

## THE INFLUENCE OF FARMERS' BACKGROUNDS WHO SWITCH PROFESSIONS TO NEW JOBS AS MIGRANT WORKERS (TKI/TKW)

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**ABSTRACT** The backgrounds of farmers who switch professions to new jobs as migrant workers (TKI/TKW) are diverse and complex, including economic, social, and other factors. The transition to becoming migrant workers has various impacts, both positive and negative. This change can affect various aspects, including economic, social, and psychological ones. Farmers will face new challenges in adjusting to a new work environment, different cultures, and unstable conditions. The purpose of this study is to identify and understand the various factors that drive farmers to move from the agricultural sector to the non-agricultural sector, particularly to become migrant workers. The method used is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to collect data. Qualitative methodology is used to gather data through in-depth interviews with respondents, while quantitative methodology is used to collect data through questionnaires. The main result is that becoming a migrant worker is not the only option available, but the limited job opportunities make them choose this job. When husbands/wives are faced with the pressure of household needs and responsibilities as heads/mothers of households, they choose to become TKI/TKW to meet daily needs, taking roles as manual laborers or domestic workers with higher wages compared to being a farmer or agricultural laborer. Their income is relatively modest and quite limited, forcing farmers to be willing to stay far from their children and wives for long periods. The destination countries for migrant workers (TKI/TKW) include Malaysia, Brunei, Saudi Arabia, and many others. In conclusion, farmers switch professions to new jobs as migrant workers to meet economic needs and improve the social status of their families. The recommendation is for farmers and agricultural laborers to enhance skills in agriculture, improve human resources (HR), and work harder to achieve maximum results.

**KEYWORDS:** *Farmers; Profession; Migrant Workers; TKI/TKW*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

According to the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2022, there were approximately 40.64 million Indonesians working in the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sectors as of February 2022 (S.P et al., 2021). East Java had 5,427,568 farmers, the highest number in Indonesia. East Java also has the highest number of millennial farmers (aged 19-39) in Indonesia, totaling 971,102 people, or about 15.71% of the total millennial farmers in Indonesia (Wirawan & Mas'udah, 2020).

The main factor contributing to the high number of farmers in East Java is the vast agricultural land, which results in the highest number of farmers in the province. East Java has ranked first in Indonesia over the past 10 years in food crop production, with rice being the main commodity. Rice production in East Java is the highest among other commodities, although it fluctuates yearly (Wirawan & Mas'udah, 2020). Additionally, East Java has a high population density, which influences the large number of farmers, including millennial farmers, the highest in Indonesia (Noor et al., 2019). The relatively better economic conditions in East Java compared to other provinces also affect the number of farmers in this province.

Better economic conditions can provide easier access for farmers to obtain the necessary resources and capital for farming (Febriana et al., 2015). The limited job alternatives in East Java influence the number of farmers in this province. Many people do not have other more promising job opportunities, forcing them to farm to meet their living needs (Noor et al., 2019).

The main reasons farmers in Indonesia switch professions to become migrant workers (TKI/TKW) include: (1) Economic Needs: Farmers switch professions due to very high economic needs. They cannot meet their living needs with income from agriculture, so they seek more profitable jobs in other sectors. Research shows that the average income as an agricultural laborer is between Rp 1,000,000 and Rp 2,000,000 per month, while the income as a migrant worker is more than Rp 2,000,000 per month (Faisal, 2014).

(2) Limited Resources: Farmers face challenges from human resources, such as limited education and entrepreneurial skills. This makes it difficult for them to stay in the agricultural sector and choose other more promising jobs. (3) Economic Conditions: The economic conditions in their home areas often do not allow for proper adaptation. The limited job vacancies and low wages in their home areas make farmers more inclined to seek jobs abroad (FIQRI & ZUHRI, 2023). (4) Quality of Life and Social Status: Farmers switch professions to migrant workers because they want to improve their social status and quality of life.

They believe that working abroad can provide them with a better identity and more opportunities to improve their family's well-being (Faisal, 2014). (5) Inadequate Government

Policies: The government's inadequate support and job opportunities in the agricultural sector also influence farmers to switch professions. This causes farmers to seek jobs in other more profitable sectors (Sundari et al., 2020). (6) Side Jobs: Some farmers also have side jobs to earn additional income. This shows that they are not only looking for jobs abroad but also finding ways to increase their income in their home areas (Tulangow et al., 2017).

