use in the study. Furthermore, analyzing data followed the stages of qualitative research mentioned by Miles and Huberman: data reduction, data display, and data verification. Additionally, the data were analyzed by making memos, interview transcripts, coding, and categories and themes from the data collected (Denzin, 2000; Lofland & Lofland, 2005). Finally, data verification and data validity testing were carried out by member checking (validating the answers of each informant) to ensure there were no misunderstandings and that important matters were included in the research findings. In addition, listening to expert opinions was another attempt to increase data validity.

Results and Discussion

As mentioned previously, the study aims to answer the main points of how is the life of women in the coastal community of Prapag Lor village, the district of Brebes in Central Java Province of Indonesia; how are life's episodes (before, during, and after working) of the women that worked previously as female migrant domestic workers (FMDWs), and the proposed solutions to improve their lives as migrant workers. Furthermore, reflecting on the roles of coastal women in their family and community lives, this part focused on life in a coastal community and being migrant domestic workers. These points could enhance the understanding of transnational domestic workers, originally from coastal areas, as having different issues, potential, and challenges than those living in agricultural and urban areas.

Life of Coastal Community

Indonesia's waters stretch three-quarters of its territory and are rich in natural and non-natural resources. With the longest coastline in the world of 81,000 km Indonesia has an estimated fish potential of 6.26 million tons per year that can be sustainably managed (Media Indonesia, 2017). Considering this natural resource, people who live in coastal areas should have a good standard of living. Surprisingly, many people in these areas live in poor conditions, lack public facilities, and are at risk of many natural disasters.

The majority of people living in Prapag Lor work as fishermen. They rarely work in the agricultural sector as the land is unsuitable and considerably limited for farming. The study found three main problems experienced daily by the people: 1) a severe economic condition that pushes many women to work as migrant workers, 2) patron-client dependency between the fishermen and the boat owners, as well as the dependency on brokers, creates vulnerability and powerlessness, and exploitation of fishery resources, and 3) conflict, namely exploitation of the

traditional fishing area by modern fishing company/ies operating within the areas of traditional fishermen.

Being a fisherman in Prapag Lor village is an inherited profession. It means that a boy will grow up as a fisherman, becoming an asset to the family. Therefore, many children drop out of school; some do not even go to school at all due to the educational paradigm in fishing communities that assumes education is unimportant and cannot guarantee prosperity for their lives. Realistically, fishing family children can earn income directly by following their fathers or siblings to sea.

The social stratification in the coastal community is reflected by two major parts: the fishermen, those who own the boats, and the production equipment. Outside this group are trader groups who have considerable access and influence in local economic activities. From these work relationships, the groups that benefit the most are the traders, and the most disadvantaged are the fishermen (Acheson, 1981). In this case, these mutual work relationships, or the 'patron-client' relationship. The patron-client network is a container and facility that provides traditional social security resources to maintain the survival of fishermen. According to Badaruddin (2005), the strength of this patron-client relationship can be seen in the patterns of social relations between (1) owner fishermen and labor fishermen, (2) owner fishermen with business capital providers, (fish traders / intermediary traders, (3) fishermen (owner and fishermen) laborers) with shop owners who provide for the necessities of life and the needs of fishing. If fishermen's catches are provided in the form of fish, the patron-client relationship between laborers and fish traders is also intensive. Furthermore, the relationship between ship owners and fishermen, or between fishermen and traders, is bound by a complex network of debts.

Before sailing, fishermen often ask for their salaries from the boat's owner first to fulfill their families' needs. If the fishermen own the ships, they still have 'debts' to market the catch with the middlemen or brokers who buy them at a lower price. One of the reasons that fishermen in Prapag Lor Village could buy their boats is because they could pay the brokers in installments. Factors such as the rainy season cause uncertainty about the catch amount and the possibility of sinking or overturning boats, forcing fishermen to borrow money from the boat's owner or the brokers.

