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Ijon Practice by Landowner of Ricefield: Agency-Structure Perspective

Praktik Ijon Petani Pemilik Lahan Sawah: Perspektif Agen-Struktur

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ABSTRACT

The status of farmers in the socio-economic study of agriculture referring to land ownership consists of landowner farmer, tenant farmer, and sharecropper. Landowner farmer holds the highest position. Many landowner farmers have been trapped in "Ijon" practice for years, which makes them work on their own land to pay their debts for a long period of time. The purpose of this study is to find out the background of farmers who were involved in the ijon practice, the reasons behind their entanglement in the ijon practice, the uses of loans, and how the loans were paid. The study location was village of XYZ in East Nusa Tenggara Province, involving 22 farmers who were involved in the practice of ijon. This study used a qualitative analysis of agency structure from Gidden's perspective. This paper concludes that farmers were involved in the ijon practice to meet urgent non-productive needs. Most of the farmers' earnings are used to pay debts. Farmers who are trapped in the ijon system for a long period of time will bear the status of "the landowner farmers who work as farm laborers on their own land." This status has yet to be categorized in the agricultural economic approach.

Keywords: ijon practice, landowner rice farming, agency-structuration perspective



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INTRODUCTION

In agribusiness, the factor of production is an important element in the discussion of the production and marketing of agricultural products. Such factors of production are land, labor, means of agricultural production, and management. The first three factors of production if converted into rupiah units will become the realm of agricultural economic studies so that an analysis of the feasibility and efficiency of farming is obtained. But the four factors of production (land, labor, means of agricultural production, and management) can be analyzed also in the sociological realm, especially in the aspect of the land, farmers' access to means of production, and labor (Zepharovich et al., 2021; Valkonen, 2021; Torma & Aschemann-Witzel, 2023; Geoghegan & O'Donoghue, 2023). Therefore, land has two areas of study, namely the study of agricultural economics and the study of agricultural sociology or rural sociology. In reality, the two domains are difficult to separate rigidly because, like social reality, there is no single factor in people's lives. The study of land in the sociological realm rests on the status of land ownership and the process of ownership transfer both real and vague. and ownership is divided into three categories: landowner farmer, land lease farmer, and tenant farmer.

The discussion of land ownership status is generally directed at the dynamics of farming activities where farmers act as owner farmers, land lease farmers, and tenant farmers, which has implications for the socioeconomic status of farmers (Hekmatyar & Nugroho, 2018; Pratiwi & Moeis, 2022). This is also the reality in Pakistan and northern Ghana where smallholder farmers need credit to finance their farming businesses. This is also seen in Pakistan and Zimbabwe where smallholder farmers need credit to finance their farming businesses. The problem is that access to formal credit is not easy to obtain (Anang & Asante, 2020; Saqib et al., 2018a).

Rural communities view land ownership as a fundamental aspect of their lives. Land is not solely one of the factors of agricultural production, but more than that, land determines the strata or social position of society. Land is not only productive capital, but it can also serve as a commodity that can be traded at any time when needed. When land becomes a commodity that is easily transferable, the farmers will have the opportunity to lose their social position in society at that time. It is possible that the farmer who sold his land changed his status to become a tenant farmer or even became a sharecropper farmer on his own former land, a status that is not profitable in the entire agricultural production process. Land release can occur through inheritance, buying and selling, or pawning (Pasaribu & Istriningsih, 2020).

One of the characteristics and obstacles to the progress of agriculture in Indonesia is that the land is fragmented into an area below 0.5 hectares per farmer household potentially (Prayitno et al., 2020). The situation in Kalimantan as reported by Harini showed that narrow land would provide opportunities for conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural activities, and the conversion process was initiated by the process of controlling agricultural land by the owner of the capital. Land conversion was carried out by farmers who sold agricultural land for socio-cultural purposes such as marrying children, sending children to school, paying debts, and some were even tempted by high selling price offers. The sale of land for schooling children is a strategy of farmer households in an effort to create a better future (Harini et al., 2019; Badoa et al., 2018).

The status of farmers based on land ownership, especially in smallholder farmer groups, requires government intervention so that farmers are not trapped into poverty. In the case of the transfer of land ownership from white owners to black landowners in post-apartheid South Africa, it was seen that the policy did not go as expected, namely the reset of white owners' land accumulation. In reality, there remains an accumulation of ownership only, that the accumulation goes from white landowners to new black owners (James & Woodhouse, 2017). This situation illustrates that ensuring the status of farmers is not an easy thing. In fact, farmers who own their own land even though it is small will be equipped with a certificate of ownership which can then be pledged to a local bank to get farm business credit (Sekyi et al., 2017; Saqib et al., 2018; Mitra & Prodhon, 2018).