Farmers in East Java face several main challenges, including the lack of interest from the younger generation in agriculture, as it is considered unattractive and not offering a good future. This makes it difficult to encourage millennials to join the agricultural sector (Noor et al., 2019). Although millennial farmers in East Java tend to be adaptive to digital technology, another challenge is sufficient access and understanding of this technology. There are 971,102 millennial farmers aged 19-39, both those who use and do not use digital technology (17.63% of the total farmers in East Java) (Noor et al., 2019). Millennial farmers face global crises such as food crises, economic crises, and literacy crises. For example, food crises can cause disasters if not addressed properly. This requires millennial farmers to enhance food security and face these challenges with the right strategies (Noor et al., 2019). Most farmers in East Java are smallholder farmers who own less than half a hectare of land. This makes it difficult for them to obtain sufficient land for farming and earn a stable income (Bariah, 2023).

**Modern Agriculture Development:** Millennial farmers in East Java also face the challenge of developing agriculture to be more modern, independent, and sustainable. This requires support and synergy from various elements, including the development of partnership networks and access to markets and necessary agricultural inputs.

The main motivation for farmers to switch to being TKI/TKW is economic factors. Here are some key reasons: (1) Higher Income: Farmers switch professions to TKI/TKW because the offered salary is higher compared to the salary in Indonesia. This helps them meet the increasing economic needs of their families (Bariah, 2023). (2) Economic Difficulties in the Home Area: The poor economic conditions in their home areas, and the difficulty in finding decent jobs, make farmers seek better income alternatives abroad. (3) The average income of farmers who switch professions is low, so they look for more profitable jobs abroad to improve their welfare (S.P et al., 2021). (4) Family Needs: Farmers often switch professions due to family needs that must be met, such as high children's education costs and debts that need to be paid off (FIQRI & ZUHRI, 2023). (5) Uniformity of Work in the Agricultural Sector: Jobs in the agricultural sector often do not guarantee a stable income, so farmers look for more certain jobs abroad (S.P et al., 2021).

The main factors influencing farmers' decision to switch professions are economic factors. Here are some key reasons: 1. Higher Income: Farmers switch professions because the offered

salary is higher compared to the salary in the agricultural sector. This helps them meet the increasing economic needs of their families (S.P et al., 2021), (Moniaga, 2018). 2. Lack of Income Stability in the Agricultural Sector: The average income of farmers who switch professions is low and uncertain. This causes them to look for more certain and profitable jobs abroad. 3. Economic Difficulties in the Home Area: The poor economic conditions in their home areas, and the difficulty in finding decent jobs, make farmers seek better income alternatives abroad. 4. Family Needs: Farmers often switch professions due to family needs that must be met, such as high children's education costs and debts that need to be paid off. 5. Decreasing Agricultural Land: The decrease in agricultural land causes farmers to look for other more profitable jobs. This can also be due to a lack of understanding and willingness to work in the agricultural sector (Tulangow et al., 2017) (Sundari et al., 2020).

The role of women in rural agriculture is shifting to TKW due to a combination of economic, technological, and social factors that prevent them from contributing optimally to agriculture in their areas. Local economic conditions affect farmers' decisions to switch professions through several main factors, namely insufficient farmer income to meet their economic needs and those of their families. This causes them to look for more profitable jobs abroad or in other more stable sectors (Santoso, 2015) (Faisal, 2014).

Arjowilangun Village, Kalipare District, Malang Regency, is known as a TKI village. The number of TKI from Malang Regency in 2018 was 3,416 people. In Arjowilangun Village, Kalipare District, Malang Regency, at least 600-700 residents choose to work abroad from a total of about 13,000 people. The majority are female migrant workers (TKW). Arjowilangun Village is referred to as the "foreign exchange heroes" because it has the largest number of TKI (Indonesian Migrant Workers) in Kalipare District, Malang Regency. This village has become the main base for TKI working abroad, with many of its residents becoming TKI and TKW. This makes the village play an important role in generating foreign exchange for the country through remittances sent by TKI and TKW to their families in this village (Wirawan & Mas'udah, 2020) (Noor et al., 2019).

