

# Building a Relationship between Domestic Workers and Their Service Users Through Community-Based Monitor Model (PBK)

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**Abstract:** The existence of domestic workers (PRTs) is still considered as an important part in everyday life of a household; therefore, the demand for domestic workers remain high. IPECs ILO data shows that currently there are 2.6 million domestic workers in Indonesia of which 90% are female. The problems are often related to the relationship between service users and workers, such as wages, working hours, work load, job type, leave and holiday rights, and so on. In the absence of a clear preliminary agreements in working relationships between service users (employers) and workers, conflicts often arise. The paper reviews how the existence of a community-based monitoring agency (PBK) creates a model to build a relationship between domestic workers and service users. Data obtained through a research activity conducted in Malang, East Java. Data collection was conducted qualitatively through observation, interviews with several informants, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). This research further shows that the existence of Community-Based Monitoring Institution protects and accommodates the interests of both parties, especially regarding their rights and obligations. PBK can also act as a mediator if a problem arises between service users and domestic workers. Thus, with the Community-Based Monitoring model, provision of a decent work for domestic workers can be fulfilled.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The service of domestic workers (hereafter, PRTs) today is needed as a result of an increasingly complex life due to each family member's external activities which causes unprocessed system in the household. Household conditions in which spouses are working resulted in an urgent need to involve outsiders in their household affairs. The outsiders with whom they share the burden of a household are known as PRT. PRT is considered very important in performing reproductive roles, so the husband and wife can work smoothly without being bothered by the household affairs and be productive in their respective jobs (Andri, 2005). Currently, there are no official data about PRTs, but ILO-IPEC data showed that in 2004 there were approximately 2.6 million people who worked as PRT in Indonesia and 90 per cent of them were female domestic workers (ILO-IPEC, 2004). In 2009, ILO estimated that more than 60 per cent of PRTs worldwide are located in Asia, encompassing Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, and Vietnam. ILO estimated that at the same year, the number of

PRT around the world was as many as 50 million people and approximately 3 to 4 million PRT work in Indonesia (ILO-IPEC, 2004).

PRTs as a job have existed since long ago, with a variety of designations and shifts in their roles and relationships from time to time. Starting from being called *babu*, *batur*, *emban*, *abdi*, *rewang*, *jongos*, *ngenger*, *bedinde*, *pramuwisma*, *pembantu* until the term of 'domestic workers (PRT)' is used. Each title has a history, a role, and a separate relationship that is currently still perpetuated by the system of feudal culture and capitalism. Essentially, PRT is employed to assist some household chores or, in other words, to reduce the work in a household. PRT usually begins to be employed when the need to bring up a child arises within a family. A housekeeper's job is to assist household chores, such as washing, cleaning, cooking and, so on. This position is essentially made to help someone doing housework.

Nevertheless, the works undertaken by PRTs are largely ignored or even underestimated, because it is done within a household and considered an informal job; thus, there is no legislation for that. Consequently, this particular employment is often

overlooked and causes some implications to the workers. As seen from the report of the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection which describes the current condition of PRTs in Indonesia, most of them are women, barely adult, in bad condition, indefinitely, and prone to violence and servitude (*domestic slavery*) (Venny, 2005). Therefore, this work is categorized as a job which desperately needs legal and social protection, as the workers are extremely vulnerable to harassment and exploitation. Domestic worker distributors themselves cause some dilemmas, given that PRTs are more likely to be seen as a commodity. As a private party that sells services, PRT dealers definitely prioritize the interests of users as their source of income. It further puts PRTs in a weak bargaining position.

PRT is a social product which was born amidst poverty and low educational level. But this profession has been considered vital in helping employers to do house chores or help nurture employers' children. Sometimes, few of them helps in education and teaching values so that the children grow healthily with good attitude and decent personality. Moreover, PRT also becomes a blessing for employers so that they can carry out their professions as employees, such as civil servants, state officials, corporate leaders, and so on. Furthermore, in many cases, the success achieved by working women is strongly influenced by the presence of PRT in their families. However, to raise their bargaining position, PRT applicants should be equipped with some skills directly related to his duties to serve the employers in order to be able to compete in job competition.

