Salasika
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SPPQT Program Evaluation for Food Access and Food Choice for the Elderly in the SPPQT Empowerment Areas

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ABSTRACT

The increasing number of the elderly population also causes an increase in various diseases, including malnutrition. To overcome this, the food choice for the elderly in their environment must be considered. Moreover, the elderly tend to experience decreased access to nutrition and healthy food because of their physical limitations. In 1999, Serikat Paguyuban Petani Qaryah Thayyibah (SPPQT) was formed for farmer groups to connect its members and distribute food through its empowerment program. This study aims to evaluate the role of SPPQT’s empowerment for the elderly to increase the food supply, which impacts access and food choice for the elderly. This study involved five participants. The result is that SPPQT has no responsibility for meeting food needs, including food selection and access for all farmers, including the elderly. The SPPQT program is only limited to farmer empowerment involving elderly farmers. However, access to food for all farmers, including the elderly farmers, is good. Yet, the selection of food for elderly farmers is not yet varied. Therefore, it is recommended that SPPQT should develop an empowerment program for the provision of food for older farmers and an increase in knowledge capacity related to food supply through access and selection of food for SPPQT’s elderly assisted groups.

KEYWORDS: food supply, elderly people, SPPQT program

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Indonesia will experience an increase in the population above 60 years old—the elderly age standard—by 28.7 million or 11.34% in 2020 and will be the highest in the world in 2025, reaching 41.4%. Data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2015 showed that the number of elderly people in Indonesia reached 20.24 million (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2015). The primary health problem experienced by the older is malnutrition. One of the causes of malnutrition is the food choice in the environment (Yuniarti et al.,
2013). The environment where the elderly live is good for food availability and can help the elderly fulfill healthy and nutritious food (Byker Shanks et al., 2017). The selection of food that is not appropriate and does not vary will affect the food intake obtained by the elderly. The choice that is not selective will make it difficult for the elderly to digest food as the digestive absorption is weakened (Ningtyias et al., 2010). The elderly also tend to experience decreased access to healthy and nutritious food due to their physical limitations (Andress, 2017). In addition, access to food is also influenced by income level, food supply system, and purchasing power. On the other hand, the rapidly aging population growth along with changes in the food supply system can cause food insecurity in an area (Ishiguro, 2014). Therefore, increasing the availability and affordability of food in all regions should be one of the focuses of the government, including the Indonesian government.

Based on the accountability report (LKPjIP) of the mayor of Salatiga at the end of the 2014 fiscal year, Salatiga residents have a farmer livelihood of 1.41%, with 10.99% of its area being rice fields (Laporan Kinerja Intansi Pemerintah Kota Salatiga, 2014). Salatiga has sufficient availability of rice fields. Such an availability lets 55.18% of its rural elderly people work as farmers in Salatiga, although in general, only 1.41% of its people become farmers, with 10.99% of its area being rice fields (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2017). Even though the extent of rice fields in the city can also guarantee the provision of food in Salatiga, the unused land is indirectly related to increased food vulnerability and the risk of malnutrition of the elderly who are still working in the agricultural area.

In 1999, Serikat Paguyuban Petani Qaryah Thayyibah (SPPQT) was formed. It is a union for farmer’s associations in Salatiga. Led by Ahmad Bahruddin, SPPQT was formed by the local community to meet people’s needs for food in Salatiga through economic fulfillment. The name ‘Qaryah Thayyibah’ itself means ‘powerful village.’ SPPQT aims to realize the empowerment of rural communities independently based on local potential so that they become empowered villages. The activities carried out target the political, economic, and cultural aspects. One of the activities carried out is Pendidikan Kecakapan Wirausaha Unggulan (PKWU), developed with an Integrated Farming System (IFS) which fully manages agrarian resources and integrates the livestock sector for the availability of organic fertilizers and forestry for conservation (waterland agro silvo pastoral) (KBQT, 2020).

