



Women's invisible labor in coconut sugar farming: Insights from standpoint theory and gender-responsive policies

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ABSTRACT

Background: In various agricultural sectors, women make significant contributions to all stages of agricultural activities, yet their presence often fails to receive equal social and economic recognition. One subsector that clearly illustrates this issue is coconut sugar farming, particularly in rural areas of Banyumas. This study aims to reveal the invisibility of women's roles in traditional agricultural systems and to understand how women interpret, negotiate, and maintain their existence within a masculine social structure. Through the Standpoint Theory approach, this study seeks to reveal how these forms of invisibility are formed and reproduced through culture, economics, and everyday language. **Methods:** Through observation and in-depth interviews with women farmers in Cilongok District, Banyumas, this study seeks to reveal the experiences of women farmers in the coconut sugar production process. The data analysis technique used in this study was Braun & Clarke's Thematic Analysis. **Findings:** The study found that the invisibility of women's roles in the coconut sugar production process is evident in their lack of formal recognition and access to institutional facilities. Women are also faced with the double burden of having to juggle their work processing palm sap with their domestic duties. Nevertheless, women farmers view their roles as a consequence of the formal system's perspective, which defines work risks based on masculine standards. **Conclusion:** Therefore, there needs to be formal recognition and economic empowerment of women's contributions to the coconut sugar industry, which have been neglected by patriarchal culture. This is important for maintaining the sustainability of this traditional industry. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** The novelty of this research lies in revealing gender inequality and the invisibility of women's roles in the coconut sugar industry in Banyumas through the perspective of women themselves, as well as in proposing gender-responsive labor protection policies for women farmers in the agricultural sector.

KEYWORDS: gender roles; rural Banyumas; standpoint theory; traditional agriculture.

1. Introduction

The agricultural sector is a key pillar of the community's economy, not only playing a role in meeting food needs, but also providing a source of livelihood, especially for people in rural areas (ILO, 2023; Loizou et al., 2019). Within this scope, women play an important role in all stages of agricultural activities, from land cultivation and planting to processing agricultural products (Kahsay et al., 2021). However, various studies show that despite women's enormous contributions, their existence often does not receive equal social and economic recognition. Women farmers play an important role in sustainable agricultural practices, particularly in Slovenia where they tend to manage agricultural land by applying environmentally friendly farming principles (Unay-Gailhard & Bojnec, 2021). However,

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there is a gap in the provision of environmental subsidies between farms managed by men and women. The study recommends more gender-equitable environmental policies in the agricultural sector (Unay-Gailhard & Bojnec, 2021).

In the context of agriculture, gender inequality is also evident in land rights and access to production facilities. Research (Huggins et al., 2025) found that although Tanzania's land use planning policy aims to strengthen women's rights to land ownership, practices in the field show limited participation. This can be seen in the limited participation of women in village institutions, as well as the strong influence of patriarchal culture in society. These obstacles make it difficult for women to obtain land rights individually or as a group (Huggins et al., 2025). This situation shows that reformulating policies and institutional systems without socio-cultural change will make it difficult to achieve gender justice that has a real impact.

In the context of sustainable agricultural practices, the roles of women demonstrate similar dynamics. Research (Azima & Mundler, 2022) shows that female farmers in Canada have different perspectives than male farmers in terms of social and ecological awareness. Women tend to associate sustainable agricultural practices with values of caring, independence, and social responsibility. They are also more open to innovations that combine environmental aspects and community welfare. However, women's involvement in sustainable agricultural practices still faces obstacles in the form of limited access to resources, gender stereotypes, and social pressure from their dual roles in the domestic and public spheres (Azima & Mundler, 2022).

