Poverty and the Excessive Role of Batik Craftswomen in Indonesia

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Poor women in Indonesia are vulnerable to various economic problems. This research was conducted to reveal and analyze how batik craftswomen in Indonesia who live in poverty must have a dual role in supporting their families. This research was conducted using a qualitative method with an explanatory design model. The data was collected through in-depth interviews with various informants and direct observation of batik activities carried out by women in several regions in Indonesia. Document collection is also carried out on other relevant data sources and references. The results show that batik craftswomen in Indonesia who are in poor conditions have tried to improve their quality of life through excessive roles. Apart from being housewives, these women also earn a living by working in more than one field, such as farming and batik. However, the income from these multiple jobs does not make them free from poverty because the income from batik is low and not feasible. This insufficient income is used to fulfill their own needs and the needs of their husbands and children. Even though they have multiple jobs, batik craftswomen are still in poor economic conditions.

Keywords: Poor family; batik; excessive role; poverty; women.

1. Introduction

There are about one billion and more people in this world who are still in poor condition (Fosu 2017). If we add near-poor categories, this number will be much higher. If the measure of poor people is those whose income is below 2 USD per day, then the number of poor people will increase (Mahembe and Odhiambo 2018). Moreover, if it is associated with health problems and others, the number of poor people in the world will increase (World Bank 2010). Debates about the number of poor people and differences of opinion and interpretations about it always occur (Vidyasagar 2006), although there are also those who say that there has been a decline in the number of poor people in the world in the last two decades (Christiaensen and Kanbur 2018), however the decline in the number is not significant (Neil and Umar 2016).

The composition of the poor population worldwide based on data from 1990-2015 is mostly in rural areas (Chauvin et al. 2017). If they do not become farm laborers, they are just unemployed, do not work, and have no income (Aggarwal 2018). The number of poor people in the world is dominated by young people and are in their productive age (Mahembe and Odhiambo 2018). This poverty can be seen from their income which does not reach USD 2 per
day. This poverty also includes the level of education, home ownership, availability of electricity, health insurance, and inadequate basic infrastructure.(Christiaensen and Kanbur 2018). Health problems are also related to poverty levels and community welfare in rural areas. However, some of the poor are also found in urban areas that are not accompanied by adequate health facilities.(Birch, Rishbeth, and Payne 2020).

Of these, women dominated the number of poor people. Women especially in rural areas are vulnerable to various problems of poverty.(Robles Aguilar and Sumner 2020), including health problems.(Sinclair et al. 2019), and childbirth.(Štulhofer, Kuljanić, and Buzina 2011). Women also faced more problems in their social and work lives.(Heslop et al. 2001). In this worrying condition, there has been a phenomenon of women playing multiple roles at the same time.(Guiga and Rejeb 2012). As housewives, they not only take care of the household, but also work to support themselves and their families because their husband’s income is insufficient.(Aggarwal 2018).

Indonesia is often categorized as a developing country. Data on the poor in Indonesia also experienced a fluctuating decline.(Booth 1993). Even so, the number of poor people in Indonesia is still relatively high. In 2015 there were still more than 28 million poor people in Indonesia or equivalent to more than 11% of the total population.(Dewi et al. 2018). This bad condition caused more than 30% of children under five in that year to experience stunting.(Rizal and van Doorslaer 2019). The poorest region in Indonesia is Papua. Papua has a poverty percentage of 26.55%. This number is certainly above the average number of poor people in other areas. Besides Papua, Madura is also the poorest area in East Java, with a poverty rate of 20.16%.

In Indonesia, women are a vulnerable group with conditions of poverty. According to data released up to 2014 by the National Development Planning Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (Bappenas RI), poor households headed by women experienced an increase of 1.09%. Meanwhile, according to PEKKA and SMERU, in the same year the number of female household heads reached 25.1%. Interestingly, 49% of them are the poorest group in Indonesia. Women become heads of families not only because their husbands die, divorce, migration, polygamy, illness, old age, or disability. Some single women also have and support children and other family members, and 68% of women who are heads of households only have elementary school education and below.(Witro 2019). In this unfavorable condition, various efforts were continuously made by these women to remain the economic support of the family.(Wibawa and Wihartanti 2018).