In social life, fishing communities are unique in that people are relatively open to interacting with one another. They graciously welcome outsiders or newcomers and do not find it difficult to provide information. This is because their fishing activity requires interaction with people from other regions. The fishermen also have a high level of cooperation. For instance, the risk of going to sea is much like betting a life. In response to this condition, even without having a family bond, a fisherman will work together with others to return home safely, repair the boat, and save the catch.

The fishermen's strategy in dealing with poverty can be done through (1) The role of fishermen's family members (wife and children). Economic activities carried out by fishermen's household members (wife and children) are one of the adaptation strategies that must be taken to maintain their survival. (2) Job Diversification: in the face of income uncertainty, fishing families can do a combination of work. (3) Social networks: through social networks, household

individuals will be more effective and efficient in achieving or gaining access to the resources available in their environment. Social networks provide a sense of security for poor fishing households in dealing with life difficulties so they can navigate their lives well. Social networks can naturally be found in all forms of society and manifestations of human nature as social creatures. This creative socio-cultural action reflects that economic pressures or difficulties faced by fishermen are not responded to by resignation. Generally, for fishing households whose daily income depends entirely on fishing income, the social network strategically maintains their livelihoods. (4) Migration: this is done when the fish season is low in certain fishing areas, and fishermen join with fishing units in the destination that are in the fish season. Migration aims to obtain a high income and guarantee family life's necessities. Within a certain time, the income they have earned they bring back home to be handed over to their family.

Attention to the coastal area is not only based on the consideration of the idea that the area not only stores a large amount of natural resource potential but also the social cohesion and solidarity among people. The social life of the fishing community, especially the people of Prapag Lor Village, is unique and different from other communities. In addition to social life, one culture (tradition) is still developing, and routinely, this tradition is an expression of gratitude for the fishermen for the abundance of catches that can be. This tradition is called 'Nadran', carried out at the beginning of the year when the fishermen get an abundant catch. Nadran is done by decorating the boats, usually done at sea with food offerings. Then, the boats and the public rushed to the middle of the ocean to conduct a thanksgiving ceremony; when they reached the ocean, offerings, and food were brought to the ocean after reading the prayer together.

Finally, the study found that the development policies in fisheries (blue revolution) so far have not improved the welfare of coastal communities. The potential of the coastal community is very important to be developed because most of the population - who live in the coastal area merely depend on marine and fisheries resources management - are classified as poor communities. As mentioned, the coastal area is vulnerable to natural disasters (flooding, landslides, hurricanes) that negatively impact their sea activities. Then, any efforts to improve the living conditions of the people are necessary to provide alternative income resources, support with sufficient public facilities, and develop knowledge to manage the natural resources sustainably.

Being Female Migrant Workers

In this part, the discussion covers three main points: factors influencing the decision to work abroad, experiences during the stay overseas, and the impact of the work. Some other important points are also explained including the women's relationships with their families at home and their employers in the destination countries.

Factors affecting coastal women's decision

As mentioned previously, the main issue that has created a burden on coastal women's responsibilities is to meet the economic needs of the household, exacerbated by changes that occur due to the country's economic policies, exploitative management of coastal and marine resources, and the impact of global warming on the lives of fishermen. If such situations

continue to expand widely, they will become a serious threat to the survival of coastal communities.

Being a migrant domestic workers is a decision taken by the women mainly inspired by a willingness to make their families happy, even though they should sacrifice themselves by working with a lack of knowledge, skills, and experience. With such conditions, they sacrifice themselves in dealing with the demands of their work environment and cultural shock (Migrant Care, 2011; Voice of America, 2011).

Meanwhile, married women involve their husbands in decision-making (Tandos, 2018a). Similarly, the decision-making process for coastal women to become migrant workers generally involves families, especially for married women. The study participants sought that their decisions were made through negotiations and discussions in determining the choice to become a migrant worker. In the context of the coastal women from Prapag Lor village, decision-making is based on a self-initiative involving the family or husband in the discussion. Most women who work as migrant workers have husbands who work as fishermen.

