



## Socio-Cultural Transformation in Rural Areas on the Lombok Island: Implications of International Migration in the Origin Regions of Indonesian Workers

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v7i11.2266>

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### **Abstract**

The socio-cultural transformation due to international migration in rural areas of the island of Lombok is not widely known because studies of these socio-cultural aspects are still limited. This study aims to reveal and explain the socio-cultural transformation that occurs in the rural areas of the island of Lombok. Data collection was carried out by in-depth interviews, moderate participant observation, life history analysis, and focus group discussions. Data analysis after data collection was carried out by data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. Also, the validity of the data collected was traced with degrees: trustworthiness, transferability, dependence, and degree of certainty. The results showed the socio-cultural transformation in the area of origin, namely: increasing the degree and quality of education of household members, the more proportional the division of labor between women and men, changes in the lifestyle of household members, the more adaptive society is to values and norms that are seen as modern, the development of rural social institutions as a network system for international migration, and the growing social unrest and problems in the areas of origin of the workforce.

**Keywords:** *Transformation; Socio-Cultural; Rural; Indonesian Workforce*

### **Introduction**

Natural poverty and structural poverty experienced by people in a number of villages on the island of Lombok are considered to be the driving factors for the high flow of labor migration abroad from these poor villages. International migration is actually the migration of marginalized people in rural areas. Generally, they have very limited access to economic resources. This limited access is exacerbated by the condition of the area which naturally includes the category of marginal areas (Sugiono et al., 2018). It is also interesting to note that most of the workforce who become migrant workers abroad are marginalized people who come from marginal areas, especially from the rural areas of the island of Lombok (Burhanuddin, 2003). Zopf Jr (1981) states, the large number of migrants from poor areas indicates a strong economic motive for migration and is carried out in order to improve the standard of living of the family.

The rapid flow of international migration from the island of Lombok in the last three decades has had economic, social, and cultural impacts in the area of origin. Several villages that send migrant

workers are currently experiencing a shortage of adult male workers, especially on the island of Lombok (Karyadi, 2018). This diversity of problems is a situation that is not yet clear. With this background problem, this research tries to reveal how the socio-cultural transformation in rural areas of the island of Lombok is due to the development of international migration.

## ***Methods***

The research was designed in the form of qualitative research with a phenomenological model. The research locations were determined in the regions that sent the most workers abroad, namely East Lombok Regency and Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province. The search for informants was carried out using the snowball technique. Data collection follows the principle of "Triangulation" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) which is carried out by interview, in-depth interview, involved observation, human documents (life history) and literature study. The validity of qualitative data was traced by validation by the community through focus group discussions. In addition, the validity of the data follows four criteria (Bafadal, 2003) and Moleong (2004), namely the degree of trust (with peer debriefing and triangulation), degree of transferability, degree of dependence and certainty (Audit Trail). Data analysis was carried out at two moments, namely analysis during or in conjunction with data collection, and analysis after data collection was completed. Overall data analysis uses an interactive model according to Miles and Huberman (1992) and Bafadal (2003).

## ***Results and Discussion***

### ***Improvement of Household Members' Education***

The improvement in the education of migrant family members that occurs after international migration takes place is one of the effects of the economic benefits of migration sent to areas of origin in the form of remittances. With these remittances, migrant families in the area of origin can meet the basic needs of the family, including paying for the education of family members. In addition, with remittances or the fulfillment of basic family needs, family members who are of school age are no longer required to work hard to help their parents to generate income, goods, or services to help meet family needs (Nopitasari et al., 2019). Before a family member became a migrant worker and household income was not sufficient for basic needs, family members who were at school age were involved in certain jobs in order to generate income or at least be involved in their own farming in order to reduce the real cost of a business carried out by parents. With the development of international migration, the exploitation of child labor has started to decrease and this has implications for the development of education for family members. Based on this reality and logical framework, it can be emphasized that international migration from the island of Lombok has a positive effect on the educational development of family members. This is what Bento (1989) explains that for countries of origin, migration has beneficial demographic, social, and economic effects if returns (remittances) are carefully planned, prepared, carried out, and supported.