This study aims to reveal the excessive role of women in Indonesia as housewives, as well as being responsible for the needs of themselves and their families. Not only working in one public sector, these women even work in more than one public sector. One of the jobs in the public sector is to become a batik craftsman. How batik craftswomen in Indonesia carry out this dual role and why it can happen will all be analyzed and explained in this study using survival theory.

This research was conducted using an explanatory qualitative method and was carried out during 2019-2020. Data collection was carried out by direct observation of batik-making centers in various regions in Indonesia. Data collection was also carried out by in-depth interviews with several informants consisting of batik craftswomen. Informants are determined in advance before being interviewed. Determination of informants obtained during field observations. Data was also collected from various online reference documents about the dual role of batik craftswomen from various regions in Indonesia. The data presented and described was then analyzed using role theory, which includes multiple roles and excess roles. The analysis also includes why dual roles and excessive roles occur in batik craftswomen.

There are many batik centers in Indonesia, but the objects in this research are only five areas: Sumenep (East Java), Pekalongan (Central Java), Papua (Irian Jaya), Medan (North
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Sumatra), and Palangkaraya (Central Kalimantan). The five areas were chosen to be studied because in these areas the batik craftswomen are in a disadvantaged economic condition. From the research conducted, the income of women who become batik craftswomen is only under 2 USD per day. On average, their income is only IDR 400,000 per month.

Table 1.
Number and Percentages of Poor Population P1, P2, and District or City Poverty Line in 2019 (Source: District/ city poverty data and information, 2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regency/ City</th>
<th>Poor/ Soul</th>
<th>Percentage of Poor Population</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>Poverty Line (IDR/Regency/Month)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sumenep Regency</td>
<td>211,98</td>
<td>19,48</td>
<td>3,03</td>
<td>0,79</td>
<td>357,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayapura Regency</td>
<td>34,42</td>
<td>11,49</td>
<td>2,27</td>
<td>0,76</td>
<td>992,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medan City</td>
<td>183,79</td>
<td>8,08</td>
<td>1,16</td>
<td>0,25</td>
<td>532,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pekalongan Regency</td>
<td>20,21</td>
<td>6,60</td>
<td>0,92</td>
<td>0,18</td>
<td>425,026</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Findings and Discussion

Indonesia has a well-known national cultural heritage, namely batik. Since October 2009, Indonesian batik has been designated by the United Nations of Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a human heritage for oral and non-material culture. UNESCO's recognition of Indonesian batik includes techniques, technology, and motifs (Ismail et al. 2012). As a batik-producing country, Indonesian batik is found throughout the archipelago, such as Sumatra, Java, Madura, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Irian Jaya. Almost every region in Indonesia has a distinctive batik motif which is produced directly by local residents. The uniqueness of this batik can be found in every region in Indonesia. Patterns and motives are also adjusted to the policies and potential of each region. Batik has also become part of the lifestyle and economic support for the Indonesian people.

So far, batik work is mostly done by women in Indonesia with certain risks when doing it. One of the areas for batik crafts done by women is in Pakandangan Village, Sumenep Regency, Madura, East Java. In this region, the craft of batik has become a hereditary occupation inherited from their ancestors. In the past, a fisherman's wife made batik while waiting for her husband to come home from fishing. Because they are used to the sea view while their husbands leave sailing, the batik motifs they usually make are sea waves or called tasa’malaja. As mentioned above, the batik skills of the women in this area are obtained directly from their mothers and families. Of the 3,000 inhabitants of this village, half are women, and of the total women, almost 90% have batik skills. The batik craftswomen in this area work closely with batik entrepreneurs, and some of them do batik work at home.

