

The State Economic Violence And Madurese Women

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Abstract

This research is a qualitative research that looks at and explores how economic violence perpetrated by the state impacts women. The research was conducted in Bangkalan Madura using a descriptive qualitative approach. The results of the research show that the state policy to increase the price of fuel oil (BBM) is considered as state economic violence. As a result, this country's economic violence has an impact on the lives of Bangkalan Madura women. To get out of this problem, the state should be wiser in raising fuel prices.

Keywords: State, Economic, Violence, Women, Bangkalan, Madura

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INTRODUCTION

The year of 2003 was the year of the fundamental downturn of the Indonesian nation. This was not only due to the fact that Indonesia remained in an economic crisis, but also because on that year the price of three basic needs of the people, namely fuel, telephone, and electricity, were increased.

The government's policy to increase the three basic components certainly plunged the people into the deepest critical point. This is indeed undeniable because, since the 1997 economic crisis, the common people was consistently in a slump. This powerlessness was getting worse and was intensified by the state's controversial policy of increasing the three components of basic needs (telephone, fuel, electricity) at the beginning of the year.

As a result, the government's unpopular policy was negatively responded by all walks of life. Protests spearheaded by students to reject the policy were everywhere, such as in Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Makassar, Sumatra, and other areas.

Interestingly, among the resistance movements, it turned out that there were workers, fishermen, businessmen, farmers, and mothers, in addition to students. The widespread protest movement showed that the government's decision was really torturous, especially for housewives. This was understandable since it was women – without ignoring other groups – who were in direct contact with the needs of a household.

Therefore, just take a look at the voices of women who were members of *Aliansi Perempuan Menggugat* (the Women's Claim Alliance) who launched protests in Jakarta to ask for Megawati's empathy as a fellow woman to feel how heavy the burdens faced by women was due to the increase in the price of fuel, electricity and telephones. Or, take a look at the letter sent by *Forum Ibu Peduli* (the Concerned Mothers Forum) in Yogyakarta to Megawati (*Kompas*, 27/1/2003);

“Actually, we weren't too surprised by your New Year's gift, Mbak Mega, because we had crossed the threshold of being saturated with price increases in the last days of 2002,” the mothers wrote after their protest.

The letter demonstrates that those women are disappointed because apparently, as a fellow woman, Megawati could not feel the economic pressure felt by the mothers. While before becoming the president, Megawati constantly shouted her side to the marginalized and the poor class in every speech. And, now her taking side was gone.

However, what the mothers complained about was denied by Megawati by saying that the increase, despite the seemingly unpopular, was actually for the country's economic recovery. With the macroeconomic mathematical calculations of her economists, Megawati believed that the decision was very correct. According to her, the people cursed her because she considered them not aware of the country's economic calculations.

In terms of the country's economic calculations, according to Franz Magnis Suseno¹, the decision was indeed the right one. However, the economists' calculations were oblivious or forgot that psychologically there was a real misery felt by the people. And this was not taken into account by the state. According to Magnis, the “economic rationality” calculations which sacrificed people now for a “better” economic situation in the future, was clearly irrational. And, for a housewife with simple thoughts who daily had to manage the sustainability of her family with a steady income, while the expenses were getting higher day by day, how irrational was the economists' opinion who remained believing that people's resilience to bear the burden of rising prices and their effects were still quite strong.

The state's arbitrary action with regard to the rising prices and their indifference for the people's feelings of suffering is clearly an act of economic violence by the state. According to Sulistyowati Iriyanto², when the policy of increasing the tariffs for three vital necessities of life in society resulted in widespread economic losses, and even decreased people's resilience to the lowest level, that is where the state violence has occurred. State violence is an act performed by the state consciously, or it refers to a situation where the state allows violence to occur.

According to the Rifka Anissa Women Crisis Center (RAWCC) based in Yogyakarta, The state economic violence in turn has an impact on the marginalization of women in the family. The economic hardship felt by men would, in the end, lead to men's increased violence against women, both physically and psychologically.

¹ Franz, Suseno Magnis, 2003, *Rasionalitas dan Irasionalitas Kenaikan Harga*, Kompas, Jakarta

² Iriyanto, Sulistyowati, 2003, *Dampak Kekerasan Ekonomi Negara*, Kompas, Jakarta

Of a number of cases handled by RAWCC, during the period 2000-2002 the marginalization of women in the form of violence increased by 10 percent. And that was because of the difficult economic situation. Indeed, economic difficulties are not always the direct cause of women's marginalization in the form of violence from their life partners. However, economic difficulties can trigger marginalization in the form of violence against women by their partners (*Kompas*, 20/1/2003). Strictly speaking, the state economic violence ultimately leads to the process of marginalization of women (housewives) by their partners.

