Research

The Role of Women in Rural Socio-Economic Development in Selama District, Perak.

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Abstract

Purpose – This study is sought to discover the role of women in rural socio economic development in Selama District, Perak
Methodology/Approach – Qualitative research using ethnographic resign design.
Data collection method – primary method using structured and unstructured interview.
Finding – result indicate that there are about four factors that influence the involvement of women in rural area into socio economic development that are motivations for being entreprenuers, contribution of Selama district, challenges that encountered by women in Selama district and assistance from various institution n term of training, financial, facilities and marketing.
Limitiation of study - As the research is only focusing in the limited rural area with focuses on the selected women entrepreneur as a research subject, result from the research may not represent the situation in other rural area.

Key Terms: women entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, rural women, socio-economy development

1. Introduction

Rural women are representing the female population who are living in rural areas. In traditional society which strongly applied in the rural areas, the role of women is limited to a supporting role to men. This can be seen from the types of tasks they perform, such as their role in the employment field is to help their husbands as sow, and reap change. In developing their respective families, women of traditional duties such as poke roof, defend poultry and other male role as helpful as larger and trees in family life and society as a whole. However, women also contribute in the main activities of economy development especially in supporting their families. Important elements for living in rural areas relative to their local society contribution are the standard enhancement of economic, social and cultural.

1.1 Background of study

Selama district located in the north region of Perak, Malaysia with land area 746 square kilometres covering 74,600 hectares (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2012). Under three main sub-districts which are Selama, Ulu Selama and Ulu Ijok, it having 25 villages surrounded, all of those populated place were categorized as a rural area. According to Department of
Statistics, Malaysia (2012), overall Selama population has shown small 0.7% growth from 2011 at 14,200 to 14,300 in 2012 with the highest population of 51% goes to female. Main economic activities in this district are focusing more on the agriculture with rubber, oil palm and cash crops as main crops. Selama was chosen for the research as the rural area within this district has a high potential for a development. Location of the Selama district which strategic in the middle of golden triangle of eco-tourism and industrial zone from Kulim, Penang, Bukit Merah, Taiping ang Lenggong has high potential for development with main economy activities monopolized by women. However, the opportunity appeared not been utilized in improving the development of the Selama socio-economy due to a limitation encountered by the surrounding communities. Based on the yearly population growth, it’s has indicate that people migration from Selama district to the urban area has slowing down are socioeconomic development.

1.2 Problem statement

There’s few reason which pushing a women in involving in the business as a one of the economic activities or as a source of generating living income. Phenomenon on the involvement of women in developing their house hold income has spread overtime especially in rural area. This phenomena obviously occurred as most of the family background who living under narrowness income and resources for supporting the high living cost which impacted by the inflation.

Even though varies of incentives provided by government and non-organisational government in assisting women for uplifting their living standard such as providing capital for stating a small scale business, its appeared a lot of failure on them and still rely on the government subsidies and incentives for their self-development. The programs specifically design for women especially in rural area by the government and non-organisational government by looking to the high potential for them to excel in the field that related to the business. Level of education in the rural area population influenced most of the socio-economic development in Selama district. Women are predominant among that are lack of complete primary education up to undergraduate education as of background of their family. This has causing a tremendously negative impact on the rural women from the economic transition on women's employment as they have no other choice other than to accept to work in insecure domestic situation or to be employed.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Women and rural development

Nowadays entrepreneurship among women in has significantly becoming as an important player in shaping the landscape of entrepreneurship (Pages, 2005). Omorode (2014) concluded that organising women is an integral aspect of socio-economic advancement of any nation. Women efforts in developing socio-economic development will be able to optimally utilize if they are been empowered socially, culturally, politically and economically. Karl. M (1995) stated that women’s participation is crucial and in development process and to meeting the development goals and it could not be able to achieve without their full involvement. Most of the research concluded that majority of the women’s performing dual role in the family which are reproductive and productive, which making them overloading in performing extra job load. However their effort was not been recognized accordingly especially their role as a main socio-economic contributor in community in general and specifically in the family.

According to Malaysia Economic Planning Unit statistic (Economic Planning Unit Report: 2010), women represents almost 50% of the Malaysia population by gender comparing to men. Despite of the rate which almost similar to men, their opportunities and benefits in gaining the developments has not been explored and exposed to the public. As of assumptions on the women who are prone more to the task on the “home and kitchen”, their capabilities in handling
a challenge responsibilities for the development of their family and in their community, especially in rural area was considered as incapable and incompetence to hold and executing the responsibilities.