In various agricultural regions, masculine identity is often associated with economic functions and traditional values, while feminine identity is more closely related to the formation of emotional networks and domestic roles that support family life (Martínez-Vérez et al., 2025). This phenomenon reflects social patterns that are deeply rooted in agrarian societies, where cultural norms and social practices play a major role in shaping perceptions and the division of labor based on gender (Zaki, 2020). For example, activities that require physical strength are commonly considered to be the domain of men, while women are often assigned to jobs that are considered lighter or related to household chores (Arthur-Holmes, 2021; Gómez-Pellón, 2024; Mengo et al., 2023). This unequal division of labor not only affects agricultural productivity, but also influences access to resources, involvement in decision-making, and economic opportunities between men and women in the agricultural sector (Abdisa et al., 2024; Quisumbing & Doss, 2021). One subsector that clearly illustrates this issue is coconut sugar farming, particularly in rural areas of Central Java such as Banyumas.

Banyumas Regency is known as one of the centers of coconut sugar production with great potential in the Central Java region. In 2024, the area of coconut palms in Banyumas Regency was recorded at 5,178.99 ha with a total production of 57,674.93 tons (Banyumas Regency Communication and Informatics Service, 2025). Of that total, Cilongok Subdistrict contributed the most to coconut production, accounting for around 13.04% or 7,525.95 tons (Banyumas Regency Communication and Informatics Service, 2025). Table 1 shows data on the harvest area and production of coconut oil in five subdistricts in Banyumas Regency in 2024. These five subdistricts occupy the top five positions out of 27 subdistricts in Banyumas Regency. Coconut sugar farming in the Banyumas region not only represents the economic activities of the community, but also reflects the local social and cultural system that has been passed down from generation to generation (Ibrahim, 2019).

Table 1. Harvest area and production of deres coconuts by Subdistrict in Banyumas Regency in 2024

Subdistrict	Harvested area (ha)	Production (tons)
Cilongok	838.00	7,525.95
Gumelar	454.70	5,291.74
Somagede	435.00	5,920.98
Purwojati	378.00	4,688.38
Pekuncen	374.65	4,403.20

(Banyumas Regency Communication and Informatics Service, 2025)

The social structure of coconut sugar farming in Cilongok Subdistrict, Banyumas, shows a hierarchical and gender-based pattern of relations. The gender-based division of roles in the coconut sugar production process includes: men play a role in the process of tapping coconut sap (*nderes*), while women play a role in processing the sap into sugar and marketing the products. Although women's contribution to the coconut sugar production chain is significant, their role is often positioned only as a companion or assistant in production, so that the social narrative that is formed highlights the position of men as the main farmers (Lasol et al., 2023). This division of labor is reinforced by patriarchal reproduction mechanisms, whereby knowledge and skills are passed down patrilineally from father to son (Putri & Wardo, 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2023). This disparity indicates the existence of strong gender bias and stigma in the social construction of society, which causes women's roles to be invisible or marginalized in the narrative of coconut sugar production in rural Banyumas.

The invisibility of women's roles not only affects their social recognition, but also their access to various empowerment programs (Lasol et al., 2023). Existing programs often focus more on increasing the capacity of men as primary farmers, while women's contributions to the production chain are often overlooked (Gómez-Pellón, 2024). In fact, women face significant vulnerabilities in production, such as the risk of respiratory diseases due to exposure to smoke when cooking coconut sap (Astuti & Wijaya, 2020; Lasol et al., 2023). Through the context of coconut sugar farming in rural Banyumas, this study seeks to reveal the invisibility of women's roles in traditional agricultural systems and to understand how women interpret, negotiate, and maintain their existence within a masculine social structure.