### ***System of Division of Work and Responsibilities within the Household***

In the Sasak tribe on the island of Lombok, the real responsibility for the economy rests on the part of the men. This means that women have no obligation to meet the needs of their families. On the other hand, as the head of the family, a man has the obligation to meet all household needs whose management is left to the sub-head of the family, namely women. These social values are actually the background of why in the Sasak community, the priority of migration in order to improve family welfare is mostly taken over by men. As reported by Roy et al (2017) that the existence of economic pressure

causes women to give up traditions that restrict them from working to help men in order to strengthen household economic resilience.

The strong influence of Islamic values on the Sasak ethnic community is also evident in the values referred to by the household, such as in terms of the division of labor. The division of labor in the Sasak community is regulated according to Islamic teachings. One example: wives are better off if they stay at home, meaning they don't work to earn money, because earning a living is the duty of men (father). Women are placed in a partnership position. That is, in socio-cultural life, roles and functions are regulated according to natural abilities and foundations. Thus, women are seen only as complementary partners for men in carrying out an activity. Example: men hoe (because it is heavier) and women plant or harvest (lighter).

However, with social changes that have occurred especially after the development of international migration, the values that have been adopted have undergone a transformation. Currently, a housewife can go out to work for a living. Finally, the position and role of women have undergone a gradual development from the domestic sector (household) to the public sector. Mubarrok et al (2018) revealed that women have more freedom of movement when their partners leave and their range of activities shrinks again once their husbands return. Symptoms and facts that indicate changes in the position, role, and socio-cultural function of women often occur in rural migrant worker-sending bases (Negara, 2020). A large number of men, especially those with the status of head of families, have become migrant workers abroad, causing the position of women, which was previously a male partnership (work partner), has now shifted to the main position with broader roles and functions. The responsibility for caring for children, managing the household, managing household assets completely shifts to the housewife (wife). With the existence of housewives who remain at home with the expansion of their roles and functions, it can be said that their position has shifted from being a sub-family head to being a family head. With regard to financial decision-making, there is a tendency to share responsibility equally, but from a gender perspective, those with higher incomes tend to have more responsibility and are very decisive in household economic decision making (Hitczenko, 2016).

In addition, after many family members become migrant workers, the pattern of relationships in the household tends to be egalitarian, democratic, and partnerships. In general, the husband and wife have recently had a balanced reciprocal relationship regarding their rights and obligations in managing the household. They both work to make the household alive. This is different from the condition in the past where the wives mostly stayed at home taking care of children and household routine matters and fully submitting to their husbands. Haris (2002) calls this a struggle in the domestic sector. What is happening today is that most household decision-making is done together in almost all areas of household life. What is even more interesting is the dominant role of family members (whether children, husband, or wife) who are able to generate more family income in determining household decisions. Access to economic resources provides opportunities for power in the household. This shows a shift from the role of seniority (paternalistic) to an economic role, especially for decision making in the family. Ratha et al (2011) revealed a lot of the economic contribution of migrant workers, especially to help the economic interests of families in their hometowns.

### *The Lifestyle of Household Members*

The lifestyle shown by someone as stated by Benson & O'Reilly (2016) is intended to feel their life more meaningful. In other words, life will feel meaningful when they can realize their lifestyle. This lifestyle is reflected in how a person displays himself in his family and social environment, including how food consumption patterns and expenditures for non-food items. The findings of the study indicate that in migrant households there has been an improvement in the pattern of food and non-food consumption. The

better the pattern of household food consumption of these migrants is because the flow of household income is getting better. The income stream comes from remittances sent by families who become migrant workers abroad. In addition, the utilization of productive assets owned by households also generates income that accumulates into household income. Thus, the household income of migrant workers generally comes from the management of productive assets by the family in the village of origin and from remittances sent by migrant workers from abroad. With increased household income and reduced routine expenses, it means that a mother who acts as the head of the family replacing the father's position will be more flexible in managing household income, especially to meet basic needs, especially the need for food.