Farmers with narrow land and limited economic resources such as the people of East Nusa Tenggara are very vulnerable to poverty. Their poverty traps include crop failure, inability to buy means of production, lack of access to marketing, and a matter of debt. Farmers are usually in debt not for the benefit of production but more to meet consumptive needs including fulfilling customary provisions. Debt activities among farmers are common, but what is burdensome is when the guarantee to get the loan is in the form of crops that are still not harvested (*ijon*). Repayment of loans with crops at harvest puts farmers at the lowest price recipients while they still have to meet the highly burdensome cultural

13 demands of the economy (Burke et al., 2019; Naisunis et al., 2020; Pranadji et al., 2021). Although farmers realize that the practice of borrowing with the guarantee of green crops will burden them in the future, they have no other choice but agree. Land is an important capital for farmers. The importance of land is then used as a landmark for whether or not a farmer can take out a loan. Identification of land ownership is not intended as a guarantee of *ijon*, but rather to confirm the certainty of paying the loan. This illustrates Giddens' Theory of Structuration that structures are formed on actors-structures that are done consciously (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2019).

Giddens' Structuration Theory is based on the duality (not dualism) of agent and structure. In this view, agency and structure are inseparable. Agency is implicit in structure and encompassed within agency. Structures are not limiters but allow for liberation. The study of agency and structure can be done at two levels, micro and macro. The core of structuration theory lies in explaining social practices through agency and structure. The duality of agency and structure is because the two cannot be separated. They influence each other in the realm of social practice (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2019).

Through the fusion of agency and structure, structuration theory emphasizes that agency and structure are not important, but social practices are very important to examine. Social practice is the result of continuous interaction between agency and structure across space and time which can then give birth to cultural reproduction through ongoing social practices. Giddens identifies structure into three parts, namely, signification, domination, and legitimation. The first is the structure of signification, which is a structure related to grouping of symbols, meaning and discourse; the second is the structure of domination, which includes the control of people in terms of political and economic control; and the third is the structure of legitimation, which is a structure related to normative regulations contained in the legal system. The power is not a symptom associated with a structure or system, but depends on the ability of the actor (subject) in social practice or social interaction. Changes in the ability of actors always occur in the process of structuration (Chatterjee et al., 2019; Juliantono & Munandar, 2016; Priyono, 2016).

Various studies of the practices of *Ijon* show that actually between farmers and lenders there is a mutually agreeable relationship even though in practice the price applied is very low compared to the normal price. This study uses the Agency and Structure of structuration theory to see how the social practice of *ijon* continues and is perpetuated by agents and structures.

14 Various studies have been conducted to examine the lives of farmers in these various statuses and *ijon*, such as: *First*, although *Ijon* has long been practiced in Indonesia, especially in rice farming, the issue of *Ijon* was only raised in academic discussions in 1974 by Partadireja who wrote the article *Rural Credit: The Ijon System*. This article examined seven *ijon* cases and found that *ijon* occurs because farmers need easy, cheap, fast, and precise funds to fulfill their needs, whereas the government credit institutions cannot fulfill this need. In contrast, the *ijon* credit institutions can provide loans at any time. As a consequence, the ease and speed of access to credit have to be paid for by the cheap pricing of farm products, especially rice, by *ijon*. Of the seven *ijon* cases, three categories of transactions were found: *first*, very poor farmers, because of incidental needs, monetize secondary crops while focusing on primary crops that provide high returns. *Ijon* for secondary crops is actually a way for farmers to save labor costs because the process of harvesting and marketing will then be taken over by the buyer, in this case, the lender (Partadireja, 1974).

Second, the study using a meta-analysis approach found that land is the most essential thing for farmers, but this essential thing is dominated by farmers with narrow land and farm laborers (those without land). The study also found that there are two credit institutions for financing agricultural activities: formal with an interest rate of 24%–36% and informal with an interest rate of 24%–80%. Smallholders need credit for production and social purposes. They will eventually borrow from the lender, middlemen or informal institutions by pledging their crops. Farmers need money to purchase production inputs such as fertilizers and herbicides as well as to prepare for financing the next planting season (Pranadji et al., 2021; Maleha & Purnamasari, 2020; Suman & Putra, 2015).

Third, other studies have shown that the choice of *ijon* is a strategy for farmers to obtain cash immediately, reduce the work of maintaining crops, reduce transportation costs, and gain a social network between farmers and actors (other farmers, middlemen, traders, and the government) who are interrelated with each other. The mechanism of running the *ijon* system begins with the capital lending of farmer to middlemen, which makes engagements with each actor (Gandi et al., 2017; Lubis & Harahap, 2019; Hanif & Yamaura, 2021).

All of those studies discuss the low income of farmers using the 'ijon' system, while this study examines the process of the 'ijon' system between 'ijon' actors and farmers to cause losses for farmers themselves and even get them into debt. Thus, the urgency of this research is contextualized in the dynamics of the life of the owner farmer in the debt loop that occurs due to the practice of *ijon* from the perspective of structuration theory. Therefore, the objectives of this study are: (1) to describe the background and reasons of the farmers involved in *ijon*, (2) to describe *ijon*'s transactions, and (3) to analyze the formation of structures due to the practice of *Ijon*. The contribution of this research is to provide information and knowledge about the study of the condition of landowner farmers who are trapped in prolonged *ijon* practices

METHODS

This research uses the Post-Positivism paradigm with a mixed method. The mixed method is a popular method in to date research and in quantitative-qualitative design, or in Creswell's terms called Sequential-Explanatory (Creswell, 2020). This means that the research is carried out with the quantitative method first and then the qualitative method. This research was conducted in XYZ village in Aesesa district, Nagekeo regency, East Nusa Tenggara province. It is believed that the area with the largest rice crop land area will have its own dynamics related to the status of farmers based on land ownership. This research was conducted in January-March 2020.