2.2 Personal profile study

Grise (1990) through their depth research on women and entrepreneurship, in average of age of women involve in the field of entrepreneur are within 31 years to 45 years old age. There are married and in average having at least 2 children, came from big number of family. Their research result is similar as study carried by Kim (1996). This research found that in Singapore, average of age of women involving in the entrepreneurship is 41 years old with majority of them are married with at least having 2 children. For this research, similar study will be perform in getting known the similarity and differences of women contribution towards the socio-economic development in the North Perak rural region with the focusing area in Selama district.

2.3 Education background and women entrepreneurs

Grise.T (1990) found that one third of women entrepreneurs having a working experience before starting their entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurs experienced are including their education level, administrative, secretarial, artistic, personal marketing, sales, advising, and finance (Kim, 1996). As known, women been born with natural vocational skills and had went through unofficial education from their parents about life skills such as cooking, arrange dressing and all task related to the household. In directly, this skill can be developing to become as one of business aspect which can generate an income for them.

However, there is also a research that proving there is no relationship between education and the successfulness in entrepreneurship. According to Stuart and Abetti (1990) there is situation based on the research where the high education degree holder incompetence and incapable in performing a good performance task related to the business. Based on Rajani and Sarada (2008) research result, it was revealed that 85% of the women entrepreneurs are having low level of education up to secondary qualification. The result from their research has proven that an influence factors for women to involve in entrepreneurship are not reflects from their education level (Rani, 1992).

2.4 Women entrepreneurs and family responsibilities

Apart of responsibility to the family, Grise (1990) found that most of the women entrepreneur having a relationship with taking care of their children, educating their children and taking care of the household. As they also playing a role as a mother despite of entrepreneurs, this factor has limiting their time and effort in the business field. The factor on the responsibility on the families on the inability to spend sufficient time with their family has become a main barriers encountered by women entrepreneurship in Malaysia as per observed by Alam et.al (2011).

2.5 Poverty

According to the 9th Malaysia Plan report, Malaysia poverty rate was at 11.9% involving 219,700 households for year 2004. From the overall households, 70.6% from it came from rural area with Malay at highest rate.

2.6 Factor of women involvement in socio-economy activities

Nordin (2005) and Hasni (2012) through their studies in Malaysia on the involvement of women in socio-economy activities revealed the factor of psychological motives such as in getting self-satisfaction, to be independent and sourcing for financial is a factor that driven women to participate in entrepreneurial field and start-up the business.
2.6.1 To be independent

Khaairuddin (1996) stated that there is no suitable career in fulfilling the desire for independence other than entrepreneurship. The diversity of areas that can be explored by entrepreneurial career able to attract the interest to anyone who wants to work independently.

2.6.2 To improve living standards

According to Rajani and Sarada (2008), supplement family income has become the most important factor of women in involving in entrepreneurship fields. Schwartz (1979) indicates that the main motivations in emerging towards entrepreneurship are the factor that related to the economic necessity. Both statement of Rajani and Sarada (2008) and Schwartz (1979) demonstrated that there is awareness in society for women to involve in any ventures in supplement their family financial condition by using any skills that they acquired.

2.7 Issue encountered

Grise (1990) voice up a concern that encountered by women entrepreneurs during their plan to starting the business which related to the lack of confident from financial institution, suppliers and customers, insufficient of initial capital funding and the problem related to the family. Kim (1996) shared the same thought by add on that other problems including difficulty in obtaining loans and prejudices against women. However Hisrich and Brush (1984) obtained different result and conclusion from their research whereby they found that most women entrepreneurs a shortage of business training, lack of management experience, lack of experience in terms of financial skills, lack of advice and guidance, lack of experience of hiring external services, lack of respect, the lack of participation of colleagues and others (financial, labour, business attractive, strategic planning, marketing and discrimination). Afza, Hassan and Rashid (2010) listed major factors that preventing women from involving in business are discrimination of gender between man and women, limitation on information access, improper education and training lack of support from community, no trusts in women capability as entrepreneur and restrain access to resources. The arguments are supported by Palaniappan, Ramgopal and Mani (2012) from the findings on the lack of proper business leadership, planning and improper source of financial that restricted women during running their business.

