

Communication of Mandiri farming group in increasing the welfare of dry land farmers in Leosama Village, Belu Regency, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to describe and analyze the role of independent farmer groups in increasing the welfare of dry land farmers in Leosama Village, Belu Regency. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The resource persons in this research amounted to 15 people who were members of independent farmer groups. Sampling of this research by purposive sampling. The results showed that independent farmer groups in increasing the welfare of its members through close cooperation between them in increasing agricultural production, openness among its members and the existence of kinship ties strengthen the relationship between them. The existence of independent farmer groups plays a very important role in increasing the welfare of its members and overcoming problems together related to the production of agricultural products. From the research data it is recommended that the kinship between the members of the farmer group needs to be maintained so that the existence of the Independent farmer group continues to exist in Leosama Village.

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1. Introduction

Indonesia as an agricultural country has a large enough agricultural land, some of which are scattered in rural areas. Development in the agricultural sector often encounters obstacles, partly due to the low knowledge of the community and efforts are needed to overcome these obstacles. The presence of farmer groups in rural areas encourages people to be able to empower themselves. The aim of forming farmer groups in rural areas is to develop the ability of farmers to be able to provide for the welfare of their families through a group approach so that they can play a role in agricultural development [1].

Leosama Village is one of the villages in Kalkuluk Mesak District, Belu Regency. The natural resource potential owned by the people in this village is dry land farming. The community in Leosama village uses and manages agricultural resources to fulfill their daily needs. The agricultural land management system carried out by the people in the village still uses traditional means,

including sickles and machetes. One of the farmer groups formed in Leosama Village is the Independent Farmers Group [2]. There are fifteen members of the group and the group has one chairman, secretary and treasurer. The formation of the Independent Farmers Group is expected that group members can work together or work together, can voice the opinions of each member in managing agricultural land well and can increase income which can be satisfactory. So that group members who join the Independent Farmers Group can feel a positive impact on a prosperous life [3]. Previous research by Edi Sumarno Ilyas, agribusiness study program, Faculty of Agriculture, Muhammadiyah University of Makassar, 2018 thesis. The similarities in this study are that they both examine the role of farmer groups. The differences in the research conducted by Edi Sumarno Ilyas focused more on the role of farmer groups in increasing lowland rice production, while the research focused on the role of independent farmer groups in improving the welfare of dryland farmers in Leosama Village.[4]

A farmer group is a group of planters/farmers/smallholders who exist or are formed for the same reason, namely similarities in an environment or a similar condition and they also live side by side so that intimacy is created between them so that they have the desire to work together so that they can form a group that makes it easier to work together [5]. The more they have cohesiveness in working together, the easier it will be for them to carry out their farming activities so that their activities can run well and smoothly [6]. Farmer groups can make it easier for farmers to work well because agriculture has an important role in economic life [7].

According to (Zahra, 2022)The characteristics of farmer groups are: They know each other well so that intimacy between them is well established so that they can trust each other; Those who are already part of the farmer group are those who have the same goals because they are aware that they can fight together to achieve their goals; They are aware because they have similarities in many ways, both in tradition, place of residence, work, economic and social status. With them having this in common, it will make it easier for them to adjust so that it will increase their enthusiasm so they can work well [9].

The purpose of forming farmer groups is to improve and develop the capabilities of farmers and their families as subjects of a group approach, so that they play a greater role in development. The development of farmer groups needs to be carried out in a more intensive, directed and planned manner so as to enhance their roles and functions [10]. The function of the farmer group as a study group is a teaching forum for its members to increase knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as the growth and development of independence in farming so that productivity increases, income increases and life becomes more prosperous. Farmer groups as a vehicle for cooperation to strengthen cooperation among fellow farmers within farmer groups as well as with other groups, so that farming activities will be more efficient and better able to face challenges, obstacles and disturbances [11]. So the question of this research is what is the role of the Independent Farmers Group in improving the welfare of dry land farmers in Leosama Village, Kalkuluk Mesak District, Belu Regency?

2. Method

This study uses qualitative methods with the perspective of role theory from Biddle & Thomas [12]. Qualitative research is research that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, etc. holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing various natural methods [13]. The perspective of role theory in this study is used to understand the close relationship between a person's role and position in his social environment. The role determines the social group in the community, in the sense that it is expected that each of the relevant social groups will carry out their role, namely carrying out their rights and obligations according to their position in the community (environment) in which they live [14]. In its role, as David Beryter said, there can be two kinds of expectations, namely the expectations of the community for the role holder and the expectations held by the role holder for the community. Individuals are required to hold the role given to them by society, in this case, the role can be as part of the structure of society, for example roles in work, family, power and other roles created by society. The link between theory and research is the existence of expectations from the farming community for the role of independent farmer groups in efforts to improve people's welfare.