Informants in this study must meet the criteria as owner farmers who cultivate rice crops, are active in rice farming activities and in the last three years sell their rice harvests in the form of 'ijon'. Based on these three characteristics in XYZ village, 94 farmers were found who practiced 'ijon'. The sample was randomly determined at 20 percent so that 19 respondents were obtained for this study. In addition to informants with these three criteria, there were 3 informants who in their daily lives work as advocates. Thus, the total number of informants in this study was 22 people.

Informants from the lender were determined after initial information was obtained from farmers where they conducted *ijon* transactions. There were three categories of lender: rich farmer lender who owned more than 3 ha of land, rice mill owner lender, and who worked as a rice trader. One person from each of these groups was selected for in-depth interviews.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with the help of interview guidelines. Interviews were conducted with 19 farmers who had been pre-determined based on the three predetermined criteria and with 3 people who acted as lender on a daily basis.

In-depth interviews with farmers were aimed at revealing their reasons for using *ijon*, their views on *ijon*, their impressions of and closeness to lender so as to find out why farmers tend to choose one of the three lenders as a place to borrow cash. Meanwhile, in-depth interviews with lender were conducted to reveal the reasons for continuing to lend, even though the last season's loan had not been paid off; the guarantee of payment; how lenders ensured the repayment of the loan; and how lender perceived the low-price set and the pricing mechanism.

The analysis technique was carried out in three stages. The first stage is the description of the data obtained, both quantitative data and qualitative data. Quantitative data was used to identify the farmer's background like age, education, land, farmer's reasons to be involved in *ijon*, where to owe, and rice price in *ijon* practices. Qualitative data was used to strengthen the findings of quantitative data based on in-depth interviews on the farmers involved in *ijon* and informants who act as *ijon* actors (Wang et al., 2023). In the second stage, after obtaining qualitative and quantitative descriptions, this study justified the structure approach of Giddens' Agency-Structure. In this section, the structural analysis follows Giddens' structural division of signification, domination, and legitimation. In this context, three structures were found in the study of *ijon* in NTT. In the last stage, this study conducts an interpretation to state the fourth status, namely the landowner who works like a tenant farmer. This final stage is the culminating point that will be reached in the study of *ijon* practices and the status of landowning farmers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses three things that formulate the objectives of the study, which are: 1) describing background and reasons of the farmers involved in *ijon*, (2) describing *ijon*'s transactions, and (3) analyzing The formation of structures due to the practice of *Ijon*.

Farmer Background and Reasons of The Farmers Involved of Ijon

The information in Table 1 relates to the background of farmers both those who have debts in the form of *ijon* and lenders (*Ijon* actor) viewed simultaneously. The background is age, education, and the area of land owned. Farmers are dominated by those aged 40-54 who are quite experienced in rice farming activities. The *ijon* givers are people whose age range between 45 and 56, and there are 3. Meanwhile, informant education is concentrated in low education, namely elementary and junior high schools (64 percent). Most of the informants are poorly educated in elementary and high schools. Meanwhile, farmers who give *ijon* are: 1) a person who is educated in elementary and junior high school 2 people with high school education.

The inverted pyramid pattern of farmer age, where older farmers outnumber younger ones, is not only seen among landowners involved in *ijon*. The trend of older farmers is also evident among smallholder farmers in Tolok village, Tompasso sub-district, where the majority of farmers are more than 55 years old (57 percent). This symptom was also revealed ten years ago through a study of the results of the 2013 Agricultural Census in Blitar and Luwu and in East Nusa Tenggara (BPS, 2013; Mandang et al., 2020; Shohibuddin et al., 2021). This age structure will affect two things: first, the low ability of farmers to apply innovations in cultivation techniques and at the same time cause farmers to stick to old patterns in managing their farming businesses; and second, the decreasing productivity of labor.

The low education level of landowners involved in *ijon* in East Nusa Tenggara is not unique to them, but is a common characteristic of farmers in Indonesia. This is reflected in the education situation of farmers in Salatiga, where 76 percent of farmers have primary and junior high school education (Kurniawan & Prihanti, 2018). The low education level of farmers is legitimized by the demographic fact that the agricultural labor market does not require education, unlike the formal labor market where education is one of the main requirements.

Farmers who are involved in bonded labor realize that their education is low, and because of their low education they can only do menial work. One farmer said that

"I did not go to school so I do manual labor like this. That's why I don't want my children to be stupid at school. I do bonding so that I have money to send to my children who are studying in the city".

It can be seen from what was said by the farmer involved in *ijon* that there is hope that he will release his child from poverty if his child has a high level of education in the city (college). A more in-depth explanation of the expectation of higher education will be explored in the sub-section on the reasons why farmers engage in *ijon*.

Table 1. Farmers by age, education, and land area of XYZ Village

| Background | Frequency | Percentage (XYZ) |
|------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Age | | |
| 25-39 | 7 | 31.8 |
| 40-54 | 10 | 45.5 |
| 55+ | 5 | 22.7 |
| Sum | 22 | 100 |
| Education | | |
| SD-SMP | 14 | 63.6 |
| SMA | 8 | 36.4 |
| Sum | 22 | |
| Land Area | | |
| 0.25-0.5 | 15 | 68.2 |
| 0.51-1 | 4 | 18.2 |
| 1.00++ | 3 | 13.6 |
| Total | 22 | 100 |

Source: Processed from primary data, 2020.