Against the above backdrop, the issues to be discussed in this research are: Does women's (housewives') partner-perpetrated violence due to state economic violence also occur in women in Bangkalan? How is the process of partner-perpetrated violence (marginalization) of the Bangkalan women? What forms of violence do the Bangkalan women experience from their life partners?

The purposes of the present study were to: 1) determine the forms of the Bangkalan women's partner-perpetrated marginalization due to the state economic violence; 2) determine the Bangkalan women's resistance to partner-perpetrated marginalization due to state economic violence; 3) grasp the Bangkalan women's strategy against the state economic violence.

The benefits of the present study include: 1) to develop an understanding of respect for women; 2) to add insight and understanding of the importance of the state's taking sides for women (housewives).

Studies describing the presence of impacts of women's partner-perpetrated violence due to the state economic violence are not only found in Indonesia. The World Bank study on various community groups in many countries presented in *Voices of the Poor, Crying Out for Change* (2000) showed that one group of men in a community would be angry and show a feeling of being humiliated by getting drunk or using drugs because they could no longer be the sole breadwinner for the family. As a result, marginalization in the form of physical violence against women is widespread and even increased in some community groups. This also happened in Russia³.

In Indonesia itself, women's partner-perpetrated marginalization due to economic difficulties – which is of course due to the state economic violence – occurs in people in East Nusa Tenggara. This violence (marginalization) is not only due to the traditional culture of the community which remains placing women in the second class, it is also caused by the women's economic dependence on men. The marginal situation shows an increase when men have economic difficulties. Women in this situation are increasingly meaningless. Women often experience violence and must obey their husbands. And this also happened in the area of Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara.

Clearly, the state's policy of increasing the three vital needs of the people, in the end, leads to a lot of economic difficulties for men. It is at this time of economic difficulty that men make their female partners meaningless. Furthermore, in order to overcome their economic difficulties, many men sell their daughters or wives. Thus, the difficult economic situation caused by the increase in these three vital needs makes women

³ Faqih, Mansur, 2001, *Femenisme dan Gender*, Insist, Yogyakarta

increasingly marginalized. Are policymakers (the state) aware that this incident places Indonesia in a bad category in the eyes of the international community, namely Tier 3, which means that there are no adequate laws capable of preventing women and children trafficking and the government's indifference to this problem⁴.

Why does the state have the heart to perpetrate economic violence against its people? Does it realize that this policy has resulted in the marginalization of women? In his book, *The Republic*, Plato dreamed of a very prosperous and organized state with the exclusion of slaves and women. These two classes, despite the classification as adults, are considered as disabled people not deserving to be heard in the political sphere.

In the life of the state, Plato considered them not superior human beings, since slaves are needed only to build the state infrastructure, while women are only children's production machines which later produce strong soldiers to fight. Meanwhile, those who are considered worthy of being the economic driver and making public decisions are only those who are considered to have adequate capabilities, the men⁵.

Men increasingly show their superiority. In a family, they have a dominant economic role. According to Karl Marx, the assumption that men are the breadwinners, while women are the housekeepers, has resulted in women being powerless. Thus, when men have economic difficulties, women are increasingly marginalized.

Violence against wives is more often caused by poverty of a family. According to Lukman Sutrisno⁶, sociologically, violence against married women (wives) is mostly caused by the family's poverty. Prolonged poverty in the end gives birth to emotional destabilization in the family. A husband whose income is limited will work hard to meet the needs of his family. After her husband came home tired, he is finally emotionally destabilized. As a result, acts of violence against the wife would be so easy to happen when there are trivial things in the family.

According to Lukman Sutrisno⁷, in addition to poverty, violence against wives often occurs because of the introduction of a consumptive culture to poor families. Therefore, when they want certain things while the financial condition does not allow it, the husband is very vulnerable to violence against his wife.

More structurally, Julia Cleves Mosse⁸ sees violence against wives (women) as mostly caused by the economic crisis of a country. This is a poverty with a female face. This is the conclusion of a large body of literature on development that looks at how women (wives) are disproportionately represented among the poor and powerless in the developing world. The economic crisis and structural adjustment programs have actually added to the reproductive and productive workload for millions of poor women.

⁴ Irianto, Sulistyowati, 2003, Dampak Kekerasan Ekonomi Negara, Kompas, Jakarta

⁵ Venny, Adriana, 2003, Bilamana Kapabilitas Rakyat Diperhitungkan, Kompas, Jakarta

⁶ Soetrisno, Lukman, 1997, Kemiskinan, Perempuan, dan Pemberdayaan, Kanisius, Jogjakarta.

⁷ Soetrisno, Lukman, 1997, Kemiskinan, Perempuan, dan Pemberdayaan, Kanisius, Jogjakarta.

⁸ Mosse, Julia C, 1993, Gender dan Pembangunan, Rifka Annisa dan Pustaka Pelajar, Jogjakarta.