In Indonesia, recruitment of PRTs mostly occurs through friends and family. This is usually preferred, because it offers greater possibilities to find a good employer and avoid potential troubles. Other recruitment channels include informal brokers or formal (agencies). Through agents, PRT grows more vulnerable as they must face a rather high risk. For instance, a friend who offers them the job sometimes do not hesitate to ask for a compensation. Moreover, using brokers might expose them to more danger, because brokers potentially perform various forms of violence physically, psychologically, and economically. Some cases prove that the brokers sometimes asked for commissions worth several months of PRT's salary. There are also cases where brokers threaten or even abuse PRTs if they ask some forthright questions. The worst case is the brokers who tempted to commit various forms of sexual harassment (Muryanti, 2005).

Violations experienced by PRTs comprise of their rights as workers and as women. They generally should work in long hours with massive work load. Long working hours without any break easily exhaust them and further affect their mental and physical health. This problem is exacerbated when domestic workers are not getting proper and nutritious meals, no access to good and cheap health care, and not given a proper place to rest. Another case is related to late wage payment or a unilateral reduction when they make mistakes.

Conversely, issues that harm the employers occasionally arise from the behavior of PRTs or its service providers (brokers). Many cases proved how employers are being deceived by PRTs in cases of burglary or robbery. Another case that often arises and elicit complaints from the employers is PRTs who only worked briefly (a week or two) and resigned. These kind of problems occur because of several factors. For instance, the absence of written contracts, illegal practices by employers and recruitment agencies, unhelpful government policies, and lack of legislation that provides adequate protection.

Based on the above background, this paper aims to highlight the conditions of PRTs and its relationship with the users. Moreover, it also illustrates how the existence of community-based monitoring (PBB) as a model help building relationships between PRTs and its users. The data was obtained through research activities in Malang, East Java. Data collection was conducted qualitatively through observation, interviews with several informants, and Focus Group Discussion activities (FGD).

## 2 METHODS

Data obtained through a research activity conducted in Malang, East Java. Data collection was conducted qualitatively through observation, interviews with several informants, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). This research further shows that the existence of Community-Based Monitoring Institution protects and accommodates the interests of both parties, especially regarding their rights and obligations.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data from the field, there are two categories of PRT. First, lived-in PRT who works and lives in the employer's homes. For this category, PRTs generally work from dawn to dusk, even through the night. Their working hours are rather long, averaging over 12 hours per day. In addition, they usually have no day off in the sense that they work every day during their stay at the employer's houses. They will not be able to work when they return home, with an indefinite allocation of time, depending on many factors. In terms of wages received, they averagely 1.2 million rupiah to 1.8 million per month. Second category belongs to non-lived-in PRT. This category works for employers without living with them. PRTs usually live in their respective houses which are usually not far from the employer's. Every day (usually early morning) they come to the employer's houses to do the housework and leave after the working hours are over. Depends on the agreement of both parties, PRTs belong to this category averagely works for 4 to 6 hours per day. In terms of wages, generally they receive a daily wage, which is an average of IDR 40 thousand to IDR 60 thousand per day.

However, they typically work 3 to 6 days a week, so they can have a holiday on Sundays. Some of them can even work for two or three or even four employers at the same time, in which they work for each employer once or twice a week. For example, there is a PRT called Mrs. Nuri. After getting laid off of a factory, she began working as PRT and has been in the job for 4 years. She works for three employers with varying working hours, working from 10:30 am to 3:00 pm and paid forty thousand rupiah per day. She also works from 07.30 to 15.00 and earns fifty thousand rupiah per day. Her typical works are wiping some windows, mopping some floors, sweeping the floors (inside the house and the yard), cleaning bathrooms, washing and ironing clothes, cooking, and washing dishes.

