



RATIONAL ACTIONS OF WIDOWS POST EARTHQUAKE DISASTER IN PALU CITY

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS

earthquakes; rational
actions; post disaster

Earthquakes not only affect material losses, but also affect the socioeconomic lives of widowed women forcing them to act rationally to survive and avoid the threat of poverty. The study aims to analyze the impact of earthquake natural disasters with rational actions of widowed women after the earthquake disaster in Palu City. The research method uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Data collection was carried out through limited observation, in-depth interviews, FGDs and document studies so as to obtain primary and secondary data. Informants were purposively selected as many as 6 people. The data is analyzed interpretively. The validity of the data is done through triangulation. The results showed that in the face of poor post-disaster socioeconomic conditions, there are five models of strategies or rational survival actions carried out by widowed women, namely, borrowing business capital, building an entrepreneurial career, finding a new job, becoming a daily freelancer, and getting married. The forms of rational action carried out by widows are instrumental rational actions, value rationality actions and effective rational actions. It suggested the importance of socio-economic empowerment of widowed women appropriately and sustainably.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries in the world that is vulnerable to natural disasters. One of the natural disasters that poses a big risk is earthquakes (Maarif, 2015; Pramono, 2016). On September 28 2018, Palu City, Donggala Regency, Sigi Regency and Parigi Moutong Regency in Central Sulawesi and the surrounding area were shaken by an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.4 on the Richter Scale. This earthquake caused a tsunami and soil melting (liquefaction) (Central Sulawesi Provincial Government, 2018).

Based on BNPB calculations on 26 October 2018, as a result of this disaster, Central Sulawesi Province experienced damage and losses reaching IDR 18.48 trillion, especially in the four affected districts/cities. The greatest loss and damage came from settlements, followed by the economic sector (Central Sulawesi Provincial Government, 2018). After the natural disaster, one of the groups most affected was widowed women, namely widows in Palu City, Central Sulawesi Province, Indonesia.

Disasters not only impact the economic sector, but also impact the socio-economic lives of women, especially widowed women who lost their husbands as a result of the 2018 earthquake disaster (Ministry of Empowerment and Protection of Girls of the Republic of Indonesia, 2011). This research highlights the impact of the natural disaster of an earthquake on widowed women in Palu City.

Widowhood is a social label attached to women who are not married either because of divorce or because of the death of their husband. After the disaster, widowed women in Palu City tried to survive by earning additional income. Research observations show that after a

disaster, widowed women are forced to bear the burden of life because they lost their family breadwinner (husband) during a disaster situation. Some research (Mazid et al., 2023; Paramithalda & Susilawati, 2016) revealed that having dependent family members requires widowed women to look for alternative sources of livelihood.

This observation is in line with research which finds that the domestic needs of families are very dependent on the economic role of the informal sector of housewives (Himawati & Taftazani, 2022; Mazid et al., 2023). This role is to prioritize children's educational needs, means of transportation and savings (Wazin, 2018). Another role played by widows is not only as sole provider but also as protector or shield for family members. Negative social stigma against widowed women can affect the psychology of their children.

The fate of widows not only faces economic pressure but also social pressure such as bad social stigma received from their social environment (Suhan et al., 2020). Other research reveals that widow status is obtained due to low education and young marriage (Foilyani et al., 2009). Several studies reveal that widowed women act as heads of families who take on a new role as backbone after being left by their spouse (husband) (Kasim et al., 2022; Nurgina et al., 2023). Similar research shows that the lives of widowed women who have been left behind by their husbands or divorced have tried to survive by setting up businesses and providing additional income from their children (Nurhaini, 2022). Apart from that, for widowed women's economic resilience, the ideal is economic empowerment through skills training (Wulandari & Rini, 2021).

Acting as head of a single family is not just about carrying out functions, but this is driven by decisions regarding the rational actions chosen by widowed women. According to Max Weber (Ritzer, 2012), everyone has the freedom to make their choices rationally. This choice can become a spirit in carrying out other social actions, including work ethic (Weber, 2006). Like research (Kasim et al., 2022) found that widows have a work ethic and economic independence. Work ethic is influenced by type of work and family conditions. Meanwhile, economic independence is determined by the ability to meet primary and secondary needs and the amount of income.

