



## Marsirimpa Tradition as a Livelihood Strategy of Sharecroppers in Sidiangkat Village, Sidikalang District

Lisbet Rizona Br Sianturi<sup>1</sup>, Bengkel Ginting\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, 20155, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: [bengkel@usu.ac.id](mailto:bengkel@usu.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

The marsirimpa tradition is a survival strategy carried out by poor farmers, one of which is rice farming sharecroppers in Sidiangkat Village, Sidikalang District. This strategy is carried out to minimize the amount of expenditure on capital for agricultural activities. The poverty experienced by sharecroppers which can be seen based on the socio-economic conditions of the family affects the survival strategy carried out. This means that the marsirimpa tradition is carried out by poor farmers who have limited capital. This research aims to describe the socio-economic conditions and survival strategies carried out by sharecroppers in Sidiangkat Village in meeting family needs. The main informant in this research is the head of Sidiangkat neighborhood I, the main informant is four sharecroppers, additional informants are two landowners. Data collection techniques are done by literature study, interviews, observation and documentation. The data obtained in the field was then analyzed qualitatively to produce a conclusion. The results showed that the socio-economic conditions of sharecroppers were below the poverty line with a total income of around Rp500,000 to Rp1,000,000 per month with two to six dependents. The type of residence is contact and self-owned which is equipped with a PLN lighting source and well and irrigation water sources and has been facilitated with private toilets. Active strategies carried out are by increasing income, having additional jobs, raising livestock and utilizing the potential of family members. Passive strategies by minimizing expenses or implementing savings strategies. While the network strategy is carried out by making loans, utilizing government assistance and assistance from relatives.

**Keyword:** Marsirimpa, Peasants, Survival Strategies

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## 1. Introduction

Survival strategies are ways or efforts made by families of poor farming communities in maintaining their lives due to limited income. Poverty experienced by farmers reflects failure in many dimensions of life such as hunger, illness, malnutrition, unemployment, inadequate housing, lack of education, vulnerability, helplessness, social isolation, and so on. This poverty problem is a driving factor for a farmer to carry out a survival strategy. Farmers can be categorized into three parts, namely: a) rich farmers with more than 2.5 ha of farmland. b) medium farmers with 1-2.5 ha of land.

c) poor farmers with less than 1 ha of farmland. Low family income is influenced by the size of the land owned. The more land owned, the greater the income, as well as agricultural business expenses. The larger the land area owned, the greater the capital for agricultural production.

Farmers who do not have their own production factors such as dry land or paddy fields are classified as poor farmers. Generally, these farmers will manage or work on land owned by others to be worked on based on the agreement made, which is called the term sharecropper. The sharecropper is only obliged to manage the land and pay profit-sharing wages to the landowner. The overall agricultural capital comes from the sharecroppers and the profit-sharing system is based on the agreement between the two parties. Sharecroppers in Sidiangkat Village are classified as poor farmers because they manage a relatively narrow cultivated rice field of 0.25 ha-0.50 ha. The income earned from the land ranges from Rp500,000 to Rp1,000,000 per month. The income from the harvest is not traded as a whole, but the rice harvest will be stored to be used in meeting food needs every day. The relatively small income of sharecroppers will be used to meet family needs including in an effort to meet the need for agricultural production capital every year. Expensive farming capital includes the cost of fertilizers, pesticides and even labor. Tenant farmers generally require two to three additional farm laborers during the planting and harvesting periods. The high wages of laborers are a consideration for sharecroppers to find alternative strategies to minimize expenses from the agricultural sector. The survival strategy used by tenant farmers in dealing with these conditions is known as "marsirimpa".

Marsirimpa is a job that is done together by involving several people to complete it, marsirimpa activities are carried out on the basis of an agreement between the parties working together (Pardosi, 2020). This agreement is in the form of time and place to work and food needs and an agreement regarding whose land will be worked on first. This is a tradition that has existed for a long time among the Batak community. This habit is based on a sense of fate and compatibility experienced by sharecroppers. With regard to the concept of mutual cooperation, marsirimpa means compact, unison and together. This meaning is very important for farmers as participants in mutual cooperation so that the three rules can be applied. This means that the rules of mutual cooperation must be based on the characteristics of compactness, unison, and togetherness to realize mutual understanding, agreement, and mutual support.