This research was conducted in Leosama Village, Kalkuluk Mesak District, Timor Belu Regency by considering: The dry land farming community in Leosama village has a socio-cultural reality of a farming community with a complexity of problems that demands a more comprehensive handling; The role of Mandiri farmer groups in the welfare of their group members.

Research informants were determined purposively with certain considerations aimed at providing data according to the needs of the research objectives. Research informants are those who are involved in and understand the role of farmer groups, namely independent farmer groups. Data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observation and documentation. Interviews in this study aim to collect information or data regarding the object of research, namely the communication of informants (members of the Independent Farmers Group) in their daily lives in their social environment. In-depth interviews are open and unstructured and in an informal setting. Used to determine the extent of the role of farmer groups in the welfare of its members [15].

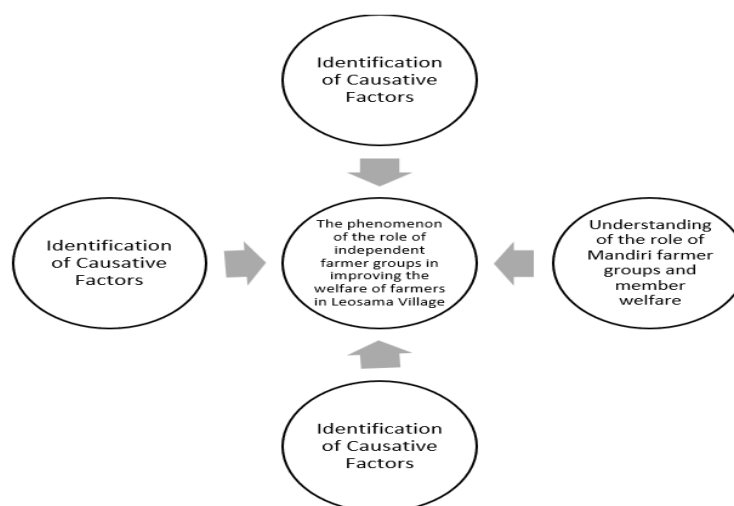


Fig. 1.research framework

Interviews were conducted with five research informants aimed at understanding the roles of farmer groups. Observation techniques were used to understand family background and the socio-economic conditions of the Mandiri Farmer Group. Its dimensions focused on the roles played by the group in Leosama Village [16]. This technique is used to obtain non-literal knowledge that cannot be obtained only from interviews. Documentation is used for document review and general description of Leosama Village. The documents used by researchers are documents in the form of records that apply to dryland farming communities that have something to do with their socio-economic life. Then in this study FGDs were also conducted with research informants to gain an understanding regarding the role of independent farmer groups [17]. The qualitative data analysis phase uses an interactive model. In general, this process includes three things, namely data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions. The results of this data analysis form the basis for answering a thorough understanding of the role played by Mandiri farmer groups in the welfare of group members.

3. Intergroup Communication Theory

Intergroup communication can be defined as the exchange of information between those who have similarities in terms of culture, linguistics, and/or geography [18]. This is confirmed by [19] which states that group communication is used for each other exchanging information, increasing knowledge, strengthening or changing attitudes and behavior, developing mental health, and raising awareness. In theory, group communication is an activity or interaction that carried out by several people in an association such as meetings, discussions, meeting or gathering in a place with a relatively small number of participants. In a word In other words, group communication is an exchange of information or messages that occurs online directly or face to face between three or more people [20].

The Role of Group Communication not only as a means or tool for exchanging information, but has dozens roles that are in line with the goals of the formation of a group. Purpose of formation a group indirectly will actually be the goal of communication the group itself. However, to achieve an effective and productive group communication goal an Effective Communication of course must pass through several stages Communication [21]. The stages or processes of Oral Communication within a group of course also influenced by several components or Factors Influencing Communication The ongoing group, because of these factors that will later effect on the purpose of the group's communication. These factors between Age and group size, Perceptions or thoughts of group members, Status and culture of group members, Structure of leadership or management of the group, Group norms or ethics, Communication network and group cohesion, Interpersonal needs and responsibilities of group members, How to communicate and the ability to communicate, Types and functions of groups [22].

