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## Strengthening Rice Farmers' Social Capital in Increasing Agricultural Productivity

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the pattern of strengthening social capital in increasing agricultural productivity in Tridana Mulya Village. The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach with data collection techniques including interviews, observation, and documentation. In this study, 19 rice farmers were used as informants. The results showed that the strategy of strengthening the social capital of rice farmers in increasing agricultural productivity in Tridhana Mulya Village included mutual trust and cooperation. The mutual trust of rice farmers in Tridhana Mulya Village is in the form of providing agricultural business capital, increasing the work ethic of rice farmers, increasing farmers' tenacity in farming, and allocation of working hours by farmers. While strengthening social capital through cooperation, namely cooperation in maintaining facilities and infrastructure, cooperation in working on rice fields and the use of livestock manure for fertilizer, cooperation in maintaining agricultural hygiene, and cooperation in maintaining the cleanliness of agricultural irrigation.

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as an agricultural country where most of the people work as farmers. With the support of fertile land and soil, the agricultural sector in Indonesia is considered very promising. The agricultural sector in Indonesia plays an important role in improving the economic sector and meeting basic food needs (Virgawati, 2012; Putri et al., 2020). Therefore, the farming community has an important role in the structure of national economic development.

Farming communities in Indonesia are generally located in rural areas, either as farmers who own land or as laborers or cultivators. Apart from this category, farming communities in Indonesia can also be classified into two categories, namely traditional farmers and modern farmers (Niska, et al., 2012; Smil, 2017). Traditional farmers (peasants), namely farmers who are still

dependent and controlled by nature because of their low level of knowledge and technology. Their production is more intended for a business to support the family, not to pursue profit (profit-oriented). Meanwhile, modern farmers (farmers or agricultural entrepreneurs) are groups of farmers whose business is aimed at pursuing profit (profit-oriented), where they have used modern technology and management systems and planted commodities that sell well in the market.

In the perspective of social capital, traditional farming communities prioritize cooperation rather than modern farming communities. Social capital is defined as a set of values and norms that live in a group or community as a common grip (Fukuyama, 1999). Values and norms rooted in culture and religious teachings will encourage people to work together, reciprocate on good terms, and strengthen a social institution (Fukuyama, 2002).

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, in his work entitled *The Forms of Capital* (1986), states that social capital is an important component in building situations in society. Coleman (1990) explains that social values will be a guide for a group of people to interact. Cohen and Prusak (2001) assert that social capital is a stock of active relationships between communities. In general, experts agree that the main sources of cultivating social capital in society are social and cultural factors, as well as people's experiences in interacting with other parties, in addition to physical and economic factors.

The results of previous studies show that social capital is a resource owned by farmers in increasing their agricultural productivity. Farming communities generally have farmer groups association known as *Gapoktan* (Azizah et al., 2019; Puspita et al., 2020) as important capital to build and maintain the integrity and social life of farmer groups and help these groups develop properly. Farmers' social capital is a social energy that is used for the benefit of agricultural development. In addition, social capital for farmers contributes to creating a variety of social obligations and a climate of mutual trust.

Empirically, the people of Tridhana Mulya Village, Landon District, South Konawe Regency, show the characteristics of traditional agriculture, where farmers generally still cultivate the agricultural system manually. To increase productivity, they always strengthen the tradition of working together, from the process of planting rice to harvest time. In addition to cooperation in agricultural management, they also cooperate and help each other when one of them is struck by a disaster. Cooperation in the farming community in Tridhana Mulya Village is widely developed among various ethnic groups, namely Javanese, Balinese, Tolakinese, and Buginese.

Sociologically, solidarity in the farming community in Tridhana Mulya Village is still strongly bound where the need for cooperation and mutual support is still well-maintained in this modern era. This is a picture of a harmonious farming community life, and no less important is that strengthening social capital can increase agricultural productivity. On that basis, the author intends to describe the typology of strengthening

social capital in rice farming communities in Tridhana Mulya Village.

## **METHODS**

This research was conducted in Tridhana Mulya Village, South Konawe Regency. The consideration for choosing this village is that geographically and monographically this village shows the characteristics of a farming community that still maintains its social capital. Methodologically, this research uses a qualitative approach to explain social reality in-depth and distinctively (Asaka & Awarun, 2020). Data were collected through observation and interview techniques, then data analysis was carried out as intended by Miles and Huberman (1994).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Currently, globalization continues to advance to various dimensions of human life. Not only on the technological, economic, political aspects but also the cultural dimension, including the culture of rural communities (Guzman & Woodgate, 2013; Kasanga et al., 2019). Globalization in rural communities, especially farmers, is often found in the form of agricultural modernization. This is intended to increase agricultural productivity. But on the other hand, it causes a decrease in social capital and an increase in individualism (Berking & Knowlton, 2012; Himawan et al., 2019).

It is different from the farming community in Tridhana Village, South Konawe Regency, where the community still adheres to the principles of cooperation and mutual trust in managing their agricultural land. The results of this study indicate that the two principles are used by the rice farming community in Tridhana Mulya Village as a strategy in increasing their agricultural productivity. Therefore, the theoretical approach that underlies the analysis in this article is the typology of social capital as intended by Woolcock (1998), including bonding social capital, bridging social capital, and linking social capital.