The marsirimpa activity is very helpful for agricultural activities carried out by sharecroppers. This marsirimpa activity is not only carried out in work on rice fields but also on dry land. This activity is the same as working as a farm laborer, the difference lies in the wage system. Farm laborers work to earn wages, while marsirimpa work does not get paid in the form of money but energy by working on other farmers' land. This activity certainly affects the social economy of the community. Farmers' social conditions are increasingly intertwined because of the bonds of cooperation that are

beneficial in maintaining and improving the family economy. The small income must be able to meet the needs of the family both in food, education, housing, health and other needs. And must meet the needs of agricultural production factors until the harvest period arrives. This study aims to determine the socio-economic conditions and survival strategies of sharecroppers in an effort to maintain family life. This research is in line with research conducted by Dinna Febriani (2017) entitled *Survival Strategies of Sharecroppers in Jorong Sarilamak Nagari Sarilamak Harau District, Lima Puluh Kota Regency* which states that farmers' survival strategies consist of three types, namely active strategies by utilizing family potential, having side jobs and increasing livelihoods. Passive strategies are carried out by reducing family expenses and network strategies by utilizing social relationships with neighbors or farmer owners to get into debt. The difference in this study is that the research conducted by researchers is unique by focusing on the *marsirimpa* strategy carried out by tenant farmers as a form of survival strategy. So that researchers feel interested and want to know in depth about the "Marsirimpa Tradition as a Family Livelihood Strategy for Sharecroppers in Sidiangkat Village, Sidikalang District".

## **2. Research Method**

This type of research is classified as descriptive research with a qualitative approach or often called the naturalistic method because the research is conducted in scientific conditions. In qualitative research the instrument is a person or human instrument, namely the researcher himself. So that it is necessary to provide extensive theory and insight to interview, photograph, and construct the social situation under study to be clearer and more meaningful. To obtain a broader and deeper understanding of the social situation under study, the data collection techniques used are triangulation, using various data collection techniques in combination or simultaneously. Research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2013). Informants in the study consisted of three types, namely key informants, main informants and additional informants. One environmental device as a key informant, four main informants and two additional informants.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### *3.1. Socio-Economic Conditions*

The socio-economic conditions of sharecroppers affect the survival strategies carried out by families in an effort to meet their needs. Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, tenant farmer communities have different socio-economic conditions that can be viewed from income, number of dependents, housing, education of family members and so on.

a. Educational

Based on the results of the research, the average education level of the main informants is at the upper secondary education level. However, limited knowledge and skills are an inhibiting factor for them to have more promising jobs. However, the education of the main informants has no influence on increasing agricultural yields, this can be seen based on the yields obtained each year. But the main informant's agricultural yield is influenced by the capital used so that experience in farming becomes a driving factor in the success of the agricultural business carried out. The more capital and complete farming needs owned, the more agricultural yields. Meanwhile, efforts to improve children's education are influenced by the motivation of the main informants. Based on the results of the study, it is known that the main informant II has the motivation to improve children's education until college. It is inversely proportional to the main informants I, III and IV who do not have the ability to improve children's education until college due to the uncertain family economy.

b. Work

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be seen that all informants chose to become sharecroppers because of their low knowledge and skills as well as not having their own production factors (assets). It can be seen that the main informants have depended on their lives for more than or equal to 15 years to work as sharecroppers. This shows that the tenant farmers have never worked in the informal sector with a good income. The four informants said they had no interest in looking for another job. Because of their age and low knowledge and skills, they are unable to find a better job.

c. The Number of Dependents

The number of family dependents is people or family members who are still dependent on the head of the family, both siblings and non-siblings who live at home but are not working or not working (Purwanto and Taftazani, 2018). Based on the research results, the number of dependents of the research informants was two to six people. The number of dependents in the family affects household consumption expenditure. The research shows that the distribution of income towards meeting the needs of children and families is very different, the more the number of dependents, the less total income received by family members. This condition is experienced by main informants I and II who have a total of 6 dependents. This relatively small income is used to fulfill the dependents of 6 family members, unlike the main informants III and IV who only bear 2 family members.

d. Income

Income is a person's source of income to fulfill daily needs and is very important for the survival and livelihood of a person directly or indirectly (Suroto, 2000). Based on the results of the study, it is known that the main informant II with a land area of 0.36 ha has a yield of 1.8 tons of rice each year. Main informants I, III and IV 0.08 ha-0.16 ha have an income of around 540 kg to 1.3 tons

of rice grain in a year. So the results show that the more land area managed by tenant farmers, the greater the income earned. If converted, the family income ranges from Rp500,000 to Rp1,000,000 per month. However, the harvest is not traded by sharecroppers, because it is only enough for their daily food needs.

e. Type of Residence

Based on the research results, it shows that all main informants have a place to live even though they are privately owned and rented. It is known that main informants III and IV still live by renting. Main informant II pays an annual rent of IDR 3,000,000 with a family of three living in the house. The condition of the house is classified as livable with plaster walls and ceramic floors, and the lighting is already using electricity with a building area of 5X15m. Meanwhile, the main informant IV has to pay a house rental fee of IDR 1,000,000 a year. The house is occupied by 2 people with zinc walls and a small size of 5x3m. This house already has electric lighting but the water source for kitchen needs still comes from irrigation channels. Other conditions experienced by main informants I and II, who own their own houses with an area of more than 5X15 m each, are equipped with PLN lighting sources, well and irrigation water sources, semi-permanent buildings. However, the condition of the main informant II's residence is equipped with household furniture such as a sofa, refrigerator, TV and others. Which indicates that the house has more wealth than the other main informants.

