

## Literature Review: Urban Poverty in a Sociological Perspective

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**Abstract:** Poverty is a major problem that is a major concern for the government. The level of disparity in urban and rural poverty is very high, however poverty in urban areas remains a national poverty alleviation challenge. This writing aims to describe the phenomenon of poverty in urban areas based on a structural-functional perspective. This research uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach. Data collection was carried out through secondary data sourced from books, journals, the internet, official documents related to poverty and structural-functional theory. The findings in this paper are that poverty in urban areas has prevented children from receiving quality education, facing difficulties in financing health care, and limited fulfillment of their needs for food, clothing and shelter. Poverty alleviation efforts must be based on the determination of the appropriate poverty line and a clear understanding (definition of poverty in local parameters) regarding the causes of the problem. The recommendations/implications of these findings are expected to contribute findings/ideas to studies of urban development in Indonesia, especially sociological studies of poverty. In addition, recommendations for regional government intervention in formulating development policies that are more pro-poor in urban areas.

**Keywords:** *development policy; poverty; urban; functional-structural*

### INTRODUCTION

Currently, it can be seen that the development of cities in Indonesia is leading to the development of capitalist-exploitative cities that not only displace the living spaces of ordinary people but also vital public spaces such as educational spaces, protected forests, historical sites, roads, parks and other public spaces. (Kartono, 2020). In fact, the negative impacts of the development of shopping centers and modern housing are enormous, such as floods, droughts, traffic jams, expulsion of poor people, eviction of poor settlements, eviction of street vendors, increased unemployment and crime. Unemployment, poverty, and even crime are part of the face of the city.

The problem of poverty is still a global issue. This means that poverty is not only a major problem in third world countries, but is still a problem in advanced industrial countries. In almost all developing countries, only a portion of the population can enjoy the fruits of development, while the rest, the majority of the population live in poverty. Poverty is a major problem that is a major concern for the government. Especially in Indonesia, there are still quite complicated problems in eradicating poverty. In Indonesia, the poverty rate is quite significant. From the past government until now the government continues to try to suppress the poverty rate to a minimum. The causes of poverty vary in different countries. Even the problem of poverty such as the availability of basic needs is a very crucial factor that can bring down a government.

Poverty is a social reality that society cannot avoid. Poverty besides being felt directly by the poor themselves, also has a bad impact on human life. This is because the link in the poverty chain is the emergence of other problems such as unemployment, hunger, stupidity,

and others. Therefore, in order to reduce this problem, not a few people solve it in a way that departs from the prevailing norms, namely by means of criminal acts.

The sociological perspective provides an important lens for understanding issues of development and poverty in urban areas. Sociological thinking can be helpful in trying to disentangle poverty from related concepts and most demeaning discussions of various social problems. Many studies examining the problem of poverty have been carried out with various study focuses. Studies that address the multidimensional causes of poverty (eg, Wolf, 2008; Kronauer, 1998; Wardaya & Suprapti, 2018; Lucci et al., 2018; Satterthwaite & Tacoli, 2002). One way to alleviate poverty requires a multidimensional policy strategy (for example, Castro, 2007; Guo et al., 2021; Wilson et al., 2022; Niu & Xu, 2023; Chevo, 2022). Different perspectives are very important when looking at the problem of poverty (Hosgorur et al., 2023; Marwell & Morrissey, 2020; Sofu & Wicks, 2017; Walker et al., 2013; Levine, 2017).

Among the various focus studies in understanding the problem of poverty, this research aims to highlight the problem of poverty from a sociological perspective. This is because Sociology provides a powerful tool for thinking about poverty. Sociological thinking can help us to better understand social issues and problems. It allows us to understand personal issues as part of society's economic and political institutions, and allows us to provide a critical view of issues that might be simplistically interpreted or misinterpreted. Related to the sociological perspective, a study that pays attention to poverty was carried out by Smeeding (2002) that external explanations (to individuals) about poverty, such as those based on place, class, gender, economic power, and related contextual variables. In this writing the focus of observation is the study of the problem of poverty in a sociological perspective, both social pathology, social deviation and structural functional in general.

Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) recorded that the total number of poor people in Indonesia reached 26.16 million in March 2022, with 14.34 million living in rural areas and 11.82 million living in urban areas. The number of poor Indonesians is greater in rural areas than in urban areas. There is still a high disparity between urban and rural poverty (BPS, 2022). Nevertheless, poverty in urban areas must remain a focal point in overcoming national problems, bearing in mind that cities are synonymous with more dynamic social, cultural and economic changes.