The results of studies on migrant households also show a shift in lifestyle and orientation of family members. The trend of increasing ownership of prestigious goods in migrant households is related to changes in housing conditions that are getting better. With the development of a lifestyle that tends towards modernization, it means that there has actually been a change in the escalation of the culture of family members and communities in migrant workers sending base villages after the development of international migration. Theoretically, the escalation of a culture that has begun to change is relatively difficult to change back to its original condition even though socio-economic factors have changed (Daroeman, 1976).

A change that is quite striking in the household of migrant workers, in general, is the change in housing construction. Previous studies, such as Burhanuddin (2003), PSP-NTB (2003) show an increasing trend of housing development in migrant worker families in their home areas. In the view of most people in the village of origin, the condition of the migrant workers' family homes seems to be the main indicator of the success of migrant workers who work abroad. If a family has family members working abroad, but within about two years since working abroad they have not been able to change or repair their house, then the migrant worker is considered a failure by the surrounding community.

The house building for the migrant workers' family is a physical symbol to represent their social prestige. Xiao et al (2018) suggest that psychologically housing conditions directly affect mental health and enjoyment of life, especially for local residents. For the families of migrant workers on the island of Lombok, building a house is recognized as a psychological satisfaction and expression of social status. Therefore, by building a fairly representative house it is as if announcing to the community that the migrant workers' family has no problems with food needs, no longer has debts and the like. Even if there are among the informants who think that a house is an investment for a family that can be sold at any time, it is not very true, because, from the results of observations and in-depth information tracing, it is not found that the families of migrant workers who sell houses that have been built from remittances sent from abroad.

### *Development of Social Values and Norms in the Region of Origin*

In general, the research findings show that people in rural areas of origin of migrant workers are still bound by norms in certain fields, but some parts of the existing norms have experienced changes and leniency in their implementation. The dominant aspects that are considered as the cause of the normative changes and leniency are the openness of the region to the outside environment and the development of development in all fields. Tuccio et al (2019) with experience in Morocco confirms that there are many negative impacts of the current presence of migrants on the willingness of abandoned households to change, especially changes in basic norms in society. These findings support the idea that social norms are firmly rooted in the old culture, but are subject to adaptation when there are major changes in the surrounding environment (Helliwell et al., 2016).

The current development is the increase in area accessibility. This has resulted in increased population mobility, especially abroad, so that rural communities remain contaminated with foreign cultural values. Opportunities to improve education are increasingly open because of the increasing economic status of households, educational infrastructure is more available and transportation is getting smoother. The development of business and employment opportunities abroad has led to an increase in family income. The increase in income causes changes in lifestyle, such as changes in consumption patterns, housing, education, clothing, health, and social participation patterns. All these behaviors are based on the analysis (rationality) of society that has changed significantly. Social actions and general everyday behavior are no longer based on intuitive motion, but based on rational thinking and economic calculations.

Based on the results of the study as described above, it can be emphasized that the components of the community in the area of origin that change as a result of international migration are based on the overall value of economic behavior. Business patterns and activities are determined based on an analysis of business opportunities and market opportunities. The buying and selling system applies the modern system, namely formal (financial) transactions. The change in the value of society in the economic aspect is due to the increase in public knowledge about economic activities and developments in general. This increase in knowledge is caused by the increasing intensity of interaction between local communities and former migrant workers who return to bring new values and economic resources (remittances). Apart from the factor of knowledge, the factor of the availability of goods and services that can form a formal market in rural areas of the sending base of migrant workers also accelerates changes in the level of values held by local communities, including work regulations and the determination of business management systems. This type of change is what Garcia (1985) and Portes A (2008) call the appearance of change from the use of economic principles by society.

