

## Asian Social Work Journal (ASWJ)

Volume 4, Issue 2, March 2019

e-ISSN : 0128-1577

Journal home page:  
www.msosialwork.com

### Vulnerability Life of Female Farmers in Rindu Hati Village Taba Penanjung District Bengkulu Tengah Regency of Bengkulu Province Indonesia

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#### Abstract

Female Farmers in Rindu Hati Village not only help their husbands or family heads to make a living to increase family income which is also expected to improve the level of family welfare, but also take care of the household, such as childcare and other domestic work. This condition makes female farmers have some vulnerability in their lives. There are three components of vulnerability affecting adaptation strategies of female farmers in their lives: 1) the level of exposure, i.e. the extent to which female farmers intersects with the disorder. 2) The level of sensitivity, defined as the effect or impact of the problem or disorder received either directly or indirectly by the female farmers. 3) Adaptability (capacity of response), is the female farmers ability to respond disturbances, balance the potential impacts that will occur, take advantage of opportunities, and fused with the consequences that may arise from a change (Gallopini 2006). This study used the descriptive qualitative design, to examine the vulnerability life of female farmers. Through interviews and observation of 24 informants who then analyzed, the researchers got the conclusions: 1) Female farmers are mostly dominated by those over 40 years old. Most of them have elementary school education, with dependents living 3 to 7 people. 2) Female farmers have experience vulnerability in the aspects of education, health aspects, and economic aspects. Vulnerability of life in these three aspects results in female farmers and their families experiencing various problems of lack of knowledge and skills, disruption of health, and low income to meet their daily needs. Nevertheless, the results of the study also show that these female farmers have potential and resources that can be utilized in dealing with vulnerabilities and life problems, namely social capital in the form of family values and mutual cooperation that are still strong in Rindu Hati Village. Based on the vulnerability and potential as well as the available source system, it is recommended that there be efforts to empower or develop the capacity of female farmers so that they are able to face the vulnerability of life while at the same time increasing their welfare.

**Key words:** vulnerability of life, female farmers, social capital, empowerment

#### Introduction

The working women phenomenon has become an interesting thing to study, especially women who live in the countryside. The role of women in the agricultural sector has lasted a long time and is seen as something natural. Female Farmers in this study are understood as women, adults and young, wives of farmers or family members of farmers who are directly or indirectly involved in farming activities and other activities related to the livelihoods and livelihoods of farmers' families in villages. Female farmers not only help their husbands or family heads to make a living to increase family income which is also expected to improve the level of family welfare, but also take care of the household, like parenting and other domestic work.

Sayogyo in Asma Lutfi (2010) states that there are two roles of women, namely: First, in their status or position as housewives, women do housework as part of the reproductive process, namely a job that does not directly generate income but allows other household members to do work to make a living. Second, in the position of being a breadwinner (additional or principal), women do productive work that directly generates income. Domestic work such as cooking, caring for children, cleaning the house, and taking water should be counted as "worker" activities in the productive sense of the word. This work, even though it does not mean "income", but has the function of providing support to other household members "breadwinners" to take advantage of employment opportunities. With this dual role condition, female farmers are vulnerable to various problems in their lives.

This study focuses on understanding the vulnerability of the lives of female farmers in Rindu Hati Village, Taba Penanjung District, Central Bengkulu Regency, Bengkulu Province, Indonesia. Rindu Hati Village, with an area of 1200 Ha, has a population of 1074 people consisting of 476 men and 598 women (data in 2016), the majority of which are farmed, where rice fields are wide spread and plantations are still easy to find. In general, the problem in Rindu Hati Village is the problem of poverty and neglected children. This problem is closely related to the level of education of the residents of Rindu Hati who said that 41.8% had elementary school education and only 2.4% had undergraduate education. The geographic and topographical conditions of the hilly Rindu Hati Village make up a large part of the area reserved for rice fields and plantations, while the rest is dry land for buildings and other facilities. Data from Village Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMD) of Rindu Hati in 2016 states that 82.2% of family heads work as farmers.