Batik work is usually done at home with a wholesale work system with payments given according to the number of batiks that have been completed. The batik craftswomen who work in batik entrepreneurs get a fixed salary every month, but most of the batik craftswomen in this area make batik wholesale and do it at home. This method is considered more flexible for both parties, both for batik business owners and batik craftswomen. Batik entrepreneurs do not lose by paying workers if the order is empty. In addition, batik craftswomen do not have to work in batik shops. They can make batik at home while doing other jobs such as taking care of children, farming, and doing other activities that help their husbands. Hana, one of the woman batik makers, stated:

“We used to work from 7 am to 4 pm. We get 20 thousand per day. But if the work is brought home, the cost is included in the piece, paid per sheet. If I calculate it, the pay is
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cheaper if i take it home, but I have more freedom to do other work at home.” (Interview with Hana, batik in the Pakandangan Village, Madura, East Java, on February 25, 2019).

Figure 1.
Women making batik in Pakandangan Village, Sumenep, East Java
(Source: Personal documentation, February 2019).

For the women who is a batik craftsman in Sumenep, batik is a second job besides farming. They only make batik when agricultural activities, both farming and harvesting, have been completed. If agricultural activities are still ongoing, they do not make batik and focus on farming activities. Batik craftswomen in this area have long been carrying out this dual role. This also directly affects their ability and expertise in batik which tends to stagnate and do not develop. They can only make batik with previously mastered motifs. For innovation on the development of motifs and others are not optimal. This, among other things, causes the selling price of batik produced to be still relatively low. Some batiks in this area only cost Rp. 100,000. Although there are also batiks that are more expensive, they are only limited in number.

The batik craftswomen in this area increase their income by farming and filling their time while waiting for the rice and corn harvest, or waiting for the planting period after harvest. For those who grow tobacco, during the waiting period, they still have activities that generate money. They do not sell all the agricultural commodities they harvest, but also for daily consumption. Sometimes the sale of produce in one season cannot meet the needs of life, so they need additional income, one of which is by utilizing their batik skills.

Among those who cannot fulfill their daily needs, Marwiyah, a woman batik craftmen from Pakandangan Village, Madura, East Java, said:

“For a half-day charge, it can be Rp. 10,000, depending on whether the worker is diligent or not, and the payment is made once a week. The division of labor is coordinated by batik entrepreneurs. The fabric that has been cut is handed over to the batik maker on request with a wholesale system, then the batik craftsman hands it back to the batik entrepreneur after the batik is finished.” (Interview with batik maker Marwiyah, 10 December 2019).

Batik crafts are also found in Pekalongan Regency, Central Java, which is an area that is included in the center of batik in Indonesia. In Pekalongan, batik has been known since the 17th century, to be precise since the days of the Islamic Mataram kingdom. Until now, in the Pekalongan area in general there are batik village centers. Since the Dutch era, Pekalongan batik has been synonymous with women, especially the batik used by the wives of officials at that time. The glory of batik in Pekalongan began to fade since the Indonesian economic crisis in 1998. Since then, the number of batik craftswomen has decreased even though the batik industry in Pekalongan continues and still exists today. The majority of batik maker are women. From the data found by researchers, the number of batik craftswomen remains dominant compared to men. This data was found both for batik makers who work formally in the batik
industry as well as on batik makers who work informally in residential areas that are batik centers in Pekalongan, Central Java (Karima 2010).

As is the case in Madura, East Java, batik craftswomen in Pekalongan also have links to the agricultural and food crop sectors. Therefore, the batik motifs that are made depend on the growing season and harvest season. Batik craftswomen produce batik after the planting season and while waiting for the harvest season. Until now, batik craftswomen in Pekalongan still carry out batik activities besides farming and doing household chores (Pertiwi 2015). It was conveyed by Sinta, one of the batik craftswomen and entrepreneurs in Pekalongan, that:

“In the past, batik makers filled their time waiting for the harvest by doing batik, but this habit has begun to diminish. Many have started to focus on batik activities, but there are also those who persist in making batik as an additional activity.” (Interview with Sinta at her house, August 25, 2019).

What Sinta said is also in line with Hilda. According to him, batik activities in Pekalongan are identical to women because making batik does require patience and perseverance. Making batik requires extra attention, detail, and care in the process.

“The number of batik in Pekalongan is now decreasing, therefore, making batik requires patience and perseverance, so it is true that a lot of batik here is made by women.” (Interview with Hilda at her home, August 25, 2019).