With regard to the area of land owned, this study found that land ownership was concentrated on a very small area of land, i.e. an area of 0.25 – 0.5 ha (68.2 percent). All lenders (3 people) own more than 1 ha of land. The area of land that was fragmented into narrow land causes rice farming to be in a state of efficiency so that optimal production is difficult to achieve. Table 1 clearly shows that farmers involved in *ijon* are concentrated on narrow land holdings. A study conducted by Pranadji (2021) linking land size and access to formal credit corroborates what was found in East Nusa Tenggara.

In-depth interviews with farmers involved in *ijon* provide an understanding that they generally own land.

"I have a garden. There is a rice field that I planted with Mamberamo rice. This rice has a high price compared to other types of rice. Mamberamo is the original rice here. But the land for rice fields is not too big. I have sold some of the rice fields for my children's medical treatment and some to pay administration fee for working as a migrant laborer".

Explanations obtained from in-depth interviews show that farmers initially had rather large land but had sold it to pay for health care and for the administration of working as Indonesian migrant workers abroad. Finally, land is not merely a means of production but has been transformed into easily transferable capital.

The characteristics of farmers who are concentrated on narrow land are also found in many studies. These studies explicitly show that farmers' land ownership is generally below 0.5 Ha (BPS, 2013; Kurniawan & Prihtanti, 2018; Mandang et al., 2020; Shohibuddin et al., 2021). The small amount of land owned and the absence of land certificates prevent access to formal credit for farm business financing, so *ijon* then becomes the door that farmers knock on (Partadireja, 1974). At this point, the study of *ijon* continues with the issue of farm credit, rather than how the status of owner farmers is intertwined with prolonged debt. In other studies, however, land tenure status is not important but security of tenure is. This can be seen in the study of farmers in Australia where there is no difference between owner farmers and tenant farmers in terms of land treatment for their farms. For tenant farmers, the most important thing is the security of tenant rights and usually the rental period is not too long (Haidi et al., 2019).

There are two terms that are often used in conversations about rural finance. These are *ijon* and *gadai* (pawn). In-depth interviews with local farmers revealed that there are two local terms for borrowing money: *mori kraeng* and *mori utang*. In everyday conversations, if they speak in Indonesian, they refer to *mori kraeng* as *ijon* and *mori utang* as pawning. The difference between *mori kraeng* and *mori utang* lies in the commodity that gets transacted. Farmers who do *mori kraeng* pay back their loans with paddy after the harvest (at a low price). Farmers who transact with *mori kraeng* can continue to work on their land because they still own the land. In contrast, in *mori utang* the collateral is not the paddy that is planted, but rather the farmland itself. Farmers who make *mori utang* transactions cannot work on their land until the loan is paid. Even if they work on the land, their status would be farm laborers instead of landowners because the land is being mortgaged.

Before discussing the reasons for involvement in the practice of *ijon*, it is important to express why farmers choose *ijon* to meet their funding needs. The farmers' confessions in in-depth interviews revealed that they did *ijon* because of the urgent need for money. To meet these fast urgent needs, it was impossible for farmers to borrow funds from formal institutions because the procedures applied were considered very long and complicated. One farmer said that "it is better to borrow from acquaintances than to village cooperatives especially to banks". Bank requirements included a guarantee of a land certificate and proof of business. These two things were very difficult to meet. Another thing that caused farmers to avoid formal financial institutions in rural areas was the disbursement procedure that took quite a long time, while the fulfillment of needs could not be delayed.

Urgent needs and simple administration seem to explain why *Ijon* remains in demand by farmers, especially those with small plots of land (Hanif & Yamaura, 2021; Partadireja, 1974; Pranadji et al., 2021). Farmers in a study conducted by Scott (1974) showed that the resignation of poor farmers because they realized the limited resources that they could not overcome so that borrowing money or obtaining cash as soon as possible as a safety-first principle would be taken. The view of farmers who entangled *ijon* seems to be understood from Scott's perspective, namely safety first (Scott, 1976; Keyes, 1983).

This study also found that there are seven reasons that underlie rice farmers in XYZ village in debt in the form of *ijon*. The seven reasons are (1) paying *belis*, (2) a new welcome event, (3) wedding party, (4) death, (5) Schoolboy fees, (6) sick/illness, and (7) the cost of building a house as presented in Table

1. The seven reasons can be grouped into debt that is consumptive in nature (custom, party and house building) and indebted for very precarious reasons (sickness, death, and schoolchildren).

The largest proportion of farmers using *ijon* is due to education financing and *belis* (traditional marriage price) financing. Education is seen as a long-term asset for farming households to lift their children out of poverty. An informant involved in *ijon* said that:

"It's okay that I've been in debt all my life. This debt is for my son's school fees in Makassar. Later, when he becomes a graduate and works, he can make our lives better".

