



Patron-Clients in Rice Production Process: Case Study of Rice Mill Entrepreneurs with Rice Farmers in North Mopuya II Village, North Dumoga District, Bolaang Mongondow Regency, North Sulawesi Province



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Abstract

The presence of rice milling entrepreneurs in the lowland rice production process has a strong influence so that rice farmers depend on entrepreneurs and it is difficult to get out of the patron-client relationship that has been built between the two. Entrepreneurs are present as "saviors" of the farmers in the context of socio-economic problems where farmers lack capital in the process of producing lowland rice and meeting urgent daily needs. The purpose of this study is to describe the patron-client relationship that occurs in the production process of lowland rice farming using descriptive qualitative research methods. As a research strategy, a case study was used on rice milling entrepreneurs and lowland rice farmers in Mopuya Utara II Village, Dumoga Utara District, Bolaang Mongondow Regency, North Sulawesi Province. The results of this study indicated that the dependence of farmers on rice mill entrepreneurs was built through a long friendship process and a sense of reluctance in which the entrepreneurs were considered "saviors" because they provided social security to farmers even though in reality entrepreneurs got bigger profits. The patron-client relationship can be permanent if each party finds its suitability and benefits and is accepted as a truth that will be passed down from generation to generation.

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1 Introduction

Rice is one of the important commodities in Indonesia. This is because the staple food of the Indonesian people is rice. Most farmers in Indonesia also make rice as the main commodity of their farming. So, the government is still trying to develop rice farming. These efforts are carried out in addition to meeting the needs of the Indonesian people for rice, as well as to increasing the income, standard of living, and welfare of rice farmers (Santosa, 2016).

Although rice is the main crop for farmers, the characteristics of rural farmers, especially small farmers, are very clear, namely small land ownership, and minimal capital ownership and savings, causing farmers to be classified as subsistence farmers, which are only able to meet basic needs. Of the three problems, capital ownership is the main problem experienced by the farmers. This is in accordance with the opinion of Hutabarat (2013), saying that, other problems are actually faced by rice farmers to date, first, land ownership is getting narrower so that its management becomes inefficient and uneconomical. Both the level of knowledge and skills of individual farmers are still relatively low so they are not able to cover all aspects of farming. Of the three business capitals owned, most are still relatively small, thus limiting the space for rice farmers to optimize their farming. The four organizations at the rice farmer level are still more of a social group organization, so it will be difficult to become an economically useful organization. The five farming patterns have not been oriented to farming as a company based on an entrepreneurial spirit. Sixth, the presence of middlemen to integrate agricultural activities with the market. Thus, farmers prefer to sell their harvests to rice entrepreneurs who have strong capital, such as rice millers, rather than selling directly to consumers. This problem has resulted in most farmers choosing to partner with rice mill entrepreneurs from the start of their cultivation (Sobirin & Rosid, 2016; Mano et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2013).

The relationship built between farmers and rice mill entrepreneurs can be well established because they build good social relations and have been going on for a long time, so without realizing it there has been a patron-client relationship between farmers and rice mill entrepreneurs, where entrepreneurs protect farmers in the form of social and economic security. Patron is a name given to someone who is considered economically strong and trusted in the community, while the client is a group of people whose economy is weak and only depends on their small-land farming. This is in accordance with the opinion of Putra (2003), which says that the patron-client relationship occurs between individuals with different socioeconomic statuses, namely that one party gives more and the other receives a lot. The Patron-Client relationship system for rice farmers cannot be said to be short but has been going on for a very long time. The patron-client relationship, in principle, is reciprocal and this is governed by norms that are different from the norms in kinship relations. There are two main norms in patron-client relationships, namely: 1) people should help those who have helped them, and 2) do not hurt those who have helped. Patron-client relationships, are not just obtained by an individual but must be built. The essence of this patron-client relationship is the dependence where each of them tries to maintain the relationship in order to fulfill their needs or goals. If someone wants to have this kind of relationship with another party, then he needs to give something first, and if the other party is willing, then the gift will be reciprocated. Interdependence in society is something that is natural and this becomes the motivation between them to cooperate so that in this cooperation there is a principle of giving and take, where in this relationship they complement each other.