To interpret this reality, this study uses the Standpoint Theory developed (Harding, 1991). Harding highlights how gender bias in the production of knowledge influences the way people understand reality, as well as who is considered to have the authority to determine scientific truth (Harding, 2004). In this context, women farmers living in patriarchal societies have a unique perspective that differs from the dominant (masculine) view of their work. Standpoint theory rejects the assumption that knowledge is objective, neutral, and universal. Instead, this theory asserts that all forms of knowledge are always bound to the context and social identity of their owners (Harding, 2015). Using the Standpoint Theory approach, this study positions female farmers as subjects of knowledge who are capable of reflecting on and explaining their own experiences. By exploring women's experiences in the coconut sugar production process, this study seeks to reveal how these forms of invisibility are formed and reproduced through culture, economics, and everyday language.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the intersection of gendered labor division and women's invisibility within the coconut sugar industry, a context that has rarely been explored in gender and rural studies. By revealing women's self-perception and acceptance of structural inequality as a survival strategy, this study provides new insight into how Standpoint Theory can be applied to understand women's agency in rural economic systems. Based on this background, the researcher was interested in conducting research on the invisibility of women's roles in coconut sugar production in Cilongok District, Banyumas Regency. The research question is: how do women farmers interpret, negotiate, and demonstrate their roles amid the dominance of male narratives in the traditional agricultural sector?

2. Methods

2.1 Research design

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method. A descriptive qualitative approach was used to obtain a comprehensive picture of the experiences of female farmers in the coconut sugar production process (Creswell, 2019). This method was chosen to explore the meanings, perceptions, and experiences of women farmers in depth through a

process of interaction and observation (Moloeng, 2016). This approach allows the researcher to capture context-specific realities and provide a nuanced understanding of gender roles in the production process.

2.2 Research location and time

The data in this study were obtained from the author's thesis research conducted in January and April 2025. Data collection was carried out through observation and in-depth interviews in Cilongok Subdistrict, Banyumas Regency. Cilongok Subdistrict was chosen because it is the largest coconut sugar center in Banyumas Regency, thus providing a representative picture of gender dynamics in this industry. This article was written and analyzed in October 2025, adjusting the focus of the discussion to the context of journal publication.

2.3 Research informants

The research informants were female coconut sugar farmers involved in coconut sugar production. Informants were selected purposively to ensure that the data obtained was relevant to the focus of the study. The research informants consisted of female farmers aged 30–60 years with 5–40 years of work experience. All informants were actively engaged in daily production activities, enabling them to provide rich and experience-based insights. In total, the study involved 6 farming households, comprising 12 informants: 6 male farmers and 6 female farmers. This composition allowed the researcher to capture perspectives from both genders within the household production system, while maintaining a primary focus on the experiences and roles of female farmers.

2.4 Data types and sources

This study uses two types of data, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data is data collected to answer the problems studied in this research (Creswell, 2019), obtained from observations and in-depth interviews with informants. Meanwhile, secondary data is data used to supplement primary data (Creswell, 2019), derived from journal articles, books, and websites. These secondary sources were also used to strengthen the theoretical framework and support the interpretation of the research findings.

2.5 Data collection techniques

The data collection techniques used were observation and in-depth interviews. The interview process was conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow informants to freely recount their experiences. Meanwhile, the observation process was carried out by observing the routines of female farmers in the coconut sugar production process. The author conducted observations and interviews at coconut sugar production sites to directly observe the subjective experiences of female farmers, such as their workload, gender-based division of roles, and access to resources.

2.6 Data analysis

The data analysis used in this study (Braun & Clarke, 2006) thematic analysis. The first stage was familiarization with the data, in which the author repeatedly read all interview transcripts, listened to recordings, and noted important points. The second stage involved generating initial codes by identifying information related to the role of women in coconut sugar production. In the third stage, the author identified and grouped codes into potential themes. The fourth stage involved reviewing the themes to ensure their relevance and adequacy of supporting data. The fifth stage was defining and naming the themes. The final stage was writing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The role of women in the coconut sugar production process

Coconut sugar production in Cilongok Subdistrict, Banyumas, shows relatively equal involvement of men and women. Based on the interview and field observation, the division of roles in coconut sugar production shows a clear gender-based pattern, in which men and women have different but interrelated roles in the production chain. These differences in roles not only reflect a functional division of labor, but also reveal social constructs regarding the ideal roles of men and women in rural environments.