Such answer shows that farmers have a rational choice to expect a better life through improving the resources of their family members. This study was also able to obtain confirmation from a family member who is studying in Makassar regarding the *ijon* practiced by his parents. The college-going family member admitted that to pay college tuition fees, he asked for remittances from his parents. But for the cost of boarding and daily meals, he is willing to work anything to make ends meet while studying.

"I work whatever I can to pay for boarding, food, and other expenses. My father in the village pays for my tuition fees." The student who was implicated in the *ijon* case worked as a manual laborer (an employee of a building materials warehouse) and some worked as a delivery driver.

Investment in education is also practiced by poor farmers in Vietnam and China. In the view of poor farmers, getting out of poverty is the highest aspiration, and they believe that providing opportunities for family members to go to school will eventually free farming families from poverty. The effort to get out of the trap of difficulties is not pursued through the development of agricultural activities but through efforts to switch to other jobs by family members who already have higher education (Keyes, 1983).

The information presented in Figure 1 shows that more than half of informants make loans in the form of *ijon* for the needs and fees of schoolchildren (63.2 percent). If Figure 1 is looked at in the grouping of consumptive reasons and precarious reasons, it appears that consumptive reasons account for 63 percent, and the remaining 37 percent for precarious reasons, namely deaths, sick/ill people, and fees for schoolchildren outside the province.

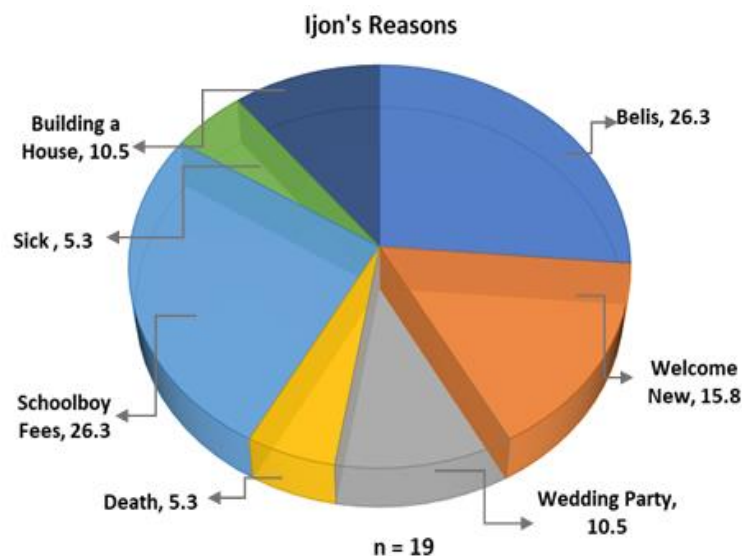


Figure 1. Ijon's Reasons by Rice Landowner

In-depth interviews conducted successfully revealed that *belis* is an unavoidable expense. *Belis* is a piece of luggage when proposing to a girl to become a wife. The groom's family will endeavor to meet a number of requirements to make a prospective wife for the family's children. The size of the *belis* becomes an indicator of the position of a person in society. A woman who comes from an established family will require a fairly high cost for the future husband. In the family view of the family of the future husband's fulfillment of the *belis* is not merely a dowry to ask for, but more than that the *belis* becomes a kind of announcement of the class of the male family. In a sociological discussion, *belis* undergoes commodification (Edu, 2016; Lumbon et al., 2021). *Belis* penetrated from a customary function into a

social position function that can be purchased. To fulfill the regulation, farmers will take a loan method in the form of *ijon* in order to immediately get a fee for *belis*.

This study has successfully revealed that farmers who do *ijon* for the cost of *belis* actually do not find it difficult, they believe that to buy the degree or position of sacrifice in the form of debt is understandable. The pretext for *belis* is issued if the child of the farmer will marry a woman from a higher degree. The cost of the bride is determined by how well the woman's family looks after her child, the bride's education, and the bride-to-be's job. *Ijon* for *belis* was eventually seen as capital to achieve a better position in society even though in economic calculations, the farmers involved in *ijon* were entangled in unfavorable conditions.

The reason of doing *ijon* whose percentage is quite large besides *belis* is the financing of college children in other provinces (26 percent). Most farmers who do *ijon* to finance college children believe that the burden of paying *ijon* debts will be repaid soon if their children become undergraduates and work. Those who study outside East Nusa Tenggara, are generally in Makassar and Surabaya. Information obtained from students in Makassar shows that the urgent need so that parents must owe debt in the form of *ijon* is to meet the needs of Community Service Program (KKN) and thesis exams that are difficult to estimate in time and magnitude. The overseas students said that spending on semester fees can be estimated so that they can set aside a little savings from odd jobs in the city. Jobs that are carried out while studying include being a construction worker, menial work in a restaurant at night, or being a truck driver out of town.

An activity that encourages farmers to go into debt in another *ijon* way is a new welcome event. A new welcome event in Catholic religious rituals is an important stage in the life of a Catholic. The new welcome is also called first communion, a first step for a person to continue his or her faith life as a person who believes in the Catholic faith. A person will not be able to attend subsequent communion if he does not perform the first communion. Generally, first communion is performed when a child is about 8-12 years old which is preceded by a course or faith deepening education. Thus welcoming the new is an important step for a Catholic. A new welcome ceremony or first communion itself doesn't cost much, but it's this new welcome party that sucks up a huge cost. The joy of the family over the first communion of family members is celebrated in such a way that it costs a considerable amount of money. In the view of the peasant, a festive new welcome party will provide confirmation and encouragement to be a Catholic. Farmers whose children or other family members are undergoing a new welcome will do their best to provide the cost for the thanksgiving party. It is on this side that farmers will owe it in the form of *ijon* to enliven their celebrations.

