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Strategies for Achieving Gender Justice in Overcoming Multiple Layers of Marginalization Faced by Women Working in the Shallot Industry from an Existentialist Feminist Perspective

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Abstract: Women who work as shallot sellers are vulnerable to the non-fulfillment of their fundamental labor rights, ranging from the right to receive fair wages to the right to protection from discrimination at work. This study focuses on understanding and analyzing the reasons for the need to protect and fulfill the rights of female shallot harvesters. It examines the reality of female shallot harvesters through an intersectional feminist approach, as outlined by Simone De Beauvoir, and proposes strategies for fulfilling the rights of female shallot harvesters based on gender justice and sustainability. This research employs a non-doctrinal research approach, utilizing a socio-legal perspective that combines primary and secondary data through descriptive-analytical and socio-cultural methods. The results of this research and discussion show that female shallot harvesters need protection and fulfillment of their rights because their welfare and wages are still below the regional minimum wage standard, and their working hours are unlimited as stipulated in Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, as well as gender bias issues for female shallot harvesters. The relevance of gender bias and the fulfillment of the rights of female onion peeling workers can be linked to the multiple vulnerabilities faced by women. The position of women, who are often placed after men, is highlighted in Simone de Beauvoir's work The Second Sex with an intersectional approach. This intersectional approach sees the multiple vulnerabilities faced by female shallot peeling workers, not only in terms of unmet decent wage standards but also in terms of gender bias issues. The strategy to fulfill the rights of female shallot sellers needs to be pursued through gender-responsive policies that guarantee the sustainability of their economy in terms of fair wages, appropriate working hours, and employment agreements in accordance with applicable regulations, as well as the right to protection from discrimination at work.

Keywords: Gender Justice, Female Workers, and Red Onion Farmers

INTRODUCTION

Red onion harvesters, or red onion workers, are freelance workers whose relationship with their employers is informal. Red onion harvesters are workers who are tasked with separating red onion stalks so that harvested red onions can be sold in a clean condition. The majority of onion peelers are women, and they are often found in onion-producing areas such as Brebes, Bali, and Solok (NTB), as well as several other regions with the potential to supply onions.

Women who work as shallot sorters are often found in Brebes They work for Regency. shallot merchants, usually from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Every day, hundreds of women gather in front of the shallot market to work for traders or shallot farmers (Nurbiajanti, 2012). wages earned by shallot peeling workers are not very high because they depend on how many shallots they manage to clean and pick from the stems, which are calculated per kilogram of shallots.

The economic contribution of female (wives of) onion farm workers, where wives contribute to family income with an average of Rp505.714.00 per month. The economic contribution of these women averages 35.85 percent during the harvest season to the income of onion farm workers' families. During the lean season, the average monthly income of wives drops to Rp59,285.00. This contribution accounts for an average of 6.15 percent of the family income of onion farmers during the lean season (Puspitawati et al., 2019).

Women onion peelers, like other female workers, also have the right to

legal protection and economic improvement. Red onion harvesters are classified as informal workers who do not have written employment agreements with their employers, as stipulated in Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower and Law No. 6 of 2023 concerning Job Creation.

Based on data from the National aovernment Food Agency. the continues to encourage food commodities that have a surplus in domestic production to expand and meet international market demand, such as shallots. Shallots can be exported from Indonesia to Malaysia, and it is hoped that Indonesia will become a global food producer (National Food Agency, 2024).

Based on data from the Ministry of Agriculture, during the period from 2019 to 2023, Indonesia ranked 33rd globally as an onion exporter. The average export value from 2019 to 2023 was USD 9.46 million per year. This represents an impressive increase of 44.87 percent compared to the period from 2017 to 2021, during which Indonesia was ranked 35th with an average of USD 6.53 million per year (National Food Agency, 2024).