Based on this background, the formulation of the problem in this study was: "How is the vulnerability lives of female farmers? That can be specified in some sub problems: 1) what are the characteristics of female farmers in Desa Rindu Hati? 2) How is the level of exposure to problems or disturbances experienced by female farmers?. 3) The impact of problems or disturbances experienced, 4) What is the adaptability of female farmers in dealing with problems or disruption of their lives.

Considering how complex aspects of human life are, the researcher limits the vulnerability of the life of female farmers in economic aspects (employment), education aspects, health aspects and social aspects.

## Literature Review

The vulnerability as states by Galopin (2006), means by condition when system was shocked from the out of system till pass the critical threshold makes the system have ability to survive and transforming. It mentions that the vulnerability have three components which effect adaptation strategy of social system in facing the transformation: 1) Exposure Level, is how far the system (social life pattern) in touch with troubles. 2) Sensitivity Level, means by effect or impact from problems or troubles having directly or indirectly by the community or society. 3) Capability of Response, is the system ability to receive problems, balancing potential impacts which can be appear, using opportunity, and unity with consistency that can be appear from the transformation. One of community that vulnerable of problems in life are female farmers.

## Research Method

The study of the vulnerability life of female farmers in Rindu Hati Village uses a qualitative descriptive approach, namely an approach to understanding or describing in detail the vulnerability life of female farmers. However, to complete the discussion, this research also integrates with a quantitative approach, so that an overview of the vulnerability of female farmers can also be explained quantitatively. Informants in this study were taken using purposive sampling technique, namely the determination of informants based on the purpose of the convenience of researchers in obtaining data. The informants in this study are amounted 24 female farmers who were members of the female farmer

group (KWT) Rindu Hati. The data is processed and analyzed qualitatively, so that it is obtained a complete description of the vulnerability life of female farmers in Rindu Hati Village.

## Research Result

### *Characteristics of Female Farmers*

The female farmers in this study were female figures in Desa Rindu Hati, both adults and young people. They are the wives of farmers or family members of the farmer who are directly or indirectly involved in farming activities and other activities related to the livelihoods and livelihoods of rural families. The results of this study indicate that female farmers in Rindu Hati Village, 41.6% were aged between 41-50 years, even 12.5% were over 50 years old, 29.1% were 31-40 years old, and only 16.6% less than 30 years old. This condition certainly affects the physical resilience of female farmers so that they are physically vulnerable to have problems when working as farmers. The results of the study also informed that the education of female farmers was 58.3% attended elementary school, and 29.2% had junior high school education and only 12.5% had high school education. This condition illustrates that poverty experienced by female farmers is also related to low education levels. The characteristics of the age and education level of female farmers are also similar to the conditions of their husbands / families. Their characteristics are also characterized by the dependence of their families' lives on an average of 4 people in each family, and this condition certainly affects the lack of fulfillment of family needs.



Picture 1. Female farmers in Rindu Hati Village

### *Exposure Level of Female Farmer Problems*

The level of exposure in this study is understood as to what extent female farmers in Rindu Hati intersect with problems or disturbances, which in this case are categorized in several problems, namely problems/disruptions on economic/occupational aspects, education, health, and in aspects of social life.

### *What problems are experienced by female farmers in economic / occupational aspects?*

The results showed that Female farmers in Rindu Hati intersected or experienced problems as follows:

1) Location of agricultural land is difficult to reach. The location of agricultural land, which is about 3 to 15 km away from home, with steep, muddy and rocky roads, made female farmers hard to reach, moreover there is physical vulnerability because most female farmers are over 40 years old, some even more than 50 years old. 2) Lack of venture capital of women farmers to buy plant seeds, fertilizers, and buy pest control drugs. 3) Double roles of female farmers, between working in fields, fields or plantations with domestic work such as childcare and managing the household, causes confusion to focus on one role which ultimately leads to the less optimal role of female farmers in carrying out their dual roles. 4) Employment of informal, erratic female farmers, such as selling vegetables, farm laborers, makes them do not have certainty income every month.