Groups are an inseparable part of our daily activities. Groups, both primary and secondary, are vehicles for everyone to be able to realize his hopes and desires to share information in almost anything aspect of life. It can be a medium for expressing problems personal (family as the primary group), [23]it can be a means of improving knowledge of its members (study groups) and it can also be a tool for solving common problems faced by all members (solving group problem) [24]. So, there are many benefits that we can reap if we get involved in something groups that match our interests. The person who separates or isolating himself with others is a loner, a hateful person to other people (misanthrope) or can be said to be an antisocial person. There are four elements that emerge from the definition stated above [25], namely:

(1) The first element is interaction in group communication which is a factor important, because it is through these interactions, that we can see differences between groups with a term called coact. Coact is a group of people who are simultaneously involved in the same activity but without communication with each other. For example, students who only passively listen to a lecture, passively cannot yet be called a group. They can be said as a group if you have started exchanging messages with lecturers or fellow students who are other [26]. (2) the second element is time. A group of people interacting for an extended period short period of time, cannot be classified as a group. Group requires interaction over a long period of time, because with this interaction will have characteristics or characteristics that are not owned by a collection of characteristics temporary [27]. (3) The third element is the size or number of participants in group communication. There is no definite measure of the number of members in a group. There are limit 3-8 people, 3-15 people and 3-20 people [28]. To overcome the difference in quantity members, a concept known as smallness emerges, namely the ability of each group members to be able to recognize and react to group members other. With this smallness, quantity doesn't matter as long as each member able to recognize and give reactions to other members or every member is capable see and hear other members / as stated in the definition first [29]. (4) the last element is the goal which implies that membership in a group will help individuals who are members of the group can achieve one or more goals [30].

4. Results and Discussion

The role of independent farmer groups in improving the welfare of dry land farmers is explained through observation using interview guidelines. This research was conducted in Leosama Village, Kakuluk Mesak District, Belu Regency. When gardening, there is a division of tasks including; some are in charge of maintaining plant seeds, land preparation, and checking plants. Farmers carry out their activities twice a day, namely in the morning and also in the afternoon. The tools that are still used to cultivate agricultural land are hand tractors, machetes and sickles. Mandiri farmer groups were formed on their own initiative in August 2007.

Mandiri farmer groups consist of 15 members and among the members have a family relationship. The types of plants planted by independent farmer groups are beans, long beans, pariah, tomatoes, Lombok. the planting period for beans for 2 months until the harvest arrives. They plant all year round, the difficulty they face is the availability of water for irrigation needs. The availability of water for irrigation is very limited, so they take water from the Cekdam for their farming needs. This problem was resolved with the initiative of the group leader to borrow money from Bank BRI in 2007 as much as 10 million to buy a hose and machine to drain water into their

garden. At the beginning of the formation of the group, they planted cucumbers and at the time of harvest they earned 28 million in cash. the money is then used to pay off loans at Bank BRI and set aside to buy seeds as farming capital and the rest is distributed to each group member. They sell their crops to the Atambua Market and some of the produce is bought by collectors (*Papalele*). The selling price depends on market demand, if the demand is high, the selling price of vegetables will increase. The price breakdown for vegetables sold is that cucumbers are sold for 1 sack for Rp. 150,000, -, long beans are sold in bundles at a price of IDR 10000, and beans are sold at 1 kg IDR 5000.

The land owned by members of the farmer group is individually owned land but managed jointly. They work together in cultivating the land until harvest time arrives. In the journey of the Mandiri Farmers Group for 25 years, there has been strong cooperation among its members. This encourages strengthening their kinship, because a cooperation between members of a farmer group can strengthen group ties and increase solidarity among its members. Cooperation also appears in decision making, each member is given equal opportunity to express opinions because they realize that the opinion of each member of the group is really needed. The kinship that is established is well developed so that they become individuals who are open and able to socialize with others.

Cooperation among group members is one of the factors that strengthens the bond between members of the Mandiri Farmer Group. Cooperation in a group is needed to help each other, so that a mutually agreed goal can be achieved. Cooperation is needed so that individuals can become open individuals. Collaboration can also make it easier to achieve a predetermined goal or target and create a close sense of brotherhood.