This article aims to reveal the decisions or actions taken by widowed women due to the worsening economic situation of their families after the natural disaster in Palu City. The existence of economic vulnerability requires widowed women who are victims of natural disasters to use various means of survival. There is research which reveals that widowed women's survival strategies are carried out through active strategies, passive strategies and network strategies (Himawati & Taftazani, 2022). Meanwhile, the results of this research found that there were various efforts by widows to determine ways to survive as a rational action including instrumental actions, valuable actions and affective actions. Thus, whatever widowed women do as an effort to survive, it is a rational decision or action.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the research phenomenon thoroughly and in depth (Bungin, 2015; Moleong, 2013). The survival strategies of widowed women are explored through a case study in Palu City. The unit of research analysis is women with the status of widows who were victims of the 2018 earthquake in Palu City, totaling 6 people. Data collection was carried out through observations on the living conditions of widowed women, face-to-face in-depth interviews and conducting focus group discussions (FGD) with widowed women. Data were analyzed qualitatively through data interpretation. The validity of the data is obtained through source triangulation (Satori, Djaman, 2011; Sugiyono, 2018; Suyanto & Sutinah (ed.), 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic Problems of Post-Disaster Widow Groups

A widow means a woman who no longer has a husband, either because of divorce or because her husband died. The results of the research show that after the earthquake natural disaster, widows in Palu City live in economic vulnerability with all the limitations they face in their lives. This condition is exacerbated by their lack of access to improve their conditions both economically and socially. As stated by informant Hartini (50 years old), the earthquake caused her to lose her business (shop) selling clothes. "My shop was lost in the earthquake, including my savings, my condition ended up being worse than before" (interview 23 June 2023).

After the disaster, widowed women face financial pressures such as difficulty obtaining sufficient finances, obtaining decent work, paying children's education costs, and other needs. It can even be said that widows are more likely to live in poverty compared to complete (dual) parents.

The research results found that after the natural disaster in Palu City, the lives of widowed women left by their husbands had socio-economic problems such as: (1) financial difficulties; (2) difficulty obtaining permanent and decent work; (3) difficulties in financing children's education; (4) loss of residence; (5) experiencing health problems; (6) limited business capital; (7) debt bondage; and (8) the presence of negative reactions from the social environment (stereotypes, negative stigma or prejudice).

These eight socio-economic problems are fundamental problems experienced by widows after the Palu earthquake disaster. Such conditions make widowed women live vulnerable to poverty. The results of this research also found that after the disaster on 28 September 2018, women who lost their husbands either through death due to the disaster or because of their way of life experienced economic pressure. This includes losing her job and feeling highly dependent on her husband.

Indah and Pious (2021) explain that widows have four problems, namely economics, education, consumption and health. Similar research found that the condition of household economic decline due to external factors (such as disasters) causes widowed women to experience difficulties in determining the direction of their lives and are even vulnerable to poverty, especially those who have dependent children (Kurniasih, 2020; Nurhaini, 2022).

Up to five years after the disaster (2023) their average monthly income will be below IDR. 1.500.000. Except for widowed women who work as civil servants (PNS) and those who work in the private sector and BUMN. At the time of the disaster, some of the widows admitted that they were very short of property, especially in the form of money, and some even had nothing at all because their property was lost as a result of the natural disaster.

Especially after the disaster (reconstruction and rehabilitation period), work is very difficult for women to obtain. Their widowed status due to separation from their husbands makes them think hard about continuing their lives and supporting themselves and their children. Most of these women admitted to experiencing psychological disorders (stress) due to the pressure of losing family members (life partners), losing jobs and losing property. In this condition, they admit to experiencing sociopsychological helplessness, especially women who have been completely dependent on their husband's income for their entire lives.

After the disaster, women who were widows depended on their livelihoods (economically) from several jobs, both jobs they had previously and new jobs. Old jobs such as civil servants, private workers and farmers and/or selling salt. Meanwhile, some of them have to depend on new jobs such as vegetable traders, food sellers and casual workers. The

following presents the types of work and income of widowed women after the earthquake disaster in Palu City.

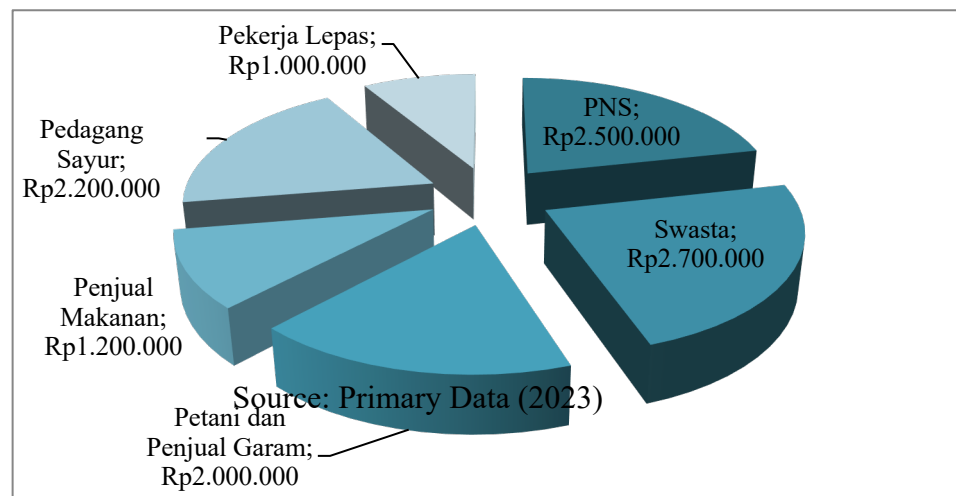


Figure 1. Types of Employment and Income of Widows After the 2018 Earthquake Disaster