In addition to rural communities, poverty also hit urban communities. Poverty in urban communities tends to lead to an individualistic mentality, unguided competition, which tends to increase the gap between the rich and the poor. Then, conflicts arise that occur as a result of natural selection (survival of the fittest), namely the strong will survive, and the weak will be eliminated. Ironically, the victims of this competition are local people, because the owners of capital are controlled by foreigners who try to profit from the local workforce, as happened during colonialism as historical evidence.

The high flow of urbanization from rural to urban communities on the one hand has a positive impact on the rapid development in urban areas, but on the other hand has a negative effect because many migrants from rural areas with low resources have contributed to the high poverty rate in urban areas, which is a multidimensional problem and very complex, influenced by various things, both the culture of the poor themselves and the structural system that keeps the poor in poverty.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the phenomenon of urban poverty from the perspective of structural-functional theory. The author will identify problems related to urban poverty in terms of their essence and urgency for cases of urban poverty that occur. The problem of poverty in urban areas is very complex. Even so, it is necessary to formulate appropriate development policies in dealing with the problem of poverty. As Ashley & Carney (1999) and Haug (1999) reveal that the right development priorities are needed to accelerate the eradication of poverty. Thus, it is important to understand how the phenomenon of urban poverty occurs theoretically.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In writing this article, the author uses the writing method with secondary data sources obtained using literature studies. Literature study is an activity that includes searching, reading, and reviewing research reports and library materials that contain theories relevant to the research to be carried out. This study uses secondary data sourced from books, journals, scientific articles, and the internet related to the research topic (Ariyanto, 2022).

The stages in this literature study are: 1) defining the meaning of the study of the topic to be reviewed, 2) identifying relevant and quality reference materials through Google Scholar, 3) selecting several references from Google Scholar and grouping them based on research topic categories, 4) compiling information matrix/matrix of previous research from the articles obtained, 5) write a review, 6) conclude and apply the results of the review. The topic of this study discusses the phenomenon of urban poverty which is studied using structural-functional theory. Thus, the author uses keywords (keywords) references include: "poverty", "urban", "urban poverty", "sociological" and "structural-functional". Then, the researcher looked for article references with the help of the Publish or Perish software version 8 with a total range of approximately 200 articles and used Google Scholar via the <https://scholar.google.co.id/> link. Finally, the researcher selects relevant articles and compiles the previous research matrix and concludes it. It aims to determine the description of urban poverty which is then reviewed sociologically.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Definition, Characteristics, Limitations, and Forms of Urban Poverty**

Three scientific approaches that are quite popular in understanding poverty are as follows (Sukmana, 2005: 149), namely the cultural approach, situational approach, and interactional approach. Nadvi & Barrietos (2004) say that urban poverty is also recognized as a multidimensional problem that involves more than just deprivation of income, but also a lack of freedom, increased vulnerability, risk and powerlessness. Suparlan (2004) argues that the problem of poverty in urban areas is a latent and complex problem whose social and cultural implications do not only involve and manifest various social problems that exist in the city concerned or become a problem for the poor in that city. Poverty in urban areas is the result of high migration of rural people to cities, especially poor living conditions (houses in poor and dirty villages, and villages with few social services) low wages and insufficient

regulations in the formal labor sector, as well as financial difficulties in the industrial sector. informal workforce.

Salim (1984: 42-43) provides limitations on the characteristics of poverty in urban areas, namely: low education levels, their time is taken up to earn a living and there is no time to study, and many live in cities when they are young and have no skills so they work as unskilled laborers, seasonal traders, pedicab drivers, household servants. Some of them even become unemployed or homeless.

Limits on urban poverty or commonly called the poverty line as by Setiadi & Kolip (2011), the poverty line as a measure for determining the minimum income required to meet basic needs can be influenced by three rights, namely: a). human perception of the necessary basic needs; b). human position in the surrounding environment; and c). objective human needs to be able to live humanely. To measure poverty, the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in Indonesia uses the concept of ability to meet basic needs (basic need approach). Poverty is seen as an economic inability to meet basic food and non-food needs measured from the expenditure side.

Bappenas (2018) identifies urban poverty from low access to various productive resources and assets needed to fulfill basic living needs where these productive resources and assets include goods and services, information and science and technology. The definition of poverty is not limited to economic incapacity, but also failure to fulfill basic rights and differences in treatment for a person or group of people in living a life with dignity. The author tries to limit urban poverty as the inability of a person to access the resources that are around him so that they experience a shortage in meeting their needs due to a lack of income and failure to fulfill their basic rights and experience discrimination in living a dignified life.