In this study the researchers have selected each informant according to the role of the group in improving the welfare of group members. From the interview results, the researcher obtained information from members of the Mandiri farmer group and the researcher concluded that one of the roles of farmer groups in improving group welfare is the existence of mutual cooperation which is manifested in cooperation between group members. The influence of the role of farmer groups in improving the welfare of farmer group members is very large. with this cooperation, the bonds between groups become stronger and have an impact on increasing the welfare of group members because by working together they can plant on the land belonging to farmer group members.

They maximize the available land so that crop yields increase. the existence of cooperation really helps members of farmer groups in working together to manage large agricultural land so that they can increase good agricultural yields and help each other so that they can get satisfactory results. They started working together from land preparation, preparation of plant seeds to the harvest. Before the formation of the farmer group, the farmers only planted vegetables for their daily food needs, but after the formation of this farmer group, the farmers began to plant not only for daily food needs but also for sale so they could generate money to buy other daily needs. The existence of this farmer group also began to expand land so that farmers began to work well together so they could get good agricultural results.

In addition to cooperation, the role of farmer groups in improving the welfare of members of the Independent Farmers group is kinship. the members of the farmer group have a marital relationship so that all members are family. This is what causes them to have a solid bond to this day. This kinship relationship also has an impact on increasing the welfare of farmers, since the establishment of this independent farmer group, they have worked hard to cultivate the available land. The problem faced besides the availability of water is the availability of capital. They struggle to overcome problems due to the availability of capital by pooling money together to buy seeds and cultivate the land. There are no conflicts related to land management because with this kinship bond they are open to each other among their members.

The Independent Farmers Group was the first group formed in 2007 and is still going strong today. They went through difficulties in cultivating agricultural land at the beginning of the group's formation until now they are able to cultivate the land well and experience an increase in income with the help of drilled wells from PLN with a budget of IDR 50000000. The help of drilled wells makes it easier for them to irrigate. The availability of water for irrigation has an impact on increasing the yields of the Independent Farmers group. Independent Farmer Groups also often receive assistance in the form of corn seeds, fertilizers and also financial assistance for farming activities. In 2020 there was a drought in Leosama village which was caused by a long dry season

and little rainfall. The impact of crop failure on the Independent Farmers group is large operational costs (large capital) and crop failure. However, the group continues despite reduced income. They work around this by switching to other commodities, namely cashew and mango.

In 2021 they will receive nursery assistance from the service. The Independent Farmers Group also worked together to process the seeds provided by the Agriculture Office and they managed to harvest and increase their income again. Another problem faced by the Mandiri farmer groups is the weather. Planting time depends on natural conditions / weather. Mandiri Farmer Groups always try to find solutions to the problems they face because their principle is that problems will be easy if we help each other. The difficulties they faced only strengthened the relationship between them. With this close bond, they are jointly able to overcome the problems faced and increase the income of each member of the farmer group. Every time they harvest green beans, they get a profit of 15 million from the land of each member of the farmer group.

In the last part of this chapter, the researcher attempts to conduct a theoretical discussion by linking the research results with the theory used in the previous chapter. The theory used is the Role Theory of Biddle and Thomas. In sparking this theory, there is a very close relationship between the role and position of a person having a role in the social environment because he has a status of position in the social environment (society). The link between theory and research is the existence of expectations from the farming community for the role of independent farmer groups in efforts to improve people's welfare. In carrying out their roles, the members of the Independent Farmers group carry out their roles as they should. The group leader is a person who works hard to improve the welfare of members, involves all members of the farmer group in farming activities and also has openness regarding grants to the Independent Farmer Group.

5. Conclusion

The Independent Farmers Group was formed on August 25 2007, the initial formation of the group to fulfill the requirements for cashew nut seedlings from the Department of Agriculture. The Independent Farmers Group plays a very important role in improving the welfare of farmers through the cooperation that exists between them in cultivating the land and finding solutions to the problems they face. The life of farmers before the formation of the Independent Farmers Group was very difficult and they did not have a steady income. Since the formation of the Independent Farmers Group, their income has increased to IDR 14000000 for each vegetable harvest within two months. The factors of kinship, cooperation and mutual openness are the factors that encourage the bonds of the members of the farmer groups to remain solid to this day. The suggestion from this study is that the kinship that exists among the members of the farmer groups needs to be maintained so that the existence of the Independent farmer groups continues to exist in Leosama Village. In addition, members need attention to maximize land management to improve farmers' welfare. Therefore, it is very necessary to have training related to the processing of cashew fruit so that it is not wasted every time the harvest arrives. This research is important for further research because research on agricultural land management is still lacking. This research is also important as a basic research reference for other research on communication between farmer groups.

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