RESEARCH METHODS

By taking into account the above issues, objectives, and contributions, the present study used the descriptive qualitative method. This method will reveal how Bangkalan women experience marginalization from their partners due to the state economic violence. The qualitative research method uses words or sentences in a logical structure to explain concepts in relation to each other⁹ and it is descriptive, in which data are broken down into words or pictures and all the sign systems which cannot be ignored in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding (*vesrtehen*).

Data and information about violence against women in the household by their partners in Bangkalan Regency of Madura were obtained by conducting in-depth direct interviews with female victims through informants. The informant's data would be forwarded to the victim and from one victim to another victim, and so on. This kind of data acquisition is often referred to as the snowball sampling model, which is to find informants from previous informants. In-depth interviews were conducted by preparing structured questions. In addition, unstructured questions were provided in accordance with the development of research data. This in-depth interview was considered as primary data.

In addition to primary data, the researchers also used such secondary data as literature studies, previous studies, media reports or seminar results. The primary and secondary data were analyzed using three methods, data reduction, data testing, and conclusion drawing as frequently used by Miles and Huberman¹⁰.

Furthermore, triangulation, was used to check the validity of the data. Triangulation of sources and investigators is performed by comparing the interviews results and utilizing the findings of other researchers.

DISCUSSION

Bangkalan Sub-district is among the sub-districts of the city of Bangkalan Regency. Demographically, it has an area of 3,501,459 Ha, consisting of 7 *kelurahan* and 6 villages. The thirteen villages are Kemayoran, Kraton, Pejagan, Bancoran, Gebang, Sabiyan, Demangan, Pangeranan, Mlajuh, Mertajasah, Kramat, Sembilangan, and Ujung Piring (*Bangkalan dalam Angka*, 2004, as described by the Chief of Administration Section of Bangkalan Sub-district, Soedibjo, 54 years old).

According to Soedibjo, of the thirteen villages, the most densely populated village was Pejagan village with a population of 12,346, consisting of 5,938 male residents and 6,408 female residents. Meanwhile, the sparsely populated village was Mertajasah with population of 1,173 people, consisting of 575 male residents and 598 female residents. However, the overall population of Bangkalan Sub-district was 55,521, consisting of

⁹ Danandjaja, James, 2000, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif dalam Penelitian Faktor dalam Aminuddin* (ed) Pengembangan Penelitian dalam Bidang Bahasa dan Sastra, Yayasan Assih Asuh, Malang

¹⁰ Miles, Matthew B dan MB Huberman, 1984, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Source of New Methods*, Sage Publications, London

26,429 male residents and 29,092 female residents. Thus, it is clear that the residents of Bangkalan Sub-district

Based on the composition of the population, the people of Bangkalan Sub-district generally made a living as farmers, fishermen, traders, and civil servants, both civil and military. Thus, it can be said that, on average, the people of Bangkalan Sub-district was in the poverty line.

In terms of religion, the majority (around 80%) of the people of Bangkalan Sub-district are Muslims (especially *Nahdlyin* Islam). And the rest are non-Muslims. Therefore, the cultural nuances in Bangkalan Sub-district is intensely Islamic. Many *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) are found in this city.

Therefore, in terms of education, not all residents of Bangkalan Sub-district had an awareness of the importance of education for their children. This was not only because of the problem of poverty, but also because of the people's view that modern education was not important. According to them, the most important thing was religious (Islamic) education, rather than modern one. Thus, the average people chose *pesantren*, rather than modern schools (elementary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, and universities).

For this reason, the Madurese people, in general, and the residents of Bangkalan Sub-district, in particular, were culturally very obedient to *kiai* (an Islamic cleric). For them, *kiai* was everything, since *kiai* are people who bring blessings. In fact, the Regent of Bangkalan Regency is a *kiai*, named *Kiai* Fuad, who is a descendant of Saekhona (Syekh) Kholil. The latter was the most respected figure by the people of Bangkalan. Saekhona Kholil was a charismatic figure considered instrumental in the spread of Islam in the Madura area.

In general, the patriarchal culture is deeply rooted in Madura. Men are highly dominant and powerful in the family life. This is what makes Madurese (Bangkalan) women completely powerless. Madurese women are always under the shadow of men's power. This subordination of women by men occurs in almost all spheres, from culture, economy, politics, to sexuality.

Violence and Resistance

Prior to the State Economic Violence

I wake up at four in the morning
After that I
Make the bed
Cook rice
Make coffee for husband
Prepare breakfast for the family
Take care of young children
Wash and iron clothes
Take care of livestock
Trade
And then night comes

My work is to prepare dinner
Then spread the mat to sleep for the family
The works I do
Take 12 to 16 hours
But my husband still never respects me

That was the complaint of Faidah, 39 years old. The woman of two children said that so far her family life has been plagued by poverty. Her husband's income was uncertain because his job was a pedicab driver. Meanwhile, he had to support his two children.