3. Methodology

Based on the definition of the qualitative methods from Merriam (1998), ethnographic method appeared the most suitable in carry out this research. Rationale of the ethnographic choose as this method involves a study of a small group of subjects in own environment and attempt to gained a detailed understanding of the circumstances on the studied subject. As this research conducted based on qualitative research method, ethnographic providing an advantages on the account for the complexity of group behaviours and reveal interrelationships among multifaceted dimensions of group interactions. Cavana et.al (2001) explained that ethnographic case study normally used in examines a community culture within specific target group and having two distinct definitions. First definition is referring to ethnographic techniques that providing the written record and secondly it was describe as a set of approach used in collecting data.

3.1 Population and Selection of Cases for the Study

Selection of this study also takes into account the status of the case study region which about 70 percent of the area is still in the category of rural and suburban areas (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2012). For this study, criteria of rural women who significantly contributed into the development of research area socio-economy had been predetermined as the predominant case. First and foremost criteria of the selection are definitely based on the rural women who
involved as an entrepreneur. Secondly, the selected entrepreneur has begun their entrepreneurship activities for at least three years from the date of research conducted and demonstrated successful progressive in their chosen entrepreneurship field. Last but not least is on the type of entrepreneurship business either dominated by product or servicing activities. Four entrepreneurship managing by women from different entrepreneurship background and business activities been identified for the study.

3.2 Data Collection Procedure

Generally, ethnographic is the strategies used by researches in collecting data about the social order, setting or situation under investigation through interviews, observation and examination. According to LeCompte et.al (1993), ethnographies recreate for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artefacts, folk knowledge and behaviours of some group of people. According to Whitehead (2005), primary data of ethnography data collection mainly carried out through fieldwork which requires researcher to be involved personally in the ongoing social activities in carry out the research. Ethnography facilitated through iterative processes of continual observation, interviewing, making inferences and these process is continuing until the research question answered.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis is an attempt of processing data into information, so that the characteristics or properties of the data can be easily understood and useful to address an issue related to research activities with regards to description of the data and to make an induction or draw a conclusions about population characteristics based on data obtained from samples. According to Yin(2003), data analysis consist of examining categorizing, tabulating, testing or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the initial proposition of a study.

3.4 Analytic Strategies

According to Morse (2000), data analysis using ethnographic method is beginning immediately after the data been gathered. In analysing the obtained data from an interview through ethnographic research method, first of all, the data which in the form of transcription of audiotaped integrated into important note and key information from the observation and conversation. Morse (2000) described the important of integrating the data gathered form interviews in the form of transcript and notes which must be retrieved easily.

3.4.1 Transcribing Interviews

According to Elizabeth & Patricia (2006) referring transcription to the process of getting written text as a final result from the interviews by reproducing it from audio medium such as spoken words from audiotaped interview. MacLean et.al (2004) further emphasized on the transcriber role that working on the interview content as it playing an important role in accuracy of transcription. Therefore, while the interview been recorded with concurrently key information been write down, the conversation also been studying in order relevant subsequent questions can be raised that not included in the structured interview question. After completion of the transcribing tasks, each of the written transcripts been review back with concurrently listening to the corresponding audio tape. This to ensure accuracy of the data consolidation and compilation in getting better understanding in the overall of the information gathered.

3.4.2 Coding and Reducing Fields Note

From the interview held with all four entrepreneurs, all the information obtained after transcription performed been consolidating in looking for similarity and contrast and distinguished according to the research item. The approach in coding and reducing fields note from this research adapted from Lindsley (1999) whereby constant comparison for grouping
problematic interaction divided into three categories which are based on the data from the interviews, observation from nonparticipants and periodical written related to the research performed.

### 3.6.3 Applying Descriptive Framework

Based on the framework develop with regards to the analysis, it was observed that throughout all four entrepreneur they have shown same commonality in running their business for maintain competitive in Selama, Perak district. Place plays an important roles concerning to the raw material supply and labour cost. However, all four respondents also shared the obstacle in marketing their products beyond Selama and neighbour district due to some limitation occurred. Some contrast result also observed among all four respondents concerning to their business activities which related to their approach in marketing their goods.

### 3.6.4 Writing Case Studies

According to Perren & Ram (2004), if the research is within small business research community, it is accepted to make use of case study. Their statement is supported by Chetty (1996) by concluded the utilising case study in a small business research context leads to the exploration of new insight that would not emerge from other approach. Rationale for writing case study for this ethnographic research as the final step of the research on women entrepreneurship in rural area as the in-depth analysis is needed in summarize and analyse the findings.