This type of work can be done without certain types of education and skills, and mainly household tasks are easily practiced by women, especially those who live in a more patriarchal society that divides the domestic sphere for women and the public for men. This study found that the domestic role of coastal women is carried out as wives and mothers. Among the household tasks are handling kitchen work, cleaning the house, caring for and educating children, providing schooling for children, and preparing the husband for the sea. In this case, the husband's position in this domestic sphere is "merely helping" if they have time or can perform the tasks (Hodge, D. R., 2007).

Although the women living at Prapag Lor village do not directly participate in sailing activities, they play an important role in distributing and processing sea products, especially through work as crab peelers with very low salaries. Due to insufficient wages from the available jobs, they want to improve their family's living conditions. In addition, paying debts (for having capital for fishing activities) is another reason for the women to leave their village. Therefore, looking for higher salaries motivated the coastal women to become migrant workers as shown by inseparable stories of those who are successful working abroad.

Experiencing life in the destination countries also influenced the women to migrate. The women were motivated by their friends who could enjoy a luxurious life at their employers' homes. This indicates that individual interests and other people also influence the decision to work as migrant workers. The women should follow general rules and mechanisms of working overseas, namely registering themselves with sponsors in the village that will process their departure. As for the women about to leave, they must collect the required documents.

Working domestically overseas

The push and pull factors significantly affected the participants' decisions to migrate and work as migrant workers. Unfortunately, the women often experienced verbal abuse, and a few others experienced physical and sexual abuse. The main reason for verbally abusing the workers may have been because they could not understand the language used by employers. Pitoyo (2005) describes different degrees of abuse: (1) verbal abuse, including attempts to seduce

workers; (2) physical abuse, such as kissing or touching a woman's private parts; and (3) requests for sexual intercourse.

Domestic workers have very different ways to face physical or sexual abuse. Some women had tried to escape by smashing windows or walls or jumping out of windows in apartment buildings (Arnado, 2002; Irianto, 2008; Migrant Care, 2011), or they had fled to a friend's place of work to be safe. If the women returned to the overseas agent, they would likely get mad and wouldn't process their salaries (Tandos, 2018a). These negative experiences are all too common for the women overseas.

In addition, the workers usually did not have time off to socialize outside their employers' homes as they had to work almost 24 hours a day. The overseas agents that are expected to protect the workers' rights side mostly with the employers to protect their rights. The workers should follow all the instructions and be happy with all situations and conditions at the employers' homes. Apart from these sad stories of being migrant workers, the participants also explained some advantages, such as building their own homes, paying for their children's educations, and investing in property (e.g., buying land and having small businesses).

Impact of being migrant workers

The decision of coastal women to become migrant workers has both positive and negative impacts on the lives of the women. The following points discuss the positive impact: first, the improvement in the economy of migrant workers is the most visible aspect of the decision by coastal women to become migrant workers. On the other hand, the decision of coastal women to become migrant workers opens a vulnerable situation for child development and family harmony.

Second, vulnerable children need love and nurturing from their mothers to ensure their healthy growth and development. A child's growth accompanied by their mother will differ from that of a child without their mother. Automatically, when a woman decides to become a migrant worker, the motherly element in the growth and development of her child will disappear so that grandparents, the father, or other family members will carry out parenting. The study shows that a child feels more comfortable accompanying their mother to communicate many issues such as social life, education, and health. Therefore, a woman's decision to become a migrant worker will have consequences on the growth and development of her child.

The study also found that education for children is outside the concerns of families. Many children drop out of school and don't even go to school due to fishing communities' educational paradigm, which assumes that education is unimportant to achieve or obtain. According to the parents, education is something other than something that can guarantee prosperity for their lives, in which fishermen's children can directly earn income by following in the father's footsteps at sea. Therefore, there is a strong belief that a fisherman's child will grow up as a fisherman when he is an adult.