Even so, she still lived a normal life, since she could help earning an extra living by trading on a small scale at home. For her, this work really helped the life of her family. She felt happy, but what made her sad is that her husband never appreciated her efforts. She said:

“What I can't stand the most is when Fahri (her husband) often hurts me. Although it is not in physical form, but he often hurt my heart with harsh words. And it hurts more actually.”

The cause of violence by her husband usually began with a debate about a problem. According to her, in the debate her husband often did not respect her at all. In the end, her husband often spoke in a harsh, hurtful tone.

However, Faida did not remain silent in response to the violence against her. She fought against her husband when she was psychologically abused. She resisted by responding back what her husband said. However, she still had no power. Her husband felt that he was the most righteous, but, at the very least, Faida has made a defense that was her right.

Similar to Faida, Sunarmi, 31, a woman from Pangeranan village of Bangkalan sub-district, was often marginally treated by her husband. She was also psychologically abused where she was often harshly treated by her husband.

It was her husband's irregular job that led Sunarmi to be frequently treated harshly by her husband. According to Sunarmi:

“My husband's job is not permanent. Sometimes, he helps neighbors in the paddy fields. Sometimes, when there is a market, my husband usually goes to the market to work as a porter, making my husband's income uncertain. Meanwhile, the family's needs continue to increase. We have two children, one is still a minor and the second is in the second grade. It is the constantly rising needs and uncertain income that probably makes my husband often act rudely to me, even in words. And that's a lot.”

Facing her husband's such violence, Sunarmi often could not do anything. She admitted that she often surrendered to her husband's treatment. It's because Sunarmi realized that she could not help with work to help ease the economic burdens assumed by her husband. However, Sunarmi would also fight against her husband when his husband's rude words have gone too far or crossed the line of reasonableness. But her resistance was

just to counter her husband's every word. However, like Faidah, Sunarmi in the end still couldn't fight her husband's harsh treatment optimally.

The economic violence against Sunarmi and Faidah was related to the economic factor. This is like what Marx said that economic violence often occurs because men show their superiority. In a family, men have a dominant economic role. According to Karl Marx, the assumption that men are the breadwinners, while women are the housekeepers, leads women to be powerless. Thus, when men have economic difficulties, women are increasingly marginalized.

Violence against wives is more often caused by poverty of a family. According to Lukman Sutrisno¹¹, sociologically, violence against married women (wives) is mostly caused by the family's poverty. Prolonged poverty in the end gives birth to emotional destabilization in the family. A husband whose income is limited will work hard to meet the needs of his family. After her husband came home tired, he is finally emotionally destabilized. As a result, acts of violence against the wife would be so easy to happen when there are trivial things in the family.

More structurally, Julia Cleves Mosse¹² sees violence against wives (women) as mostly caused by the economic crisis of a country. This is a poverty with a female face. This is the conclusion of a large body of literature on development that looks at how women (wives) are disproportionately represented among the poor and powerless, as a direct result of the development model promoted throughout the developing world. The economic crisis and structural adjustment programs have actually added to the reproductive and productive workload for millions of poor women. Therefore, there is a need for a development policy that is not only concerned with the interests of investors, but an economic policy that should side with the interests of the poor.

Meanwhile, Hosiye, 50, a woman who lived in the city of Bangkalan, was luckier since her husband, Abdul, 52, had a fairly steady job, even though he was only a broker of vehicle registration services in the police. In addition, the woman who was not graduated from elementary school also traded in the Bangkalan market to relieve the family's economic burden.

However, this does not mean that Hosiye has never been abused by her husband. Even the woman of two children often harshly treated not only with words, but also physically by her husband. According to Hosiye, it happened because:

“My husband is affected by the promiscuous environment. He often got drunk and was influenced by promiscuity. He frequently came home late at night drunk. When I asked him, he scolded me and in the end I was often slapped. And I just keep silent.”

In addition to economic problems, the violence committed by Hosiye's husband shows that is not solely due to economic but also cultural factors, especially the consumptive culture (promiscuous environment) adopted by Abdul, Hosiye's husband. According to Lukman Sutrisno¹³, violence against wives often occurs because of the

¹¹ Soetrisno, Lukman, 1997, *Kemiskinan, Perempuan, dan Pemberdayaan*, Kanisius, Jogjakarta.

¹² Mosse, Julia C, 1993, *Gender dan Pembangunan*, Rifka Annisa dan Pustaka Pelajar, Jogjakarta.

¹³ Soetrisno, Lukman, 1997, *Kemiskinan, Perempuan, dan Pemberdayaan*, Kanisius, Jogjakarta.

introduction of a consumptive culture to poor families. Therefore, when they want certain things while the financial condition does not allow it, the husband is very vulnerable to violence against his wife.

