

Resilience of Batik Workers Women in Responding To Economic Vulnerability

Nurul Friskadewi^{1*} Setiadi²

¹Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia

² Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia

*Corresponding author. Email: nurulfriskadewi@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Conceptually, resilience is the resilience of the socio-cultural economy of women batik workers in adjusting and dealing with crisis and uncertain conditions as part of the dynamics of batik business. The condition is getting worse with the inherent social status as a widow, stigmatized as someone who needs to be pitied. As experienced by batik workers at Gumelem Banjarnegara. They have developed patterns of resilience in dealing with the dynamics of life. This study aims to uncover the reality of resilience and survival strategies for women in vulnerability situations. In this study, vulnerability is seen from three components: exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity that will affect the women's resilience ability. Data was collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews and supported by literature study. The results showed that the vulnerability experienced after holding a widow's status was a drastic economic change, which demanded them to become the backbone of their families. They optimize the use of social capital (building relationships, following communities) and human capital (doing side jobs) to reduce economic vulnerability. This paper is expected to provide input for the empowerment of widows and women in general. From a theoretical point of view, the study of the resilience of batik laborer widows is expected to be able to contribute to the discourse and understanding of resilience patterns and the development of conceptual understanding of the context-based resilience of vulnerable local Javanese communities, particularly based on the economics of the batik craft industry.

Keywords: livelihood strategy, vulnerability, resilience, widower, batik worker

1. INTRODUCTION

“Omahe nini-nini ya memper mbok, rusak. Senge pada rogol, berisik bae kena angin. Ya pada bocor kana-kene. Patut temen lah, nini ne nang omah dewekan”. (Naturally, if Grandma's house was damaged. The tin roof was flying, it sounded noisy because of the wind. Everywhere it leaks. Grandma lives alone), said Nini Risah in interview on October 5, 2019.

The statement above is an expression of the heart of a grandmother who is living alone in her house. This condition is not much different from the condition of an elderly widow's house some time ago having enlivened the virtual world because of the upload of her house

condition. The house with one door and only a small part of roof is inhabited by a woman who lives alone, Nini Supinah [1]. This portrait is an illustration of how elderly widows are in a very vulnerable position. Households headed by women are one of the most disadvantaged groups [2]. In South Africa, households headed by women have low incomes and tend to be in poverty [3], [4]. The characteristics of households headed by women are more vulnerable due to limited access to social networks [5]. In Bulgaria in the 1990s, the economic crisis has affected women-headed households [6]. In rural India, there have been changes in wealth in households headed by widows due to the burden of sending their children to school. [7]. In rural Ethiopia, the 2007-08 food price crisis had a major impact on female-headed households, surviving by reducing food consumption [8]. In Thailand and Vietnam, female-headed households are particularly vulnerable to economic shocks to leadership types and country contexts

[9]. In United States, the problem of elderly widowed population and poverty also occurs. Nearly 48 percent of the elderly population in the United States is vulnerable economically, while seniors aged 80 years and over have a higher vulnerability, 58.1 percent [10]. The factor of racial and ethnic differences is also a determinant of vulnerability, it is stated that there are differences by which black elderly people are more at risk of falling into poverty than white people.

The vulnerability of widowed women occurs in various parts of the world, and even continues today. Ironically, quantitative data does not elaborate the fate of vulnerable widowed women. In Indonesia, on average they are in old age, namely someone who has reached 60 years [11]. BPS data states that the number of elderly women reaches 11.6 millions or equivalent to 52.8% of the total elderly population [12]. Based on the national socio-economic survey data (Susenas) in 2017, as many as 60.5% of elderly women are divorced (widows) who have the characteristics of their own residence (head of household status), have never attended school and have not graduated from elementary school, and are not affected by the government program and a half of the total number of widows are still actively working (47.9%) with their health conditions, which generally suffer from non-communicable diseases, in the form of multi-degenerative diseases.[11].

Poverty is often associated with elderly widows. The Deputy Regent stated that the poverty rate in Banjarnegara currently reaches 17.77 percent (around 175,060) of the total population of 985,148 people. This figure is higher than the national poverty rate, 10 percent [13]. This situation is complemented by the fact that poverty in Banjarnegara ranks 7th position in Central Java [14].

Under these conditions, the social status of "widows" is closely related to conditions in which women must be pitied, or even feel sorry for themselves. Sometimes, they experience abuse and even their existence is not considered. This situation is reinforced by the existence of a stigma regarding women who are weak.