Poverty that occurs in urban communities is more likely to be relative poverty where poverty occurs for generations/persistent poverty is caused by the life attitude of a person or group of people who feel sufficient and do not feel deprived and are supported by discriminatory treatment of services by both government officials and owners. capital for the poor. Absolute poverty is determined by the poverty line set by the government based on a benchmark of a person's lack of income who is below the poverty line or unable to meet minimum living needs, while relative poverty is more viewed from a comparison between income levels and other incomes.

### **Conditions and Poverty Levels in Urban Areas**

The focus is mostly on poverty in rural areas (Gibson, 2015). Therefore, it is not surprising that these tools are in many ways inadequate to explain living standards in an era of increasing urbanization. With today's accelerating urbanization in many countries, it is indeed becoming increasingly important to raise the profile and enhance our understanding of deprivation in urban contexts. However, we also need to pay attention to poverty in urban areas because it is often overlooked, even the level of poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

Very ironically, the city is always identified with progress and prosperity, but the other sides of poverty and prosperity are mixed together, combined and presented as a portrait of life in various corners of the city (Jamaludin, 2017). On city streets, we can see luxury cars passing by, and at the same time, beggars stretch out their hands asking for mercy.

The number of poor people in the country increased to 26.4 million people or 9.78%. This figure has increased by 1.63 million compared to September 2019. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) stated that the increase in the poverty rate was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic which hit Indonesia's economy. The impact is felt by 12.2 million near-poor people who work in the informal sector. This group is vulnerable to poverty and affected by Covid-19. The highest distribution of poor people is found in Maluku and Papua at 28.15%. While the lowest percentage of the population is on the island of Kalimantan at 5.81% (katadata, 2020).

The situation of poverty in the city that has been experienced for too long by a group in society will form a culture of poverty as a culture that shapes their attitudes and behavior. Poverty has formed a vicious cycle/circle which prevents poor families from getting out of poverty, apart from being caused by economic poverty as well as due to lack of social relations and limited association with friends with the same fate.

Suharto (2009) mentions urban poverty caused by four factors, as follows. a). individual factors, related to pathological aspects, including the physical and psychological condition of the poor; b). social factors, poor people are caused by social environmental conditions that trap someone into poverty; c). cultural factors, conditions or cultural qualities that cause poverty; d). Structural factors refer to structures or systems that are unfair, insensitive and inaccessible, causing a person or group of people to become poor.

Poverty in urban areas is mostly migrants from villages who migrate to cities without having skills and education as well as business capital (Suyanto, 2018). They only become factory employees with very low wages, causing inequality and social inequality. The existence of socio-economic disparities shows differences in the level of welfare in society, that is, on the one hand, the community has an adequate level of welfare and on the other hand, the community has an inadequate level of welfare. However, it cannot be denied that at the same time, poverty, especially relative poverty, continues to persist, and even tends to increase. We can see this from the widening gap between classes.

Studies that examine the causes of poverty in multidimensional terms, for example Wolf (2008), Kronauer (1998), Wardaya & Suprapti (2018) say that the causes of poverty can be broken down into four aspects, namely social stratification (including segregation and racism); lack of access to social capital (exclusion); cultural norms and values; and social policy. Thus, policies that are inclusive and widespread in various dimensions of social life are needed; it implies economic, cultural, social, and political participation.

There are several problems with measuring urban poverty: definitions of 'slum' settlements vary widely, data collection may underestimate the number of slum dwellers, inadequate disaggregation of data can hide intra-city differences, and common indicators and assumptions may not be suitable for assessing income and multidimensional poverty. in an urban context. Thus, new data analysis from the Demographic and Health Survey and the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (Lucci et al., 2018) is needed. Furthermore, a livelihood strategy is needed for urban groups in alleviating poverty (Satterthwaite & Tacoli, 2002).

### **Poverty in Urban Conditions from the Perspective of Structural-Functional Theory**

Various perspectives have examined the problem of poverty, namely from the perspective of school managers (Hosgorur et al., 2023), employment (Sofa & Wicks, 2017), and urban politics (Levine, 2017). Thus, it is necessary to study the problem of poverty sociologically. Sociological studies have been carried out with a focus on individuals (psychosocial) such as studies from Walker et al., (2017) and Smeeding (2002). Furthermore, Marwell & Morrissey (2020) conducted a study using the concept of social organization in formal organizations.