### **Strengthening of Bonding Social Capital**

Bonding social capital is a type of social capital with the characteristics of a strong bond (social glue) in a social system. Bonding social capital describes the type of social bond that is formed in the context of the same thoughts, perceptions, values, and culture (homogeneity).

Therefore, this type of social capital looks inward rather than outwardly. The strength of social capital in this type of bond is more specific only to the dimensions of the internal unity of certain social groups. For that, every element or member of a group or community can take advantage of this energy in the form of support in all social activities.

Practically, strengthening social bond capital creates a perspective or perception for individuals who have the same identity, for example, feelings of one region, ethnicity, religion, including the same feelings as farmers, thus creating a sense of moral obligation to help each other. In the context of rice farmers in Tridhana Mulya Village, he described various collaborative activities including cooperation in maintaining agricultural production facilities, cooperation in cultivating agricultural land, and cooperation in maintaining the cleanliness of agricultural areas.

1. Cooperation in the maintenance of agricultural production facilities

Agricultural production facilities such as rice milling machines and hand tractors are facilities and infrastructure that cannot be separated from the activities of rice farmers. Therefore, to increase agricultural production, the farmers in Tridhana Mulya Village always cooperate in maintaining these facilities and infrastructure. The use of agricultural tools and machines is needed to increase efficiency in farming, such as the use of tractors for tillage. In general, rice farmers in Tridhana Mulya Village use tractors to cultivate their agricultural land, and a small number of them plow their fields using animals such as cows and buffalo.

2. Cooperation in cultivating agricultural land

The cooperation of rice farmers in Tridhana Mulya Village can also be seen in the processing of agricultural land. Cooperation in land management carried out by rice farmers in this village includes plowing the land, planting rice, fertilizing, harvesting, including cooperation in processing agricultural products by jointly bringing agricultural products to the rice mill. Although in this modern era there are various types of inorganic fertilizers available, rice farmers in this village still use organic fertilizers from livestock manure. Together they process and use livestock manure as a basic ingredient for fertilizer. In addition to being cost-effective, the use of cow dung as fertilizer is also

based on the consideration that organic fertilizer can produce rice that is tastier, healthier, and environmentally friendly.

3. Cooperation in maintaining agricultural cleanliness

The grass that grows between rice plants is very disturbing the growth of rice plants. Therefore, rice farmers intensively clean up their agricultural areas. In addition to disrupting the growth rate, the grass is also a nest for pests such as rats, birds, and stink bugs. This collaboration is carried out by farmers in Tridhana Mulya Village every week to eradicate rats and grasshoppers that attack their crops. In addition to cooperation in cleaning rice fields, they also work together in cleaning irrigation. By cleaning the irrigation, the flow of water to the fields will be smooth and increase the growth of rice plants. Irrigation cleaning around Tridana Mulya Village is carried out periodically when garbage accumulates and blocks the irrigation gate.

**Strengthening of Bridging Social Capital**

In addition to strengthening internal social capital, external social capital is also required. It is intended to bridge or connect (bridging social capital) strength and energy through social relations between various elements or different social groups (heterogeneity). Bridging social capital is a social bond that arises as a reaction to various group characteristics. This type of social capital power is built on norms and beliefs that are passed down from generation to generation as a common grip.

The energy of bridging social capital opens the widest possible space to maximize the potential possessed both from within (internally) and from outside (externally) a group, community, sector, and others. In this condition, hatred towards different ethnicities, races, cultures, and ways of thinking is at a minimum. Each member of the group has an open attitude and view and always follows the development of the world outside the community group (outward-looking). The principles that underlie the strengthening of universal bridging social capital are the values of togetherness, freedom, and humanity.

The value of equality emphasizes that every member of a community group has the same rights and obligations. Each group decision is based on the agreement of each group member. Community group leaders only carry out agreements that have

been determined by group members. Then the value of freedom means that each group member is free to express opinions and ideas to develop the group. The climate of freedom created allows creative ideas that can enrich collective ideas that grow in groups. Likewise, human values emphasize respect for the human rights of each member and other people which is a basic principle in the development of community groups. The strong will to help others, feel the suffering of others, empathize with the situations faced by others are the basics of the idea of humanity.

In the context of rice farmers in Tridhana Mulya Village, the type of social capital that is bridging is the existence of multiethnic cooperation (plurality) in cultivating their agricultural land. Cooperation is not only within certain ethnic groups but is built among all ethnic groups (Tolaki, Balinese, Javanese, and Bugis). The context of this social capital greatly facilitates farmers in managing their agriculture, and what is no less important is that collaboration in this multicultural context provides a space for sharing experiences on farming systems between the various tribes in Tridhana Mulya Village.

Therefore, strengthening bridging social capital can make a major contribution to the development of progress and community strength, especially in bridging the functioning of other assets. In addition, strengthening bridging social capital can build and develop social relations between various other social groups.