It is similar to the life as an elderly widow who works as a batik laborer in Gumelem Banjarnegara, tireless, does not look at wages, and never gives up. They have swallowed the bitterness of life and experienced various ages. This study aims to reveal the reality of the vulnerability of the batik labor widows and their survival strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Vulnerability has many definitions, various meanings and interpretations, depending on the context such as climate change [15], [16], [17], [18], [19]; natural hazard [20], [21]; environment [22], poverty [23], [24] and limited food [25]. Furthermore, social vulnerability concentrates on the

demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the local population that increase or decrease the impact of a hazard event [26]. There are three components in measuring vulnerability, according to Colburn (2011): exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity. These three concepts will be seen and affect resilience [27].

Socio-economic vulnerability is related to whether or not vulnerability is linked to several physical, demographic, and socio-economic characteristics. Some of the research results show that street vendors experience varying socio-economic vulnerability by gender, type of goods sold, frequency of presence, location, clusters of vendors and types [28]. The status of illegal and informal workers puts their working conditions at risk and their livelihoods more vulnerable in developing cities [29]. Socio-economic vulnerability is also related to subsistence risk management, especially due to the changes in household income. Socio-economic vulnerability is also related to intersectional subjectivities related to gender, class, culture, and affects the access to and meaning of resources [30]. From the results of researches above, there have been researches on the economic vulnerability of women, but there is not much discussion of elderly women specifically; therefore this study is important to do.

3. METHODS

Data collection was carried out through participatory observation for approximately 10 months, as well as in-depth interviews and supported by literature studies on of batik worker widows belonging to the elderly category by revealing their live stories. At first, they were reluctant to tell their live story. But as time goes by, they believe and even tell stories without being asked. We collected general information about daily activities, resource collection, occupational choices, social interactions, and health, as well as specific information regarding certain events that happened to them, and how they handled it. The unit of analysis in this study was three widows aged 75-85 years who became the head of family with the main job being batik workers in Gumelem Banjarnegara. The results of interviews and observations were united, then sorted by theme, and analyzed.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the research show that being a batik maker does not recognize old age, does not recognize retirement because not working means that you do not get wages. Old age actually gets more caretaking jobs, but they are not paid. Their days are filled with physical demands, grandchildren and others. The caretaking work for elderly women is often a valuable part; they need greater financial support to fulfill important roles in the community.

Women, who are considered weak and vulnerable, seem to be strong by standing alone on their own feet, and

not depending on others. Women who work in written batik industry experience the stigma of being "widowed", "elderly" leading to helplessness. In fact, they show strong resilient attitudes and strategies so that they can survive until now.

When they are old, they still have to be active in social activities such as donations, participating in various traditional ceremonies, and so on. In this condition, they are also exposed to the threat of fraud by sales or irresponsible parties so that they can lose money.

Hand-written batik widows use survival strategies in a certain form, certain degree, and within a certain time. They optimize the use of capital (natural, physical, human, financial, social and activities in building a livelihood system. They modify this capital to reduce vulnerability and increase social resilience.

In times of emergency, they take steps including borrowing and skipping meals. For them an empty stomach is a daily habit. The stories of the three widows are shown as follows. **Nini Risah** is a 79-year-old widow whose husband had died for about 5 years. Since childhood, she has been making batik to help his parents. She went to school until grade 2 elementary school because his mother did not allow him to go back to school. Since she was young, Nini Risah had to nurture and take care of his younger siblings. Now, she lives alone in a tin roofed house. Often the house leaks. Everyday she makes batik at home. Each sheet of batik cloth is valued at Rp. 75,000.00 which is done at least 14 days. In addition, in the harvest season she *ngasag* (looking for leftover grain in the fields) and collected it. His health condition is not what it used to be, she is no longer able to plant in the fields. Everyday she is only able to eat 1-2 times or sometimes he doesn't eat at all because she has to "fast".

To her, the most important thing is just to fill in the stomach. And what is more important is to be able to donate if there is a celebration in the neighbors, to follow rituals such as *gethekan*, *takiran*, *ambengan*, and so on where it is the main requirement as a Javanese as gratitude to God.

Even though his son had grown up and had a family, and several times she was exposed due to uncertain economic conditions, she did not want to depend on them. The price of food which suddenly rises is one of the main exposures in itself. The price of batik equipment, which suddenly rises, is also a pressure for her, especially if it is accompanied by a celebration invitation that is booming in the environment. He had to spend more.

