

## The Strategy of Turmeric and Ginger Farmers at Pasrujambe Village During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims at finding out the attempts of turmeric and ginger farmers at Pasrujambe village of Senduro sub-district in Lumajang Regency during COVID-19 pandemic that has a severe impact on every sector, including spices market. The pandemic has caused a significant decrease in spices price. Therefore, the farmers need to make some strategies and changes to adapt to the current situation that result in their profit decrease due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study applied the AGIL Talcot Parson theory to analyze the interview and observation data result from several farmers as the subject of the study. The analysis result shows that farmers have developed a new method to process turmeric and ginger into tea product as an alternative healthy drink that is considered suitable for the current market related to the pandemic situation.

**Keywords :** *Covid-19, farmer, price, spices*

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## INTRODUCTION

The world is now suffering from a severe disaster; the COVID-19 has made all nations, including Indonesia, paralyzed. The number of patients that are confirmed to be positive COVID-19 per May 21, 2020, has reached 134.490 people; this means that social interaction becomes less among people (Line: 2020). This pandemic affects the economic sector; the unemployment rate has increased significantly from 5.3% to 7.7% from a total of 3.5 million people included in the open unemployment group (Aam: 2020). One of the sector that suffers from this pandemic is the spices farmers; their profit decreases to 75% from the regular income due to uneven market distribution as a result of the outbreak (Deny: 2020). Among many areas that suffer from the situation, the Pasrujambe village in Senduro sub-district of Lumajang regency also has its spices farmers to experience similar economic distress.

Natural resources have become one of the income-generating aspects for Pasrujambe village; the most prominent one is the spices agriculture that provides many benefits. This type of crops cultivates various kind of spices, such as ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), turmeric, Javanese ginger (*Curcuma zanthorrhiza*), blue ginger (*Alpinia galangal*), and clove. The farmers sell their yield to the merchant or collecting traders from the market. Before the outbreak, the price for turmeric was around Rp. 5.000 and for ginger reached Rp.40.000 per kilogram of the crops. After the pandemic outbreak, the prices of the crops dropped significantly that the farmers have experienced a loss until 75% of the total cost for plant tending. Turmeric price that previously was Rp.5000/kg has now dropped to Rp. 1000/ kg, while the ginger price dropped to Rp. 30000/kg from previously Rp. 40,000/kg.

The current situation is in contrast with price in the market, where the spices price is relatively still high; Rp.10,000/kg for turmeric and Rp50,000/kg for ginger. The price gap between the one in the collecting trader and the market is a result of the extraordinary market demand that is unlike the typical situation before the pandemic occurred. The drop in collecting trader demand for spices is because they only can sell 5 kg of crops per day compared to the previous sales of 20 kg/day. This situation occurs due to the decrease in the number of consumers in the market because they prefer to do groceries shopping from home via online service. On the other hand, many restaurants are now closed has a significant contribution to the decrease of the spices demand as they used to be one of the biggest markets for the spices product. Based on various studies, spices like ginger and turmeric, have high nutrition contents and can bring benefit for health in the form of traditional herbal medicine. Based on a study by Ester (2019), turmeric has several benefits as a traditional medicine commonly consumed by people; it can reduce inflammation effect, lessen the stiffness in the body part, and joint swelling. According to Wayan (2019), ginger as herbal medicine can be used to treat vertigo, nausea, travel sickness (also known as motion sickness), menstrual disorders, cancer, and heart disease.

Based on several studies mentioned before, it can be concluded that ginger and turmeric have many benefits and is are useful for traditional herbal medicine and drinks for health. Therefore, ginger and turmeric can have a high economic value after being processed into healthy drinks products. The idea of processing the spices into healthy drink products can be a prominent solution to overcome the low price due to the pandemic crisis of COVID-19 outbreak. This finally can give positive impact towards the spices farmers, especially ginger and turmeric growers in Pasrujambe village whose income has dropped significantly due to the pandemic outbreak.

## METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach to describe the obtained data in detail. The Pasrujambe is selected to be the subject of the study due to its abundance of crop products of ginger and turmeric; it is one of the biggest spices suppliers in Lumajang Regency.

Field observation was conducted to obtain data at Pasrujambe village. The observation is to find out about the catchment area of ginger and turmeric growers at Pasrujambe village, the cultivation and harvesting systems, and also to find out parties related to the harvesting time. The research has become more interesting to conduct because it occurs during the pandemic outbreak, which has an indirect impact on the spices farmers in Pasrujambe village in particular, and other regions in general. The most significant effect of the pandemic experience by farmers of Pasrujambe village is that the prices of the crops dropped significantly, resulting in the need to find out the solution to overcome the issue.

In completing the method in analyzing the phenomena, the study also uses the structural-functionalism perspective by Talcot Parson through the AGIL concept (Poloma: 2010). Through the AGIL concept, it is possible to find out the strategies applied even during the pandemic outbreak as currently, it is also possible to figure out the parties that are involved in the process, and also the adjustment and system to realize the program and purpose of the innovation being planned.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### **The Strategy of Turmeric and Ginger Farmers at Pasrujambe Village During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Based on the interview result with the spices farmers in Pasrujambe village of Senduro sub-district in Lumajang regency, the price of harvest yield has dropped significantly, and the growers suffer up to 75% of the total plant tending cost. The lost is the calculation result of the farmers' total expenses from the initial stage of the cultivation until the harvesting time, including the labour expense to do the harvest.