The existence of farmer groups involving elderly farmers and the emergence of SPPQT as a liaison between the community and food raise a question of to what extent the programs carried out by SPPQT for the elderly community in their empowerment areas have an impact on the fulfillment of elderly nutrition. This study therefore aims to explore SPPQT innovative programs related to empowering elderly farmers to increase food needs which impact food selection and access for the elderly. This research is expected to be used as a recommendation for SPPQT to
develop the programs and to increase the knowledge capacity for SPPQT’s elderly assisted group.

**METHODS**

The research was carried out in Salatiga, which is included in SPPQT’s empowerment area, from September to December, 2020. This research is qualitative employing an in-depth interview and participatory observations. The in-depth interview was used to determine the extent to which SPPQT’s innovative program had an impact on the elderly who were included in their empowerment area. Meanwhile, participatory observation was used to directly observe the empowerment activities that the SPPQT elderly people followed.

The research focused on SPPQT administrators as participants. The criteria of the participants are having experience running SPPQT empowerment programs, playing an active role in empowering SPPQT members, and being willing to become research participants. Based on these criteria, five participants were involved, including female staff members, the head of the farmer representative supervisory board, the deputy chair of organization and politics, the chair of the women’s division, and the founder of SPPQT now serving as chairman of the organization’s advisory board.

In the data collection, researchers used voice recorders and writing instruments. Furthermore, the data obtained through interviews were still raw data and processed into interview transcripts, subsequently coded and given a theme. Then, the data was written in a narrative form according to the theme and drawn to conclusions.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Results**

From the result of the study, three themes can explain the evaluation of the SPPQT program on access and food choices for older farmers in the SPPQT empowerment area. The three themes are an overview of the SPPQT program, how SPPQT empowers elderly farmer members, and the impact of SPPQT empowerment on food choices and access for the elderly.

**Overview of the SPPQT Program**

Until 2012, SPPQT already has nine main organizational programs. The first is farmer education and organizing; this is intended for farmers’ families, which include farmers who do not own their land. Second, the agrarian reform program intended for youth in the empowerment area is expected to be the future successor and mover in the agricultural sector. Third, an agricultural development program called Integrated Farming puts forward environmentally friendly principles to encourage farmers to produce their seeds and fertilizers and not use factory-produced fertilizers. The fourth program is the economic development program for farmers’ families through cooperatives. Through cooperatives, farmers can get standard prices for selling products in the market. Fifth, the farmer community development program empowers members to improve agricultural knowledge and achieve maximum results from an economic perspective. There is also
a women’s organization, and SPPQT wants to promote that women’s work is equal to men’s and that they can deal with the increasing problem of patriarchy. Other programs are intended for youth organizations and work advocacy. This work advocacy is useful for assisting SPPQT members or farming communities in its empowerment areas when dealing with cases or land disputes. This was reported by one of the administrators:

“There is one program at SPPQT that is an organizing program. The second is an access program for children, so this is an agrarian reform program. Then the third is the agricultural development program we call Integrated Farming. This is an agricultural development concept that puts forward from the input side. It encourages farmers to use environmentally friendly inputs, fertilizers, and seeds made by themselves so the principle is friendly to the environment and also sovereign means self-produced not depending on input from manufacturers. Then the next one is the economic development of farmers’ families with the development of cooperatives. Then, the next one is a program for women’s organization. Then there is the youth organization itself. Then, there are community development programs, learning communities, and worker advocacy. So, there are nine.” (In-depth interview with Participant 2, November 2020)

How SPPQT Empowers Elderly Farmer Members

Empowerment is the main program to empower all SPPQT farmer groups. Most SPPQT farmers are already old, around 60 to 70 years old. SPPQT calls them the old-generation farmers. However, the management makes the same empowerment program for all farmer members. This can be seen from the young and elderly farmers’ involvement in forming farmer groups in each SPPQT empowerment area.