Another area in Indonesia that has batik potential is Papua. Papuan batik is different from batik in other parts of Indonesia. Papuan batik is characterized by animal motifs such as birds of paradise and plants with striking colors. Papuan batik motifs are expressions of past stories, depictions of natural resources, and their culture. As in other parts of Indonesia, the batik craftswomen in Papua consist of adult women and teenagers. Although not as many as in Java, there are also quite a lot of batik craftswomen in Papua. One of them is Ibo. Ibo is a woman who has been in the batik world for a long time. According to him, the activity of making batik is not only part of an effort to earn a living, but also part of an event to channel his artistic passion.

“Making batik has two benefits, it can be economically useful and it can also express our art and culture.” (Interview with Ibo at the Sentani batik studio, Jayapura Regency, Papua, 5 June 2019).

Many Papuan batik craftswomen live in the Sentani area. Apart from making batik, they also work as fishermen and fishing families around Lake Sentani. Like Aufa who is a new generation of batik craftswomen in Papua. She pursues batik work because batik can be used as an alternative livelihood for women who live far from the city. According to him, the income from batik is quite good. For one meter of cloth that has become batik is valued at Rp. 100,000. As for one piece of batik that has become a shirt, the price can reach Rp. 500,000.

“If all the batik that I make sells, my income is good, it can be used for children’s school fees and to help my husband buy daily necessities.” (Interview with Aufa, at the Sentani Batik Gallery, Jayapura Regency, Papua, 5 June 2019).

Palangkaraya Regency, Central Kalimantan Province, is also one of the batik-producing areas in Indonesia. Palangkaraya batik is also unique when compared to batik in other regions in Indonesia. Palangkaraya batik is commonly known as “spotted thread.” The thread spots on Palangkaraya batik reflect the unique culture of Kalimantan, with the unique motifs of saber weapons, "house betang", shields, and the trunk of a crisp tree which is also known as the tree of life. Batik in Palangkaraya is also mostly occupied by women. One of them is Paramita. Paramita started pioneering Palangkaraya batik since 2008. He started to pursue batik with a capital of Rp. 1,500,000 and assistance from friends in the form of batik equipment. Paramita employs many female employees to make batik. The batik craftswomen who work for Paramita also receive an average income of IDR 400,000 to IDR 1,000,000 per month.
One of the problems of batik in Palangkaraya is the lack of market interest in batik, so that batik marketing does not develop. Regarding this, Endang, one of the women batik makers also said:

“In the center of batik in Central Kalimantan, the demand is wide but the marketing is lacking. As a result, production costs and other costs become obstacles. After gaining knowledge and knowledge, we were at a loss on how to build our business further due to lack of assistance.” (Interview with Endang, at the Office of Cooperatives and SMES Palangkaraya, October 1, 2019).

The Medan area of North Sumatra is also a well-known batik center, mainly because of its batik characteristics that are different from batik from other regions in Indonesia. While other batiks are dominated by animal and plant motifs, Medan batik has a unique motif, that is the Ulos motif. The Batak tribe influences the Ulos batik motifs in the North Sumatra region with images of ducks returning in the afternoon, accompaniment ants, sundung power in the sky, mataniari, pani patunda, and gorga. As in other areas, batik work in North Sumatra is also carried out by women. Batik work in Medan is done individually with a payroll system every two weeks.

“The wages we get from batik are not enough to meet the needs of family life. Just enough to meet personal needs, nothing more.” (Interview with Nurita Napitupulu, batik on Jalan AR Hakim, Medan City, North Sumatra, Sunday, June 7, 2020).

Yani, a young woman who is also involved in hand-drawn batik, admitted that making batik is an effort to earn additional income for her family's needs.

"By making batik, there is additional income to increase expenses, although it is not much but it is quite helpful." (Interview with Yani, at his workplace in Medan City, North Sumatra, 7 June 2020). Amel also said the same thing. The mother of one admitted that she chose to become a batik maker because her husband’s income as a freelancer was not enough to meet their daily needs.

