

Poverty Culture of Community in Bengawan Solo River Bank in Surakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract: Riverbank is one of population-dense settlements and slum areas dwelled by many poor people. Bengawan Solo River bank is the settlement area for poor people in Surakarta City. This research aims to find out the manifestation of poverty culture in Bengawan Solo River bank community. This qualitative research with explanatory case study was taken place in Surakarta with the poor people living in Bengawan Solo River bank area as the unit of analysis. This study employed Oscar Lewis' poverty culture theory and informants were selected using purposive sampling technique. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interview, observation, and documentation of activities related to the manifestation of poverty culture in Bengawan Solo River bank community. Validity test was conducted using data source and method triangulations while data analysis using explanation development. The result showed that they realized the legality of their living-land but they did not desire to move to the flat due to their fear of losing their occupations as well as they had been living there for a long time. They were dependent on collecting-rubbish job for their livelihood because they have no other occupation choice due to their low level of education. In addition, they were not afraid of flood disaster from river water overflowing and considered it as calamity because it had occurred usually and frequently.

1 INTRODUCTION

In Surakarta, there are many people living below the poverty standard who occupy population-dense areas. Poverty, according to Suparlan (1993), is a people's life with low standard, inadequate material in some groups of people compared with the standard enacted in surrounding society. The poverty occurs widely in urban areas, including in Surakarta Area in which poverty is found widely in slum area such as in riverbank area. Slum area (poor people settlement) can be found in Surakarta area, for example in Bengawan Solo River bank exactly in Kelurahan Semanggi, Pasar Kliwon, Surakarta. Polantolo (Putra, 2016) defines riverbank as an area on two sides along river trough calculated from the edge to the inner dike foot.

Recent data shows that there are about 160,000 poor people in Surakarta (<http://solo.tribunnews.com> retrieved on May 29, 2018). Pasar Kliwon sub District, exactly in Kelurahan Semanggi, is one of sub districts with largest number of poor people in Surakarta City. Large number of poor people in

Surakarta is due to the unbalance between population number and their increasing need for residence, and the limited space available in urban area leading to a population-dense settlement. Settlement density and high population number of course decrease the comfort level of a dwelling area, so many people remain to occupy riverbank area as their dwelling. People in Kelurahan Semanggi reside illegal land constituting the bank of Bengawan Solo River, which is vulnerable to flood disaster. In addition, poor people settlement seems to be dirty, decrepit, unlivable, and narrow. The majority people have low education level, so they are dependent on informal occupation only, such as laborer and waste picker.

The reality above shows similar characteristics to the Oscar Lewis's Poverty Culture concept. The habit of poverty categorizes by those living in slum area and having informal occupation. They have poverty culture when their participation level is low, physical condition of house is decrepit, childhood period is short, and feeling of worthlessness is high (Suparlan, 1993: 5).

Previous studies have been conducted by Yuniar Christy Aryani and Ahmad Zuber (2017) entitled "Poverty Culture in Surakarta City: Ethnography Study in the railway crossing edge of Joglo (*Palang Joglo*), Kadipiro occupying illegal land. Basically, the people in the railway edge are the urban. Since they cannot afford house, they stand in poverty culture due to low income so they find more difficulty to make vertical mobility and hold out in poverty. This research is different with the current study conducted by author, entitled Poverty Culture of Community in Bengawan Solo River bank in Surakarta, Indonesia as current study focuses on discussing the poverty culture arising in poor people in slum areas in Bengawan Solo River bank in Kelurahan Semanggi. Meanwhile, previous research studied poverty culture in railway crossing edge of Joglo (*Palang Joglo*), Kadipiro, Surakarta due to urbanization. This research applied habitus theory to analyze the problems mentioned with ethnography method.