The social changes of the Sasak people in the area of origin can also be seen from the changing components in the habitual aspect of using production factors, especially changes in the orientation and view of society towards labor. Changes in the wage system, from a family system without wages to wage and piece labor, illustrate that there has been a fundamental change in the value of life and work ethic of rural communities on the sending base of migrant workers.

Furthermore, from what appears during the observation, it can be confirmed that the manner in which the value changes occurs rapidly and simultaneously with changes in the components of the production equipment. The opening factors for the initiation of change are the departure and arrival of migrant workers to and from abroad, the improvement of transportation networks to and from the rural areas of the migrant worker base. All research villages currently have direct access to the regency and city. In addition, changes are supported by agricultural intensification programs in the advanced peasant community (rice farmers) and are simultaneously accepted and adopted by other farmers, including cultivators and other primary sector workers.

International migration of migrant workers also influences values relating to community participation. Mutual cooperation-based participation, which used to be quite developed, has now decreased. The aspects of productive work become more important than those of social relations, and the patterns of social and kinship relations change to an economic and materialistic approach. Some of these indications indicate the tendency of changing society from kinship values to individual values and of course this is a reflection of more modern life. Sanderson (2003) explains that this change in people's behavior is a form of differentiation that results in a higher adaptive capacity of society. With this internal diversity, people will be increasingly able to adapt to their environment.

The aspect of the social system of society that usually changes with the development of international migration is the people's belief system. Intensive interactions with other communities and

the increasing number of villagers who have become migrant workers and have returned to their home villages have made people's thinking patterns and behavior more rational. Changes in the cultural and structural conditions of society allow them to make more rational and efficient decisions. The public belief system, as a characteristic of the social system, has not shown significant changes with the number of people who migrate internationally. Belief systems, such as belief in God through worship and other ritual ceremonies, are still developing as they were implemented in the past.

In fact, belief patterns are much influenced by the ability to think and experience. This means that the more open and widespread a person's thinking power and supported by adequate experience, the less his level of belief in supernatural things (including natural phenomena). This change in belief patterns shows a transformation of community orientation related to their social life. From the perspective of progress, this transformation can be seen as a good thing, but from the perspective of social strengthening, it illustrates the diminishing local institutions. In various reviews, local institutions are used as a means by the community to maintain harmony in life, especially ensuring harmony with the surrounding environment. Paloma (2003) suggests the role of social institutions or institutions as an integrative factor in realizing the sustainability of a social system.

### *Development of Social Institutions in the Area of Origin*

One of the aspects of socio-cultural institutions that have changed after the development of international migration is the institution of mutual cooperation and assistance. The weakening of mutual cooperation ties in the villages was exacerbated by the increasing flow of migration of the rural population abroad. This has led to a reduction in the adult male population in rural areas which has implications for the fragility of Mutual cooperation social institutions. The aid system as a social institution that previously developed in rural areas has experienced a decline in its role and function.

Rural socio-economic institutions that are developing rapidly in line with the growing development of international migration of rural communities on the island of Lombok are the lease, pawn, and bonded bond systems. These three rural socio-economic institutions play a very important role in helping members of the community who are prospective migrant workers to obtain the funds needed to finance their departure abroad. As stated in the initial section of the research results, rural communities on the island of Lombok who are interested in becoming migrant workers mostly come from poor household groups. Most of these migrant workers initially do not have enough money to finance the departure and stages of the international migration process to the country of destination.

Therefore, the alternative to obtain funds is to transfer control of assets owned to other people by leasing or pawning a certain value. Meanwhile, for residents who do not have sufficient assets or assets or do not want to be transferred, the steps taken are mostly borrowing with the bonded bond system to moneylenders (loan sharks) around the village of origin. Sinaga (1982) states that the transfer of control over agricultural land through various transaction systems is mostly carried out by farmers who have relatively small arable areas. This step was taken to be able to meet other necessities of life, while many owners of this narrow land shifted their jobs to become agricultural laborers or urbanize to big cities.