According to Scott (1983), the Patron-Client relationship has certain characteristics that distinguish it from other social relationships, namely: 1) There is inequality in exchange. This inequality occurs because the patron is in a position that is stronger, higher or richer than his client. In this position, the patron is able to give more to the client than vice versa. The second characteristic, 2) is face-to-face (face-to-face character). A patron usually knows his client very well, and vice versa, and this makes the relationship between them also stronger and closer. The existence of a reciprocal relationship between the two parties generates mutual trust to protect the other party. With this mutual trust, a client can hope that the patron will help him if he has difficulty. On the other hand, the patron can also expect the support of his client when he needs it. The third characteristic is flexible and widespread (diffuse flexibility). In this relationship, a patron is not only linked by a land rental relationship which is generally the basis of a patron-client relationship, but also by a relationship as a neighbor or as a friend or by the friendship between their parents. This relationship can be used for various purposes by both parties and at the same time, it is also a kind of social security for them. The basic purpose of a true patron-client relationship is the provision of basic social security (Zaman, 2011), where the patron must be able to provide economic protection to his client, while the client responds by giving all the resources they have to the patron. Resources that can be provided can be in the form of personnel who are owned and fully devoted to their patrons. If the exchange that occurs in it no longer provides basic social security for the parties involved, the parties involved will perceive a sense of injustice and exploitation. Therefore, it is not surprising that there are demands from the client on the patron to fulfill his promises or basic needs in accordance with his role and

function. In plain view, rice mill entrepreneurs play an important role in the process of lowland rice production, namely in addition to providing grain milling services, they also provide services for providing rice production facilities, which can be paid for after the rice harvest. This makes it easier for farmers to carry out their farming production process because the reality faced by farmers is that the prices of production facilities often fluctuate and also the unstable prices of agricultural commodities, of course, is very detrimental to them. As a result, farmers tend to depend on entrepreneurs. This dependency system creates a situation where entrepreneurs not only control the marketing and capital systems but also in the production process of lowland rice farming. This causes the dependence of rice farmers to rice millers to persist (Burritt et al., 2009; Rajini, 2018; Sari & Sjah, 2016).

If explored further, it turns out that the Patron-Client relationship in the production process of lowland rice farming exists in Mopuya Utara II Village, North Dumoga District, Bolaang Mongondow Regency, namely between rice mill entrepreneurs and lowland rice farmers. This partnership pattern is formed because of the emotional relationship between entrepreneurs and farmers, namely entrepreneurs are in the midst of farming communities and accommodate farmers' production and provide production facilities for rice farming. Thus, farmers do not experience difficulties in obtaining farming production facilities and marketing them, while for entrepreneurs, the continuity of the rice milling business can run well. North Mopuya II Village, is one of the villages in North Dumoga District in Bolaang Mongondow Regency, which is a mainstay area in North Sulawesi Province as a rice-producing center, so it has an important role in efforts to fulfill community food, especially rice. The production of paddy/rice produced for now is mostly marketed for the local needs of the province, especially the city of Manado and its surroundings. Apart from the central role of the Dumoga area, the potential problem that is thought to be one of the obstacles and serious threats for the government to maintain Dumoga as a center for supporting national food security is the dependence of farmers on rice mill entrepreneurs in the production process of rice farming. On the one hand, farmers have guaranteed production facilities and marketing of their products, but on the other hand, as primary producers of lowland rice they do not develop because the market that is formed leads to a closed market, so from an economic point of view, it does not make rice farmers better off. In North Mopuya II Village, there is not only one rice mill service business that buys rice harvests and markets rice crops. However, there are four rice milling businesses, all of which are in the village. This is what makes there is competition between rice mill entrepreneurs in order to get rice farmers who want to partner. So, every entrepreneur must be able to establish good relations with farmers so they will not move to other entrepreneurs. This patron-client relationship will only be present in a community if there are favorable conditions for its growth, therefore the purpose of this study is to describe the patron-client relationship that occurs in the production process of lowland rice farming, in order to obtain a clear picture for decision making. on the development of lowland rice farming (Guenha et al., 2014; Ruddiman et al., 2008; Kumar et al., 2016).