However, at times, HosiyeH also put up a fight. Of course, it was not physical resistance that she did. Rather, it was resistance by words, or denying her husband's verbal violence. But, after all, HosiyeH suffered the same fate as other Bangkalan women; she remains under the control of her husband.

Jumani, 45 years old, a woman who graduated from grade 3 of elementary school, also had no difficulties in dealing with the economic needs of her family. It was understandable since her husband, Bewi, 50 years old, was a fairly lucky farmer; he had his own land and often had successful harvests. Thus, the needs of her family could be met, despite the two children not in school. In addition, Jumani, who lived in Desa Kramat, also worked alone by trading on a small scale at home.

However, Jumani also had the same fate as other Bangkalan women, violence and marginalization by her husband. Harsh words were often spoken. After being investigated, it turned out that her husband wanted to marry again (polygamy). Jumani said:

“I was often abused, even if it was not physically. My husband often scolded me for no apparent reason. The reasons were often contrived. Until finally he expressed an intention to marry again. Immediately, I wanted a divorce”.

That is it, it turned out that Jumani was really brave, knowing that her husband's intention to marry again, Jumani immediately took the fight to her husband by asking for a divorce. Jumani did not want to be polygamized. Yes, even though her resistance ended in the loss of her husband, but Jumani saw that it was better than living to be polygamized.

Violence against Jumani arose due to economic as well as cultural factors, in this case her husband's polygamy. According to Lukman Sutrisno¹⁴, violence against wives often occurs not only because of economic factors, but also cultural factors.

As for Suaidah, 31, a woman who lived in the city of Bangkalan, she was far more fortunate than the other Bangkalan women. Economically, Suaidah was more than wealthier since her husband, Asrem, 39 years old, was a migrant worker in Malaysia. Her husband's income was very good. She got monthly remittances from her husband in Malaysia.

However, Suaidah was still a woman who was always marginally treated by her husband. She was often psychologically abused through harsh words from her husband when he returned from Malaysia. Suaidah, a woman who graduated from high school, said:

“I think all women, not only in Madura, have experienced harsh treatment from their husbands, perhaps with hurtful words, including me. Usually, the harsh words happened when I was considered wrong in caring for the children. I have

¹⁴ Soetrisno, Lukman, 1997, *Kemiskinan, Perempuan, dan Pemberdayaan*, Kanisius, Jogjakarta.

two children. The harsh treatment like this was finally resolved when my husband and I sat together and discussed it with a cold head.”

What Suaidah said was interesting. Despite the violence against her, she could resolve it with discussion, preventing from bad things. This was because Suaidah and her husband, Asrem, were fairly highly educated, even though they are only graduated from high school.

It is different from Nakiyeh, 32 years old. So far, there have been no significant obstacles in the economic life of her family even though she herself supported the needs of her family, including a child who was still in the 4th grade. Nakiyeh did work alone as a trader at the Bangkalan market. Meanwhile, her husband, Rabbou, 35 years old, was unemployed.

Even though Nakiyeh was in charge of her family’s economy, it did not mean that the woman who was only graduated from elementary school, was not marginally treated by her husband. Nakiyeh often got psychological pressure in the form of harsh words and even physical violence from her husband. According to Nakiyeh, this rude treatment was caused by a misunderstanding between the two of them about family problems.

Marginally treated by her husband, Nakiyeh did not just stand still. Nakiyeh fought back by countering her husband’s harsh words. Until she dared to file for divorce from his husband. She said:

“Instead of being abused continuously, I resisted. Until I asked for a divorce. It is I who work all this time, but he scolds me and sometimes even hits me.”

Nakiyeh’s strength in resisting the violence committed by her husband is indeed an extraordinary courage. This is because Nakiyeh has economic power, so there is no need to be afraid of her husband who had committed violence against her. Finally, in 2001, Nakiyeh was divorced. She was also free from harsh treatment from her husband. Nakiyeh now lives with her one child without violence from her husband, even though she had to separate and lose her husband. But it’s better.

Meanwhile, Soadhah, 35 years old, admitted that her family’s economic condition was fine, despite the life from hand to mouth. Her husband, Rusli, 40 years old, worked as a pedicab driver, while Soadhah herself was peddling cooked rice in the city of Bangkalan. She and her husband fulfill each other and help each other to fill her family’s deficiency, including to meet the needs of their three children, one being not yet in school and the other two in school.

Even though they helped each other in terms of the family economy, Soadha, a woman who lived in the city of Bangkalan, admitted that she had experienced harsh or violent treatment from her husband. She said:

“Yes, even though both my husband and I work, I still have and often received harsh treatment from my husband. Even though it’s not physical, but I often verbally abused. Usually, the violence I experienced began from a misunderstanding in family matters.”

However, when her husband abused her, Shoadah was not silent. The woman, who never attended school, dared to resist her husband. Shoadah recounted:

“When my husband acts rude to me with rude words, first I just keep quiet. I don’t care. But if it’s too much, then I finally reply the same too.”