A party for the people in the research area is not just an arena of rejoicing, but can be an arena of recognition of status and an arena of greater binding of social relations. In addition to the new welcome party, the wedding party is the reason a person owes it in the form of *ijon* (10.5 percent). Marriage activities require large costs from the moment of fulfillment of the *belis* to the wedding party. At mating feasts, the greatest expense goes to the provision of pigs and *Moke* (a kind of traditional alcoholic drink). If the wedding party, *belis*, and welcome party are combined in the consumptive expenditure group (party) then a very large percentage can be seen (53 percent). This means that more than half of the expenses that cause farmers to get involved in *ijon* are earmarked for party activities.

An uncommon expense is the expenditure on building a house. In tracing information, there was an acknowledgment of farmers' misunderstanding of government assistance. The government through the Village Housing Renovation Assistance program provides a renovation fee of Rp. 17,000,000 per house. People think that instead of just renovating a house, it is better to build a new house because their yard land is still quite large. The construction of houses costs a lot and there are 10 percent of farmers who do not have enough money to finance the construction of new houses. The way out is to apply for a loan to the people who give *ijon* with the guarantee of their young rice crop in the rice field. If *ijon* is judged to be an unproductive step, it can actually be prevented through monitoring the use of government aid budgets.

As seen in figure 1, there are 7 (seven) reasons why farmers use *ijon*. The seven reasons can be categorized into consumptive and precarious reasons. Consumptive reasons include *belis*, new welcome events, wedding parties, and building houses. Precarious reasons include sickness, death, and children's school fees. Figure 1 shows that the consumptive reason for *ijon* is quite high at 63 percent, while the precarious expenditure is only 37 percent. There is not a single reason for *ijon* for productive needs such as the purchase of seeds, fertilizers, or herbicide/pesticide. The biggest consumptive expenditure on rural communities is not for the development of their farming businesses but to meet the demands of the

custom, such as the 'Rambu Solo' ceremony in Toraja which can cost up to billions of rupiah (Salu et al., 2018; Naisunis et al., 2020).

Ijon's Transactions

The discussion of *ijon* transactions covers two issues: firstly, where and to whom farmers borrow money, and secondly, how prices are set and agreed upon in *ijon* transactions.

With regard to the place of borrowing in the *ijon* practice, the 19 farmers interviewed provided information that most of them chose rice mill owners as the place of borrowing (79 percent) and the least used place of borrowing in the form of Ijon was rice traders. Not all wealthy people in the area are willing to give loans in the form of *ijon*. Those who are willing to give loans in the form of *ijon* are local residents who have a long-standing kinship relationship. There are also lenders who are not local residents but who are married to local women. Money lenders have the following characteristics: they are farmers who own more than 3 hectares of paddy fields, have other businesses including goat and cattle farmers, and are local residents. Of the three groups of *ijon* lenders, the owner of the rice mill is the one to whom borrower farmers owe the most (Figure 2).

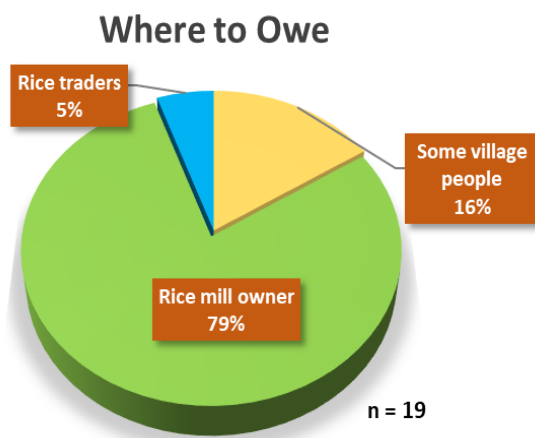


Figure 2. Where to Owe

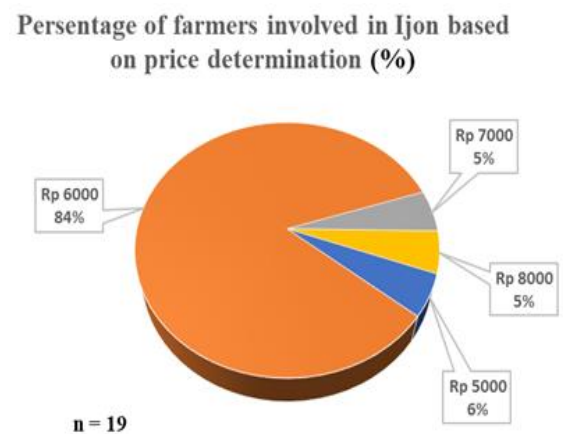


Figure 3. Farmers Involve in Ijon based on price determination (%)

Indebted farmers declare that the choice of whom to go to when applying for loans is based on considerations of kinship, the purpose of the loan, the size of the loan, and the frequency of lending. The kinship that farmers mean is not due to blood ties, but to social proximity. The purpose of the loan is also a consideration for farmers to determine which door to knock for *ijon*. On spending on new *belis* or welcome farmers tend to borrow funds from owners of capital that still have family ties. But for schoolchildren, wedding parties or building houses, the intended address is on the *ijon* actor who has a large capital. For large loan amounts (more than 10 million) they will go to the same village people. This group saves a lot of cash because they have extensive rice fields and are successful cattle breeders. But behind the available cash, the requirements given are quite onerous. Rice prices will be cut by 50 percent of the prevailing price, and if they fail several times, They are socially sanctioned as people who cannot be trusted. Because they cannot be trusted, there will be no one to lend to if the farmer needs help.