### 4. Results and Discussion (Important for research paper)

Table 1 below is the summarize result from the interview with all four selected entrepreneur. Answer from them are generating from the standard structure interview format which been summarized and tabulated in assessing the similarity and contrast of the perspective towards their role as a women entrepreneur in developing rural area. Summary of the interview been separated into four different categories in analysing the features of women entrepreneur in Selama district.
4.1 Motivation for Being Entrepreneur of Selama District Entrepreneurs.

From the table, it's observed that all four entrepreneur respondents agree that the main factor of their involvement mainly in supporting family financial and for having their own income independently without relying on other resources, for instance from their husband and family. Das (2000) stated entrepreneurship influence factor derived from three categories which are antecedent influences such as families background, the incubator organization such as the skill learned from involvement in other business before they start their own business and factor that related to environmental such as economic condition an opportunity for developing business in the environment.

Based on the interviews perform, prior becoming a successful entrepreneur, all of the respondents are coming from poverty family background which causing them unable to achieve better education level. Therefore as an effort in changing their life situation and with an average or low qualification education level which not enable them to obtain a better career, entrepreneurship has become an option in improving their family financial condition. The result from this analysis is similar as explained by Culkin & Smith (2000) and LeComu et al (1996) concerning to the motivation of owning a business. Lavoie (1992) supporting the agreement as the primary motivation factor not only referring to the potential of gaining in financial but more likely they start a business as of the opportunity and challenge in meeting the self-fulfilment.

Two interviewees stated that the motivation for them also influenced by the factors of control. Their answers satisfy with the result of research from Sultana et al (2015) which indicates women who involving in small scale business is empowered to controlling over the decision making, economic freedom and freedom of making own choice on the approaches need for running the business.
4.2 Contribution of Selama District Entrepreneurs.

Looking on the finding of entrepreneurship contribution on the socio-economic growth in Selama district area, all respondents providing same thought where their role as entrepreneur has generating an employment for their living community and in return this has generate as income contribution for the communities. In average, each of the interviewed entrepreneurs is employing at least three workers in operating their production facilities. Raw materials for producing their products are supplied by local farmers within the community whereby middleman (wholesaler) involvement is prevented in marketing farmer's products. This also benefited the entrepreneurs as the can reduced the dependence from outsider supplier where the material costs are higher than supplied by local farmers which leading in lowering down the manufacturing costs.

Averagely, the entire interviewed entrepreneur focusing their products marketing in Selama district and neighbour area. This activity has generating an income contribution for the community there from the process producing the goods, distribution the goods and marketing the goods which benefiting the local people of the community. Even though the activities is limited within the limited range of marketing area, it has at least providing an income to the individual involved in the business activities. With the principle for developing their communities, multiple work-study and training program been arranged in improving the living communities who mainly with low education level, unemployed and single mother. These programs positively will develop new entrepreneurs for the competitive growth of socio-economy of Selama district area. In the perspective of socio-economy development from employment creation and income contribution through entrepreneurship, Schmitz (1989) agree that the economy able to become better with the more introduction of entrepreneurial activities as of positive relationship between entrepreneurial activities and economic activities.

Within the contribution category, it also observed the entrepreneurship activities in the Selama district are lacking in innovation and providing new goods and services as only one entrepreneur is contributed in each contribution. This is contradicting from Gries & Naude (2010) opinion on the entrepreneur's role that supposedly provides innovative intermediate input, product and contribution. Mrs. Noor Azlina stated innovation is important in making her business stay competitive in a challenging business condition whereby her products are easily intimated while Mrs. Nurul Azmira creating a new recipe for her products in differentiating from other competitors. However their minor innovation in changing the products is not appeared to sustain longer as of the changing of marketing demand on the product produced by them. Moreover, it's easily to be imitated by their competitors. With regards to lacking of innovation observed from this research which supposed to be one of a role of entrepreneurs, the finding appeared to contradict with Yeong (2012) whereby he emphasized that entrepreneurial activities should be correlated with innovation, hence proposed that entrepreneurs should focus in operating more towards innovations and not only rely on entrepreneurship activities.

Out Of all four entrepreneurs, only one respondent is contributing on the new services for her community by exploring a beauty centre and homestays which no similar business is available in the community.

4.3 Challenges Encountered by Selama District Entrepreneurs.

Out of seven challenges given by Selama district entrepreneur respondents, it was observed there were three main factors of obstacles encountered by all of them. Primarily, it was agreed by the respondents that financial gap is a major obstacle for them in involving in their business regardless a financial aid needed for start-up their business or to develop their business. As all of them are financing their business from their own saving during start-up, it has restrict them from having sufficient facilities for supporting them in producing
their products even for supporting a financing on their daily business activities. Vijayakumar and Jayachitra (2013) stated failure of the most women entrepreneur mostly driven by lack in proper financing facilities as for every business activities, financing is like a life blood.