Shallots are produced in almost all provinces in Indonesia. Still, several regions are the leading producers of shallots, such as Brebes Regency (Central Java), Demak Regency Java), Nganjuk Regency (Central (East Java), Bima Regency (West Nusa Tenggara), and Solok Regency. Additionally, Bangli Regency (Bali) is also a major producer of shallots. Bangli Regency has 1,200 hectares of shallot fields spread across the Lake Batur area. Bangli and Tabanan Regencies are sufficient to meet the

needs of the Bali market (Daniswari, 2022).

Shallots are needed in almost all regions of Indonesia. The eight provinces that contribute the most shallots are Central Java, West Sumatra, West Java, East Java, West Nusa Tenggara, Central Sulawesi, South Sulawesi. and which contributed 95.4 percent of the total shallot production in Indonesia in 2020 (Daniswari, 2022).

The fulfillment of women's rights is enshrined in the country's constitution, namely Article 27 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which states that "Every citizen has the right to a decent life and work." Women are often vulnerable to discrimination and marginalization in various public and private spaces. In fact, gender equality has long been advocated for, allowing women to enjoy the same rights as men. This is reinforced by the ratification of the **CEDAW** (Convention the on Elimination of ΑII **Forms** of Discrimination against Women) through Law No. 7 of 1984 concerning the Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination against Women.

Efforts to achieve gender justice goal of sustainable are kev development. Gender equality and women's empowerment are not only of the 17 one Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also the basis for achieving all other goals. The experience of the MDGs shows that more than 30% of women in the world have experienced physical or sexual violence, which hinders the progress of other MDG targets due to the correlation between indicators and

gender equality. The inability of women to participate fully in development has a broad impact, so that in the SDGs, the prevention of violence against women and girls has become a top priority (Munasaroh, 2022).

The reality is that there are still many gender inequality issues in Indonesia in various fields, such as sexual violence against women. domestic violence. discrimination female against migrant workers. discrimination against female workers. the domestic and marginalization of women as laborers or daily workers in the shallot industry itself

Previous research related to this topic includes a study by Nur Fadilah Al Idrus and Rufaidah (2023) entitled "Legal Protection for Farmers Victims of Red Onion Fraud (A Study in Sambi East Rampas District. Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province)." This study examines the issues surrounding shallot trading in Sambi Rampas Subdistrict, beginning with the mass fraud committed by traders against farmers from 2015 to 2020. The farmers reported the case to the police, and the case was settled through a compensation agreement. However, this settlement was uneven due to the lack of valid evidence, such as a written contract. Despite the agreement, the perpetrators of the fraud still managed to escape. Therefore, the authors suggest that the police or law enforcement be involved in every shallot transaction, especially those of high value, and take firm action against fraudsters to provide a sense of security and trust to the community (Al Idrus & Rufaidah, 2023).

The author's research focuses on protecting women workers in the shallot industry, specifically on ensuring their rights, including fair wages and adequate welfare. Another study in line with the author's research is by Arum Nafo'ah and Moh. Ansori (2024) entitled "Equal Relationship Patterns between Employers and Workers: A Case Study of the Relationship between Employers and Red Onion Cutting Workers in Sekoto Village, Badas District, Kediri".

This study examines the relationship between employers and red onion workers in Sekoto Village. District. Kediri Regency. characterized by mutually beneficial equality, facilitated by strong family ties and mutual trust. Employers accept workers without openly discriminating against their backgrounds, creating a harmonious and comfortable working atmosphere. The flexible and mutually protective nature of the relationship strengthens the bond, fostering worker loyalty to employers. Overall, relationship supports the creation of a supportive work environment and strengthens social bonds within the community (Nafiah & Ansori, 2024).

The difference with the author's research is that the author's study focuses on the urgency and strategies for fulfilling the rights of women shallot workers, especially in Brebes Regency, based on gender justice and sustainability.

This study aims to examine the vulnerability of women, especially women who work as shallot sellers, in

terms of their rights as workers and the multiple burdens they must bear.

This study examines the intersectional feminist approach as presented in Simone de Beauvoir's book, The Second Sex, with a focus on the double burden faced by female workers and the power relations explored in the work of Michael Foucault.