Several times, she was attracted by the sales trickery that seduced her. Two hundreds rupiah money she should use for her about 1-month life was disappeared because of the salesperson's trick. Not long ago, she also lost IDR 150,000.00, when she and her entourage made a

pilgrimage to the graves of guardians (*para wali*). The money that was collected during the year and was prepared just disappeared. And, he just said that perhaps it was not her fortune.

Nini Sarinah is 76 years old. At his current age, making batik has become his main job because she is no longer able to work in the fields. Her husband had died decades ago. During the last three years, she felt that his burden was getting heavier because she had to support his grandson in junior high school. Almost every day she works on batik overtime to provide for fulfilling his grandson's needs.

Every 07.00 WIB she is starting to make batik accompanied by a glass of hot coffee until the afternoon. To hear, eating is not the primary thing; the most important thing is that her grandson can eat first. Each of her grandchildren would pay for school, she would work overtime, squeeze his energy so she could stay sufficient. She will be not hesitant to sell her chicken to pay for her grandson's school tuition.

Sometimes she has to bear the shame of his neighbors because she is unable to donate when the neighbors have an urge. She has to bury the shame deeply because she is no longer able to follow traditional events or rituals in his environment.

Again, sales threats or irresponsible fraudsters often lurk. Often, she is asked for information that claims to be a socio-economic census, or on behalf of anything that results in a demand for money. On the other hand, the withdrawal of village activity costs is also an unexpected expense. Especially if she or her grandson is sick, the cost will swell and must be deep in debt.

As a woman who has never received an education, she often admits that she is stupid, and is easily tricked. The expression that comes out is often regret, sadness and also the enthusiasm to wake up from adversity. Not infrequently she asks her child for help when she feels she really needs help.

Nini Mursidah is a widow who is 79 years old, with 7 children. At the age of 40, when she was pregnant with her seventh child, her husband died. She must be the head of the family who supports her six children who are still at school age. In her childhood, she did not go to school, because at that time her life was still very miserable so that schooling was not a top priority. In her old age, she still makes batik at her skipper's house. The strong reason she has is that she cannot make batik at home, because she will be disturbed by her 1 and 2 year old grandchildren. At 6:00 a.m. she left her house and went to her employer's house. The journey takes an hour. When she got there, she rested for a while and then started making batik. One piece of cloth is usually priced at IDR 20,000.00. This price is very far if done at home. Even though the batik is made at home, the equipment and production costs are borne by the

batik maker. She received this wage after completing his work for 7-14 days.

She admitted that she did it in order to fulfill his daily needs. She also explained that the money was also used to make occasional donations for rituals. In his house she lives with his son and son-in-law as well as his two grandchildren.

Her son is a tomato seller who has an uncertain income. Sometimes nothing is sold at all. Nini Mursidah can only be concerned about the condition of her child. Therefore, she tried her best to make her son happy. Whatever she earns, she still tries not to depend on her son. Instead, she felt that she should be able to make her children happy.

From the description above, it can be concluded that the three widows experienced vulnerability related to exposure that originated from their socio-economic conditions. In a situation that is completely deprived, they face the threat of fraudsters under the guise of sales or census officers, etc. which makes them more vulnerable. Their level of sensitivity automatically works, whether they are able to pass it or not. If they are very forced and unable, they will ask for help from children, neighbors and close relatives according to their adaptive capacity.

They will utilize various sources and develop strategies to survive, namely through social capital and human capital. Maintaining contact with the community is very important to them. They value family relationships very much, sometimes more than their own kind.

Primarily, social capital increases access to other resources and opportunities that enables adaptation [31]. Social capital refers to integration into broad social groups, networks, and organizations, and access to resources via these groups [32]. Social capital supports adaptation via collective action, resource networks, and establishment of support systems during stressful times. In addition, social capital enables adaptation primarily because it creates opportunities for the exchange of goods, services, information and trust, which enable them to have access to the resources and opportunities necessary for long-term adaptation and resilience. Social capital can advance local economies and help ensure a sustainable future [33].

On the other hand, they also utilize human capital. Human capital supports the competence and capabilities necessary for adaptation and minimizes barriers to many adaptation options [34], [35]. Human capital is the skills, knowledge, experience, health, and education an individual has [36], [37]. Their ability in agriculture is not doubted because they have been trained and proven and are supported by their natural resources. As is known, Banjarnegara is an area with major agricultural potential due to the availability of vast land that is fertile and suitable for the development of various agricultural commodities, including 14,663 hectares of rice fields and

44,478 hectares of moor [38].