Another study has been conducted by Heny Budi Setyorini (2013), which entitled "Fisherman Poverty Culture in Mangunharjo Semarang". This research aims to find out in-depth the poverty culture including social, economic, and cultural dimensions as well as fisherman institution in Mangunharjo coastal area. This research also aims to find out the effect of fisherman poverty culture in Mangunharjo coastal area. The methods employed in this research were survey and library study. This used survey method was visiting the location of research repeatedly to interview and observe the fishermen community in-depth. This study found out that Mangunharjo community has high work ethos, but it is inversely proportional to the fishermen's welfare level belonging to low economy. It is because fishermen poverty culture is affected by such factors as natural condition, technology (fish capturing tool), fishermen's low education level, lifestyle, and fish catch marketing instead marginalizing the Mangunharjo fishermen.

This research aims to study more in-depth the form of poverty culture in Bengawan Solo River bank. This research used theoretical foundation to analyze the data collection during the research. The used theory was Poverty Culture from Oscar Lewis. Poverty culture, according to Lewis (Suparlan, 1993: 5), is the poor people's adaptation and reaction all at once to their marginal position in stratified society that is individualistic and capitalistic. The low-strata society is also more presumably having poverty culture. Poverty culture has the following characteristics (Suparlan, 1993): (1) less effective

participation and integration of poor people in society's main institutions; (2) dirty, population-dense houses and settlement; (3) short period of childhood; (4) strong feeling of worthlessness, helplessness, and dependency; (5) high level of misery due to mothers' anguish, weak personal structure, less self-control and passion impulse, and strong present orientation; (6) creating the group's narrow orientation, the members which only know difficulties, local condition, neighbor environment and their own lifestyle, but have no class-consciousness although they are very sensitive to status difference. They usually have no competence to see the similarity of their encounter problem to the one encountered by the same group of their dwelling. This poverty culture tends to perpetuate itself from one generation to the next through socialization impacting directly on family like children as the next generation.

Considering the characteristics mentioned by Oscar Lewis above and the previous explanation about poverty culture condition, it is relevant for the author to examine the condition of community in Kelurahan Semanggi area as this community belongs to poor area and has dirty (slum) environment, particularly those living in Bengawan Solo River bank, Kelurahan Semanggi, Pasar Kliwon Surakarta.

2 METHODS

This research was taken place in Kelurahan Semanggi, Pasar Kliwon, Surakarta, exactly in poor people living in Bengawan Solo River bank. The author decided this location because the riverbank area considers as poor people settlement, and the majority work as laborer and waste-picker which creating dirty and population-dense environment. The method employed in this study was qualitative research method using explanatory type of case study approach. Informants were selected using purposive sampling with poor people living in Bengawan Solo River bank area, Kelurahan Semanggi, as the unit of analysis. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interview, observation, and documentation on activities related to the form of poverty culture in the community of Bengawan Solo River bank. Data validation was carried out using data source and method triangulation. Data analysis was conducted using explanation development.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research tries to observe community culture in dirty and population-dense village (slum area) located in Bengawan Solo River bank, Kelurahan Semanggi, Pasar Kliwon Sub District, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia. Kelurahan Semanggi is located in Pasar Kliwon Sub District, the southeast of Surakarta City, adjacent directly to Sukoharjo Regency characterized with the presence of Bengawan Solo River. In Kelurahan Semanggi, many poor people live in filthy and population-dense settlement, exactly in Bengawan Solo River bank. The phenomenon occurred in this area is very relevant to the characteristics of poverty culture as suggested by Oscar Lewis, as explained below.