In the production process, male farmers act as *penderes*, who are responsible for collecting coconut sap. This activity involves climbing coconut trees, installing and collecting *pongkor* (containers for collecting sap), and bringing the sap home to be processed into sugar. This activity requires physical strength, skill, and the courage to face the risk of workplace accidents. Therefore, the community considers the work of *penderes* to be masculine and therefore more suitable for men, as quoted from the following interview. "Yes, we work together, but there is the issue of division of labor. If the problem is down below (*neng ngisor*), the easy way is that once it's down, it's the women's job. I just help, but when it comes to climbing coconut trees, women can't do it, that's a man's job." (Interview, 2025).

Meanwhile, female farmers play a role as sugar craftsmen who are responsible for processing palm sap into coconut sugar. This activity includes filtering the sap, cooking it to a certain consistency, molding it, and packaging the sugar. The process of processing coconut sap into sugar requires perseverance, starting from cooking the sap to molding the sugar into a marketable form. This work also requires a long time, usually starting immediately after the morning sap is collected. This work is done in the kitchen or *pawon*, which in Javanese culture is synonymous with the female domestic space. In between these activities, women also continue to carry out household chores such as cooking, washing, and caring for children while waiting for the sap to boil. This situation illustrates the double burden placed on women, who must balance their productive role (involvement in coconut sugar production) and their reproductive role (taking care of the household). This division of labor is often accepted as natural because it has been passed down from generation to generation.

The interview results show that the local language used by the community reinforces gender perceptions in this division of labor. In the process of processing palm sap into sugar, the community uses the term *ngindel* to refer to the activity of cooking palm sap, *nggeneni* and *ngrumat* which are related to the cooking and maintenance processes, as well as the term *neng ngisor* which indicates that these activities are carried out on the ground or at the bottom, in contrast to the activity of *menek* (climbing) which is carried out in coconut trees and is the domain of men. This is shown in the following interview excerpt: "Yes, it requires perseverance. If both parties are not persistent, then it is permissible. The reason is that if the lower party (*neng ngisor*) is not very enthusiastic about maintaining and caring for it, then automatically the sugar will not be good. There are people who are enthusiastic about *nderes*, but the lower party (*neng ngisor*) does not really care, so in the end the sugar is not good either." (Interview, 2025). "My husband is the one who *nderes*, I'm the one below, you're the one who looks for wood and *nderes*. Once it's time to mold the sugar, time to cook, well, if I'm healthy, I do it myself. *Penderes* requires a partner; you can't do it alone." (Interview, 2025).

In addition, the choice of fuel for coconut sugar production, such as firewood or wood chips, takes into account time efficiency and women's ability to perform various tasks at the same time. Women farmers usually do household chores while waiting for the coconut sap to mature. In this context, women perform multi-tasking that requires physical and mental endurance, but this is often not recognized as a form of skill or productive work. This condition reinforces the argument that rural women face an invisible workload, even though their contribution is important in maintaining the household economy.



Fig. 1. The interview process with women farmers

When linked to gender theory, the division of labor between male and female farmers in the coconut sugar production process reflects the concept of gendered division of labor, in which the patriarchal system divides space and roles based on social constructs, not solely on biological abilities (Stark, 2023). In the context of coconut sugar farming, activities that require physical strength, such as climbing trees and collecting sap, are categorized as men's work, while work that is considered to require diligence, patience, and is done in the domestic sphere, such as cooking sap, is positioned as women's work. This division not only shows a difference in function, but also illustrates how social norms shape a hierarchical work structure and imply differences in social recognition of the contributions of each gender (Sullivan, 2018). Meanwhile, from the perspective of Standpoint Theory, women's experiences in managing dual roles in both the domestic and productive spheres are a unique source of knowledge about rural social realities (Cockburn, 2009). It is these experiences that enable them to understand the dynamics of daily life and family needs, while also creating strategies for survival within their limitations.

