



# Empowered Peasant Women: Character Development and Independence

Mimin Maryati<sup>(✉)</sup> and Solehudin Solehudin

Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang, Karawang, Indonesia  
mimin.maryati@fai.unsika.ac.id

**Abstract.** This study explores the process of character development and journey towards independence amongst peasant women in rural areas. Through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis, the experiences of 12 peasant women from various socioeconomic backgrounds were examined. The findings suggest that personal hardships and barriers in accessing education, financial services, and agricultural resources have been instrumental in shaping the strong character and determination of these women. Yet structural gender inequalities continue to limit their autonomy and capacity to thrive independently. Most women expressed a sense of pride in overcoming adversity through relentless diligence, resourcefulness, and gradual self-empowerment. Some became recognized role models in their communities for successfully managing agricultural businesses after years of struggle. Hence the study highlights the need for more grassroots initiatives, vocational training programs, and policy changes to foster such resilience and independence amongst peasant women on a wider scale. It argues for greater social recognition and support systems to enable peasant women to gain economic self-sufficiency, unlock their entrepreneurial potential, and assume more leadership roles in rural development.

**Keywords:** Peasant Women, Character Development, Independence.

## 1 Introduction

Agriculture in Indonesia contributes significantly to national economic development [1–3]. This sector absorbs around 30% of the workforce in Indonesia and 16% of the total national GDP in 2021. Nevertheless, the productivity of the agricultural sector in Indonesia is still relatively low compared to neighboring countries in ASEAN [4, 5]. One of the reasons is because the role of peasant women, which should be important, has not received adequate appreciation and attention so far [1, 6].

Many peasant women in rural areas have limitations in optimizing their character and independence [7–9]. They often carried out only domestic duties, while the management of agricultural land was left entirely to men. As a result, the potential and talents of peasant women are wasted. A survey by the Central Statistics Agency (2021) shows that only 28% of peasant women are actively involved in decision-making related to agribusiness. The rest play a passive role even though they help physically.

This condition is very unfortunate considering that women have a vital role in the progress of agriculture and rural development [1, 10]. Several previous studies have proven that empowering farm women can increase agricultural productivity by 20-30% through the application of agricultural innovations [11–14]. In addition, household income and the welfare of rural communities in general have also increased in line with the increasing role of peasant women in agribusiness management.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine efforts to develop character and independence in peasant women so that they can play a more active role in the progress of the agricultural sector and rural development in Indonesia. The results of the study are expected to provide appropriate policy recommendations and empowerment programs for the government and related institutions in optimizing the important role of peasant women for the progress of this nation.

## 2 Method

This study uses a qualitative approach to examine character development and independence in peasant women under the guidance of Graha Tani Ruminansia Subang Foundation. The selection of qualitative methods is carried out with consideration in order to be able to explore in-depth various aspects related to the topic under study.

The study participants were selected purposively with the criteria of being farm women who are actively involved in agricultural business. Participants came from various regional backgrounds and socio-economic characteristics to obtain comprehensive data. The number of participants is determined based on the principle of data saturation until no new insights are found.

Data collection was conducted through three techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews aim to understand participants' views and experiences related to the research topic. Participatory observation was conducted to observe the behavior and interaction of participants in daily agricultural activities. Meanwhile, document analysis is used to enrich data from interviews and observations.

Data analysis uses content analysis techniques inductively in accordance with the characteristics of qualitative research. The validity of the data is tested by source triangulation and triangulation of data collection techniques. The results of the study are described descriptively and accompanied by direct quotes from participants to support the researchers' interpretations and arguments.

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Results

**Character development and independence of peasant women are important to improve their ability to manage agricultural businesses.** The results of interviews and

observations show that farmer women who have strong character and independent attitudes are better able to make strategic decisions in family agribusiness, implement agricultural innovations, and play an active role in farmer groups (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Women Farmer Participants

No	Name	Age	Education	Agricultural Commodities
1	Siti	45	JS	Padi
2	Rina	50	HS	Vegetables, fruit
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
15	Yuni	62	ES	Chili, tomato

**Table 2.** Interview Results Related to Character Development and Independence

Participants	Interview Results
Siti	I play an active role in family agribusiness decision-making. Starting from seed selection, fertilizer use, to analysis of farm profits and losses.
Rina	I always try to implement agricultural innovations such as hydroponics and crop rotation to increase productivity.
.....	.....
Yuni	I attended the training of breeding chili peppers and tomatoes. The knowledge gained is very beneficial for managing our vegetable garden.

The results of the interview above show that character development and independence have a positive impact on the ability of farm women to manage agricultural businesses and implement innovations. They became more confident and active in farmer groups (Table 2).

**Increasing the managerial ability of farmer women in farming has a positive impact on improving household welfare and income.** Some peasant women participants who successfully manage agribusiness have been able to send their children to college or even perform Hajj.

The following are the results of interviews and observations of 15 farmer women respondents regarding the impact of improving managerial skills (Table 3):

**Table 3.** Interview Results Impact on Well-Being

Question	Respondents Agree	Percentage
Able to school children to Higher Education	10	67 %
Build a new house/pawn	7	47 %
Hajj Savings	5	33 %

**Table 4.** Observations of the Impact of Well-Being

Indicator	Sum	Percentage
Permanent Home	8	53 %
Private Vehicles	6	40 %

Savings at the Bank	11	73 %
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Based on the results of interviews and observations, it can be seen that more than 50% of respondents experienced an improvement in their welfare after pursuing agribusiness. It is characterized by the ability to meet the needs of education, housing, vehicles, and family savings (Table 4).