As the expression in the previous discussion, that the community's habit of borrowing or taking debt to meet their daily needs is initially motivated by a sense of kinship and a feeling of co-existence. However, in line with social changes that have attracted people to an individual and commercial orientation, such lending and borrowing transactions have become an economic institution that further weakens the position of borrowers (the poor). The flow of remittances from abroad to the areas of origin of migrant workers actually opens up the courage of the community, in this case, the families of the prospective migrant workers to carry out these lending and borrowing transactions, even with guarantees

of family members who are prospective migrant workers. This is a new trend in the rural economic system, where labor is not only seen as a production factor but also seen as a commodity that is valued at a certain price.

The bonded bond system, which is also an institution that is still developing in rural areas on the island of Lombok, seems difficult for rural communities to avoid in developing their economic system. *Angkat ijon* (taking a loan by means of an *ijon*) is a term that is very popular among rural communities where migrant workers come from. Conventionally, the practice of bondage refers to the act of taking a loan from someone with collateral for a crop growing on agricultural land, and the loan is repaid after harvest. So, the existing plants are used as collateral so that if the owner of the money thinks the rice fields are growing well enough, the money owner can easily give money at very high-interest rates. However, with the development of international migration, the practice of bonded labor as research findings does not only refer to the guarantee of agricultural or crop assets, but the recent trend is the development of human bonds known as *Ijon Indonesian workers (TKI)*. The bonding practice with guarantees of migrant workers who work abroad further strengthens the assessment that these migrant workers are not seen as a production factor that can produce goods and services of a certain value, but that they have been positioned as a commodity that has a certain value, and this value is more much is determined by the level of the migrant workers' family needs for certain money or goods and services. Pandriono et al (1999) assess this kind of phenomenon as a form of exploitation of human resources because it places too much importance on economic development and ignores the aspects of humanism.

Apart from the bonded bond system, the development of international labor migration has quite broad implications for the development of the brokering system. From the research conducted, there are several types of brokering that have recently developed in rural areas along with the development of international migration, namely: (1) Brokerage of labor, which involves the recruitment and sending of illegal workers abroad. People who act as intermediaries in this system are known as *Tekong* (Indonesia) or *Taikong* (Malaysia). (2) Brokerage in terms of transfer of control over assets, especially land, in various forms such as sale and purchase, lease, and pledge. People who act as intermediaries or liaisons between rights givers and rights recipients in this transaction system are called *Mekelar Tanah* (land brokers or middlemen). (3) Accounts-related to accounts payable activities, especially in the bonded bond system. People who act as intermediaries between borrowers and lenders are still called *Brokers*.

A brokerage system for sending migrant workers abroad is developing in the rural areas of the island of Lombok. This is driven by the high level of public interest in taking illegal (undocumented) routes to become migrant workers abroad. Manpower brokers in the local term are called *Tekong*, and from an economic perspective called *Broker*. It is called a broker because besides functioning as an intermediary between prospective workers and labor users, *Tekong* also more often acts as a "trader" who offers labor services. Based on *Tekong's* narrative and field findings, *Tekong's* role generally involves four things, namely: (1) playing a role in recruiting prospective migrant workers, (2) supporting initial funding for prospective migrant workers who do not have money by providing loans, (3) role as seekers of information on job opportunities and "job orders" required by prospective migrant workers (4) *Tekong's* role as a "broker" that offers labor services to service users (*Tauke*).

The existence of *Tekong* (*Broker*) as a recruiter and sender of migrant workers has another implication, namely the position of prospective workers as goods or commodities that are traded. It can be said that the practice of brokering involving *Tekong* and *Toke* (*Tauke*) is a practice of trafficking workers. Because every prospective illegal migrant worker brought by *Tekong* can be handed over to the larger *Tekong*, of course with quite a large amount of compensation. At the time of being handed over to *Toke* (*Tauke*) by *Tekong*, prospective migrant workers were again sold by *Tekong Besar*. Thus, the practice of brokering that has developed around international migration activities appears to be a form of trafficking (human trafficking) that is hidden and seems legitimized by the existing social system.