“As far as I know, there has been no special program for the elderly people. But they are not discriminated because they are 60 years old.” (In-depth interview with Participant 2, November 2020)

“So, if the question is whether there are any elderly SPPQT members, the answer is yes.” (In-depth interview with Participant 5, November 2020)

In addition, based on the management monitoring program, elderly members are still active in attending regular meetings held by SPPQT management. One example is the Candakulak group in Kalibening which has elderly members. Many elderly members in that group have been there since the group was established SPPQT was officially formed, so many elderly farmers still survive. In addition, the Candakulak group still has a tradition of continuing to pass on the farmer groups to their children or grandchildren so that they can survive. One of the administrators stated,
“This group in Kalibening is funny and interesting because its members can be passed on to children or grandchildren. For example, if the parents are elderly members, the membership can be given to their children. However, some survive until they are 60 to 70 years old.” (In-depth interview, Participant 4, November 2020)

In carrying out its work, SPPQT empowers elderly farmer members through several approaches. Although not directly for elderly farmers, these programs also contribute to them. SPPQT approach is carried out through education, organizing, and advocacy programs. The education program maintain a series of training, workshops, and direct assistance sessions from coaches or SPPQT administrators. The coach or administrators teach the members how to cultivate the lands and plant superior seeds. Through this program, SPPQT administrators want farmer groups to gain knowledge about good soil, good seeds, and good planting methods for their farms. Furthermore, the form of the organization carried out by the management assists members in organizing programs that will be carried out by members of the farmer group. SPPQT forms the groups, e.g. the Bada Merbabu group. The group was formed to accommodate farmer groups who have different farming methods from the ones in Salatiga due to environmental conditions and cooler weather. Furthermore, assistance through an advocacy process helps farmers who have land problems.

“There are three series of approach programs: education, organizing, and advocacy” (In-depth interview with Participant 2, November 2020)

Another program that emerged from SPPQT that became the flagship was the production congregation. The production congregation program, which is an empowerment program, is run by all members of the farmer group, including the elderly. The program builds the entrepreneurial spirit of farmers by utilizing local potential. In the production congregation program, SPPQT takes an organizational approach to assist farmers in forming a production congregation program group; then, farmer groups involving elderly farmers will also be given the education to process local potential into a product that can be sold and consumed by themselves. Each empowerment area produces different products, depending on the local potential of the agricultural area of each group.

“The production congregation itself turned out to be the aim of the group to raise the potential of the community, about what can be produced and what can be sold.” (In-depth interview with Participant 4, November 2020)

“There are coffee farmers in Temanggung. Then, in Kopeng farmers make Dutch eggplant syrup because the eggplant is their local potential.” (In-depth interview with Participant 3, November 2020)
Furthermore, SPPQT has an empowerment program for food processing. The program involves elderly farmers as well. The approach taken is organizing and educating like the previous production congregation programs. SPPQT helps farmer groups to solve problems related to the high consumption of instant food or fast food among the farmers’ children. In solving this problem, SPPQT provides socialization to farmer groups on how to make food products from their agricultural ingredients. Elderly farmers who are members of the group play a significant role in this food processing program, even though the program does not affect the fulfillment of food for the elderly in particular. One of the administrators said,

"Yes, there is training. It is adjusted for them. For example, what to take to cultivate cassava, so that they can present various variants of food and it makes them interested if it is consumed. Our children and other family members become interested if the products are sold, so the added value is interesting for consumption. It's a food processing program." (In-depth Interview with Participant 2, November 2020)

Finally, SPPQT has a program to encourage food diversity. The program is carried out by providing various forms of educational approaches and is formed by organizing by the SPPQT management. In the food diversity program, all members of farmers, including elderly farmers, are taught about meeting the needs of carbohydrates or staple foods that can be obtained from food besides rice. For example, farmer members including the elderly can plant tubers that can be consumed as a substitute for rice. The SPPQT management explained,

“There is a program to encourage food diversity, so that the understanding of carbohydrates is not limited to rice. The processing program is a challenge because we are currently dealing with instant food that only needs to be apart in 2 minutes, and it is already cooked…” (In-depth Interview with Participant 2, November 2020)