Lenders who act as owners of rice mills are indeed the main address when farmers need funds. The results of this study show that rice mill owners know well the character of farmers who use their rice milling services. In addition, they can find out the quality of rice so that the estimated price of rice in *ijon* transactions can be estimated easily. Rice mill owners dare to lend between 5 million-10 million according to their rice production capacity. Not all loan requests will be approved. Rice mill owners will check the frequency with which farmers grind their rice. The frequency and amount of rice milled determines how much assets farmers have. From these observations, the owner of the rice mill can determine the upper limit of the loan proposed by the farmer. So, the debt requests submitted are not always approved, "I have to estimate that farmers have harvest. Let him have a lot of land, if he is lazy,

the harvest will not be much, I must not give him a lot of debt", explained one of the *ijon* actor and owners of the rice mill.

The price of rice set as collateral during *ijon* transactions varies between Rp 5,000-Rp 8,000 per kilogram (Figure 3). The rice that is the collateral for debt is only one type, the Mamberamo rice whose price is quite high. The price of Mamberamo rice at the farmer level is priced at Rp 10,000 per kilogram. This rice is a first-class rice and agronomically can live well in XYZ village of East Nusa Tenggara Province.

This study successfully revealed that the lender set a price of Rp 8,000 per kilogram on farmers' loans due to three considerations: first, the urgent need to care for families who are sick and there is death; secondly, the age of rice is approaching harvest; and thirdly, loans are not in large amounts. *Ijon* actor felt that the need for the sick and dead meant farmers needed to be helped. "I think for the sick and dead, I estimate the price of rice highly, I calculate that I help reduce their cost of care".

The general price for *ijon* is Rp 6,000 per kilogram while the price of rice at harvest is around Rp 10,000 per kilogram (84%). This price means that it is 40 percent lower than the actual price. Repaying debts with rice that is still not harvested causes farmers to lose the opportunity to receive income by 40 percent. This percentage is very large considering the average profit from the business. Rice can afford profit 62-76 percent/growing season/ha (Ma'ruf et al., 2019; Ulma et al., 2020). This means that in each loan, farmers will bear a huge profit reduction. The main reason why the plant suppresses prices by up to 40 percent is because the age of the plants is still too young so the risk of crop failure is quite large. If the crop fails then the one who gives the foothold is the one who loses a lot. *Ijon* lenders are bound by an agreement that payments are made in the form of rice so that if the harvest fails it means that the payment is postponed until the next harvest. This rule has been agreed upon by both sides.

Farmers' engagement in *ijon* should also be seen in the broader context of the consequences of *ijon* on land ownership and labor in the agricultural sector. The study found that in terms of land ownership, there is no transfer of ownership due to *ijon*. Farmers continue to own their land, but what they do on their land is to repay their loans to the *ijon* lender. In practice, farmers no longer have excess funds for agricultural production costs so that rice productivity does not rise. To cover household expenses, farmers have two ways: borrow again (*ijon*) or start another business in livestock and other informal sectors in rural areas.

The Formation of Structures due to The Practice of Ijon

As is well known, social practice from the perspective of Agency-Structuration theory strongly emphasizes the blending of agency and structure, both of which are inseparable, and thus there is a duality between agents and structures. Agency is an actor who is in one realm and they interact with each other to form and strengthen the structure. Agency in the context of this study are farmers and capital owners in *ijon padi* transactions in East Nusa Tenggara. Large structures are always built from three clusters of supporting structures that are always repeated in social practices across time and space, namely signification, domination and legitimation. The structure of signification relates to symbolic schemata and discourse. The structure of domination includes the schemata of control over people (politics) and goods (economy), while the structure of legitimation includes the schemata of normative rules that take place and are agreed upon by agents and structures (Arifin, 2014; Juliantono & Munandar, 2016; Priyono, 2016). These three structures occur randomly, not necessarily sequentially. In the study of Punggawa Sawi relations in South Sulawesi, the sequence of structures starts from signification, domination, and ends with legitimation. Meanwhile, the structure seen in the transformation of indigenous people into a tourist village in Wonokotri goes through a cluster of structures of domination, signification and legitimation (Arifin, 2014; Handono, 2019).