Picture 2. Female farmers' double roles, work while taking care of children

### **What problems are experienced by female farmers in the education aspect?**

The results of this study indicate that female farmers in Rindu Hati, 58.3% attended elementary school (SD), and 29.2% had junior high school education and only 12.5% had high school education. This condition illustrates that poverty experienced by female farmers is also related to low education levels. In this aspect of education, the results of the study show that female farmers feel several problems such as: 1) Access to schools are far enough for their children, especially for junior high schools (SMP), senior high schools (SMA) and higher education whose location must be outside the region Rindu Hati. 2) Another problem that arises is the cost requirement for schools, especially for school needs that are not borne by the government.

### **What problems are experienced by female farmers in the health aspect?**

One of the vulnerabilities commonly experienced by poor families is vulnerability / problems in health aspects. The statement was apparently not fully proven. The results of this study indicate that even in conditions of economic shortages, in terms of health, female farmers in Rindu Hati stated "fine". In general, they stated that they were in good health, although in their families there were those who sometimes had fever, cough and flu. The statement that the health aspect was "fine" was supported because of the existence of a national health insurance card (JKN) from the Social Security Organizing Agency (BPJS) in health sector.

The research results show that female farmers generally have joined and obtained BPJS cards in the health sector, through the scheme of premium payments both those borne by the government or by themselves. Nonetheless, this study also shows that not all female farmers in Rindu Hati have health insurance cards, as experienced by Ms. Harisa's family members, Mrs. Candrawati, Mrs. Elis Susanti.

In addition, one of the life vulnerabilities of female farmers and their families in health aspect is treatment access to a doctor or PKM that is quite far from home, especially when experiencing chronic and acute diseases. This was conveyed by Mr. Sarimin, husband of Mrs. Jumiati (55 years) who had epilepsy, and had to be treated regularly in a hospital or doctor, but because of far and expensive access to medical treatment, the treatment was only handled traditionally.



Picture 3. Free Health Services Activity for poor people

### ***What problems experience by female farmers in social aspects?***

In social interaction, life in Rindu Hati can be said to still be full of family atmosphere. The results of the study show that the leadership factor currently led by the Village Head of the descendants of the Pagar Ruyung Kings who are the ancestors of the community in Rindu Hati, so that the community is very "obedient" to the leadership. This is indicated by the statement of Ms. Yuhelmi as the coordinator of the females' farmer group that: "The people in Rindu Hati from long time ago uphold their leaders ... what the leader says is what the people listen to and obey" The results of this study indicate that in general the life in the Desa Rindu Hati was stated by them as a comfortable life. Some of the reasons conveyed by female farmers about the comforts of life are: 1) the community is accustomed to living with helping each other, working together, with a high sense of family. Mr. Sarimin, Mrs. Jumiati's husband stated: "In Rindu Hati, it is very comfortable to live ... here people are still accustomed to working together ... for example, to make a stage for the preparation of a wedding, only 2 hours can be completed, because people help each other and work together ...".

This condition was also stated by Rindu Hati Village Chief Mr. Sutan Mukhlis, who stated that "... as one of the" old villages "... Rindu Hati has local cultural values, especially the blend of Rejang and Pagar Ruyung, Padang cultural values... which support the formation of a sense of family and the principle of mutual cooperation in life".