The planting seed with five personnel in four days cost averagely Rp.1.500.000, while the plant tending for ten months takes approximately Rp

2.000.000 per month. The yield of the cultivation of the spice can reach up to five tons with a basic price to the collecting trader Rp. 5.000/kg for turmeric and Rp. 40.000/kg for ginger. During the harvesting time, the turmeric growers can achieve Rp. 25.000.000 while the ginger grower Rp. 200.000.000. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic outbreak, farmers lost a significant amount of their profit; the turmeric growers only receive around Rp. 5.000.000, and the ginger growers can earn approximately Rp. 150.000.000. Each crop suffers a loss of Rp. 20.000.000 and Rp. 50.000.000 from the total profit compared to the normal situation. As an addition, the total income does not include the seed procurement yet.

According to the observation result in the traditional central market of Lumajang regency, the sales of spices, just like ginger and turmeric, have dropped after the pandemic outbreak. The sellers are having difficulty in selling their product due to fewer consumers and food stalls that usually in high demand for spices for their menus and also as the raw material of traditional herbal drink. As a result, the spices vendor in the market reduces their ginger and turmeric stock to avoid risking the damage potential for their products because it needs more time to it due to the pandemic outbreak.

There have been various attempts by the spices farmers to minimize the risks they face after the pandemic outbreak by prolong the harvesting time more than ten months, nevertheless the effort is not effective because it takes more cost for the plant tending. Prolonging the harvest time is proven not to affect the price in the market. The harvesting after more than ten months of planting time makes the crops cannot be sold at a high price because it is already included in the super quality. This practice makes the spices farmers do not have any option other than following the price from the collecting traders. A small profit is better than not getting anything for the spices farmers even though they have spent more cost on planting the crops compared to the benefit that they receive.

Due to that condition, spices farmers, in Pasrujambe village, are to think and set their thought creatively. Additionally, they have to dig out the ways to sell their products at reasonable prices; consequently, they can stabilize their economic condition. To deal with the problems, spices farmers collaborate with *Karang taruna* (youth organization). Then, they come up with the idea to make ginger turmeric tea, then named *jakun tea*. *Jakun tea* has two primary ingredients; ginger and turmeric, which is added with moringa as an additional ingredient. Furthermore, *Jakun tea* can utilize existing raw ingredients with an economical selling value which is accepted by the market.

The name *Jakun* comes from the acronym from *jahe* (ginger) and *kunyit* (turmeric). By the same token, they believe that *jakun* is a catchy name, and it can grab people's interest to buy it. Furthermore, they use moringa as an additional ingredient because Pasrujambe village has a lot of moringas. Additionally, villagers never consume moringa because they think that moringa is inedible. They also believe that moringa can only be used for removing implants (false belief), and they use it for animal feed (Anwar: 2007). Therefore, they use moringa as an additional ingredient to dispel villagers' false beliefs about moringa. Moringa contains protein, calcium, iron, and vitamin A (Dewi: 2016). In

a nutshell, this product is right to consume during the COVID-19 pandemic because it can help people to stay healthy and keep their immune system.

According to the perspective of Talcot Parson's functional structural, to keep the system running well and consistent, there has to be good cooperation amid elements. Moreover, to attain the goals in increasing the prices of ginger and turmeric during COVID-19 pandemic, spice farmers have to adapt to the situation by learning new things on how to cultivate ginger and turmeric to be an economical product. Also, spice farmers adapt to collaborate with *Karang taruna* (youth organization) by sharing their ideas to make *jakun tea*. The last is the maintenance and strategic steps. It is to achieve all elements and make them last long (latency) by implementing some vital steps.

Strategic steps comprise two stages:

a. Socialization stage

The socialization stage is utilized to introduce *jakun tea* to spice farmers. Socialization is done by, first, delivering material about the contents and benefits of ginger, turmeric, and moringa. Moreover, the socialization stage explains the reason why ginger, turmeric, and moringa can be used as a tea. Next, the second socialization done to spice farmers and *Karang taruna* is about how to make *jakun tea* and how to sell it. This stage purpose of increasing the profit of ginger and turmeric harvest.

b. Training stage

Packaging, *jakun tea* is packaged using a teabag. Each tea bag contains 2 grams. The tea bag is put into an aluminum foil. An aluminum foil contains 10 bags, so each package contains 20 grams. The last stage is pressing the aluminum foil to prevent the teabag from the air. Thus, it can last for a more extended period.



**Picture 1. The packaging design of *Jakun tea***



**Picture 2. Product design of brewed *Jakun tea***

Marketing, *karang taruna* (youth organization) organizes the marketing of *jakun tea*. They use online media such as Instagram, Facebook, Shopee, Tokopedia, and Lazada. It can give more benefits because as a millennial *Karang taruna* knows better about the internet/ an online platform compared to generation X or baby boomers. Moreover, *Karang taruna* has more links in social media; they have their followers and many friends on their social media. Accordingly, they can get more consumers or buyers.

## CONCLUSION

The COVID- 19 pandemics that struck almost all over the world, including Indonesia, have an impact on the people's economy. In Pasrujambe Village, farmers of ginger and turmeric are one of the affected sectors. Hence, the selling price of ginger and turmeric is dramatically down, and the selling price is lower than usual. Due to this situation, the ginger and turmeric spice farmers collaborate with *Karang taruna* to create creative ideas. They utilize abundant ginger and turmeric products to make tea products called *Jakun tea* which have a higher economic value. Moreover, *Jakun tea* products will only succeed in the market following the initial goal, when the spice farmers and *Karang taruna* are solid in terms of production, and marketing sales

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our gratitude to the editorial team and reviewers of the Indonesian Journal of Digital Society (IJDS) who have chosen our articles and publications in Volume 1 Number 2 of 2020. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be able to publish our articles.

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