Several other issues related to the findings in the field data on PRT in Malang are:

- Day off. Many PRTs complained about the weekly allowance which is directly related to their wages. Users only provided weekends and national holidays. However, PRTs think that they should have been allowed to take a paid holiday during national holidays. Unfortunately, their employers do not count their wages during it. Therefore, most PRTs in Malang need some additional wages during holidays.
- Leave. PRTs have 2 kinds of leave, absence and sick leave. The difference between the two lies in their wages as well. If the PRTs take a leave, they may not receive their daily wages. On the contrary, if they take their sick leave, the employers will pay them their daily wage to be used for medical treatment. However, some different cases were experienced by them. For instance, Mrs. Nuriati retold her experience for taking her sick leave. Her employer was willing to reimburse her medical expenses, however they have not kept their promise yet.
- Working hours. Most PRTs have problems with working hours, especially for them who worked with more than one employer. The difference in working hours perceived by a PRT and another is definitely different. It may cause problems especially for those with equal pay. Basically, their average working hours are ranging 07:00 to 17:00 pm, a 10-hours work. It is a contrary to their expectations to work 8 hours as mentioned in the Employment Legislation.
- Type of work. The findings showed that there are still many PRTs doing varative work and almost all household chores, such as cleaning the house, cooking, taking care of children, making breakfast, and so forth. It is because the relationship between PRTs and their employers are especially unique, complex, and informal.

The relationship between PRTs and their employers is more inexplicable than the relationship between labors and employers in industrial relations or other formal jobs, because PRTs and their employers tend to have a unique, complex, and informal relationship. Moreover, it is largely conditioned in a familial relation, which may obscure legal relationships between them. As a result, the work load and rights of PRTs become obfuscated, as they frequently have unlimited working hours, unstandardized salaries, and without health insurance. Furthermore, they work and live hidden from the public view, because most of them live in their employers' houses. There is no clear boundary between personal life and work and it further complicates PRT as a profession, because it demands time, attention, energy, and various skills. A domestic worker is someone who performs domestic duties within a household. On average, they work without any written agreement or employment contract which contains the rights and obligations of each party. In addition, as they work

in a private household where the rules are varied, so PRTs must be able to follow the household's rules. In fact, it is not only about rules. In a large household, PRTs are faced with several different employers with their respective characters, such as father, mother, and the children.

Community-Based Monitoring (*Pemantauan Berbasis Komunitas* or PBK, hereafter) is a model built and developed by the Institute for Community Development and Development (LPKP) in Malang, East Java. The PBK model intends to monitor the presence of PRTs in their environment, including their relationships with their employers. It also aims to provide PRTs empowerment and a decent work approach for the employers with regards to their treatments to their PRTs. PBK Model is actually just one of several approaches and strategies undertaken by LPKP, whose scope of activity is to promote a decent work for PRTs and the elimination of child domestic labors. It also promotes the recognition and fulfilment of PRTs as workers to the community and other stakeholders. The approaches or strategies undertaken by LPKP are: (1) reaching and organizing PRTs; (2) increasing their knowledge and skills through training or education sessions; (3) promoting decent work for PRTs through social media, religious leaders, and government; (4) conducting a community-based monitoring of PRTs by involving neighborhood association (hereafter, RT), community association (hereafter, RW), and family welfare program (hereafter, PKK) in the monitored area; and (5) developing networks with unions and hotline services.

PBK formation is especially intended to help oversee the presence of domestic workers in their environment and encourage to strengthen PRTs' positions as workers. Further, it also intends to provide an understanding to the employers about the rights and obligations of both parties. Thus, it is expected that more service users can accept and realize the existence of PRT with all conditions and abilities. The PBK model is assumed to be more readily accepted by service users, as the PBK board consists of local community members led by the head of neighborhood association and involves PKK members.