That is typical Bangkalan women, who are always harshly treated by their husbands. They often receive marginal treatments through psychological violence, such as hurtful speech. In fact, not infrequently their husbands’ violence has led to acts of physical violence.

Facing their husbands’ violence, the Bangkalan women did not stay silent. They resisted it. Of course, it is in their own way, ranging from arguing with words to resistance with a risk of losing their husbands, divorce.

After the State Economic Violence

Until finally, the state economic violence came. To be precise, during the new year of 2003, when Megawati Soekarnoputri was still the president, she issued an economic policy that was truly unpopular, not in favor of the interests of the lower class: raising the prices of fuel, basic electricity tariffs (TDL), and telephone calls.

Of course, this decision not only made the lives of the poor more difficult, who have been hit hard by the economic crisis, but also added to the burden of living for married women. It is women who were most impacted by the decision, since they would feel that the increase in prices of fuel, electricity, and telephone would make the prices of basic necessities also rise. Meanwhile, their husbands’ income did not increase.

This situation was also felt by married women in Bangkalan Sub-district. The increase in the prices of fuel, electricity, and telephone would worsen the economic situation of their families, which was already in difficulty. That meant the Bangkalan women must be prepared to face two things: increase in the prices of basic commodities and marginal treatment from their husbands.

Faidah, 39 years old, admitted that the increase in fuel prices has put her and her family in an increasingly deprived condition. Prices continued to rise while her husband’s income was uncertain, making it more difficult for her to manage the family economy.

Faidah admitted that the strategy to counterbalance the increase in those prices was to take measures to save electricity. Additionally, what she did was to reduce or simplify the daily meals for herself and her family.

In addition, her husband was looking for additional income by gambling. Faidah said:

“With the rising prices due to rising fuel prices, my husband often participates in lottery gambling. My husband had to do it because there was no other additional income besides being a pedicab driver. Sometimes, he won the lottery, but sometimes not.”

That was how Faidah's husband looked for additional income in dealing with rising prices. Despite the seemingly shortcut, it was considered realistic for such poor families as Faidah and her husband.

In addition, the increase in prices made Faidah often got scolded by her husband, Fahri, 44 years old. Faidah said:

“Now my husband not only often yells at me with harsh words, but often beats me when he's angry. I don't know, maybe he is tired of not having money or losing the lottery.”

In response to her husband's treatment, Faidah now preferred to remain silent. However, she admitted that when she could not bear it, she would fight by words, as well. And more importantly, Faidah considered that the conditions she felt made her think that the New Order was better than the current government (Megawati at that time).

Meanwhile, according to Sunarmi, 31 years old, the increase in the prices of basic commodities caused by the increase in electricity, fuel, and telephones made her husband often angry. Her husband's violence against her was related to the economic difficulties of her family.

In response to her husband's treatment, Sunarmi no longer cared much. The important thing for her was how to deal with these price increases. Sunarmi said:

“I no longer care about my husband's violence against me. What is important is how to find extra money in order to meet daily needs. Therefore, since the price increase, I am now opening a small shop at home. I sell snacks for children.”

That was Sunarmi. She no longer cared about her husband's violence against her, since for her the most important thing was how to deal with the economy of her family's life by earning extra money through trading.

Over times, Sunarmi herself began to dare to resist her husband when her husband committed acts of violence, because she was no longer dependent on her husband economically.

Apart from trading, what Sunarmi did was to save electricity. According to her, previously the lamps used at her home were 25-watt fluorescent, but now they were changed to only 5-watt lamps. That was Sunarmi's strategy to deal with the state economic violence.

Similar to those other women, Hisiyeh, 50 years old, saw that the rising prices due to rising prices for fuel, electricity, and telephones made her suffer a tragic fate, a divorce from her husband. Due to the rising prices of basic necessities, she often quarreled with her husband. Hasiyeh recounted:

“Frankly, the increase in prices made my husband and I often fight. My husband was often angry with me and often beat me. He often came home drunk at night and had an affair with other woman. Seeing that I could not be silent, and I warned my husband. But he got angrier, until we finally had to divorce a year ago.”

Due to the divorce Hasiyeh was finally living without a husband. But, fortunately, she still had two children who helped her finances daily. Fortunately, her son has grown up so that he was now working in Malaysia and sent money to her.

What Hasiyeh, Sunarmi, and Faidah experienced was husbands' violence due to the state structural economic policies. According to Julia Cleves Mosse (1996; 151)¹⁵, violence against the Bangkalan women committed by their husbands was the result of the economic crisis that hit the country. This means that the women victims of husband violence are the result of the state economic policies that do not side with the poor, especially women. The economic crisis and structural adjustment programs have actually added to the reproductive and productive workload for millions of poor women.