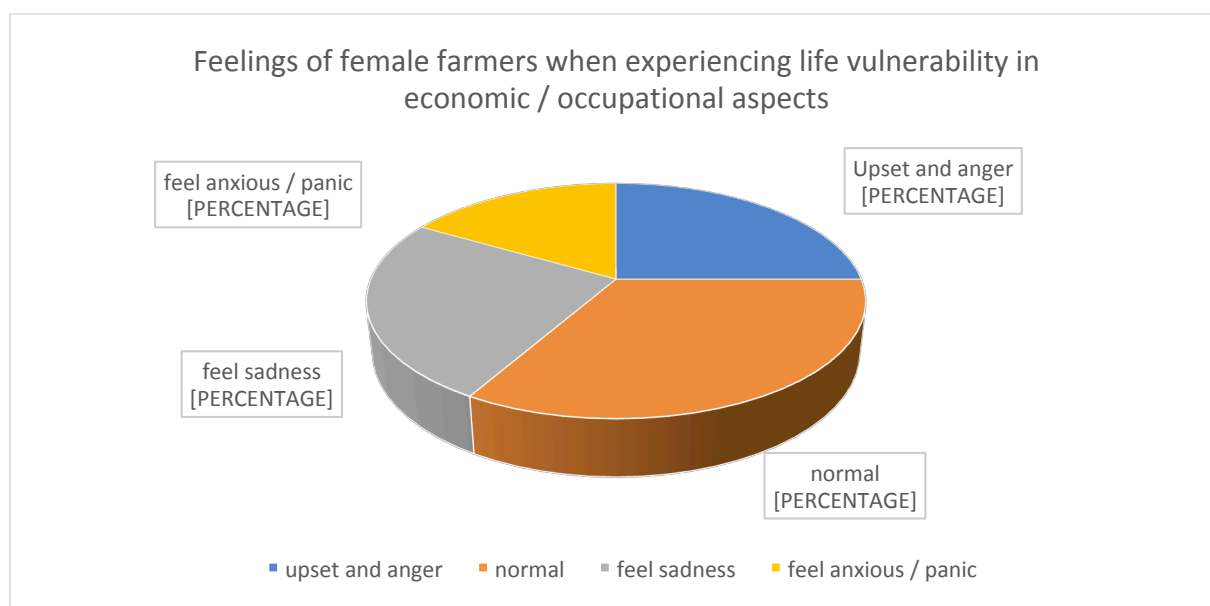
Another analysis found in this study, why people can feel the comfort of life, in a comfortable social life is the fact of the geography of the Rindu Hati Village region. This village is located in a mountain valley flowed by a river with views of rice fields stretching on the river side. This area can only be reached by one entrance about 10 minutes by vehicle from the highway, through the road with the left and right are rubber and durian plantations. Thus, this region is relatively unaffected with the dynamics of traffic flows which generally bring rapid changes to the area it passes.

The results of the study also show that the social interaction of female farmers is one of the social capitals for handling their problems. This is indicated by the response of them who generally tell others and ask for help from others when facing life problems both in terms of education, health, and vulnerability in economic/occupational aspects. The attitude and behavior of them shows that there is intimacy, there is solidity, and there is closeness between them and other community members.