PBK was established in early 2016. When it was formed, as many as four PBK, PRT, and PRTA were located in the area estimated to employ many PRTs and spread across several districts in Malang. The four PBK are dispersed in these areas: (1) Perum Bumi Mondoroko Raya (BMR) RW 14, Banjararum Village, Singosari District; (2) Perum Pondok Blimbing Indah (PBI) RW 5, Polowijen Urban

Village and Purwodadi Village in Blimbing Sub-District; and (3) Perum Griya Shanta RW 12, Mojolangu Urban Village, Lowokwaru Sub-District. The base of PBK is RW which means that PBK model covers an area of one RW. One RW covers several RTs. For example, PBK in Perum Pondok Blimbing Indah (PBI) in RW 5 includes 11 RTs. Each RT is formed by a team led by the head of the RT and the head of the PKK.

The activity of PBK is initiated by collecting data on the identity of domestic workers and service users in monitoring coverage areas in the RW. According to one of the PBK coordinators, collection data is not easy, because some service users view PBK model negatively and suspiciously. Therefore, PBK begins its activities with socialization and data collection which involves in various local apparatus, from RT to PKK. Socialization intends to provide an understanding of the benefits for the service users, particularly with regards to some cases adversely affecting them (i.e. fraud, robbery, etc). After a while, more and more service users are willing to participate in data collection, even though there are still reluctant users who reasoned that using PRT is their family's personal right and cannot be interfered by anyone and there is no formal regulation about it yet.

After data collection is completed, monitoring process is done periodically. Monitoring Team meets regularly to deliver the results. The findings indicate that, up to data collection time, there is no important and crucial issue found with regards to the relationship between domestic workers and service users. On the contrary, it successfully strengthens the awareness of PRTs and their employers about their respective rights and obligations. In addition, PBK model can be used to continuously promote and advocate decent work for PRTs.

Meanwhile, some other significant changes occur due to PBK are listed as follows: (1) promotional activities to provide a decent work for PRTs are made known to public, especially for PRTs themselves and their users; (2) the head of the RTs are greatly assisted by data of PRTs in their regions, the awareness of PRT and community to report the presence of PRTs to the RTs, and the monitoring team concerns about the condition and presence of PRT; (3) there is a progress in sharing experiences and strong bonds among PRTs, emerging awareness for the group to conduct regular social gathering (*arisan*), and increasing bargaining positions of PRTs after they join the organization; (4) domestic workers gain new knowledge and experiences to support their works.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

PRT is a social product, it is born amid poverty with low level of education and skill. Nevertheless, they have been instrumental in helping employers do household chores. The existence of today's PRT is increasingly needed as a result of the increasingly complex life forms. In general, there are many violations experienced by domestic workers, including about their rights as workers and their rights as women. Domestic workers generally work too long in a day with workloads that often go beyond human boundaries. Long working hours without breaks make domestic workers constantly exhausted and affect their mental and physical health. This problem is exacerbated when domestic workers are not getting proper and nutritious food, have no access to good and cheap health care, and are not given a proper place to rest. Another case is the late paying of salaries paid or not paid at all when domestic workers make mistakes. Conversely, issues that harm the employer also occasionally arise as a result of the behavior of domestic workers or service providers acting as brokers or domestic workers. Many cases show employers being deceived by domestic workers, such as cases of burglary or robbery involving domestic workers with their conspirators. Another case that often arises and becomes an employer complaint is the presence of domestic workers who just work a week or two and then ask out or taken by the agent of the PRT provider who brought it.

PBK is a model developed by LPKP in East Java which intends to monitor and supervise PRTs in their respective surroundings, particularly with regards to their relationship with their employers. It intends to empower them and provide them a decent work by communicating a better way to treat them to their employers. The establishment of PBK model is merely one of several approaches and strategies undertaken by LPKP whose scope of programs aim to promote a decent work for PRTs and eliminate child domestic labors. Therefore, it is expected that the rights and obligations of both PRTs and employers will be clearer, more measureable, and well-monitored, so that their relationship can be better and more harmonious.

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