Competition is a factor that cannot be prevented when involving in the business. According to Vijayakumar and Jayachitra (2013), experienced male entrepreneurs and organized industries became main competitors for women entrepreneurs. In general, all the respondents feedback that instead of having competition pressure from small-scale entrepreneur and organized industries in marketing the products, they also having a competition in getting certain limited raw materials within limited supplier in continuing producing their products. Pertaining to the challenges on the marketing, it was observed similarity on issue encountered by entire interviewed entrepreneurs.

4.4 Help Needs From Selama District Entrepreneurs.

All of four interviewees were similarly agreed on the need for a guidance and support in marketing their products and services. The reason gave is in order to expanding their business, strategic marketing is required while they have limitation in having better knowledge and support for marketing their products. The statements obtained from the result of the interviews is align with Vijayakumar and Jayachtra (2013) whereby they stated that in assisting and encouraging women entrepreneurs, marketing of their products should be established.

Referring to Table 1, all four interviewees also showed an agreement that training is crucial in order for them to success in managing their business. Specifically, all of them are required for a special training scheme that designed for the needs and suit for women entrepreneur for them to get full advantage from it. Woo, Cooper and Dunkelberg (1991) expressed that training programs that teaching fundamental business skills and cognitive adaptability is a key element for women to be success in entrepreneurship. The arguments supported by Klein and Cook (2005) by describing the ability of entrepreneurship able to be increased by providing a program such as training, education and experience.

5. Conclusion

In completing The Role of Women in Rural Socio-Economic Development in Selama District, Perak research, an appropriate stage in field research have been followed as proposed Singleton and Straits (2005) for the ethnographic data collection and combining with process suggested by Barnes-Holmes et.al (2005) in completing the case study of data gathered from ethnography field research.

With regards to the finding, in overall it can be conclude that women did play a role in developing rural area in improving community’s socio-economy development even though the significant of contribution may argueable compare to the man which not included in this research. Women as an entrepreneur in rural area are capable in managing their own business despite of low education level and limited capital in developing their business. However, they are able succeeded in the entrepreneurial field by proper aids provided for them to have better managing systems for their business as an effort for becoming more competitive in the market.

It’s expected that the factors in motivating rural women to become as an entrepreneur are influence by their family background and from that factor it’s driving them to finding a way in searching for their own income. Positively this has brought up them to the level of taking a risk in start-up the business independently with limited available resources. In owning own small business, typically the individual involved in business are either having a motivation from positive inner desire in start-up the business or been influence by external factor such as desire to be independence, wealth creation and for lifestyle change (Burke et.al, 2002; Birley and Westhead, 1994). As a result from their positive motivation, they able to create their own career as an entrepreneur and own an income as individual financial rewards. To develop a community
socio-economic, it must be start from the contribution of each individual in the community from themselves to their family followed by the community. Therefore, both of this result in improving family and individual financial condition that move those women entrepreneurs has strongly generating a change and improve Selama district socio-economic development.

Obviously from the interviews result compilation, there is no denies on the role of women in developing rural area socio-economy development. Their role as an entrepreneur is parallel with Schmitz (1989) on the strong correlation between entrepreneurial activities and economic activities. Either consciously or unconsciously, many are not believes on the ability of women in managing their business and it is a big risk for financing the ventures run by women (Goyal & Parkash, 2011). However, result from this research has shown that women are able to manage and achieving success in their business as from the research result also all of the interviewed respondents are able to sustaining their business for a longer period. Nevertheless event though they able to survive in entrepreneurial field, it was observed that their progress in extent their company performance into next higher level is slow and restricted. Based on the findings, it was agreed by all four women entrepreneurs that the main challenges they are facing is on the financial limitation which become a common issue for any small business scale owner in rural area.

Overall of this research, we do admit on the limitation in extent the research result for making generalization on the role of rural women. As the research is only focusing in the limited rural area with focuses on the selected women entrepreneur as a research subject, result from the research may not represent the situation in other rural area. Nevertheless, even though this research influenced with those limitation factors, from the comparison and contrast through academic review for the similar research conducted, we do observed similarity in the result obtained from our research. However, we do admit that for a generalization, more research and case study are required for the future study. Furthermore the social, economy and cultural perspectives in Selama district may differ from other rural area that may significantly influenced the final research result.

Reference


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