Thus, the role of women in coconut sugar production cannot be viewed merely as a technical part of the production chain, but also as a complex form of social practice. Women do not simply carry out predetermined roles, but also construct their own meanings, strategies, and values of work. These roles reflect the agency of rural women operating between domestic and public boundaries, between obligations and choices, between subordination and independence.

3.2 The existence of women farmers in agrarian society structures

The coconut sugar production process in Cilongok District, Banyumas, involves a long series of tasks, in which there is a complex negotiation of roles between male and female farmers. Although both parties contribute equally to the continuity of production, social reality shows that women often occupy subordinate positions in the structure of smallholder agriculture. Their vital involvement in the sap processing process is rarely accompanied by formal recognition or adequate social protection.

The dynamics of gender relations in the coconut sugar production process reveal a gap in access to institutional facilities. Although the coconut sugar production process is highly dependent on cooperation between men and women, there is a clear imbalance in terms of formal recognition and access to occupational safety protection. Based on the interview results, most male farmers who work as tappers already have a tapper card, which is an identity card that provides access to social protection benefits in the event of a work accident.

Female farmers who are involved in processing palm sap into sugar experience different conditions. Although they also face risks in the production process, such as the danger of being splashed with hot liquid while cooking palm sap or exposure to smoke from the stove, which can cause respiratory diseases, there is no formal protection system that covers these risks. The lack of insurance for female farmers creates a particular

vulnerability in the coconut sugar production system. Interestingly, female farmers do not interpret this situation as a form of injustice. In interviews, they actually show a strong acceptance of the situation. For them, the existence of a *penderes* card for their husbands is considered sufficient as a form of family security. They continue to diligently carry out their role as sap processors. They hope that the card will not be used, or in other words, they hope that their husbands will return home safely and in good health from working as *penderes*. This is illustrated in the following interview excerpt: "Only my husband (who got the card), as for me, I pray that he won't fall from a tree, because many people have fallen from trees and been unable to work since retirement. My father also died after falling from a coconut tree..." (Interview, 2025).

This statement shows a relational orientation in the meaning of women's existence. Their existence is not defined through self-protection or self-recognition, but rather through the continuity of the husband's role as breadwinner and head of the family. In the context of patriarchal culture, women's identities are often linked to their position as supporters or guardians of the family's economic sustainability (Zhang & Wang, 2021). Thus, women's existence is shaped by social functions that affirm their domestic and relational roles, rather than by recognition of the productive work they do.

In the decision-making process, women also show strong attachment to the hierarchical structure of the household. The decision to become a coconut sugar farmer is not a personal choice, but rather a consequence of the husband's economic choices. Their decision to become coconut sugar farmers is not independent, but rather a direct consequence of their husbands' choice to become palm tappers. This illustrates the hierarchy in family decision-making, where the wife's choice of livelihood follows and supports her husband's profession. This choice is based on the societal assumption that married women will follow their husbands. This is illustrated in the following interview excerpt: "So it's been passed down from generation to generation. When I was a child, it wasn't like that. I just wandered here and there. But once I started a family, I thought, "The person who earns the money wants to be successful, so what else can I do? I have to learn (how to make sugar). I have to learn from the very beginning of my family life..." (Interview, 2025).

Interestingly, although men play the role of primary breadwinners through sugar cane tapping, the role of managing household finances lies in the hands of women. This responsibility requires good financial management skills, as income from sugar sales must cover the family's various needs. Gender inequality is also evident in the formal organizational structure that supports the sustainability of the coconut sugar business. Farmer groups, which should be a forum for capacity building and representing the interests of sugar farmers, only allow male farmers to become members. Although this group is currently inactive due to a decline in the number of tappers caused by a lack of regeneration, the pattern of gender discrimination in its membership reflects the marginalization of women's roles in joint decision-making related to the coconut sugar business. Women's involvement in the decision-making process is very important, because women also play an important role in the success of the coconut sugar production process. Even so, women's existence has not been completely erased from the social sphere. They continue to actively participate in activities in their neighborhoods, ranging from social activities to religious activities.