5. CONCLUSION

Elderly widows with various socio-economic vulnerabilities deserve attention. The poverty that haunts them with exposure actually makes them stronger to develop their adaptive capacity. This proves that women have become an important part of the sustainability of family economy. The resilience perspective is useful for understanding resource management decisions and changes that arise in society as a result of changes in access to resources. The results of study show that various efforts have been put into practice by batik workers whose vulnerability increases their resilience to maintain the sustainability of community life. The main factor that makes it resilient is maximizing social and human capital. The resilience of widows of batik workers in the research locations is limited to resilience. Currently, the renewal and the modification of local knowledge is still able to guarantee resilience, but if there is continuous disruption one day, this strategy may experience limitations.

Attention to studies of women has generally focused on children and women of childbearing age. Meanwhile, studies on the elders tend to be gender neutral, so they do not address the unique challenges faced by elderly women.

The weakness of this study is that it can be responded to by future studies. This paper is expected to provide input for the empowerment of widows, and women in general. Of course, it is also an input for improving attitudes, being positive and supportive of a patriarchal society towards women.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to thank those who have helped this paper completion. We also thank the speakers in this study for helping this research run smoothly.

REFERENCES

- [1] Sechudin, "Rumah Berpintu Satu Nini Supinah yang Viral di Banjarnegara Butuh Perhatian," *Kompasiana*, 2019. [Online]. Available: <https://www.kompasiana.com/siwisang/5dd016bd097f36725b19e3e2/rumah-berpintu-satu-nini-supinah-desa-glempang-yang-sedang-viral-di-banjarnegara-butuh-perhatian?page=all>.
- [2] W. Bank, "World development report 2012: Gender equality and development report.," Washington, DC, 2012.
- [3] C. Bhorat, H., & Van Der Westhuizen, "Poverty, Inequality and the nature of economic growth in South