### ***Sensitivity Level of Female Farmer toward Problems***

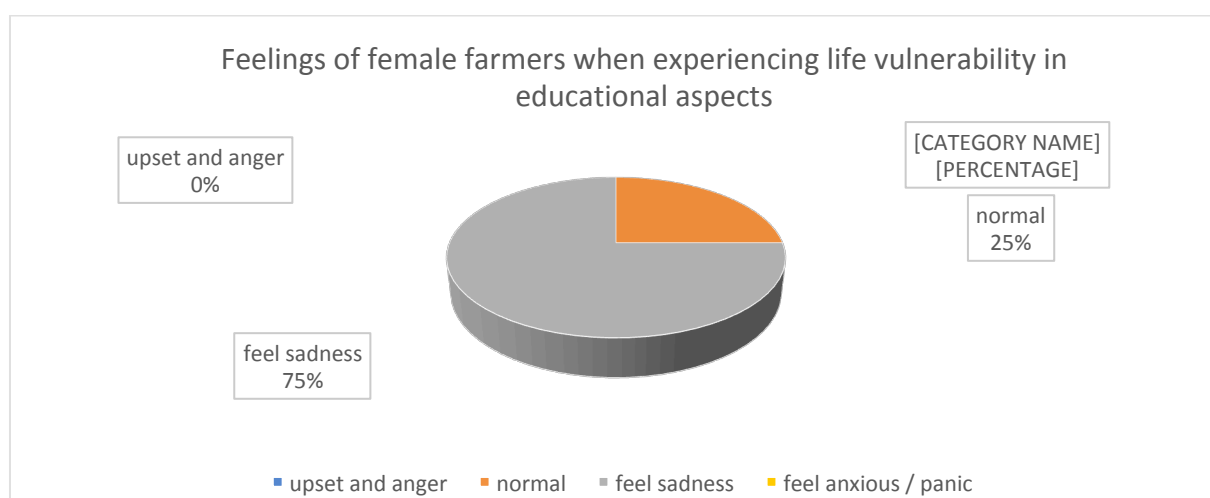
The level of sensitivity in this study is interpreted as the effect or impact of problems or disturbances received directly or indirectly by female farmers in Rindu Hati Village. The results of this study indicate that the problem/life vulnerability of female farmers in economic/occupational aspects causes

them often be hampered in farmin process, including having crop failure. In addition, the work of female farmers also hampered because no one has cared for children at home, while farmland is far from home. The results of this study also show that female farmers feel sadness, upset and anger, feel anxious and panic, and there are also those who feel normal when facing problems /intimacy in the economic / employment field.

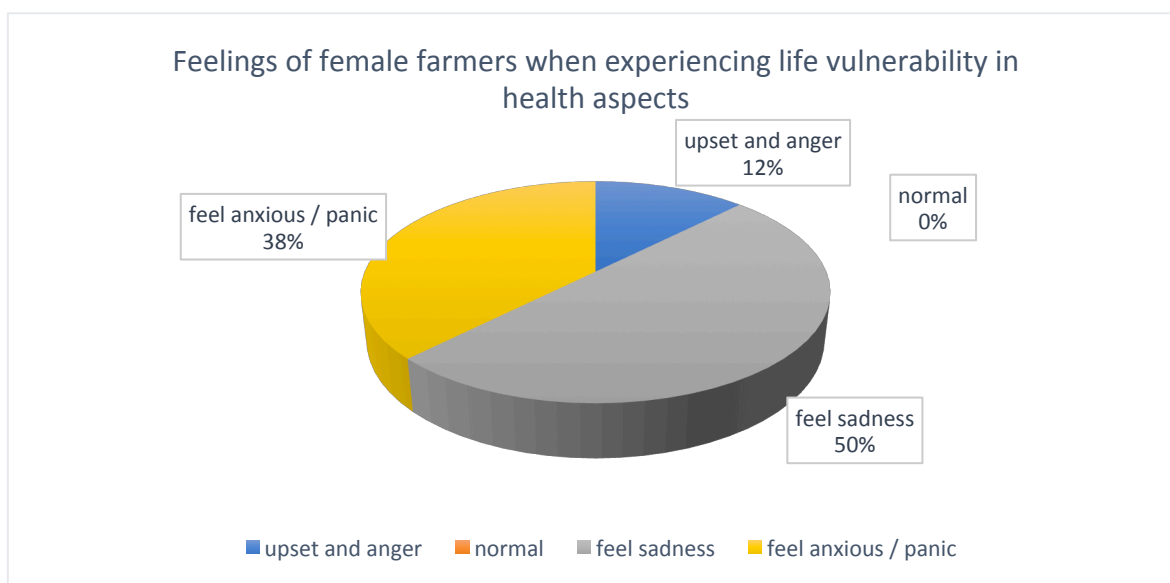


The graph above shows that despite experiencing economic/occupational vulnerability, 33% of female farmers stated normal. This happens because of their helplessness in a long period of time so it assume just normal.