“I also have to work, and this is what I can do, and besides, this is a job that suits a woman like me.” (Interview with Amel, at her workplace in Medan, North Sumatra, 8 June 2020).

Figure 2.
Batik and weaving activities in the city of Medan, North Sumatra.
(Source: Researcher's personal documentation, June 2020).

The charm and fame of batik which is well known to foreign countries and the many world figures who are proud to wear it are not comparable to the fate of the women who make it who are economically disadvantaged. For them, making batik is part of their way of surviving the burden and responsibility to meet the needs of themselves and their families. Hana, one of the batik craftswomen in Sumenep, East Java, stated that the result was only Rp. 25,000 per day.
or equivalent to Rp. 750,000 per month. However, even though they only get a small salary, they still do it because they do not have other jobs that can be used as alternatives while waiting for the corn or tobacco harvest season. Hana is a portrait of a woman who is a batik craftsman who is a housewife, who cannot get out of poverty. General conditions in several regions in Indonesia can be seen in the table below. General conditions in several regions in Indonesia can be seen in the table below.

Table 2. Percentage of Poor Household Who Receive Welfare Rice According to Regency or City in 2019.
(Source: Regency or city poverty data and information, 2019).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regency/ City</th>
<th>Percentage of Poor Households who Receive (%)</th>
<th>Average Rice Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rastra (kg)</td>
<td>BPNT (kg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumenep Regency</td>
<td>62,04</td>
<td>9,29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pekalongan Regency</td>
<td>36,36</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medan City</td>
<td>20,57</td>
<td>12,05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayapura Regency</td>
<td>2,91</td>
<td>22,81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palangkaraya City</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the data above, the highest percentage of poor households receiving BPNT in Sumenep Regency compared to other areas is 62.04%. This is directly proportional to the number of poor people in the Sumenep district. Women's income from batik activities with an average of IDR 400,000 per month is 40.81%. While the income of Rp 800,000 is 22.44%. As for the income of Rp. 1,200,000, - is 20.41%. The rest earn IDR 2,000,000. The division is explained in the following diagram. If measured using the poverty indicator according to the United Nations, the poor are those who live below USD 2 per day or the equivalent of Rp. 900,000 per month. Thus, batik craftswomen in Indonesia can be categorized as poor people even though they have performed multiple and excessive roles, such as working as housewives, farmers, and batik craftswomen. That is, the excess role they do can't rule out their bad condition. Furthermore, if measured by the district or city minimum wage in 2020, the income of batik craftswomen will be further away from a decent income.
The determination of the district or city minimum wages in Indonesia is carried out based on decent living needs set by the government, in this case the Ministry of Manpower, representatives of employers, and representatives of workers. Of the highest income of Rp. 1,200,000, batik craftswomen have not received wages equivalent to the minimum wage of the lowest district or city in Indonesia, Sumenep Regency, which is Rp. 1,954,705.

If the fulfillment of living needs is also measured, then it needs to be regulated in Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, Article 88 paragraph 4, concerning the standard of living needs, and Government Regulation Number 78 of 2015 concerning wages. The components of decent living include: food, drink, clothing, housing, education, health, transportation, recreation, and savings. This means that even though batik craftswomen have played an excessive role, they still cannot get out of the cycle of poverty. This happens because the batik craftswomen not only work to meet their own needs, but also bear the living expenses of their husbands and children. As experienced by batik craftswomen in Sumenep (East Java), this is also experienced by batik craftswomen in Sentani (Papua) and Palangkaraya (Central Kalimantan).

The phenomenon of batik craftswomen trying to find alternative income to meet their daily needs could be analyzed using the survival mechanism of James C. Scoot who introduced the theory of survival mechanisms(Scoot 2016). According to Scoot, there are two ways for the poor to survive:

1. Choosing a subsystem independently with limited skills, such as being a freelancer and selling small businesses. Referring to Paul Valent, survival strategies also include making specific responses to existing conditions by making adjustments related to individual aspects, such as social, psychological, and biological aspects. Referring to Valent, to survive in unfavorable conditions, batik craftswomen make adjustments socially and biologically;

2. Work socially by looking for alternatives to what has been done so far. Biologically, batik craftswomen do other jobs that are usually done by women. Tony Beck said that survival strategies are usually carried out by people who are economically unable to maintain household life. Usually all they can do is do informal work(Ramadhani 2016). Batik craftswomen are included in the poor category when viewed from their income which is not sufficient to meet the needs of life. In addition, they also do not have the economic capacity to be used as business capital, so all they can do is become laborers. Their ability to make batik is also what it is. This causes the batik wages for them are also not large. Working as batik artisans has lower wages than formal jobs such as working in factories or other industrial companies which are paid according to the district minimum wage standards.