2 Materials and Methods

This study uses a social behavior paradigm that discusses the relationship between individuals and their environment, which affects the behavior of actors. This research uses a descriptive qualitative research method to describe the patron-client relationship in the production process of lowland rice farming so that they can understand the reality of farmers' dependence on rice mill entrepreneurs. As a research strategy, a case study was used on rice mill entrepreneurs and lowland rice farmers in Mopuya Utara II Village, Dumoga Utara District, Bolaang Mongondow Regency, North Sulawesi Province. North Mopuya II Village, is one of the rice production centers in the North Dumoga District. In general, lowland rice farmers have less than 0.5 hectares of land (55.33%). So that it is classified as a small land user agricultural household. Thus, it is in accordance with the objectives of the study.

Primary data collection was carried out by means of in-depth interviews with rice mill entrepreneurs (Patron) and small rice farmers (Clients). Patron and client selection was done by purposive sample and snowball, based on the research objectives. The purposive selection method is intended to find informants who have an understanding that is in accordance with the intent of the researcher. While the snowball method is done by asking questions to get recommendations from previous informants. While the secondary data was obtained from the relevant agencies for the purpose of this study. Data analysis was carried out qualitatively to know and understand more deeply the patron-client relationship between rice mill entrepreneurs and lowland rice farmers. The research strategy uses an interactive model as proposed by Miles & Huberman (1992). This model consists of three main things, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

The stages in the descriptive analysis are carried out in the field using an interactive method. The interactive method in the descriptive analysis is collecting data directly from people naturally (Sukmadinata, 2012).

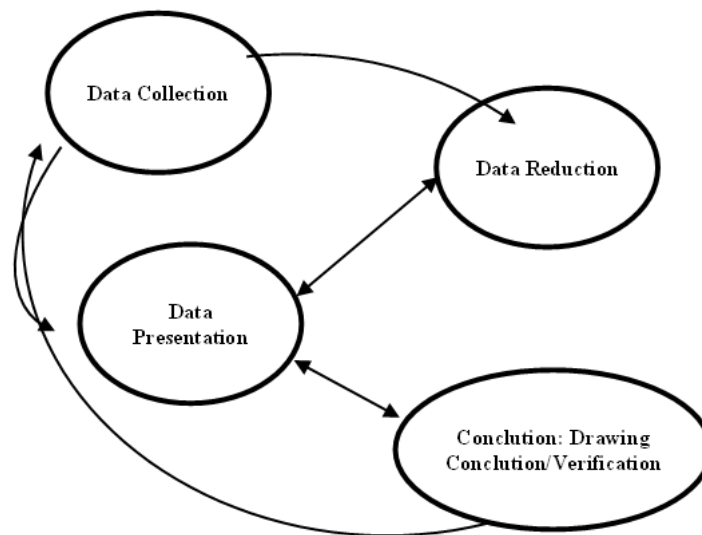


Figure 1. Data analysis components: Interactive Model
Source: Miles & Hubermas (1992)

3 Results and Discussions

The role of rice milling entrepreneurs in lowland rice production process activities

The presence of a rice milling business in Mopuya Utara II Village has an important role because it is considered to be able to help lowland rice farmers in post-harvest activities. The presence of rice milling business can be reached by farmers at any time. But over time, these efforts, not only grind farmers' grain but also assist farmers in solving social and economic problems by implementing a mutually beneficial relationship between the two parties. Farmers are often faced with difficult situations to maintain their existence in farming as well as in social life, so farmers must have various ways to survive, one of which is dealing with rice mill entrepreneurs to get guarantees of subsistence and security in the form of borrowing money for farming purposes and meeting the necessities of daily life.

In contrast to borrowing money in general, here entrepreneurs do not give interest to farmers, but the harvest must be sold to rice mill entrepreneurs. This is done to find customers who are willing to sell their crops or grind the grain in the area. Entrepreneurs think that lending money without interest is a common thing, as stated by one rice mill entrepreneur: "Lending money to farmers without interest or collateral, is a normal thing, apart from being familiar with the farmer, also to help those who are in trouble". Although the money loans made by rice mill entrepreneurs are without interest or without special guarantees, entrepreneurs have benefited from farmers, namely regular customers. Although it is not officially written that farmers who owe debts must sell their crops to borrowers of money, this has become an unwritten law that farmers who owe debts must sell their crops to those who give the debt, as stated by one farmer who owes debts: "..., I am ashamed, if the harvest is sold to other entrepreneurs, even though in other places the price is higher. Later I can no longer borrow money because he does not trust me. I dare not do such a thing."