- Africa," Cape Town: Development Policy Research Unit, 2012.
- [4] M. Posel, D & Rogan, "Gendered trends in poverty in the post-apartheid period 1997-2006," *Dev. South. Afr.*, vol. 29, pp. 97–113, 2012.
- [5] A. Flatø, Martin; Muttarak, Raya; and Pelser, "Women, Weather, and Woes: The Triangular Dynamics of Female-Headed Households, Economic Vulnerability, and Climate Variability in South Africa.," *World Dev.*, vol. 9, pp. 41–42, 2017.
- [6] L. Ligon, E., & Schechter, "Measuring vulnerability," *Econ. J.*, vol. 113, pp. 95–102, 2003.
- [7] A. Chudgar, "Female headship and schoolig outcomes in rural India," *World Dev.*, vol. 39, pp. 550–560, 2011.
- [8] A. . Kumar, N & Quinsumbing, "Gendered impacts of the 2007-2008 food price crisis. evidence using panel data from rural ethiopia," *Food Policy*, vol. 38, pp. 11–22, 2013.
- [9] F. Klasen, S., Lechtenfeld, T., &Povel, "A feminization of vulnerability?Female headship, poverty, and vulnernability in Thailand," *Wold Dev.*, vol. 71, pp. 36–53, 2014.
- [10] D. Gould, Elise and Cooper, "Financial Security of Elderly Americans at Risk," Washington, DC, Briefing Paper365, 2013.
- [11] L. heri M. Cicih, "Info Demografi," *BKKBN*, vol. 1, 2019.
- [12] B. P. Statistik, "Survei Penduduk Antar Sensus (Supas)," Jakarta.
- [13] Ilham, "Kepala Desa di Banjarnegara Hafal Semua Nama Janda," *Republika.co.id*, 2016. [Online]. Available: <https://nasional.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/daerah/16/03/03o3gs361-kepala-desa-di-banjarnegara-hafal-semua-nama-janda>.
- [14] BPS, "ersentase Penduduk Miskin Menurut Kabupaten/Kota di Provinsi Jawa Tengah, 1996- 2019," *BPS Jateng*. [Online]. Available: <https://jateng.bps.go.id/dynamictable/2019/01/29/93/persentase-penduduk-miskin-menurut-kabupaten-kota-di-provinsi-jawa-tengah-1996- 2018.html>.
- [15] R. J. T. and R. J. N. Klein, "Assessment of Coastal Vulnerability to Climate Change," *Ambio*, vol. 28, pp. 128–187, 1999.
- [16] P. M. and W. N. A. Kelly, "Theory and Practice in Assessing Vulnerability to Climate Change and Facilitating Adaptation," *Clim. Change*, vol. 47, no. 4, pp. 325–352, 2000.
- [17] J. Barnett, "Adapting to Climate Change in Pacific Island Countries: The Problem of Uncertainty," *World Dev.*, vol. 29, pp. 977–993, 2003.
- [18] S. C. Moser, "Now More than Ever: The Need for More Societally Relevant Research on Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change.," *Appl. Geogr.*, vol. 30, pp. 464–474, 2010.
- [19] S. Arora-Jonsson, "Virtue and vulnerability: Discourses on women, gender and climate change," *Glob. Environ. Chang.*, vol. 21, pp. 744–751, 2011.
- [20] A. Oliver-Smith, "Anthropological research on hazards and disasters.," *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.*, vol. 25, pp. 303–328, 1996.
- [21] and M. S. S. 2000 Cutter, S. L., J. T. Mitchell, "Revealing the Vulnerability of People and Places: A Case Study of Georgetown County, South Carolina," *Ann. Assoc. Am. Geogr.*, vol. 90, no. 4, pp. 713–737, 2000.
- [22] and A. S. Turner II, B. L., R.E. Kasperson, P. Matson, J.J McCarthy, R.W. Corell, L. Christensen, N. Eckley, J.X. Kasperson, A. Luers, M.L. Martello, C. Polksky, A. Pulsipher, "Framework for Vulnerability Analysis in Sustainability Science," *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci.*, vol. 100, no. 14, pp. 8074–8079, 2003.
- [23] C. O. N. Moser, "The Asset Vulnerability Framework: Reassessing Urban Poverty Reduction Strategies.," *World Dev.*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 1–19, 1998.
- [24] R. Chambers, "Editorial Introduction: Vulnerability, Coping And Policy," *Inst. Dev. Stud. Bull.*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 1–7, 1989.
- [25] and J. E. H. White, G. F., "Assessment of Research on Natural Hazards.," *MIT Press. Cambridge, MA*, 1975.
- [26] D. Cutter, S. L., Emrich, C. T., Webb, J. J., & Morath, "Social vulnerability to climate variability hazards: A review of the literature," *Final Rep. to Oxfam Am.*, no. 1–44, 2009.
- [27] Colburn, "Development of Social Indicators of Fishing Community Vulnerability and Resilience in the U.S. Southeast and Northeast Regions.," 2011.
- [28] E. and S. M. Esayas, "Analysis of Socioeconomic Vulnerability of Street Vendors," *Theor. Empir. Res. Urban Manag.*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 49–65, 2020.
- [29] T. Niaya, "Coping with Informality and Illegality:

The case of street entrepreneurs of Harare Metropolitan, Zimbabwe,” *Asan J. Econ. Model.*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 93–102, 2014.

[30] E. and M. J. Rap, “The lives of women in a land reclamation project: gender, class, culture and place in Egyptian land and water management,” *Int. J. Commons*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 84–104, 2019.

[31] R. A. and G. B. Bailey, Karen. M; McCleery, “The role of capital in drought adaptation among rural communities in Eswatini,” *Ecol. Soc.*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2019.

[32] R. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

[33] W. Ruzek, “The Informal Economy as Catalyst for Sustainability,” *Sustainability*, vol. 7, pp. 23–24, 2015.

[34] J. Paavola, “Livelihoods, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change in Morogoro, Tanzania.,”

Environ. Sci. Policy, vol. 11, no. 7, pp. 642–654, 2008.

[35] and G. D. B. Cassidy, L., “Understanding household connectivity and resilience in marginal rural communities through social network analysis in the village of Habu, Botswana.,” *Ecol. Soc.*, vol. 17, no. 4, p. 11, 2012.

[36] I. Scoones, “Sustainable rural livelihoods: a framework for analysis.,” Brighton, UK., IDS Working Paper 72., 1998.

[37] and T. W. D. Nawrotzki, R. J., L. M. Hunter, “Rural livelihoods and access to natural capital: differences between migrants and non-migrants in Madagascar.,” *Demogr. Res.*, vol. 26, pp. 661–700, 2012.

[38] Baperlitbang, “Potensi Pertanian di Kabupaten Banjarnegara,” *Baperlitbang Banjarnegara*. [Online]. Available:

https://baperlitbang.banjarnegarakab.go.id/web/konten/26/potensi_pertanian.