Working as batik craftswomen with an income of IDR 400,000 per month is part of the strategy of batik craftswomen in several regions in Indonesia to survive. Although this income cannot meet all the necessities of a decent life, which from time to time continues to increase,
it can be an alternative income in the midst of difficulty in getting a job. The results from making batik can at least be used to meet the main needs of buying rice and side dishes. It was enough to keep them alive. Meanwhile, to meet other needs such as health and education, they have to wait for help from the government. What happened to batik craftswomen in Madura and several places in Java only provided enough income to buy basic needs.

Batik craftswomen in various regions in Indonesia have worked to survive by playing multiple roles and even exaggerating. The dual role in question is in addition to making batik, she is also a housewife who relies on her husband's income. Such roles are generally experienced by batik artisans in Java and Madura. Some experts interpret this "role" as an individual who performs his function as expected by others. Most of the batik craftswomen are expected to be housewives and take care of their children. While earning a living is the husband's obligation and responsibility (Han, Kim, and Timmermans 2019).

Based on role theory, that is, if a person carries out the rights and obligations according to his position, then he has carried out a role (Hemphill 2008). Based on this understanding, the role can be interpreted as a person's behavior that includes the norms stated by society. Roles are also related to individuals who are expected to carry out their obligations and responsibilities related to the duties and work they carry out. Role is defined as a set of expectations imposed on individuals who occupy certain social positions. Norms in society determine a person's role. This means that they are required to do the things society expects them to do at home, at work, and elsewhere. A role is a pattern of behavior expected of a person holding a certain status or position. Community expectations of role holders seem to be an obligation for role holders. The role can be seen as part of the community structure so that the community structure can be seen as a pattern of interrelated roles between the role holders and their environment.

Batik craftswomen have a dual role. One role is required to be a housewife, but the other role has the responsibility to meet the needs of life. In conditions of poverty and limitations, they must improve the welfare of themselves and their family members (Halim 2017). This is the dual role they perform at one time. All roles go hand in hand, between being a housewife, raising children, working as a batik craftsman, and other works (Ismail et al. 2012).

The phenomenon that appears in the activities of batik craftswomen in various regions in Indonesia explains that there are multiple roles in their lives. On the one hand, they are housewives, but at the same time, they are warriors who support themselves and their families (husband and children). They not only have a dual role, but they are also even redundant. However, this excessive role causes their lives to be psychologically burdened. This is commonly experienced by batik craftswomen in Madura (East Java), Pekalongan (Central Java), Palangkaraya (Central Kalimantan), and Sentani, Jayapura (Papua).

4. Conclusion

In disadvantaged economic conditions, many women have to play an exaggerated role. In the private sector, women must be housewives, and in the public sector, women must work to meet household needs. However, because the dual roles they carry do not get them out of the cycle of poverty, these women have to return to work in the informal sector, such as being batik craftswomen. But the income from batik has not been able to get them out of the cycle of poverty. Calculated by the amount of the district or city minimum wage in Indonesia, the income of batik craftswomen is still far from sufficient.

So, these batik craftswomen are in a life that is far from standard. In the midst of inadequate income and poor conditions like this, they are still required to provide for themselves, their children, and even their husbands. This makes them not only perform multiple roles, even more. However, this excessive role is still not able to get them out of poverty.
Therefore, it is necessary to formulate a policy that places women so that they can carry out their roles as housewives, but are free and independent to work in the public sector, and can enjoy the results of their work to meet their needs independently without the burden of meeting the needs of their husbands. That way, women will be able to get out of poverty.

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