3.2. *Survival Strategies*

The survival strategy theory used in this study is a theory proposed by Edi Suharto (2009), which states that a survival strategy is a person's ability to apply a set of ways to overcome various problems that surround their lives. Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted, the researcher sees that the smaller the family income, the more livelihood strategies are carried out. The low income and the large number of family dependents are the main factors in the number of strategies taken. The following are the forms of survival strategies carried out by rice farming sharecroppers in meeting family needs.

a. *Active Strategies*

An active strategy is a strategy or way of surviving a person or family that is carried out by optimizing or utilizing all the potential of the family or individual. As according to Suharto (2009: 31), an active strategy is a strategy for survival carried out by utilizing the potential of the family, doing it yourself or extending working hours. Sharecroppers in Sidiangkat Village apply several active strategies such as adding work, raising livestock, utilizing the potential of family members and marsirimpa. The strategy of increasing work is done by working as farm laborers and catering. This work is done to obtain income in the form of money which is used to buy daily family needs. The strategy of utilizing family potential is to invite family members to help in agricultural activities and

at times when school holidays arrive. Children help their parents by working as farm laborers. Meanwhile, the marsirimpa strategy is carried out by utilizing their potential to work on other people's land without payment in the form of money, paid in the form of services. This strategy is carried out to ease the burden of costs and labor, so that agricultural activities can be completed more quickly. The last strategy is to raise livestock in the form of poultry, namely around 50 chickens. This livestock will be traded both eggs and meat, so that it can increase family income and increase the variety of food in the family.

*b. Passive Strategy*

Passive strategy is a survival strategy carried out by minimizing family expenses as Suharto's opinion states that passive strategy is a survival strategy by reducing family expenses (for example, costs for primary, secondary, and tertiary needs). Based on the research results, it is known that the passive strategy carried out by tenant farmer families is by implementing a frugal lifestyle. The frugal lifestyle is carried out by minimizing expenditures on food, such as limiting food variations with improvised side dishes. Then by buying new clothes only once a year when celebrating holidays such as Christmas. A frugal lifestyle is also carried out by utilizing irrigation channels as a source of water for family needs. So that the cost of expensive water will be covered by utilizing irrigation channels

*c. Network Strategy*

Network strategies are strategies that are carried out by utilizing social networks. According to Suharto, the network strategy is a survival strategy carried out by establishing relationships, both in the formal sector and with the social environment and institutional environment (for example, borrowing money from neighbors, owing money to stalls or shops, utilizing poverty programs, borrowing money from moneylenders or banks and so on). Based on the results of the study, it is known that the network strategy carried out by tenant farmers utilizes all the relationships they have. Borrowing from banks and savings and loan cooperatives when in need of high funds. Generally, sharecroppers use this strategy when they need capital for their farming business, the beginning of their children's education and other urgent situations. In addition, borrowing money from neighbors is also done when tenant farmers are experiencing difficult times. In addition to making loans, farmers also utilize existing assistance as a guarantee of their lives. Assistance from the government such as KIP which can help with children's education costs, KIS as family health insurance and PKH assistance. Assistance in agriculture is obtained by farmer membership as a member of a farmer group to obtain subsidized fertilizer.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that the socio-economic conditions of sharecroppers who live below the poverty line will utilize all the potential and opportunities available

to increase their income in an effort to meet family needs. The *marsirimpa* strategy is one of the strategies carried out by tenant farmers to be able to maintain their agricultural activities. This strategy is based on mutually beneficial agreements and cooperation. To reduce the amount of agricultural production costs from the rice planting process to the harvesting period, the *marsirimpa* tradition is carried out on the basis of a sense of fate and togetherness. This *marsirimpa* tradition can generally increase good social solidarity between communities. This is reflected in the community interaction that is still thick and familial in nature. The magnitude of the influence of *marsirimpa* as a form of savings on agricultural capital is a driving factor in this tradition that is still valid today in Sidiangkat Village.

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