Based on the picture above, it is known that there are six types of work and the average monthly income earned by widows after the earthquake disaster in Palu City, namely, civil servants (PNS), private employees, freelancers, vegetable traders, food sellers, and salt seller. Of all the types of work, widows who work in the private sector have the highest average income, namely IDR. 2.700.000. Meanwhile, widows who work as freelancers or daily workers earn the lowest income, namely IDR. 1.000.000.

Among the many jobs that widowed women took up after the earthquake disaster, jobs as civil servants (PNS) and private sector jobs were jobs that contributed quite a large amount of economic income. Meanwhile, work as a laborer or freelance worker is the job that provides the least income for widows after a natural disaster. This means that the lives of widows after natural disasters experience economic difficulties, especially women who do not have permanent jobs.

Apart from income problems, the education problem of family members is also a problem experienced by widows. Losing the breadwinner of the family - their husband - forces widows to look for other alternatives so that they can still afford their children's education. Informant Jamilah (38 years) said that to fulfill her child's desire to go to school, she became a daily freelance worker, namely as a clothes washer. "My three children go to school, everything costs money, since I was a widow five years ago, I have been working as a clothes washer and get paid every time I come to work" (interview, 27 August 2023).

Meanwhile, widowed women who work as private employees and civil servants (PNS) admit that they feel less burdened by their children's education because they have a fixed income every month. Roslina (64 years old), an old informant, said: "I am grateful to have survived this far, because I am a civil servant even though I am a widow. My children can go to school and even college from my salary" (interview, 29 August 2023). Apart from that, some of them have side businesses (kiosks and shops) that support the educational, health and other needs of family members.

Meanwhile, for widowed women who do not have position or material things, living life as a widow is considered a very difficult thing to live alone. Moreover, the costs of supporting children's educational needs are increasing. Likewise, with health needs, some informants,

Marlina (43 years old), who works as a food seller, said that she and her children do not yet have a health insurance card (BPJS) so they still have difficulty meeting their health needs. Moreover, in the early post-disaster period (reconstruction and rehabilitation period) they were forced to bear their own health costs. Many widows are forced to go into debt with family, friends or savings and loan institutions, which ultimately complicates their economic situation. In fact, quite a few of them admit that they are in debt.

When carrying out family functions, widows in Palu City raise their children independently. This spirit of independence then spreads to children when they enter adolescence or adulthood. Children who are raised with an independent spirit are aware of their parents' living conditions so they join in earning a living to ease the burden on single parents.

According to Indah and Pious, (2021) the condition of women who are widows is that they care for and raise their children alone without help from their partners, such as husbands. Apart from caring for them alone, widows are resilient by working to meet the economic and educational needs of their children as well as ensuring the health of their families. Even widows are willing to suppress primary and secondary needs for the sake of their children's future needs (Gusnita & Syafrini, 2021; Wazin, 2018).

Families headed by women are most likely to be poor when compared to families headed by men. If women head the household, on average they only earn 70% of the income compared to men who head the household (Henslin, 2007).

Widows care for and raise their children alone without help from their partners. This is certainly not easy to do because socially women without husbands (widows) are looked down upon. After a disaster, widows experience a series of special problems. The widow's family is increasingly poor because they were previously accustomed to being economically dependent on their husband. As head of the family, widows should have an independent spirit and be able to support their families.

Widowhood Survival Strategies

After the earthquake, widows had economic problems, where widowed women only worked alone while they had to meet their daily needs, not to mention the educational needs of their children that had to be met and also the debts, loans and credit that had to be paid. As a result, widowed women often face difficulties in meeting their economic needs.

Another problem faced by widowed women is social problems. They said they were often viewed or received negative labels socially (Suhan et al., 2020). After the disaster, society reacted in the form of stereotypes, negative stigma and prejudice towards widowed women who worked to earn a living. Psychologically, it requires having a strong mentality so as not to drag on in sadness due to strong social reactions.

Widowed women ultimately have to face these various problems alone without the presence of their partners. After the natural disaster, widowed women who act as heads of families in Palu City are quite capable of overcoming various problems and challenges in life by turning these problems into positive energy and still being able to carry out their daily lives by taking rational actions.

The results of the research show that there are five models of rational action as a survival strategy used by widowed women after the earthquake disaster in Palu City, namely:

1) Borrowing Business Capital

The 2018 earthquake natural disaster caused widowed women to lose their property and even lose family members. Apart from that, they lost their main source of livelihood, such as trading businesses, both small scale and large scale, such as shops. Some of these widowed women have a strong entrepreneurial spirit in order to survive after the disaster.