As for Jumani, 45 years old, the increase in the prices of basic commodities clearly made her panic. It was because it had an effect on her family life.

Jumani's response to deal with the increase in prices of basic commodities was to reduce the food for his family's daily life. And then she tried to make sure that for a year the family did not add to the life burden by saving electricity through changing all electric lights to those of five watts.

Additionally, she lived a very simple life by eating modestly, not extravagantly, the important thing being full. Furthermore, Jumani did not want to use items that were not basic needs, such as television, radio or others. Jumani said:

“What I do to deal with rising prices is to save electricity, eat whatever is important, and do not use things like televisions or other things. With this effort, the high prices of basic commodities can be overcome.”

Since Jumani was divorced from her husband, the rising prices made her a single parent to meeting the needs of herself and her two children. Of course, this situation made Jumani even more difficult. Therefore, she earned extra money by trading until the night. She said:

“To get around to making extra money, in the end, my working hours increased. Initially, my working hours ends in the afternoon, now I work until the evening. Otherwise, how will I get extra money to meet my basic needs, which keep increasing in price?”

That was Jumani, who lived alone in dealing with the state economic violence. Despite the lone life, she was strong enough to overcome the economic difficulties.

Meanwhile, Suaidah, 31 years old, also suffered the same fate as other Bangkalan women. The increase in the prices of fuel, electricity, and telephone, which was followed by the increase in the prices of basic daily necessities, made her look for a strategy or a way to survive to support her family, which relied on remittances from her husband who worked abroad.

In dealing with the increase in the prices of basic commodities, what Suaidah did was to eat modestly, the important being full. And then she reduced pocket money for her two

¹⁵ Mosse, Julia C, 1993, *Gender dan Pembangunan*, Rifka Annisa dan Pstaka Pelajar, Jogjakarta.

children. In addition, Suaidah also did the same thing as other mothers: using small wattage lamps. Furthermore, she also rarely used the phone, in the sense of using outgoing calls.

Additionally, to deal with the high prices, Suaidah was looking for extra money. She no longer relied solely on remittances from her husband who worked abroad. Suaidah has now started working by peddling food, with the aim of generating additional income. Thus, she said:

“When prices went up, I started to think that only relying on remittances from my husband who was working abroad was obviously not enough, considering that my children had also started college. Therefore, I had to work, and so I decided to peddle food in order to earn extra money to cover the family’s daily needs, which were increasing and getting more expensive. And thank God the results were pretty good too.”

Fortunately, Suaidah’s effort was not hindered by her husband. Her husband allowed her and realized that his family’s needs were increasing and getting more expensive. Indeed, Suaidah was lucky to have an understanding husband. However, she remained being marginally treated by her husband.

Not quite different from other mothers, Nakiyeh, 32 years old, admitted that the price increase due to the increase in the price of fuel, electricity, and telephones made her even more difficult and confused. It was hard because the prices were all going up. She was confused because now she was divorced.

What was clear was that the increase in the price of basic commodities reduced Nakiyeh’s sales. Prior to the price increase, her merchandise was always full. After the increase in prices, her merchandise began to decrease due to her inability to find wholesale merchandise. In this regard, she narrated:

“Before the increase in prices my merchandise was full. Bottled tea that previously could sold are two crates, now it only sells 10 to 15 bottles. Furthermore, the price increase also leads my working time to increase; previously, I worked from dusk until twelve o’clock at night, but now I work from dusk until dawn. Even then I only earn IDR 15,000. This condition is getting worse because I am often chased by the city cleaning officers. Indeed, it’s because I do not have a fixed place to sell.”

This condition was really worrying, especially since she had to pay for her child who was in the 4th grade. But, Nakiyeh was not discouraged; in fact, she wanted to send her child to high school, even though her ex-husband no longer provided for his child.

In an effort to survive and send her child to high school, despite the loneliness, Nakiyeh finally looked for additional work by helping her family’s business of trading limestone in the Bangkalan market. In addition, she also worked casual jobs as long as someone ordered and paid her and, if it was halal, Nakiyeh did it.

In addition, in order to survive in the midst of rising prices, Nakiyeh reduced electricity expenditure. She then changed her house's lights to those of five watts. Furthermore, she helped her brother sell in the Bangkalan market.

That was how Nakiyeh, despite the loneliness, persisted to fight. And that might be better than living with a husband who often committed acts of violence.

As for Soadhah, 35 years old, the increase in the price of fuel, electricity, telephones also resulted in the difficulty of the family's economic life, which was already in difficulty. The rising prices of basic commodities made her and her husband work very hard. Her husband, who was a pedicab driver, increased his working time. And so did Soadhah who peddled rice.

Even worse, rising prices forced her to ask his son for help to peddle cooked rice. In this regard, Soadhah told:

“Actually, I don't have the heart to ask my son to help me peddle the cooked rice. But, because I lacked rest, I was forced to involve my child to help me. If not, my energy is not strong enough, I'm tired.”