MAIN PROBLEM

Based on this research, the author presents three research questions, namely:

- 1. Why is it necessary to fulfill the rights of female shallot farmers in Brebes Regency?
- 2. What is the reality of female shallot farmers in the intersectional feminist approach by Simone De Beauvoir?
- 3. What are the strategies for fulfilling the rights of female shallot farmers based on gender justice and sustainability?

METHOD OF RESEARCH

This study uses a non-doctrinal research method with a socio-legal approach. In this nonresearch doctrinal legal study, it is conceptualized as a manifestation of the symbolic meanings that social actors attribute to their interactions with one another. The reality of life does not exist in the empirical realm. which is also the realm of observation and perception. It manifests itself in the form of behavior that is objectively normatively) patterned structured, and can therefore be measured to produce quantitative data (Suparno & Indriyanti, 2016).

This study employs primary and secondary data sources, adopting a socio-legal approach that integrates legal text data with empirical data collected through observations and indepth interviews with informants, specifically shallot farmers, in line with the study's topic and research objectives.

The secondary data in this study consists of primary legal materials, namely Law No. 7 of 1984 concerning the Ratification of the **CEDAW** Convention, Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, and Law No. 6 of 2023 concerning Job Creation. The primary and secondary data were then analyzed using content analysis, which involves examining the deeper meaning of each piece of data collected. The researchers classified the data through indexing, sorting, grouping, and filtering (Suteki & Taufani, 2018).

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reasons for the Need to Fulfil the Rights of Women Workers in the Red Onion Industry in Brebes Regency

The fulfillment of women workers' rights is one of the issues of gender bias because, so far, several cases of gender bias have occurred in the public sphere, including for women as workers. Women, as one of the vulnerable groups, are often faced with marginalization and subordination in both the private and public spheres, especially with the stigma that women only are

complementary or complementary elements in the public sphere.

Another problem faced bv female workers is the lack of guarantees for their safety, health, and reproductive rights, which is one of the factors contributing to various employment-related issues that persist to this day. Female workers/laborers still receive treatment discriminatory from employers, which then has an impact on the rights of female workers/laborers where the rights that should be received by female workers/laborers, such protection of safety, health, and reproductive rights, are not fully provided (Kusumawati, 2022).

Female workers cannot be equated with male workers because female workers have biological conditions or reproductive organs that are different from those of male workers. Biologically, in relation to their reproductive functions, female workers experience menstruation, childbirth, pregnancy, and breastfeeding. Law Number 13 of concerning Manpower, specifically Articles 76, 81, 82, and 83, regulates the protection of female workers' rights related to their reproductive functions (Agusti et al., 2023).

The multiple burdens faced by female shallot workers include wage inequality, heavier workloads, and inadequate health and welfare guarantees that fall far short of meeting the basic needs of female shallot workers. Brebes Regency is renowned as one of the largest shallot-producing areas in Central Java and Indonesia; however, the

region's poverty rate and gender bias remain high. Gender inequality in Indonesia arises because the social structure of society is still influenced bγ historical. environmental. traditional and cultural factors that are based on a patriarchal system. This system places men as more dominant and powerful than women, giving rise to practices of discrimination, thinking and exploitation of women. As a result, women's potential and space for movement in various sectors is hampered and does not develop optimally (Larashati, 2022).

Gender inequality can be caused by structural discrimination. Structural discrimination refers to the rules, norms, practices, and behaviors that are widely accepted in institutions and social structures, preventing subordinate thereby groups from obtaining equal rights and opportunities as those of dominant groups. This form of discrimination can be obvious or hidden, and can be intentional or unintentional. Women workers in the informal sector are among those who are treated as inferior, with their social position and economic status determined by structural factors (Mohapatra, 2012).

Based the on author's observations and interviews, the conditions there socioeconomic vet be considered cannot prosperous, as evidenced by the uneven access to roads, which has led to economic inequality among the community.