At the level of theoretical abstraction, this study shows that the formation of structures begins with borrowing money which will be paid after the crops are harvested (the practice of *ijon*). This activity happens continuously and reproduces the structure of allocative resources, namely the means of lending money between farmers and *ijon* providers. The reproduction of structures from allocative resources is then known as a form of domination structure which then gives meaning or awareness to farmers and forced laborers that farmers are the ones who always need loans while the small number of forced settlers are the ones who have to provide loans when farmers need them. The understanding of this situation in Giddens' view is a form of significance structure in which two parties are aware of their respective

positions and attempt to perpetuate that position (production and reproduction of significance structures). The significant structure produced in the practice of *ijon* is in the form of perception of each actor to accept the fact that only the *ijon* can fulfill the urgent needs of farmers, which in the end they agree voluntarily that the *ijon* is the actor in power and the farmer is the party who has to accept the decision of the current price of rice as payment in the practice of *ijon*. This situation is a legitimizing structure for the practice of *ijon* which continues to happen in East Nusa Tenggara. The legitimacy structure prevents farmers from realizing their advantages as sovereign land owners. They only recognize themselves as the party who must accept the low bonded *ijon* prices and forget that they hold a higher status as farmers, as land-owner farmers.

In the practice of *ijon* in East Nusa Tenggara, when landowning farmers need funds quickly and without strict administrative requirements, this relationship has resulted in an agreement and understanding that if farmers are in trouble, lenders, especially rice mill owners, are the most appropriate people to reach out to in order to ensure the availability of the funds needed. This study found that the relationship between farmers and lenders can be seen at the level of domination. Since the farmer is in a position of needing cash and the lender is the party that holds power over what the farmer wants, any rules imposed by the lenders will be obeyed by the farmer. One rule that is clearly visible is the price at the time of return. Farmers become price takers who have no other choice but to follow the lenders, while lenders are the price makers. The lender is in a state of control over compliance and gets to determine the economic price. This relationship is a clear structure of domination.

This relationship is mutually maintained and perpetuated by the continuous agreement of both parties in the form of a loan to be paid with paddy at a low price. The farmer feels that he is being helped and the lenders does not object or fear the possibility of farmers who default on loans. In the perspective of Agency-Structuration theory, this relationship is at the level of significance. Farmers who need a loan immediately know and have no doubt to whom they should go to. Those who own rice mills are a sign of abundant resource ownership, so it is believed that the rice mill owners, rice traders, and local traders will not reject farmers' requests for loans of any size and under any conditions. Capital owners, in this case lenders, do not hesitate to provide loans because they know that farmers who can borrow money are landowners. Lenders do not dare to give loans in the form of *ijon* to tenant farmers. Land ownership (even if farmers do not show their land certificates) is considered sufficient collateral to provide loans. This study found that moneylenders have a strong belief that farmers will not default on their *ijon* loans because they own the land capital.

In addition to the structures of signification and domination, the Agency-Structure approach has one more structure, which is legitimation, that includes the schemata of normative rules that are applied between agencies and structures. This normative schema in turn is an invisible force that strengthens the other two structures. Owner farmers who engage in continuous *ijon* have no room to escape from *ijon*. Their land will not be taken over by the lenders. In-depth interviews with lenders revealed that they would not confiscate their land. If the land is confiscated, there is no certainty that there are farmers who will manage the confiscated land. Therefore, the lenders let the owner farmers plant the rice to continuously pay their debts. In this way, although the lenders do not technically take over the land, it seems as if they visibly own it. On the other hand, the landowners who work almost around the clock to pay their debts (the *ijon* practice) appear to be workers or farm laborers on their own land. This is the fourth status of land ownership. This relationship happens continuously and then unwittingly becomes a normative scheme that shows how *ijon* relations are supposed to be practiced.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that farmers who are trapped by *Ijon* are typical of farmers in Indonesia, namely old farmers with small plots of land and low education levels. Those trapped in bonded labor are identified as landowning farmers. The prolonged trapped in *ijon* is caused by the urgent needs: (1) paying *belis*, (2) new welcome parties, (3) wedding parties, (4) death, (5) Schoolboy fees, (6) sick/illness, and (7) the cost of building a house. These reasons could be categorized into consumptive (63 percent) and precarious reasons (37 percent). The price for *ijon* is Rp 6,000 per kilogram while the price of rice at harvest is around Rp 10,000 per kilogram (84%). This price means that it is 40 percent lower than the actual price. Farmers will work to repay their debts for a long time as the accumulation of loans continues. The landowners who work almost around the clock to repay their debts (the *ijon* practice) appear to be workers or farm laborers on their own land.

The agency structure relation explains how a social reality of *ijon* is built through structures signification, domination and legitimation. But if it is examined further at the level of land ownership (agrarian aspect), it can be seen how vulnerable narrow landowner farmers are in fulfilling their needs. The reality of Ijon illustrates that land ownership can backfire, tying farmers in a prolonged cycle of debt and to pay off their debts landowners seem to become sharecroppers on their own land. Landowning farmers who are in debt bondage (*ijon*) do not become landless farmers, but they still have the status of farmers who own land. However, their power over their land has been handed over to the lenders. This study can finally show a pseudo land transfer mechanism in the rice farming community.

The study found that *ijon* activities do not require formal conditions, but they are equally aware that land ownership status is a prerequisite for *ijon*, which puts farmers at a disadvantage. The study, therefore, recommends that the government enhance the role of rural credit institutions by emulating how moneylenders facilitate farmers' access to them, but at a reasonable price difference.

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