The existence of a rice mill entrepreneur who is in the midst of a farming community has a role that is considered "saving" farmers from adversity, especially in the process of lowland rice production. The rice milling business is the only business that also provides production facilities, such as fertilizers, seeds and pesticides that can be used by farmers by paying after harvest, besides that entrepreneurs also have access to sell their harvests outside Mopuya Utara II Village. As a result, the harvest is always controlled by the rice millers. The role of rice mill entrepreneurs who buy farmers' crops is not only a matter of wanting to sell and transport from the fields, but entrepreneurs also act as parties who can access the market. It can be said that this market access can only be reached by entrepreneurs because they have great access, both to markets located in the provincial capital, rice factories, and even Bulog. So, farmers have

no other choice to sell their crops. As a result, farmers are very dependent on rice mill entrepreneurs and become regular customers of these entrepreneurs (Rahman, 2003; Abdul-Rahaman & Abdulai, 2018; Lu et al., 2020).

Rice millers, in addition to having large capital, selling agricultural production facilities, having warehouses, drying floors, and transportation equipment (trucks) also have broad access and cooperate with various parties to sell the harvests collected from farmers, so that the rice mill entrepreneurs or Patron has the following criteria:

- a) Able to provide loans of money and production facilities for the production process of rice farming.
- b) Able to provide loans for daily needs from farmers
- c) Able to market the results of rice production collected from farmers
- d) Able to provide a sense of security to farmers.

Another capability is that when farmers need money loans, both for farming needs and daily needs, they can be obtained quickly from entrepreneurs and the repayments are not limited by time. So it is natural that farmers choose rice mill entrepreneurs as parties who can guarantee their subsistence ethics. This subsistence-oriented life makes farmers bound to entrepreneurs, which in the end gives birth to certain conditions where this relationship involves two people, one is higher or superior (patron) than the other, where the higher party provides protection, and security. Economic status and position in society in exchange for the willingness of farmers to become business partners in the production process of farming which is considered a lesser party (client).

This relationship is valid because basically social relations are relationships between positions or statuses where each carries out their respective roles. This role exists based on the function of the community or group, or the actor in society, so the relationship between the positions of the two is what happens (Scott, 1993).

The factors causing the patron-client relationship between rice milling entrepreneurs and farmers

The relationship between rice farmers and rice mill entrepreneurs has been carried out since the beginning of farming, even longer because they know each other and live in the same village. This relationship is established due to the inability of rice farmers to meet the needs of farming capital and meet their daily needs. This is because the role of the rice milling entrepreneur in North Mopuya II Village is in addition to rice milling, as well as providing farming production facilities with a down payment system or loan bond. The trick is that rice mill entrepreneurs provide production facilities in the form of seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides, while farmers will repay loans by selling their harvests to these entrepreneurs. The main reasons why farmers cooperate with rice milling entrepreneurs are:

Costs in farming

The main problem for farmers in farming is the lack of capital to buy production facilities, especially fertilizers. Fertilizer as its function can spur increased production of rice plants. However, the use of fertilizers requires costs and these costs are not owned by farmers, therefore farmers buy fertilizers at the rice mill, by paying for it after the rice harvest. The reason for this cost is also followed by practical reasons, namely: by selling the rice harvest to rice milling entrepreneurs, farmers no longer need to pay for harvesting and transportation. Because automatically all harvesting activities starting from labor costs for harvesting, transportation from paddy fields to rice mills and post-harvest activities are borne by the entrepreneur. This is as stated by one respondent:

“... Yes, it's better to sell at the rice mill, I don't have to pay for harvesting anymore, I don't need to find people to harvest, I don't need to find a vehicle to transport. The main thing is to just receive the results after deducting the loan debt when you take fertilizer and other production facilities.”

If the farmer does not sell the harvest to the rice milling entrepreneur, then the farmer must look for harvest labor, even though the labor (farm labor) is available in the village, but the workers are usually also attached to the entrepreneur so that these workers cannot work to others because these workers are also bound by cooperation with rice milling entrepreneurs. Thus, there is no other safe way other than partnering with rice milling entrepreneurs. So, in another word, the reasons farmers partner with rice milling entrepreneurs are:

- 1) The place of rice milling business is in the middle of the community
- 2) Entrepreneurs have the ability to buy rice harvests in large quantities
- 3) Entrepreneurs provide labor or harvest workers.