The aim of the research is to investigate the career change of farmers who become migrant workers (TKI/TKW), how the background of the farmers affects the migration process. To identify the factors that influence farmers to switch professions to TKI/TKW, and the economic and social impacts of this career change.

## **2. METHOD**

The methodology and research approach in "The Influence of Farmer Background on Switching Profession to New Jobs as Migrant Workers (TKI/TKW)" can be seen from several available sources. Here are some explanations of the methodology and research approach:

**Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methodology:** This research uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to collect data. The qualitative methodology is used to gather data through in-depth interviews with respondents, while the quantitative methodology is used to collect data through questionnaires (Faisal, 2014) (Sundari et al., 2020).

**Descriptive Approach:** This research is a type of descriptive research that aims to provide an in-depth description of certain social phenomena or specific aspects of life within the community (Bariah, 2023).

**Purposive Sampling:** The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, where the researcher selects respondents based on certain considerations. The researcher chooses respondents who are deemed to be the most knowledgeable about what is expected, making it easier for the researcher to explore the object or social situation being studied.

**Data Collection Techniques: Interviews and Questionnaires.** Data is collected through in-depth interviews with respondents and questionnaires given to them. Interviews are used to obtain more in-depth information, and questionnaires are used to gather more structured data (Tulangow et al., 2017) (Waridin, 2007).

**Data Analysis: Qualitative Descriptive Analysis:** Data analysis is conducted using qualitative descriptive analysis with the help of a Likert scale. This analysis aims to describe the factors that cause farmers to switch professions to become migrant workers (TKI/TKW) and the impact on family living conditions (Noor et al., 2019).

### **Research Location**

The research location is Arjowilangun Village, Kalipare District, Malang Regency. The determination of the research location is done using the purposive method because many farmers in this village have switched professions to become migrant workers, specifically Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) or Female Migrant Workers (TKW). Here are some explanations of the respondent selection method:

**Purposive Sampling:** The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, where the researcher selects respondents based on certain considerations. The researcher chooses respondents who are deemed to be the most knowledgeable about what is expected, making it easier for the researcher to explore the object or social situation being studied (Bariah, 2023).

### **Criteria for Respondent Selection:**

**Education:** Respondents with low education levels, such as elementary school graduates, are considered the most likely farmers to switch professions to become migrant workers (TKI/TKW). **Age:** Respondents aged 30 years or older are considered the most likely farmers to switch professions to become TKI/TKW. **Number of Family Members:** Respondents with an average family size of 4 people are considered the most likely farmers to switch professions to become TKI/TKW.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 Results**

The majority of the community in Arjowilangun village works as farmers and farm laborers. However, efforts to increase food crop production face various obstacles and issues. Drought and floods often threaten production, pests and diseases continually evolve, and high post-harvest losses are problems that need to be addressed. Additionally, farmers with leased land face rising rent costs annually, and the high prices of fertilizers and fuel add to their difficulties. Farm laborers, who do not own land and only work during planting and harvesting seasons, often remain unemployed during the off-season. The wages they earn are sometimes insufficient for daily living expenses, such as food, education, and health. Their low education levels (typically primary school graduates) and lack of specialized skills make it difficult for them to find other jobs. This worsens the farmers' economic situation, leading them to switch professions to migrant workers (TKI/TKW).

After collecting data through surveys and interviews in Arjowilangun village, the results are as follows:

1. The education level of farmers switching to migrant work is typically primary school graduates. Out of 20 respondents, 11 are primary school graduates, 6 are junior high school graduates, and 3 are high school graduates.
2. The average age of farmers switching to migrant work is over 30 years.
2. The average family size of these farmers is 4 people (10 respondents), 3 people (6 respondents), with the rest having 1 or 2 family members.
3. Their reasons for switching professions include high economic needs, insufficient agricultural income to cover daily expenses such as food, education, health, lifestyle, and the desire to improve their social status.

Most farmers who switch to migrant work have a low level of education. Out of 20 respondents, 11 have completed primary school, 6 have completed junior high school, and 3 have completed high school. This indicates that farmers with lower educational backgrounds are more

likely to transition to migrant work. Limited educational attainment can restrict opportunities in agriculture and drive individuals to seek work abroad as an alternative for increasing their income.

The average age of farmers switching to migrant work is above 30 years. An older age may suggest that these farmers have had significant experience in farming and may be facing difficulties or declining income, prompting them to seek migrant work as a solution. Older individuals might also have greater family responsibilities, which could necessitate additional income sources.