Only a small number of shallot investors come from Brebes; most of them are shallot harvesters.

commonly known as shallot laborers. They are casual daily workers, so they work when there is a shallot harvest, but if the shallot harvest fails or is not optimal, they will also lose the opportunity to work as shallot laborers.

Geographically, Brebes is also constrained by the phenomenon of tidal flooding due to its proximity to the coast, which contributes to failed shallot harvests and various other social and environmental problems, including constraints on the community's economic activities.

This has resulted in various problems, such as the community's vulnerability to poverty, especially among female shallot harvesters. If the shallot harvest fails, they will also suffer economic impacts in meeting their daily needs.

The urgency of protecting female shallot workers is also reflected in the Convention on the of ΑII Elimination Forms Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was ratified in Law No. 7 of 1984 concerning the Ratification of CEDAW. Article 11(d) stipulates that the State is obliged to take all appropriate measures to ensure equal rights between women and men, including in terms of... (d) the right to equal including allowances, and equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equal treatment in the evaluation of work quality.

Indonesia has also ratified the ILO (International Labor Organization) Convention through Law No. 21 of 1999, concerning the

Ratification of ILO Convention No. 111. which addresses discrimination in Respect Employment and Occupation. This strengthens ratification protection of female workers in both the public and private spheres, ensuring that their fundamental rights are fulfilled, including the prevention of forms all discrimination against formal and informal female workers.

In essence, the constitution has fundamentally regulated the rights of citizens to obtain decent work and equality before the law in Article 27 paragraph (2) of the-Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945, but in reality, the fulfillment of the rights of female workers in the formal and informal sectors is often neglected, especially informal female workers who are classified as part-time or seasonal workers, such as these female shallot sellers.

multiple The burdens experienced by women who work informally are not only economic but also related to the fulfillment of their health rights, which are often nealected. Biased working time restrictions drive this due to the absence of clear employment agreements between workers and employers, as well as a lack of education and understanding on the part of both workers and employers to empower female shallot sellers appropriately.

Brebes Regency itself, as a shallot-producing area with a large number of female shallot workers, has a Brebes Regency Regulation No. 8 of 2024 concerning the Implementation of Employment and

Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers. However, in reality, there are still many cases of discrimination against female workers and Indonesian migrant workers in Brebes.

The above regulations do accommodate the rights of female workers in both the formal and informal sectors; however, their implementation is less than optimal, especially for informal female workers who do not have specific employment agreements with their employers, such as the female onion peeler workers.

2. The Reality of Women in the Red Onion Industry in an Intersectional Feminist Approach by Simone De Beauvoir

The condition of women in coastal areas, especially in Brebes Regency, is quite vulnerable to discrimination and violence. This includes wage inequality for shallot harvesters. The poor economy has forced women there to work as shallot harvesters.

conditions Working in the informal economy are generally more concerning than in large formal companies and often fall below minimum human rights standards. Wages for workers in this sector are typically low, often set unilaterally by the owner or manager, and are frequently paid late. Informal workers generally lack a representative body, often work beyond the hours stipulated by law, and have no protection against discriminatory or abusive treatment. They also have minimal access to social security, and their working

environment is often unsafe and unhealthy. Thus, informal sector workers rarely obtain the fundamental labor rights as stipulated by the ILO, including freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, elimination of forced labor and child and the elimination labor. of discrimination (Faundez, 2009).

The high rate of violence against women in Brebes Regency exacerbates this situation. Based on data from the Brebes Regency Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Family Planning, there were 87 recorded cases of violence against women, consisting of physical and sexual (Diskominfotik violence Kab. Brebes, 2025). This figure cannot be used as a representation of the total number of cases of violence against women because violence against women is an iceberg phenomenon.

The iceberg phenomenon in cases involving women means that not all actual violence is reported; only a few cases are reported and recorded because the victims are brave and able to report their cases. Meanwhile, many female victims are reluctant to report cases of violence against them because they fear threats from the perpetrators and stigma from the community, which often makes victims feel guilty or leads to victim-blaming. This is influenced by the patriarchal culture that is embedded in the social construction of society.

Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold the role of primary authority and are at the center of the social structure. In this system, men are generally considered to hold a higher and more dominant position than women in various aspects of life, including social, cultural, and economic spheres. Meanwhile. lower-middle-class communities tend to experience conditions that the opposite of those are experienced by upper-middle-class communities. They face various difficulties, especially in the areas of economics, education, and other aspects of welfare (Clarissa, 2023).

The position of women, who are placed after men. often highlighted in Simone de Beauvoir's work, "The Second Sex." In this book, she combines the ideas of existentialism with feminist а perspective. Feminism itself is a movement that aims to fight against all forms of treatment that demean women. Even though continues to pass, women are still not free from the grip of the patriarchal system. Gender inequality still often occurs, where women still experience unequal treatment and do not yet have complete freedom in making choices or taking action, especially among the lower-middle class. Therefore, the discussion of the concept of existentialist feminism developed by Simone de Beauvoir is considered important in efforts to eliminate the patriarchal culture that continues to exist in society. especially among lower socioeconomic groups (Clarissa, 2023).

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir brings the biological differences between women and men into the

realm of philosophy with a phenomenological approach. She questions why women are considered "the second sex" or "the other," because, according to her, women are not born as women, but become women through social construction.

The three main characteristics of Beauvoir's existentialist feminism are:

- a. The Others Women are perceived as "the other," where men are positioned as subjects and women as objects.
- b. **Freedom** Women have autonomy and can determine their own path in life when they realize their existence.
- c. **Transcendence** An effort by women to transcend the limitations of patriarchy and free themselves from the constructs that constrain them (Rohmah et al., 2021).

ln addition to criticizina patriarchy through the concept of Liyan, Beauvoir also offers three strategic steps for women to assert their existence as equal to men, namely: (1) work to develop their potential, (2) become intellectuals, and (3) reject subordinate positions while acting as agents of social change. The existentialist feminist movement is seen as part of microsociological theory because it focuses on individual struggles. Thus, the key to the success of this movement lies in the growth of women's awareness to fight for their existence, including in the domestic sphere (Azzahra, 2022).

The connection with the condition of women who work as shallot sellers is the double burden

they face as they work as shallot sellers while also being burdened with domestic work at home, such as taking care of children and managing household affairs, even though their right to work in the public sphere has not been fulfilled in terms of decent wages and a sense of security from marginalization and discrimination.

3. Strategies for Fulfilling the Rights of Women Workers in the Red Onion Industry Based on Gender Justice and Sustainability

Female workers/laborers are explicitly regulated in Law No. 7 of 1984. which concerns the ratification of **CEDAW** (Convention on the Elimination of ΑII Forms of Discrimination Against Women), also known as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Female workers/laborers are further regulated in Article 49, letter c of Number 39 of concerning Human Rights, which also regulates protection related to special rights attached to women due to their reproductive functions, quaranteed which are protected by law. The special rights referred to in this article are opportunity for female workers/laborers to take leave in accordance with certain conditions experiencing (Kusumawati, 2022).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW. 1979), which came effect in 1981. holds significance for all women. It acknowledges that discrimination against women undermines the principles of equality and human dignity and disregards the vital contributions of women to both family and society (Fourie, 2021).

The fulfillment of the rights of female shallot sellers in Brebes is a phenomenon of gender bias that is not only discriminatory against the position and role of female workers but also biased against the welfare of women themselves.

Several villages in the North Brebes region, where many women work as shallot peelers, include Pesantunan Village. Village, Keboleda Klampok Village, Kupu Village, and Pagejugan Village. Based on the author's observations. Pagejugan Village in Brebes District has the potential to produce shallots, including the productivity of women who work as shallot peelers.

activity The of peeling shallots is carried out from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in a room or in the shallot fields owned by the employers. When the shallot harvest season arrives. the activity of peeling shallots becomes even busier, and the

work is carried out even until nighttime.