While for life vulnerability in the education aspect, the results of the study have show that 75% of female farmers stated "sad". This shows that the aspect of education is something that is considered important in life; so that when a problem occur it make miserable. While the life vulnerability on health aspects, the results of this study indicate that 50% of female farmers stated "sad" when experiencing problems in health aspects. While 12% said "angry / upset", even 38% of female farmers expressed anxiety or panic when experiencing health problems. Feelings of sadness, resentment / anger and anxiety or panic also show that health is an important aspect in the lives of female farmers.



Based on the explanation above, these conditions indicate that there are negative emotions experienced by female farmers when experiencing economic/employment, educational and health problems, namely feeling sad, upset, angry and even feeling anxious/panic. Negative feelings when experiencing problems are humane, but if not managed properly can cause mental health problems.



Feelings of sadness, upset, anger as part of unstable emotions can disturb the mind (thinking), while thinking is the best way to overcome life's problems. When this condition occurs, thoughts and feelings become confused so they cannot think objectively. And worse, this mental condition reaches the level of diffuse, which is a situation where people do things or movements that are not really needed, such as pacing, tugging at hair, screaming and so on. Besides, the situations and conditions of feelings and thoughts that are not normal can also cause disruption of physical health, or known as Psychosomatic (Dimiyati Mahmud: 1990).

### Female Farmer Adaptability in Facing Problems

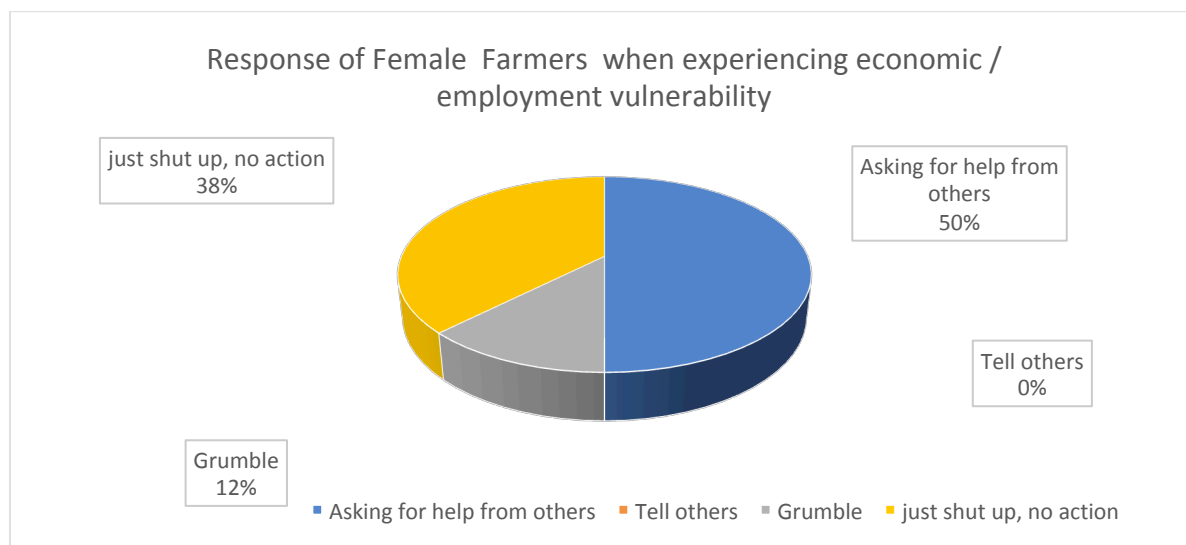
In times of shocks, female farmers carry out a number of adaptation strategies to maintain the quality of their livelihoods. Adaptation strategies undertaken by female farmers are aim to minimize the negative impact of shocks on livelihood aspects. Regarding life vulnerability, many studies show that in times of shocks, women are the ones who bear the burden of earning a living to save their families from the risk of crisis. The Institute of Development Studies study found that women are family members who tend to be more creative to increase income in the face of a crisis. The main cause of the women's creativity emergence is the amount of pressure on the responsibility of managing the household and ensuring its welfare. This is in line with Gaerlan who found that housewives in the Philippines during the crisis were required to carry out creative and unique ways to make money so that their families could survive the storm of the crisis (Smeru Research Report: 2016).