Third, as the smallest unit in society, the family is the first place to foster norms, principles, and culture and develop other personal habits. Communication in a family is very important to maintain its integrity and harmony. Migrant work can cause disharmony in marriages and, thus, the family. Unfortunately, divorce often occurs. In this case, disharmony in the family

influences the growth and development of a child. The growth and development of a child in a disharmonious family will cause stress always under pressure.

Lastly, the participants also had an opportunity to raise their voices on the solutions to the problems they examine daily. Table 1. shows the main findings of life episodes of being a female migrant domestic worker (before, during, and after working overseas), living in a coastal area, and expectations for empowering the women’s lives.

Table 1.
Solutions from the perspectives of female migrant domestic workers (FMDW)

Stage of Work	Suggested Plan for Action
1. Before working overseas	
Pre-departure program	- Agents should provide training to improve knowledge and skills that are needed in the workplace
Placement	- Agents should provide the FMDWs with ‘good’ employers
2. While working overseas	
Healthy workplace	- Implementing all the procedures based on the work contract - Must be fair for employers and the FMDWs’ rights - Be responsible if unexpected things happen
Work Hours	- Not working overload and hours
Time off	- Having time off to socialize with others outside the employer’s home
3. After working overseas	
Returning home	- There shouldn’t be any additional cost or payment at the airport and a trip to home town
Reunification with family and community	- Support the women by providing capital (financial support) and training skills to run a home business - Provide job opportunities for the FMDWs

Source: Author, 2023

The first set of suggestions focuses on increasing training for performing household tasks. Hence, female migrant domestic workers know how to use electronic devices in the employer’s homes and are prepared to handle all the work required while working overseas. Many participants were unsatisfied with the training program because the lessons were irrelevant to their workplace needs. As a consequence, they started working abroad without sufficient knowledge and skills. To address such needs, training programs could be continued after the women arrive overseas, which might be provided by overseas agents. In addition, a few of the female participants also mentioned the hope of having good employers to help them perform good work and adjust to a new life.

The second suggestions are concerned with the response to issues while working overseas. As mentioned previously, many issues are related to the health and safety of the work environment. The participants expressed some thoughts on addressing these issues. Their primary suggestions include protecting their rights. The female participants also suggested proper facilities such as a bedroom and the necessities for daily functioning. They also wanted the agents to help ensure that the entire contract was upheld, respect the female migrant domestic workers, listen to their voices, and actively work to solve any problems faced by the women. The final suggestions are related to reunification with family and community. While this was the least stressful stage for the participants, as time passed, some issues emerged since most women did not have access to jobs while at home.

Enhancing Interventions

The decision of women to become migrant workers is often inspired by their dreams to improve the economic lives of their families. Earnings from working in the destination countries are invested in many things. One form of physical economic improvement is to build a home. This is a symbol of success for migrant workers (Pitoyo, 2005; Tandos, 2018a) because in a coastal community, building a proper home aims to save the family from saltwater floods and soil erosion that happens during the rainy season.

During the focus group discussions, the participants identified several important issues that they felt should be addressed by all of the stakeholders of transnational domestic work, especially by the Indonesian governmental entities. They also provided specific suggestions as solutions for their lives. They provided suggestions for protecting their rights and improving the available programs and services in both their home and destination countries.

Applying social welfare perspectives to the discussion of transnational domestic work, three levels of interventions – for changes in policies and improvement of programs and services – might be conducted to solve the problems of transnational domestic work, specifically protecting and empowering female migrant domestic workers. First, empowering families and women living in the coastal areas of Prapag Lor village. At this point, family members often pressure women to work as migrant domestic workers. This pressure affects wives, daughters, or young women to fulfil their kinship obligations (ILO, 2006; Heyzer et al., 1994; Raharto, 2002). Therefore, family intervention should integrate women's voices, develop their capabilities, and permit them to decide whether to migrate (Lesmana, 2002; Tandos, 2018c; Tandos, 2018a). At this point, the women could decide whether or not they are ready to work abroad and how to manage the remittances they send back home.