3.3 *The standpoint of women farmers: Meaning, negotiation, and existence*

The results of the study show how the social position of female farmers in coconut sugar production results in a different work experience from that of male farmers. This difference is not merely a division of roles based on gender, but a reflection of the social structure that places them in different positions in the production hierarchy (Rolin, 2009). In the agrarian society of Banyumas, men who work as *penderes* are generally regarded as the breadwinners of the family, as reflected in the local saying "*ora ngindel, ora madhang*" (if you don't make sugar, you don't eat). Meanwhile, women who process the sap are often

not recognized as workers, but merely as helpers to their husbands. This perception illustrates a form of symbolic invisibility that shapes gender-based power relations within the coconut sugar production system. According to research (Hasyim et al., 2022) and Salamah et al. (2023), the division of roles in the agricultural sector in rural areas is still based on traditional gender stereotypes that place men as the main breadwinners. Meanwhile, women are responsible for domestic work as well as participating in agricultural work (Hasyim et al., 2022; Salamah et al., 2023).

According to Standpoint Theory, different social experiences produce different forms of knowledge. Women who occupy subordinate positions in social structures have a unique perspective on the world. In the context of this study, the standpoint of female coconut sugar farmers is shaped by their experience of managing productive and reproductive work simultaneously. Women not only play a role in processing sugarcane into sugar, but also bear domestic responsibilities such as cooking, caring for children, cleaning the house, and managing family finances. This combination of roles gives rise to complex situational knowledge, which is not generated by formal theory, but by daily practices that are lived continuously. In line with these findings, research by Maulana & Rokhani (2022) found that the dual roles played by women were commonplace and not forced upon them.

Gender inequality also occurs in the symbolic realm. In local narratives, the term "*penderes*" always refers to men, while women who process palm sap do not have a specific designation. The absence of symbolic representation for women shows that invisibility is not only an economic issue, but also a linguistic and cultural one. Language becomes a tool that indirectly perpetuates inequality by erasing the existence of women in the sphere of production. The use of the terms *dhuwur* (above) and *ngisor* (below) in the stages of coconut sugar production also indicates social hierarchy, where these terms reflect how farmers position themselves in the social hierarchy, not just referring to the physical position where they work (Fernback, 2019). This hierarchical structure creates layers of power that not only influence access to resources, but also determine the level of formal recognition received by each gender group.

Male farmers' experience as tappers gives them direct access to formal recognition through tapper cards and work safety insurance. These findings are in line with research by Lee et al. (2025) which states that men's social position allows them to obtain formal recognition for the occupational risks they face. The *penderes* card is not merely an administrative identity, but a symbol of legitimacy that gives them status as formal workers in the production system. The work-safety insurance they receive reflects the state's recognition of the dangers they face when climbing coconut trees and collecting sap. This shows how the formal system has constructed the work of *penderes* as high-risk work that requires special protection.

Meanwhile, female farmers who work as palm sap processors are invisible in the formal protection system, even though they also face risks such as exposure to hot liquids and smoke from stoves. This invisibility is not accidental, but rather a consequence of the formal system's perspective, which defines occupational risks based on masculine standards. This inequality reflects the masculine perspective in defining occupational risks, whereby work performed in the domestic sphere is considered harmless, when in fact it carries potential physical and health risks. This shows that the formal system only recognizes work that conforms to masculine norms, while women's work is considered natural and does not require special protection. In line with these findings (Nazir, 2017) and (Zhang & Wang, 2021) state that the role of women in both the domestic and public spheres, which is unrecognized and unrecorded, is considered unimportant in the economic and social system. In line with these findings, research (Santos et al., 2020) explains that women's work in the agricultural sector is often considered a form of support for men's work, even though they also face a double burden between productive and reproductive work.