Empowerment of SPPQT on Food Access and Choice of Elderly Food

The potential in agriculture is related to farmers’ access and food choices. The elderly people who become farmers or farm laborers supposedly have good access to food because they have easily accessible agricultural land. Unfortunately, access to available food does not support the choice of diverse foods for farmer groups, especially the elderly members. One of the SPPQT administrators stated,

"Yes, it must be related if the access is due to agriculture, I think, either they are called farm laborers or they have their own land. In a village, I think access to food is easy. They can access existing availability. It’s just that sometimes the choice is about healthy food, what kind of food it is that needs to be conveyed." (In-depth Interview with Participant 1, November 2020)
Most of the elderly farmers in SPPQT are rice farmers and vegetable/fruit farmers. The types of vegetables and fruits grown are of the high premium group, such as beets and Dutch eggplant. Unfortunately, these plants do not become daily consumption. Older farmers prefer selling to consuming them. This choice also occurs in the organic rice they grow. For them, organic rice has a higher selling value so it will be more profitable. However, if there are fruits or vegetables and rice that are not sold, they will choose to consume them themselves rather than selling them at low prices. The SPPQT stated,

“The elderly, they have a habit in terms of maintaining food security by saving the harvest for a new season. They sell the rest. That’s the calculation.” (In-depth Interview with Participant 2, November 2020)

“[We] encourage them to plant different types of high premium, like the beet and Dutch eggplant. The approach chosen is the same as the goal for the rice farmers to get added value, even though they don’t consume that type of vegetable because it’s the type of vegetable that urban people consume.” (In-depth Interview with Participant 2, November 2020)

This habit continues to be carried out by elderly members of SPPQT. As a result, the SPPQT program only strives for the empowerment process and does not regulate access and food choices for elderly farmers. All farmers have their own choice to meet the needs of access and food choices independently. The recommendation given by SPPQT is limited to separating different lands so that plants can be planted that can be consumed daily. SPPQT’s encouragement also hopes that farmers can maintain local food through a variety of crops. An SPPQT administrator reported,

"SPPQT emphasizes more on farmers to produce themselves, for example maintaining local food. Local food in this area, for example, is corn, but now it has switched to rice. But then there is local food that actually deserves to be preserved but sometimes it’s been that long or sometimes it’s not that much. What’s left? Because it’s more of a by-new production, for example, taro, sweet potatoes, and then cassava, which don’t need special care, as long as you plant them and later on you harvest them. The emphasis is on maintaining local food” (In-depth Interview Participant 3, November 2020)

Discussion

Indonesia has entered a state with an aging population structure in 2020 (Jamalludin, 2020), with 10.06% of its population being 60 years and over. United Nations’ projected that the percentage will reach 21% in 2050 (UN Population Division, 2019). To meet their daily needs, 49.39% of the Indonesian elderly people in 2019 were still actively working even though they had retired (Jamalludin, 2020). However, physical, mental, and social setbacks due to the aging process were an obstacle for the elderly to do their jobs (Intani, 2013).
On the other hand, in facing their old age, the elderly in Indonesia must still be encouraged to their potential so that they can live healthily, actively, and independently (Hendrawanto, 2016). The emergence of problems faced by the elderly requires real action to improve the quality of their lives. This requires the concern of various parties, including the government, private institutions, the community, and the families. One form of caring can be realized by empowering the elderly (Suyanto, 2017). The empowerment program can be a brain stimulation activity and encourage the elderly to play an active and productive role so that they can improve the quality of life of the elderly and those around them (Hendrawanto, 2016). This is what SPPQT did through its program in the agricultural sector involving elderly farmers.