Second, supporting the coastal community to help develop resilience in the women and families by tackling daily issues of poverty, lack of resources, and disharmony in marriages. Empowering families, youth, and communities could improve their awareness and support for female migrant domestic workers. The patron client relationship also needs to be re-constructed towards more justice for fishermen. Comprehensive dialogue and conflict resolution could be built by establishing a union for fishermen to channel their voices and interests.

Currently, the government has launched Microfinance Credit (Kredit Usaha Rakyat/KUR) for Migrant Workers that have its purpose to help migrants financing

costs incurred during their transition. For example, the Scheme adopted on 24 January 2012, Regulation of the Head of BNP2TKI stated that the credit scheme for Singapore is IDR 10.933.000, with interest and administrative fee, new migrant workers should pay IDR 14.336.000 and calculated equal to 8 months of wage; while for former migrant workers IDR 5.448.000, with interest and administrative fee in total IDR 7.168.000. The credit scheme is designed based on the destination countries of the migrants. Accordingly, this scheme can ease the burden of migrant workers, but this purpose seems to be achieved because the amount of credit is still relatively high for migrant workers.

Therefore, all types of interventions, partnerships, and collaborations are needed to improve policies, programs, and services that will consider female domestic workers as key partners, experts, and agents of change in the lives of their families and communities. Furthermore, the international protection of domestic workers conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2012 should emphasize three main points of the magnitude of migrant domestic labor (the characteristics of domestic workers and their employers, and the prevailing patterns and arrangements under which domestic work is performed (living in or living with arrangements), and an analysis of the existing national laws to identify the legal provisions applicable to female migrant domestic workers. These three points are expected to improve the lives of the women, families, and coastal communities by providing advocacy, sufficient education and training, as well as coordination and collaboration among stakeholders of transnational domestic work.

A community economic development program that involves all stakeholders could help the women, as most of the participants mentioned. They need capital or loans to start a new small business as alternative sources of income. Microcredit programs might be a solution so they will not have to borrow money from '*rentenir*,' someone who lends money with excessive interest rates.

Finally, programs to develop women's teamwork building and leadership skills are also important in furthering their economic empowerment. The women could work individually or as a team to run a business. An example of such a program was developed in Bondan village, Indramayu district. Programs for capacity building and entrepreneurship have been conducted for former female migrant domestic workers there (Tandos, 2018b). The results show that women can economically support their families while remaining in their home country. In addition, they may reconsider how often they are willing to work overseas, particularly when working overseas comes with a lack of protection and increased risks.

Conclusion

Women have become the main actors of transnational domestic work in this global industry. Indonesia is among the countries that send women for this multi-billion dollar business. Both countries, sending and receiving, gain advantages from the workers as they contribute revenue (for their home countries) and provide cheap labor (for the destination countries). The flow of migration workers continuously happens as they also

find it an alternative to improve their economic lives, financially support their families, invest in property, and establish small businesses once they return home.

The study specifically addressed the three main points of being female migrant domestic workers (FMDWs): 1) Exploring the life of women in the coastal community, 2) describing the life's episodes (before, during, and after working as FMDWs) of the women, and 3) the proposed solutions using the lens of eyes of the women to improve their lives.

The fact that many female migrant domestic workers often experience various forms of abuse (verbal/emotional, physical, and sexual) cannot be denied, and women tend to face the problems alone for the sake of their dreams. In addition, a lack of worker rights protection is regularly reported as this type of international work is still considered 'unprofessional work' or informal work. Therefore, efforts to improve protection and empowerment for women should be taken into account in response to the life dynamics of the women in their places of origin and their workplaces in acknowledgment of their significant sacrifices and contributions.

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