Fig. 2 shows the imbalance between the role of women farmers in agricultural activities in the context of coconut sugar farming and the level of recognition of their contributions at the social and institutional levels. In terms of the role of women farmers, it can be seen that women are actively involved in various aspects of agricultural production, such as

processing palm sap, performing domestic work, and managing family finances. These roles show that women contribute directly and indirectly to the economic sustainability of their households. However, on the other hand, recognition of women's contributions is not clearly evident, as shown by the lack of women's involvement in strategic decision-making. In addition, inadequate occupational safety protection for women reflects gender bias in the formal system. This gap shows that although women play an important role in the agricultural production chain, their value and contributions are still marginalized in the social structure and agricultural policies.

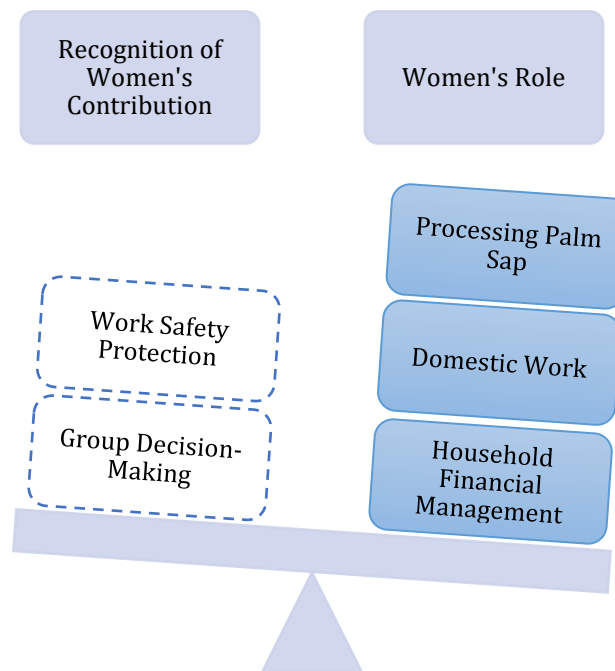


Fig. 2. Disparity between women's roles and the recognition of their contributions

Figure 2 shows the imbalance between the role of women farmers in agricultural activities in the context of coconut sugar farming and the level of recognition of their contributions at the social and institutional levels. In terms of the role of women farmers, it can be seen that women are actively involved in various aspects of agricultural production, such as processing palm sap, performing domestic work, and managing family finances. These roles show that women contribute directly and indirectly to the economic sustainability of their households. However, on the other hand, recognition of women's contributions is not clearly evident, as shown by the lack of women's involvement in strategic decision-making. In addition, inadequate occupational safety protection for women reflects gender bias in the formal system. This gap shows that although women play an important role in the agricultural production chain, their value and contributions are still marginalized in the social structure and agricultural policies.

Women's experiences as a marginalized group in the labor protection system have resulted in unique situational knowledge. Based on the interview results, female farmers do not feel burdened by the absence of work safety guarantees, while continuing to carry out their roles diligently. These conditions show that women's standpoint stems from experiences of exclusion and institutional injustice. They understand risk not only in the context of personal safety, but also as part of the collective responsibility of the family. Some informants actually hoped that the *penderes* card "would not need to be used," because its meaning of safety lies in the hope that their husbands will return home safely. This knowledge reflects a deep understanding of the dynamics of risk in the household, where the welfare of the family depends on the safety of the husband as a rubber tapper. Women's perspectives also reveal the complexity of the dual roles they play (Gurung, 2020). The choice of fuel in sugar production shows how they must balance production efficiency with

domestic responsibilities. This knowledge comes from experience in managing multiple roles that are not fully visible in the formal structure of production (Dular, 2023).

Findings regarding decision-making patterns in coconut sugar farming families indicate the existence of an epistemic hierarchy that places the perspective of men as the primary breadwinners in a dominant position (Wu, 2022). Women's decision to become sugar crafters is not independent, but rather a consequence of their husbands' choices. This reflects how women's knowledge and experience in the context of production is often viewed as secondary or supporting roles to the primary role of men (Cockburn, 2009). However, in terms of household financial management, there has been a shifting of epistemic authority, with women now having full control and authority. Their knowledge of financial management, long-term planning, and family risk management reflects their growing experience gained from directly managing the domestic economy.