In studying structural-functional poverty, it can be seen from the following perspectives. In the perspective of social pathology (Durkeim), poverty is seen as a social disease, in which people fail to function socially in the expected role of a constantly changing social structure so that they are pressured by other structures. People become poor because they fail to follow or fail to adapt to these ever-changing conditions that interfere with their functioning, such as limited access to information, unable to attend education, limited social relations. This is what keeps people poor because they are unable to compete (dysfunction).

Based on the perspective of social disorganization/disintegration (Parson), poverty is caused by errors in rules, misorganization and policies that are not pro-poor due to institutional abuse due to lack of social control. Disorganization occurs when society as a whole/part of it experiences imperfections in organizing/integrating goals, expectations and rules and does not maintain stability or balance. This is possible because change is so fast and people are not able to keep up with it, so there is a possibility of an imbalance in society and the poor remain poor and the rich remain rich.

In the perspective of deviant behavior, related to social pathology, this perspective causes people to rebel and commit deviance as a form of resistance and seek attention to adjust to social situations. Poverty arises because of differences in the values and expectations that a person has with the values and expectations of the group/society in which he lives so that he behaves deviantly. This deviant behavior causes him to be unable to take advantage of the welfare resources found in the community where he is, so he is poor.

Adherents of structural-functional theory accept change as something constant and do not require explanation (Rosana, 2019). Change is considered to disrupt the balance of society. The disruptive process stops when the change has been integrated into the culture. Changes that turned out to be useful (functional) were accepted and other changes that proved useless (dysfunctional) were rejected. Adherents of structural-functional theory view all social institutions that exist in society as functional in both positive and negative senses, including poverty. Gans proposed fifteen functions of poverty which can be reduced to four criteria, namely economic, social, cultural and political functions. Poverty will continue (according to Gans) for the following reasons: 1). Groups in society still think that poverty still has benefits; 2). Until now, the function of the poor has no other choice; and 3). The existing alternatives are still more expensive than the reward for the pleasure they provide.

Such is the function of poverty put forward by Gans, which does not mean that poverty is necessary and cannot be eliminated or at least minimized. Efforts are needed to overcome poverty that occurs in society. Poverty will disappear if poverty is no longer functioning for prosperity and also if the poor try their best to change the dominant system in social stratification. If the work that should be done by the poor has been replaced by mechanical

power and the condition of society is getting better and more evenly distributed, then the situation in society will remain stable even though there is no poverty.

Poverty is a complex problem with various interdependencies. Effective poverty reduction requires new ways of thinking about poverty and innovative programs to reduce its impact on people, communities and the environment. To date, a mix of economic, social structural, capability and learning perspectives has been applied to understanding poverty and planning strategies to accelerate its reduction.

The role of the private sector and sub-national policies are very important in alleviating poverty (Castro, 2007; Guo et al., 2021). However, if we reflect on the locus, reducing urban inequality is more effective in reducing urban poverty than promoting growth (Wilson et al., 2022). Thus, attention to heterogeneous policies of urban-rural integration is very important for alleviating urban and rural poverty and seeing urbanization waves (Niu & Xu, 2023; Chevo, 2022).

## CONCLUSION

Poverty is always present in every society, be it modern society (urban communities), especially in simple societies (rural communities). Efforts to eradicate poverty have also been carried out in various ways, both using top-down and bottom-up approaches, although the results are still far from expectations, we must continue to work so that poverty can be reduced immediately. There needs to be cooperation between the government and the community so that poverty can be minimized.

Poverty has crippled the joints of life. Poverty has prevented millions of children from receiving quality education; facing difficulties in financing health care; lack of savings and lack of investment; lack of access to public services; lack of jobs; lack of social security and protection for families; the strengthening flow of urbanization to the city. Poverty also causes millions of people to meet their limited needs for food, clothing and boards.

To overcome the problem of poverty, a strategy must be chosen that can strengthen the role and position of the people's economy in the national economy, so that structural changes occur which include allocating resources, strengthening institutions, empowering human resources. The selected program must side with and empower the community through economic development and improvement of the people's economy. This program must be realized in strategic steps aimed directly at expanding the access of the poor to development resources and creating opportunities for the grassroots to participate in the development process, so that they are able to overcome their underdevelopment. In addition, poverty alleviation efforts must be based on the determination of the right poverty line and a clear understanding of the causes of the problem.

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