The results of this study indicate that to overcome feelings due to vulnerability in the work/economic aspects, female farmers have a self-defense mechanism as much as 50% asking for help from others to help overcome the problem, which is indicated by borrowing venture capital to others in anticipatin vulnerabilities that occur. 38% said they were "silent" when experiencing problems and 12% of female farmers stated "grumbling" when experiencing economic/employment problems.

Another vulnerability in the economic aspect is the low income, which is addressed by female farmers by means of "enough" given their powerlessness to increase income. To anticipate this condition, female farmers are actively involved in seeking additional income through selling vegetables, becoming farm laborers, helping domestic helpers. This is done considering that to work in the garden or field with her husband is too far away from home, so it is not possible to leave the house especially if there are children who need care at home.

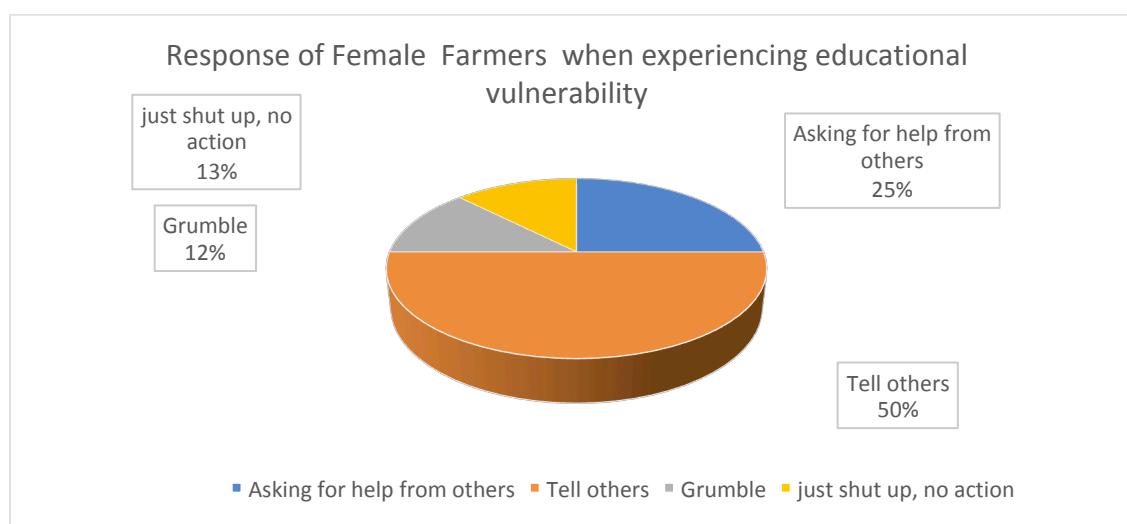
The attitude and behavior of female farmers in dealing with economic/occupational problems apparently did not make them forget family members who needed care. This is evidenced by their statement that *"in fulfilling the necessities of life, what is important first is the need for food and education for children"*. They reasoned that for food needs, it could still be fulfilled with vegetables