This shows that rice milling entrepreneurs are perceived to provide benefits to farmers, as stated by one farmer: "Selling the rice harvest to the mill boss, apart from paying debts, is also very helpful for us, the main thing is that you don't lose, because there are many conveniences provided by the mill boss."

Urgent daily needs

Apart from cost reasons in farming, there are other reasons as well, namely urgent daily needs, so farmers borrow money from rice milling entrepreneurs for their daily needs. During the farming production process, farmers' income will decrease and they have to wait approximately 4 months before the rice plants can be harvested, while their daily needs must be met. The more often farmers are in debt, it will strengthen the position of rice milling entrepreneurs. The entrepreneur considers that the farmer is his family, and the farmer feels comfortable and appreciated by the entrepreneur. This is as stated by one respondent.

"I'm not ashamed if I owe to the boss of rice milling because the boss already considers us his family, and we will definitely be given a loan, regardless of the amount you want to borrow, the important thing is that the harvest is sold to the rice mill"

Although the relationship between lowland rice farmers and rice mill entrepreneurs is a relationship that requires each other, farmers often tend to be disadvantaged, especially in determining the selling price of rice set by rice milling entrepreneurs without any negotiations with farmers. The dependence of farmers on entrepreneurs is a reality that shows that farmers are at a disadvantage. Weak economic conditions for farmers are an underlying reason why farmers continue to depend on rice mill entrepreneurs. In fact, to cover their daily needs, the farmer's family (wife and adult children) have been doing work outside the farm, such as being a farm laborer and using the yard to grow vegetables, but even this cannot cover the living needs of the farmer and his family.

Patron-client relationship between rice farmers and rice mill entrepreneurs

The dependence of farmers on rice milling entrepreneurs in North Mopuya II Village is a reality that shows that farmers are in a weak position and entrepreneurs are a strong party. It is clearly illustrated that rice milling entrepreneurs help farmers out of their economic problems, so it can be said that farmers need rice milling entrepreneurs. Although it is realized that farmers' economic problems cannot be completely resolved, and will repeat themselves in the next rice planting season. So, it can be concluded that the main factors causing the dependence of farmers on entrepreneurs are economic factors and social factors.

Economic factors that lead to limited capital in farming lowland rice, resulting in the formation of thought in farmers that in collaboration with entrepreneurs, will create practicality where farmers no longer need to think about where to sell their rice harvest and no longer think about harvest costs in the form of labor costs like harvest work and transportation costs from the rice field location to the milling/storage site. This is in accordance with the opinion of [Soekartawi \(2006\)](#), that farmers, especially small farmers in Indonesia, still lack capital and savings as well as limited business facilities and infrastructure which results in the inability of most farmers to sell agricultural products directly to consumers. While the influence of social factors in the decision of rice farmers to choose to cooperate with rice milling entrepreneurs is the feeling of shyness due to the bonds of friendship and the concern of entrepreneurs to help farmers. This shyness is a feeling of discomfort if you don't sell to friends who have helped them when they are experiencing economic difficulties, even though there may be a higher price offer from other entrepreneurs. So, it can be said that rice farmers do not always make the high price offered a benchmark in choosing business partners, but also because they feel reluctant due to friendship ties. So, [Scott's \(1993\)](#), opinion is correct which says that the patron-client relationship is an exchange relationship between the two roles which can be stated as a special case of bond involving instrumental friendship in which an individual with a higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his influence and resources to provide protection and benefits for someone with a lower status (client). The client then reciprocates by offering general support and assistance including personal services to his patron. As a pattern of dispersed exchange, such as services and goods exchanged by patrons and clients reflect the emerging needs and resources owned by each party. [Putra \(2007\)](#), says that with mutual trust a client can expect the patron to help him if

he has difficulties, if he needs capital and so on. The client feels bound to the patron because of his respect and indebtedness to him, so when the patron asks for something he wants from the client, the client will try to fulfill it. The relationship that is built only based on mutual trust and mutual benefit because the relationship that occurs is informal. There is no written contract or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This is a weakness of this cooperative relationship so that in the event of irregularities or violations in the future, both parties cannot sue each other. This relationship is a relationship of mutual need and interdependence and cooperation with each other, which is governed by norms and is more of a social exchange under mutual give and take obligations.