As a result of the increased working hours, Soadhah rarely gathered with her husband and other children. Previously, I peddled until the evening, and we usually used to together from dusk until dawn. But now it is rarely done. So, my attention to my family is reduced.

Therefore, currently Soadhah frequently harshly treated by her husband. Her husband was often angry since he felt that she did not pay attention. However, she had to peddle. She said:

“My husband is getting angry with me more and more and even now he often beats me because she thinks that I don't pay attention to him. Even though he knows that I am peddling cooked rice which take a long time to prepare. Facing this, I just keep silent, only fighting back by saying that I couldn't take it anymore. When he keep angry with me, I just give up.”

Soadhah's experience is consistent with the World Bank's studies in various community groups in many countries which are presented in *Voices of the Poor, Crying Out for Change* (2000). It shows that one group of men in a community would be angry and show a feeling of being humiliated by getting drunk or using drugs because they could no longer be the sole breadwinner for the family. As a result, marginalization in the form of physical violence against women is widespread and even increased in some community groups. This also happened in Russia. Meanwhile, those who are considered worthy of being the economic driver and making public decisions are only those who are considered to have adequate capabilities, the men (Adriana Venny, 2003)¹⁶.

That is how Soadhah and other Bangkalan women faced the state economic violence in a fairly resilient way: peddling, reducing electricity, doing casual jobs, despite the

¹⁶ Venny, Adriana, 2003, *Bilamana Kapabilitas Rakyat Diperhitungkan*, Kompas, Jakarta

violence committed by their husbands, ranging from harsh words, beatings, to divorce. But yet they continued to survive with all their might.

What happened to the Madurese women of Bangkalan further perpetuate the government's impartiality against women. This is a form of government indifference to the issue of violence against housewives by their husbands.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

Violence against women in Bangkalan Sub-district committed by their husbands actually existed before the increase in the price of daily staples. Husbands' violence against wives was more due to the poverty of their family.

Violence against women by their partners takes the forms of psychological violence, ranging from hurtful words, yelling, to threats of divorce. In addition, it also take the physical form: beating.

In response to such violence, it turned out that the women of Bangkalan did not merely remain silent. These women also resist their husbands. However, their resistance was only limited to words. However, some of the women dared to resist by asking for a divorce when their husband wanted polygamy.

The state economic violence finally came out. The increase in the price of fuel, electricity, and telephones in the New Year of 2003 made basic commodities in Bangkalan, Madura go up. As a result, the economic condition of families who were previously poor was even worse.

This situation intensified husbands' harsh treatment to their wives. Harsh words were increasingly being spoken by husbands to their wives. Furthermore, physical violence was becoming more and more frequent, ranging from slapping to beating.

In response to the increasing violence, the Bangkalan women did not merely sit back and surrender. They resisted, despite the mere words. Even in their resistance there were those who then chose a divorce.

In addition to dealing with the state economic violence, followed by husbands' violence against their partners, women sought strategies to survive in poverty. The strategies taken started from saving electricity by changing lamps with a large wattage to those of five watts, to letting their husband gambled with the lottery.

In addition, another strategy taken by the Madurese women to deal with the increasingly poor condition was to seek additional income. The women did not want to depend on their husbands' income. Therefore, the Bangkalan women did the work of peddling food, despite the involvement of their children to help with their work.

Those strategies turned out to be quite effective since the economic difficulties began to be resolved. However, another problem arose, in which some of their husbands did not agree with their wives' work. The reason was that the husband felt being less cared for.

¹⁷ Irianto, Sulistyowati, 2003, Dampak Kekerasan Ekonomi Negara, Kompas, Jakarta

In fact, according to the World Bank, this is a form of fear of husbands when their wives gets a job that leads to their own economic independence.¹⁸

On the basis of the results of the present study, the structural economy approach is recommended to reduce acts of violence against women by their partners. This means inviting the state not to make economic development policies that actually create misery for people in the poverty line. The government should have an economic development orientation that prioritizes the interests of the poor rather than the capital owners.

Furthermore, culturally, what husbands should do is not to use violence in solving family problems. Resolution by means of violence is actually not solving the problem but, rather, adding to the new problems. Husbands (men) are expected to have the empathy for their exhausted wives. Wives have to do their domestic chores, ranging from cooking, washing, to cleaning the floor. Not to mention, they have to think about the costs for their children. Furthermore, husbands are expected to appreciate what women have done and not place women as subordinate to men, keeping away the patriarchal culture which has made women powerless.

Finally, hopefully there would be no more violence against Indonesian and Madurese women, especially in Bangkalan District, in the future. There should be cooperation between the husband and wife to solve family problems and build the future of children. There is no longer a feeling of being the most powerful, or vice versa, since women and men are indeed equal.

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