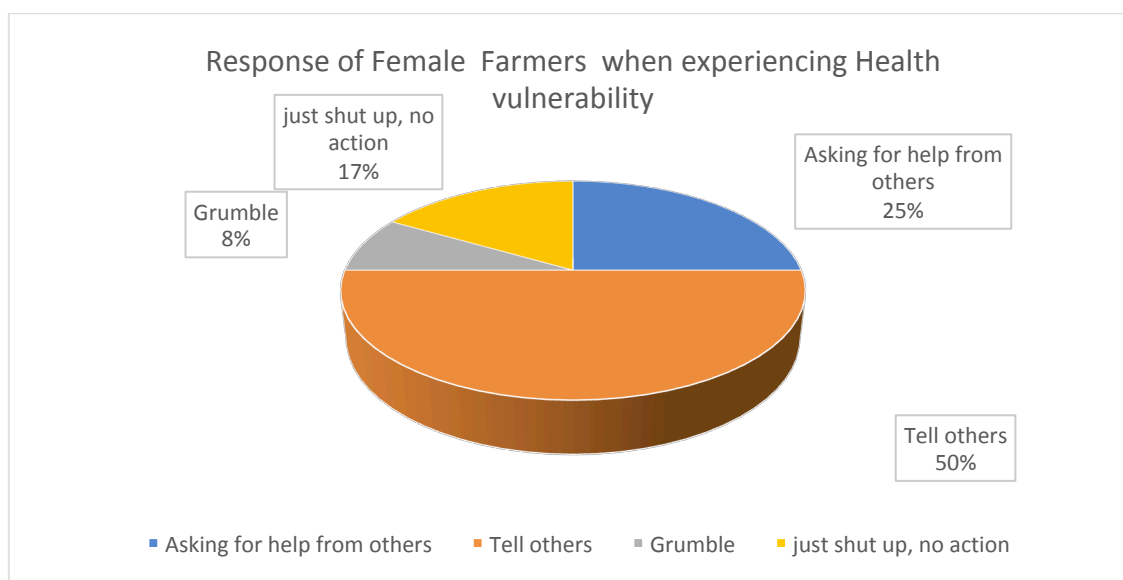
grown in home yards or rice fields with houses, while children's education was the main thing because through Education, they hoped to be able to change the living conditions of their families to be more prosperous.



While to respond to problems in the aspect of education, farmer women in Rindu Hati generally stated telling stories to other people even asking for help with other people, such as family, friends or close neighbors, and community leaders such as village government officials. The high enthusiasm of women farmers towards education was also shown by their participation in the Education of Package Pursuit for equalization with primary schools and first-born schools.

The results of this study indicate that female farmers respond by telling others about the problem as much as 50%, 25% say "asking for help with others", and 17% say "just shut up, no action", and only 8% say "grumble" if face health problems. Access to health services was hampered by female farmers by checking their health at health mantri and village midwives in the Rindu Hati area, although to access it they had to spend around Rp.50,000 per treatment. While some female farmers use alternative health services when experiencing obstacles in accessing medical services.





The ability to tell others, ask for help as female farmers do when facing life's problems is basically a form of "catharsis", as Freud and Breuer peasant women are allowed to participate in "cleaning the chimney" which is also called The talking cure. When he talks about his problems, he feels better, and the symptoms disappear. Freud and Breuer called it the "cathartic method", a cleansing of emotional conflict within oneself by talking about it (Novi Qonitatin et al: 2011).

The female farmers' adaptability in dealing with their vulnerability of life through "catharsis" can only be done because there is social capital in the form of a family sense, there is closeness between the community including its leaders.

## Conclusion

Based on the study and discussion above, the researcher takes some conclusions related to the female farmers vulnerability of life in Desa Rindu hati as follows: 1) Female farmers in Rindu Hati Village mostly dominated by whom above 40 years old. Some of them have been studied in primary school with 3-7 people as living dependents. 2) Result study showed that female farmers in Desa Rindu Hati having vulnerability of life education, health and economic aspects. The vulnerability of life in the three aspects caused the female farmers and the family having many problems, lack of knowledge, healthy problem, and low of income to fulfill life necessities. Nevertheless, result study also showed that the female farmers have potency and sources which can be used to facing the vulnerability and life problems, which is social capital in form of family values and mutual cooperation which still solid in Rindu Hati. Based on vulnerability and potency and also existence source system, so suggested to have efforts of capacity empowerment and development of female farmers so that able to facing the vulnerability of life at once to increase welfare.

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