Thus, strengthening social capital both internally and externally is a set of horizontal relationships between people who influence community productivity, in this case, the rice farming community in Tridhana Mulya Village. This relationship includes a network of civic bonds and social norms (Putnam, 1993). The results of studies in many countries show that with the growth of this form of bridging social capital it is possible to develop in many dimensions of life, control corruption, make government work more efficient (Graeff & Svendsen, 2013; Carmeci et al., 2021; Mtiraoui, 2021), accelerate the success of poverty reduction efforts (Barassou et al., 2013; Ijaiya et al., 2016; Islam & Alam, 2018), the quality of human life will improve and the nation will become much more prosperous. strong.

According to Agnistch et al (Birendra et al. 2018), that the optimal effect of bonding and bridging social capital is the building of community resilience. Clifford asserts that for social capital to be effective, the strength between bonding bonds (roots) and bridging bonds (paths) must be in a balanced condition (Wynne, 2007).

#### **Strengthening of Linking Social Capital**

As an effort to increase agricultural productivity, strengthening social capital is not only needed from internal and external cooperation but also requires cooperation from various levels of social statuses. This social relationship between several levels of power or social status is what is meant as linking social capital. In the context of farming communities, relationships or networks have an important role in increasing agricultural productivity. The relationship between the rice farming community in Tridhana Mulya Village is established between landowner farmers and sharecroppers, and between farmer groups and agricultural extension workers.

Because social networks and relations are important in increasing farmer productivity, it is necessary to support trust, especially between landowners and sharecroppers. A society with high trust can organize its work on a flexible and group-oriented basis with more responsibilities delegated to lower organizational levels (Fukuyama, 1999). Fukuyama (2002), asserts that the most important element in social capital is the trust which is the glue for the sustainability of social relations in community groups. With trust, people will be able to work together more effectively. Thus, trust for farmer groups is an asset in increasing the activities of the farmer groups themselves.

When beliefs and beliefs dominate individuals and groups, it will be possible to create responsible lives among human beings so that they can act responsibly and will strengthen group solidarity. Without mutual trust, no synergy or interaction requires better results, group members will not share ideas and expertise with other members, personal interests will overcome common interests, and the spirit of togetherness will be stronger. Putnam (2003) states that nations that have high social capital tend to be more efficient and effective in carrying out various policies to prosper and advance the lives of their people.

Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive in providing material benefits to individuals linked to other individuals and groups (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putman, 2003). Likewise in agricultural activities, social capital also determines the level of productivity as other forms of capital. However, agricultural activities, especially rice plants, need togetherness and cooperation both horizontally and vertically.

The results of this study also strengthen the views of experts about the importance of social capital in a community, including the farming community in Tridana Mulya Village. Social capital is a resource that is owned by individuals who come from group interactions because of trust, reciprocity, and cooperation (Carpenter, 2004). Increased production through strengthening social capital also reinforces the view that social capital is an investment in social relations that is expected to provide benefits in the market mechanism (Lin, 2001).

**Social Capital, Work Ethic, and Productivity**

Strengthening social capital for rice farmers in Tridhana Mulya Village as described above also has implications for improving work ethic. Work ethic shows the motivation and drive that underlies a person to do work (Yokoyama & Ali, 2019). Based on the results of the study, it is known that the work ethic of farmers in Tridana Mulya Village creates a sense of mutual trust between landowners and sharecroppers. The high work ethic of farmers in Tridana Mulya Village is based on the spirit to increase crop yields so as not to disappoint the landowners.

The high work ethic of farmers in Tridana Mulya Village can be seen from their hard work in increasing agricultural productivity from year to year as shown in the following table.

Table of Increase in Rice Production in Tridhana Mulya Village

No	Rice Fields in Tridana Mulya Village	
	Year	Product (Ton)
1	2015	940
2	2016	1024
3	2017	1050
4	2018	1100
5	2019	1276
Quantity		5390

Source: PPL Tridana Mulya Village, 2019

Based on the data above, it shows that the production of agricultural products has increased for 5 consecutive years. This increase is an implication of social capital that has been entrenched for years. Social capital as an asset of the farming community in Tridhana Mulya Village triggers the tenacity or work ethic of farmers. This confirms that high tenacity can increase agricultural productivity. If the farmer is tenacious then the landowner can trust him because he works very hard. The high work ethic of rice farmers in Tridhana Mulya Village can be seen from the allocation of working hours used. Generally, farmers in Tridhana Mulya Village work from morning to evening.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that social capital in rural communities, especially rice farmers, significantly increases farmer productivity. Strengthening social capital is an important asset that needs to be maintained. Three social capitals have an important role in increasing farmer productivity, namely bonding social capital, bridging social capital, and linking social capital. These three social capitals encourage the creation of a high work ethic which in turn results in increased agricultural products.

The existence of social capital in rice farmers is principally determined by a series of values and norms, mutual trust, social networks, responsibility, and cooperation. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the relationship on an ongoing basis between bonding, bridging, and linking social capital to achieve an increase in agricultural production. This strengthening is not only for rice farmers in Tridhana Mulya Village but also for farming communities in other areas. Strengthening social capital is very important in responding to the currents of change in society, both in sharpening the sense of sociality from today's globalization, where people tend to rely on technology.

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