The above reasons are some of the reasons why women who work as shallot peelers have not had their rights accommodated at work, such as the right to a decent wage, agreed working hours in accordance with the provided. wade and fulfillment of their health rights. This has encouraged efforts to gender equality achieve various policies for female shallot peelers in Brebes.

Gender equality plays a crucial role in the world of work, as it contributes to creating a fair. inclusive. and productive environment for all workers. One form of its application is the protection of maternity rights, which includes maternity leave, job security during pregnancy, and recognition of the role of mothers as primary caregivers in the family. This protection ensures that women do not suffer career losses due to their biological or social roles. addition. the provision lactation rooms in the workplace is also an important part of efforts to create gender equality, as it supports breastfeeding female workers that they SO continue to fulfill their biological needs without neglecting their professional responsibilities. This reflects the recognition women's specific needs while also building a more familyfriendly work environment (Yanti & Rosa, 2025).

Strategies to fulfill the rights of women workers in the informal sector also need to be encouraged by aligning the perceptions of employers or business owners who empower them, especially in employment agreements regarding wages and working hours. Therefore, needs to there be synchronization between the Brebes Regency Government, in this case, the Industry and Manpower Office, and the Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection. **Population** Control, and Family Planning, in protecting women workers in the informal sector, especially women who work as shallot sellers, so that their rights are protected. Excessive exploitation of female workers is prevented.

The strategy to fulfill the rights of female shallot sellers can also be achieved through central and local government gender policies based on in mainstreaming terms regulations and local budgets for empowerment of female especially workers. in informal sector, such as through training based on formal and informal work competencies, education on the fundamental rights of female workers, and wage equalization programs for informal female workers whose wages are below the regional minimum wage.

Gender mainstreaming was first introduced by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (1997) as a strategy to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated at every stage of formulation, policy program development, and organizational activities. The concept is not merely understood as an effort to increase the representation of organizations. within women However, more importantly, it emphasizes the transformation of organizational structures and workplace culture accommodate the needs. experiences, and potential of both women and men in an equitable manner. Essentially, mainstreaming gender systematic process for assessing impacts of policies, programs, and work practices on both men and women. Its aim is not solely to achieve numerical equality but to foster transformation in organizational making practices. them responsive to genderdifferentiated needs (Suryaningsi et al., 2024).

Efforts to improve the quality of human resources (HR) among shallot farmers in **Brebes** Regency are carried out through various extension and training activities organized by the Food Crops and Horticulture Agency. Training, extension, and capacity building for farmer organizations carried out in each are subdistrict. Extension and training are provided regularly and gradually by agency officials farmer groups. through The training material covers information on environmentally practices, friendly agricultural

proper onion planting techniques, and the correct use of fertilizers and pesticides (Apriyanto et al., 2013).

Not only does it provide farmers with an understanding of how to manage shallot crops, but provides extension also for services shallot entrepreneurs who employ shallot harvesters. especially female workers. that so entrepreneurs can empower shallot harvesters in accordance with the regional minimum wage, balanced working hours, and prevent the exploitation of female workers based on gender justice and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion outlined above, it can be concluded that:

- 1. The reasons for the need to protect and fulfill the rights of women workers in the shallot industry include the fact that Law No. 13 of 20023 on Labor regulates the rights of workers to receive fair wages and working hours in accordance with provisions. Indonesia ratified the CEDAW Convention, which protects women working in the public and domestic spheres, as well as addressing issues such as wages that do not meet regional minimum wage standards working hours that exceed the limits.
- 2. The relevance of the issue of women working as shallot sellers can be linked to the position of women who work as shallot sellers, who are often considered a second-

- class group because they frequently face economic difficulties, excessive burdens as working mothers and homemakers, and marginalization within the community at the village level.
- 3. Efforts to fulfill the rights of female include shallot sellers several measures, such as harmonizing policies at the central and regional levels based on aender responsiveness. providina skills training to improve the qualifications of female workers, and educating employers on fulfilling the rights of female shallot sellers in accordance with gender iustice and sustainability.

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