The relationship between rice farmers and rice milling entrepreneurs is a form of socio-economic relationship, where each party needs the other. However, in this relationship found the characteristics that lead to a patron-client relationship, namely:

- 1) There is a reciprocal relationship, namely a mutually beneficial relationship, giving and receiving each other, even though in an unbalanced level. There is a tendency that the price of rice offered by entrepreneurs is unilateral, and farmers, in general, are resigned to and accept the price determined by the rice milling entrepreneur.
- 2) There is an imbalance of socio-economic resources between farmers and rice mill entrepreneurs. The imbalance can be seen where farmers do not have access and opportunities to sell their crops to other parties, while rice milling entrepreneurs have wider access to sell. Besides that, entrepreneurs also have other facilities such as: storage warehouses, drying floors and trucks as a means of transportation
- 3) There is a relationship of loyalty. Loyalty referred to here is an act of loyalty from farmers (clients) to entrepreneurs (patrons), to repay services or gifts they have received from patrons. This loyalty can be seen that farmers do not want to switch to other patrons (other entrepreneurs), even though the price of rice offered is more expensive. This act of loyalty causes a stronger emotional bond so this relationship is difficult to break.

As two parties are interconnected and cause interdependence, they have a strong relationship, with a distinctive feature of mechanical solidarity, referring to a state of moral and trust relationships that are shared and strengthened by shared emotional experiences. This bond occurs because they are involved in lending and borrowing activities and are believed to be ingrained, making it difficult for individual changes to occur. Rice milling entrepreneurs trying to enter into this solidarity relationship is an effective way to make a profit. By being fully involved in the activities of the lowland rice production process, entrepreneurs are present as "saviors" of farmers, even though the loans given are not always large, only enough to finance the farming production process or meet the daily needs of farmers. The assistance provided was considered sufficient by the farmers and very useful, so that, for the farmers, there was no other way to get out of the economic crash, other than dealing with rice milling entrepreneurs.

This situation, in accordance with [Scott's \(1983\)](#), opinion related to the life of farmers, namely:

- 1) Basic subsistence livelihoods, namely rice milling entrepreneurs providing money loans for the production process of lowland rice farming and for urgent daily needs, without taking into account the repayment time.
- 2) Guaranteed subsistence crisis, rice milling entrepreneurs (patrons) guarantee the basis of subsistence for farmers (clients) by absorbing losses caused by farming problems that will disrupt the lives of their clients.
- 3) Provides protection from external pressure.
- 4) Patron apart from using his powers to protect his clients, he can also use his powers to withdraw profits/gifts from his clients in return for his protection.
- 5) Collective patron services. Internally, patrons as a group can carry out their economic functions collectively, namely managing various collective assistance for their clients.

In a stable condition, the power relationship between patron and client becomes a norm that has its own moral strength which contains rights and obligations that must be carried out by both parties. These norms will be maintained insofar as they provide basic protection and security guarantees for clients. For the client, the key element that affects the level of dependence and legitimacy to the patron is the comparison between the services he provides to the patron and the results/services he receives. The greater the value he receives from the patron compared to the cost he has to return, the more likely he is to see the patron-client bond become legitimate and legal.

4 Conclusion

- a) The patron-client relationship between rice milling entrepreneurs and rice farmers is caused by the limited capital of farmers for the production process of lowland rice farming and their urgent daily needs. To meet these needs, farmers partner with rice entrepreneurs, with the principle of mutual benefit.
- b) The principle of mutually beneficial relationships is built through a long friendship process and a sense of reluctance, where entrepreneurs are considered "saviors" because they provide social security to farmers.
- c) The dependence of rice farmers on rice mill entrepreneurs as patron-clients will further worsen the economic conditions of rice farmers, this is because in this relationship there is an imbalance in exchange between patron and client where the exchange is dominated by patrons, in this case entrepreneurs get greater profits compared to clients or rice farmers by utilizing available resources such as providing capital, storage warehouses, grain milling services and buying crops, while rice farmers will repay them by selling their crops to him even at a price determined by the entrepreneur.
- d) The patron-client relationship can be permanent if each party finds its suitability and benefits and is accepted as a truth that is passed down from generation to generation.

Conflict of interest statement

The author declared that he has no competing interests.

Statement of authorship

The author has a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The author has approved the final article.

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