The marginalization of women in farmer groups reflects how formal institutional structures reproduce gender inequalities in access to knowledge and resources (Rolin, 2009). Restricting membership to male farmers ignores women's contributions and knowledge in the production process. From a standpoint of perspective, this shows how formal institutions often fail to recognize or validate knowledge that emerges from the experiences of marginalized groups (Hall, 2020).

Through daily experiences and reflections, women develop unique knowledge about work, risks, and family welfare. Their standpoint shows that work is not merely an economic activity, but a complex form of social and emotional involvement. Thus, this study contributes to the development of gender-based division of labor theory and Standpoint Theory. First, this study broadens the understanding of women's standpoint in the context of Indonesian agrarian society, where spirituality, morality, and family relations are an integral part of the work experience. Second, this study shows that women's standpoint does not only represent a subordinate position, but also becomes a source of alternative knowledge that challenges the dominance of masculine knowledge. Third, these findings emphasize the importance of recognizing local, cultural, and spiritual dimensions in the formation of gender theory, because women's experiences in rural areas are not always in line with the industrial or urban contexts that are often used as references in Western gender theory.

Thus, women's standpoint in coconut sugar production reveals the dynamics between subordination and agency. Although they are marginalized from the formal system, through work practices, financial management, and moral values of work, women have succeeded in building a unique space of existence and knowledge. Their experiences prove that the knowledge of rural women is an important epistemic source for understanding gender justice in the context of sustainable agricultural development in Indonesia.

4. Conclusions

Women play a major role in the coconut sugar production process, from processing to marketing the product. However, their presence remains largely invisible within the social and economic structure of rural agriculture. This invisibility manifests in the absence of occupational safety protections and the limited involvement of women farmers in farmer groups, which are predominantly male-dominated. Women farmers also face the vulnerability of a double burden, balancing palm sap processing with domestic responsibilities. From the women's standpoint, the decision to engage in coconut sugar production often stems from their support for their husbands' work as sap collectors. They do not feel burdened even though they do not have occupational safety protection, because for them the most important thing is the safety of their husbands who collect sap from coconut trees every day.

The results of this study reveal gender inequality and the lack of formal protection for female farmers in the coconut sugar industry. Therefore, policymakers are expected to formulate policies that are more responsive to gender issues, for example, by providing work safety cards for female farmers or sugar craftsmen. In addition, synergy between the

village government and relevant agencies is needed in the process of data verification, card production, card distribution, and benefit distribution so that this policy can be felt equally by sugar farmers in Cilongok District, both male and female.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the development of gender theory by demonstrating how the gendered division of labor in rural agricultural production not only reproduces economic inequality but also perpetuates women's invisibility within the rural economy. The findings expand the understanding of how women's labor is socially and symbolically devalued despite being economically essential, thereby deepening the discourse of Stand Point Theory that situates women's lived experiences as a valid site of knowledge. This research thus provides an empirical basis for rethinking the concept of gendered labor in rural contexts and for constructing more inclusive models of rural development that recognize and value women's contributions. In addition, the findings of this study also highlight the need for policy support and capacity building for farmers in addressing gender and structural inequalities. Stakeholders such as NGOs are expected to advocate for policies that favor coconut sugar farmers, including price protection, social security, and recognition of women's contributions to the production chain. NGOs can then facilitate the formation and strengthening of inclusive and participatory farmer groups or coconut sugar cooperatives.

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Ethical Review Board Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical research principles.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data used or generated during this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

During the preparation of this work, the author used DeepL to translate the manuscript from Indonesian into English. In addition, the author used Sapling to assist in checking spelling, grammar, and clarity of the manuscript. After using these tools, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of this publication.

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