**Independent and active farmer women who contribute to agricultural activities and local farmer organizations provide benefits for the overall progress of the village, such as improving irrigation infrastructure, procuring agricultural machinery, and increasing access to agricultural information and technology.** The following are the results of interviews and observations from 15 peasant women respondents regarding their contribution to the progress of the village (Table 5):

**Table 5.** Interview Results of Contribution to the Village

Statement	Agree	Percentage
Irrigation Improvement	10 persons	67 %
Procurement of agricultural machinery tools	7 persons	47 %
Access to agricultural technology	11 people	73 %

More serious and sustainable efforts are needed to empower peasant women from various parties so that their character and independence can develop optimally. This effort is expected to encourage the participation of peasant women in agricultural sector decision-making and their contribution to rural development.

### 3.2 Discussion

Although women farmers have shown resilience in character and an important role in agricultural activities, the journey to self-reliance still faces various structural obstacles. Most agricultural development policies and programs today are still very male-oriented and ignore the specific needs of women farmers. As a result, access to extension services, technology, alsintan subsidies, and agricultural financing schemes for women farmers is still far behind. Without the support of specific policies and budgets that champion the economic empowerment of women farmers, the social stigma against women's public roles is difficult to change. Policy breakthroughs through a gender budgeting approach are needed to overcome gender disparities and encourage active participation and full independence of women farmers in agricultural development. The following is a discussion of related research results:

**Character Development and Independence of Peasant Women.** The results of interviews and observations on 15 respondents showed that 80% of farmer women became more confident in agribusiness decision making, 67% dared to try new agricultural innovations, and 73% became active in farmer group activities after attending character development and independence training.

This data is in line with sari and islam findings which shows that self-capacity building interventions in farmer women's groups can increase their participation in farm business planning by up to 90% [15, 16]. In addition, Devkota at all also found that agricultural entrepreneurship training for farm women has an impact on increasing farm productivity by 35% [17].

Increasing the active role of women farmers in agribusiness management and the implementation of these innovations is important to ensure sustainability and increase productivity of agricultural businesses [18, 19]. In addition, economically independent peasant women are proven to have a higher bargaining position in household decision making [20].

Therefore, efforts to develop the character and independence of peasant women need to be carried out massively and sustainably. Multi-stakeholder cooperation between the government, academia, the business world, and civil society is needed to achieve a wider impact on the empowerment of peasant women in Indonesia.

**Managerial Abilities of Peasant Women.** The results of interviews with 15 female farmer respondents showed that 67% were able to send their children to college, 47% were able to buy/mortgage a new house/land, and 33% had Hajj savings after improving their farm management skills.

This data is in line with the findings research [21, 22] which shows that financial management capacity building interventions in farmer women groups can increase household income by 65%. In addition, research [23, 24] also shows that agricultural business administration training for women has an impact on increasing ownership of productive assets such as vehicles and land.

Increasing women's economic contribution through optimizing agribusiness management can accelerate the welfare and economic resilience of farmer households [25]. Especially considering the high role of women in managing family finances in rural areas due to the migration of husbands to work in urban areas.

Therefore, assistance in increasing business management capacity for women farmers needs to be carried out regularly and sustainably so that the impact can be felt widely. Multidisciplinary cooperation between government, academia, the private sector and civil society is needed to accelerate the achievement of these goals.

**Independent and active peasant women contribute to agricultural activities.** The results of interviews with 15 respondents showed that 67% of peasant women contributed to improving village irrigation infrastructure, 47% in procuring alsintan, and 73% in increasing farmers' access to agricultural technology information.

This data is in line with the results of [23] research which found that the active participation of farmer women in farmer groups can encourage the realization of agricultural village development programs such as subsidized fertilizer procurement and farm road improvement by up to 80%.

In addition, [26] research also shows that the involvement of farmer women in association management has an impact on increasing the diversity of member economic businesses such as processing agricultural products and agrotourism.

Thus, empowering peasant women through institutional capacity building and active participation in decision-making is very important. This will have a double impact both on increasing household income and accelerating rural development at large [25]

Therefore, various initiatives to encourage women's participation in farmer institutions need to be encouraged. Capacity building of leadership and affirmative policy advocacy is also needed so that the voice and role of women farmers are stronger in realizing food sovereignty and community welfare.

## 4 Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, several things can be concluded as follows: Character building and independence are important to increase the active role of women farmers in decision making and the application of family farming business innovations. Increasing the capacity of farm business management has a significant impact on increasing the income and welfare of women farmer households. The active participation of women farmers in farmer institutions is able to encourage the acceleration of rural development such as infrastructure procurement, alsintan, and access to agricultural technology. Efforts to develop the capacity and economic empowerment of women farmers need to be carried out in an integrated and sustainable manner by various stakeholders. Affirmative policy support and special programs from the government are needed to accelerate the impact of empowering women farmers broadly. Thus, empowering women farmers through strengthening character, managerial capacity, and institutional participation can make a double contribution to improving the welfare of farmer families and accelerating rural development in Indonesia.

**Acknowledgments.** The researcher expressed his deepest appreciation and gratitude to the Institute for Research and Community Service of Singaperbangsa University Karawang for facilitating lecturers to conduct research. Acknowledgments were also conveyed to the Graha Tani Ruminansia Subang Foundation for providing full support in the form of activity facilities and access to research locations for women farmer groups. This good cooperation has supported the smooth implementation of research so that it can run smoothly. Hopefully the results of this research can be useful as a reference source for efforts to improve the welfare of farm women and the progress of agricultural development in Indonesia.

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