However, efforts to build an entrepreneurial spirit will not necessarily run smoothly without the assistance of business capital.

Some of those who have small businesses such as kiosks or mobile cake sales businesses admit that they still lack capital to develop their type of business. Often income from business and fixed income is considered insufficient to meet various needs, so widowed women have to borrow capital to develop their business. Business capital is obtained from various sources such as cooperatives, savings and loan institutions, neighbors' loans, family loans, and so on which they use for business development.

According to widowed woman Mirnawati (48 years), some of the widowed women succeeded in developing their businesses and some failed in managing the finances of the loan proceeds. Those who succeed in managing capital loans because they can manage their finances wisely and are able to differentiate between business needs and personal needs. Meanwhile, for those who fail to develop business capital because they cannot manage it properly, such as consumer habits, so they cannot differentiate between business capital and personal interests.

2) Continuing and Building Entrepreneurship

The results of the research show that some widowed women who previously owned their businesses chose to continue entrepreneurship with the capital they owned or with new capital obtained. There are also those who build businesses with savings. According to them, savings are very important for a married woman so that she is not completely dependent on her husband/life partner.

A widowed woman named Ibu Murni (64 years old) who works as a seller of "Talise Salt" in Talise Village said that the habit of selling salt is a job she has done for many years that she cannot just leave. Meanwhile, her eldest child works as a salt farmer, inherited from her deceased husband. So he chose to continue his business selling salt on the side of the road with enough income a month.

Some widowed women also admit that the business they are running is a legacy left by their husband that they must continue. For them there is no other choice but to continue the business. There are also those who claim to build new types of businesses with the capital they have, such as businesses selling cakes and selling vegetables at the market.

3) Looking for new job

The earthquake caused infrastructure damage which resulted in many married women losing their jobs. Several widowed women who were met said that previously they worked as Roa Roa hotel workers, shopping center (mall) workers, restaurant and shop workers. However, due to the earthquake, their place of work collapsed, causing them to lose their jobs. So that requires them to look for a new job that suits their passion.

Currently they are working in new places such as shopkeepers, shop cashiers, restaurant/restaurant waiters and selling clothes. For them, getting a new job is a rational choice to survive because day by day the necessities of life are considered to be increasing. Therefore, material needs must be accompanied by the ability to work. Widowed women admit that from the post-disaster period until now, looking for a new job or alternative job is a life choice that must be made, especially since their physical needs as young widowed women are considered primary.

4) Become a Daily Freelancer

Becoming a daily worker is a choice that is considered reasonable by some widowed women today. They are willing to wash clothes, deliver ordered goods, or clean people's homes to make ends meet. This type of widowed woman is those who do not have valuable assets and who are over 40 years old. Apart from that, having dependents (children) is a

responsibility that must be fulfilled, requiring them to do whatever they want as long as they earn money.

There are also widows who are disaster survivors who are willing to become their neighbors' mobile cake sellers. According to him, he did this because he did not have the skills to work elsewhere, such as working as a shopkeeper. Moreover, they have children who always need attention. Apart from that, according to them, working as daily freelance workers does not involve special demands such as appearance, age and certain skills. As long as they have courage (confidence) and are honest, they are able to play their profession.

5) Marriage

Apart from the four strategies for surviving widowed women after a disaster, another strategy they use is getting married or looking for a new life partner. Getting married or looking for a new life partner is considered to be the final rational choice made by widows for the following basic reasons:

- a) There is a backbone that can finance children's education
- b) Someone can take care of the family's basic needs
- c) There are feelings of love and wanting to be loved or because of attraction to men (affective reasons).

Some old women admit that getting married is the last option because there is no other way to survive in the city nowadays other than getting married. The affective reason is that they need support in life, namely love from other people. Because peace is not only obtained from income or earnings (economic), or from kinship and kinship relations (social), but also obtained from personal feelings of affection (affective). Thus marriage is considered the last resort to obtain the desired prosperity.

CONCLUSION

After natural disasters, widowed women feel the socio-economic impact the most. Financial difficulties, difficulty obtaining permanent and decent work, difficulty financing children's education, loss of housing, health problems, limited business capital, debt burdens, and negative reactions from the social environment are factors that can cause widowed women to live in the shadow/threat of poverty.

In order to struggle in the midst of poor post-disaster socio-economic conditions, there are five models of strategies or rational survival actions carried out by widowed women, namely, borrowing business capital, building an entrepreneurial career, looking for a new job, becoming a daily freelance worker, and getting married. Of the five survival strategy models, marriage was the final rational choice made by widowed women after the earthquake disaster in Palu City.

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