Empowerment carried out by SPPQT is important because based on data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health, almost 80% of the elderly living in rural areas work in the agricultural sector. The large number of elderly people who are still working is caused by the relatively large economic needs, and physically and mentally the elderly are still able to carry out daily activities. The demands of the elderly to meet various kinds of daily needs are increasing more than ever (Afrizal, 2018) encouraging elderly farmers to still actively work as their strategy to survive (Intani, 2013). This motivates SPPQT to handle the problems experienced by its members. Through empowerment, all farmers becoming members of SPPQT, including elderly farmers, get knowledge about good soil, seeds, and planting methods for their farms. In addition, the empowerment of SPPQT can also increase the economic income of farmers through the SPPQT program which has the concept of farmer entrepreneurship by utilizing local potential.

The involvement of elderly farmers in the SPPQT empowerment program can help improve the quality of the elderly farmers’ life. The quality of life for the elderly is a functional condition of the elderly in optimal conditions to let them enjoy their old age meaningfully, happily, and usefully (Nawi et al., 2010). Unfortunately, the empowerment carried out by SPPQT has not yet been fully centered on elderly farmers. This condition might be influenced by the general view in society regarding the elderly who tend to be considered as a group that is no longer productive and a burden for the productive age. Their physical condition has generally decreased, making them vulnerable to various diseases. This assumption is known as ageism. The strength of this assumption restricts the elderly in the community, which can indirectly harm the health and welfare of the elderly (Irawanto, 2013). This study also shows that SPPQT still carries out the empowerment program for the elderly, but the involvement of other groups is still carried out with the assumption that the elderly have limitations in running the program.

Furthermore, in its empowerment, SPPQT has no responsibility in encouraging efforts to fulfill farmers’ food needs related to food selection and access. SPPQT is only limited to providing
recommendations regarding the use of agricultural land to plant various types of plants so that farmers can consume them. However, all SPPQT farmers independently have their own choices of access and food selection. Considering the environment where the elderly live, the availability of access to food generally affects the choice of more nutritious food for the elderly (Byker Shanks et al., 2017). Based on the results of the study, access to food owned by SPPQT farmers including elderly farmers is quite good, due to the availability of agricultural land for planting food crops. Unfortunately, the food choices of all SPPQT farmers are less varied. The elderly is particularly recommended to have more varied food choices, so that the nutritional fulfillment for the elderly is met properly (Tamba & Gultom, 2014). The elderly need healthy food with a choice of various types of food consisting of staple foods, side dishes, and fruits that contain calories, protein, carbohydrates and dietary fiber, vitamins and minerals, water, and low fat (Qurniawati, 2018). Food choices that are not appropriate and do not vary will affect the elderly’s food intake. The non-selective choice of food will make it difficult for the elderly to digest the food because of their weakened digestive absorption. The less varied food choice is because most of the elderly farmers in SPPQT prefer to sell organic rice or high-premium vegetables/fruit’s rather than consume them.

However, sometimes elderly farmers still consume the remaining harvests that are still available if they are not sold. Harvests from organic farming produce high-quality and nutritious food that can support the farmers’ health and welfare. The principle of organic farming shows that the health of each individual and community cannot be separated from the health of the ecosystem which can support the health of the living creatures around it (IFOAM, 2005). Currently, the concept of the SPPQT empowerment program related to organic farming systems has been well carried out by their farmer groups including the elderly farmers because the results can increase farmers’ economic income. It is just that the agricultural system has not had an impact on the provision of food for farmers regarding the selection of food for elderly farmers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of this study, SPPQT has a responsibility in encouraging farmer groups including elderly farmers to make efforts to fulfill their food needs regarding food selection and access. Besides, SPPQT has tried to empower farmers, including elderly people in their empowerment areas. One of the impacts of empowering farmers is the availability of good agricultural land for planting food crops to encourage good food access for all farmers, including elderly farmers. Unfortunately, the choice of food variations for all farmers is not yet varied, and efforts are still needed to increase the farmers’ knowledge capacity. Therefore, SPPQT should develop a program for the farmer’s groups that also involves elderly farmers to increase their knowledge of variations in food sources through agricultural products.
REFERENCES


http://repository.unhas.ac.id/bitstream/handle/123456789/6590/Quality of life.pdf?sequence=1
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