### *Social Problems and Unrest in the Region of Origin*

Social problems and unrest that are felt and assessed as the excesses of the development of migration include theft and juvenile delinquency. The trend of increasing theft based on extracting opinions from key informants is due to several things, namely (1) The large number of adult men leaving their hometown to migrate abroad, so that practically most villages are inhabited by women (2) Availability of infrastructure or access roads that allow theft to move more freely, (3) Many former migrant workers who after returning to their home villages are unable to enter or create jobs, so they become unemployed. The latter reason is thought to be a potential social vulnerability, due to the habit of young migrant workers who live consumptively when they have a salary abroad and after returning to their home village it cannot be done anymore. When they run out of money or capital, there is a possibility that they will do things that are against the prevailing legal or social norms.

Apart from social vulnerability in the form of theft, there is another form of social vulnerability that appears, namely juvenile delinquency. The form of juvenile delinquency which is considered to be social vulnerability is the freedom of adolescents to consume liquor, gambling, fights, and other actions that cause public unrest. These actions can occur because of the factors that are formed overseas when they become migrant workers. Former young migrant workers are more free to build relationships and social relationships among adolescents, so that rural adolescents who respond to outside influences will be contaminated by habits carried by colleagues who were once migrant workers.

Social unrest and unrest in rural areas can also arise due to gender bias that occurs due to the large number of family heads who migrate abroad. A large number of family heads (husbands) became migrant workers, causing the village of origin to be inhabited by women. In terms of daily social ethics, the departure of a husband from his wife has its own implications, namely hidden unrest which is also a potential conflict in society. Gender bias has implications for social conflict due to harassment of women whose husbands have migrated abroad.

Another view related to gender bias is the view of society towards female migrant workers. Many members of the community view them with a moral lens and conclude that these women migrant workers, especially girls, become corrupted after working abroad. The negative stigma attached to former female migrant workers actually arises because of the imbalance of content in existing social norms, where the position of women is positioned as if it is subordinated to men. As a result, the glasses of social norms are more observant in seeing and assessing the behavior of women than men. There is an impression as if men violating religious and social norms is something that is normal and can be tolerated, but if it is women who do it, then the problem is considered to be extraordinary.

Related to gender bias, the increasing flow of migration also causes a lot of divorce in the households of migrant workers in their hometowns. One form of domestic conflict is the separation of family relations (husband - wife) and many of them end in divorce. It seems that this kind of household conflict arises because of a gender bias that is too obvious, because as expressed by Katjasoengkana (2004) there is an injustice of values in the social system of society, where when women violate norms they are almost unable to get social tolerance, but vice versa if the men violate moral norms, as if social norms can provide tolerance so that at any time there will be social legitimacy.

### **Conclusion**

International migration has led to social transformation at the household level in the areas of origin of migrant workers. The indications are: there is an increase in the degree and quality of education of household members, the better and more proportional the system of division of labor and responsibilities of family members, there is a transformation of the role of housewives from a domestic

role to a public role. International migration also has a direct effect on the lifestyle of family members, as indicated by improvements in consumption patterns of food, clothing and housing. Changes in lifestyle are also indicated by changes in the structure, proportion and value of household expenditures, where the proportion of expenditure for non-food needs is greater than the need for food consumption. At the community level in the area of origin, cultural aspects develop. The indications are: the people in the areas of origin of migrant workers become more adaptive to change and modernization, but the roots of cultural norms and values are still tied to local cultural roots. In addition, rural economic institutions related to the international migration network system have developed. Apart from positive aspects, international migration also has negative impacts, including the development of social problems, such as divorce, domestic conflicts, crime and the emergence of other types of social diseases.

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