Some people inhabit an illegal land as riverbank area categorized as an illegal area in which people's houses are constructed. This fact widely happens in Kelurahan Semanggi people, but they admit that they had been living there for a long time and there is no desire to move to other safe areas although flood disaster occurred frequently. The reason why they stand to remain there is because they cannot afford land or house in other areas due to limited income. Meanwhile, they live in Bengawan Solo River bank area with the right to build only and they realize that they reside the illegal land. Surakarta Government actually has evicted them firmly and prohibited them from constructing houses again on the land. It was the beginning of government's plan to construct embankment along Bengawan Solo River to minimize water overflowing from Bengawan Solo River. In that eviction, government was also responsible for the activity by providing flats near the location. Government has also provided flats used to relocate the people in order to occupy the livable places and to leave the riverbank area. However, they do not desire to move because they admit that they have lived there for long time even though some people reconstruct their houses after the eviction. In addition, surrounding people also has some other reason: they are highly dependent on the job as laborer and waste-picker so they are afraid of losing their job and have not substitute job once they move to new residence.

Riverbank area becomes a slum and population-dense settlement area. The area is also utilized by local people as the place to collect wastes and used products. It is because majority local people, in addition to working as laborer, are also dependent on waste-picker. Informal occupation, such as laborer and waste-picker, was done by riverbank people because the majority of surrounding people have low education level. Data collected by the author through interviewing some people in riverbank area shows

that the majority people have low education level (elementary school, on average). They admit that they could not continue their study to the higher level due to limited fund and their obligation to help their family by working. These reasons create them in having improper job and less ability of fulfilling their need.

Local people's dependency on their job as laborer and waste-picker causes them entrapped in poor life. They realize that their dependency on their jobs obstruct the improvement of their family's life. However, they also realize that they have no adequate education level to seek other better jobs with better income. Therefore, they remain working as laborer and waste picker as long as they can fulfill their daily need. They do not believe of the job improvement for their life in the future, they only believe of the current need for the family.

The income received from the job is very inadequate to suffice their family's need. In addition, its impacts on children's education, in which their children cannot finally get high education. Some people even recognize that they unnecessarily have children with high education; the most important thing is that their children are able to work and help their family earning money to meet their daily life. In addition to impacting on the minimum income and low education of children, waste-picker profession also impact on surrounding neighborhood. Because waste picker is collecting used product, it creates slum area with piled used products and wastes. As they have long lived in riverbank area, they feel comfortable and not disrupted with the dirty environment condition even though some people admit that they have been accustomed with the scenery of used product and waste collection.

People have adapted to flood disaster as well and considered that living in Bengawan Solo River bank is not always comfortable. It is not only dirty and population-dense settlement, but also often affected by flood disaster due to Bengawan Solo River overflowing. In rainy season, Bengawan Solo has swift stream and receiving the delivered water from Wonogiri and Sukoharjo Regency. Therefore, in rainy season, Surakarta City is often befallen with flood disaster deriving from Bengawan Solo River water overflowing. Thus, the people living in Bengawan Solo River bank area, Kelurahan Semanggi can not escape from flood disaster as well. However, from the result of interview with some people living around the riverbank, the author found out that the people admit that they have been accustomed with such condition. Local people have been accustomed with flood disaster befalling their residence and not consider it as a calamity. Local people's adaptation to flood disaster deriving from

the river set out from their accustomedness with flood disaster in their residence. In addition, poverty culture also arises due to the local people's habit of admitting that the riverbank area is their residence, so they remain to stay and ignore to move to other places even in flood disaster.

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4. CONCLUSIONS

This research found out some forms of poverty culture in the people of Bengawan Solo riverbank, Kelurahan Semanggi, Pasar Kliwon, Surakarta, Indonesia: firstly, riverbank's people realized that they occupy illegal land, but they did not desire to move to other places as their admission of living there for a long time as well as their fear of losing job when they move to new residence. Secondly, they were highly dependent on their profession as laborer and waste picker for earning money. Their dependency on its jobs was due to their low education level which cause of the lack improvement of their life. In addition, it also impacts directly on low education level of their children due to the limited income. Thirdly, people have adapted to flood disaster. Bengawan Solo River bank people did not consider flood as a calamity because of their accustomedness with flood disaster which creating a comfort feeling despite flood disaster in their residence. It did not lead them to move to other place as they have admitted the long duration of their living and did not desire to move to new residence.

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