The average family size of these farmers is 4 people (10 respondents), 3 people (6 respondents), with the remainder having 1 or 2 family members. A relatively large family size indicates that these farmers may have significant financial responsibilities, motivating them to pursue migrant work to support their families. Larger families might also reflect more pressing economic needs.

The primary reasons for switching professions include high economic needs, insufficient agricultural income to cover daily expenses such as food, education, health, and lifestyle, as well as the desire to improve social status. Economic factors such as low agricultural income and the need to meet basic needs like food and education are major motivators for migration. Additionally, the desire to improve social status highlights the social factors influencing their decision.

### **3.2 Discussion**

#### **Reasons for Farmers Switching Professions to Migrant Workers**

Indonesian migrant workers (TKI) are citizens working abroad under employment contracts for a specific period, receiving wages. Female migrant workers are often called TKW. Becoming a migrant worker is not the only option, but limited local job opportunities drive them to choose this path. Faced with household needs and responsibilities, many husbands opt to become TKI to meet daily needs. As construction laborers, they earn more than as farmers or farm laborers, even if it means being away from their families for long periods. Destinations for migrant workers include Malaysia, Brunei, Saudi Arabia, and others.

The shift in farmers' backgrounds to new professions as migrant workers (TKI/TKW) has significant impacts on their success in these new roles. Factors influencing their success include:

1. The primary reason for becoming TKI/TKW is increasing economic needs. They seek higher income abroad to support their families.
2. The average education level of farmers who switch professions is primary or junior high school, with limited skills for other sectors, making TKI/TKW jobs more attractive.

2. This shift affects family roles and dynamics, leading to changes in lifestyle, appearance, and consumerism, potentially causing family role changes and divorce.
3. Adjusting to new work environments, cultures, and unstable conditions can challenge their success as TKI/TKW.
4. Families left behind often face economic and social difficulties, affecting the TKI/TKW's ability to support them.

Both men and women can work as migrant workers, with women contributing significantly to national revenue. Men sometimes allow their wives to work abroad as TKW to support their families, despite the challenges of long separations. The income disparity between TKW and their farmer husbands often leads to role reversals, with husbands staying home to care for children.

Bambang, 42, from Arjo Wilangun, has been a TKI in Malaysia for 18 years. He chose this path due to economic pressures, despite only having a primary school education and no farming skills. His wife joined him as a migrant worker, and they used their earnings to build a house, buy land, and support their children's education. Similarly, Sugeng, 25, became a migrant worker at 19 to support his family, improving their economic situation significantly. After four years as a TKI, he married another migrant worker, and they plan to return abroad to meet their growing financial needs.

### **Impact of Working Abroad on Social Status Shifts**

Working abroad can lead to shifts in social status, including income, appearance, and ownership. Migrant workers aim to improve their living standards with higher incomes. Returning TKW often change their appearance and behavior, reflecting new fashions, hairstyles, and possessions, sometimes causing family dynamics to shift.

### **Challenges Faced by Migrant Workers**

Farmers or farm laborers with minimal incomes switch to migrant work to improve their economic situation, but new challenges often arise, such as:

1. Physical violence, including beatings, starvation, and even life-threatening injuries.
2. Sexual assaults, particularly in countries like Saudi Arabia, where workers are often treated as property.
2. Issues like deportation, unpaid wages, and document retention, especially for those using illegal recruitment agents.
3. Personal problems, such as infidelity leading to high divorce rates among TKI/TKW couples.

Despite these risks, many farmers choose migrant work for its higher income potential, driven by economic pressures.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Farmers switch to TKI/TKW due to higher wages compared to agriculture. Their average income is low and unstable, prompting them to seek more reliable and profitable work abroad. They often switch professions to meet family needs, such as children's education and debt repayment. Decreasing agricultural land availability pushes farmers to find more lucrative jobs elsewhere. The socioeconomic impact on their families includes lifestyle changes, improved social status, and shifts in family dynamics.

#### *Suggestions*

1. Farmers should receive higher-level training and skills to work in more profitable sectors, potentially improving agricultural sector incomes.
2. Government incentives could help land-owning farmers remain in agriculture.
3. Improving local economic stability and job availability in agriculture could reduce the need for farmers to switch professions.

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#### **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

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