

CHILDREN IN THE LABOR FORCE : THEIR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS (The Case of Three Provinces in Sulawesi)

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ABSTRAK

Studi ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan berbagai aspek sosial ekonomi dalam keterlibatan anak-anak dalam pasar kerja di tiga propinsi, yakni Propinsi Sulawesi Selatan, Sulawesi Tengah dan Sulawesi Tenggara. Populasi penelitian ini adalah anak-anak pekerja yang berusia kurang dari 15 tahun. Lokasi dipilih secara sengaja untuk mewakili daerah perkotaan dan pedesaan di tiga propinsi yang dimaksud. Ada 995 anak-anak dan 100 orang tua yang telah dijadikan responden. Hasil studi ini menunjukkan bahwa cukup besar proporsi anak-anak yang sudah masuk sebagai pekerja dalam usia kurang 10 tahun, bahkan sebagian diantara mereka ada laki-laki, dan pada umumnya bekerja pada jenis pekerjaan jual-jualan dan jasa-jasa. Khusus di daerah pedesaan, sebagian besar mereka bekerja dalam usaha tani keleuarga. Mereka yang bekerja di luar usaha tani bekerja lebih lama dibandingkan dengan di dalam lingkungan pertanian. Sebagian besar pekerja anak-anak ini tidak memiliki akses terhadap bantuan permodalan formal maupun dari upaya-upaya pembinaan. Pendapatan mereka rata-rata hanya sebesar Rp.61.400 per bulan, dan hanya memberi kontribusi rata-rata 21,1% terhadap penghasilan keluarga. Sebagian besar penghasilan mereka dibelanjakan untuk memenuhi kebutuhan sehari-hari mereka sendiri, khususnya makanan dan jajan, sementara mereka yang masih berstatus sekolah sambil bekerja ada 45,1% yang membelanjakan sebagian besar penghasilannya untuk keperluan sekolahnya.

BACKGROUND

Labor force development during the last two decades in Indonesia has been marked by a considerable increase in the size and proportion of children under 15 years old entering the labor market. They have been engaging not only in their households' economic activities, but mostly perform independent jobs, some of which were indeed not suitable with the nature of their childhood, such as work until late night, work in dangerous and unhealthy work environments.

The 1990 Population Census had reported that in Indonesia, the number of children workers at 10-14 year group was more than 2 million. The number would be much higher if children below 10 years also included.

In relation to the policy of HRD among young generation within the national development frame work, such a phenomenon is somewhat discouraging, since the both activities of children - work and attending formal schooling - to some extent are mostly conflicting.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. General Objective

To describe and explain various aspects of children's economic activities in the three

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selected Provinces in Sulawesi, and to investigate the relationship of those activities with the right and the ultimate need of those children to obtain formal education in the path of their Human Resource Development for their future wellbeing.

2. Specific objectives

- (a) To understand the pattern of children's economic activities as related to their social, economic, and demographic backgrounds in both rural and urban environments.
- (b) To understand how do the children workers allocate their income, in relation to their social and economic backgrounds.
- (c) To formulate alternative policies that might be effective to encourage the HRD among the children workers while supporting their economic activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many reasons why a child participates in economic activity instead of doing their "normal work" i.e. Schooling. Two of them are the so called "Household survival strategi" and the "Industrial transition" approaches.

The first approach suggests that as a household faces heavy economic burden, it will mobilize its capable members to perform income earning activities beside the head of the household, and these members were mostly of housewives and children (Harbirson in Effendi, 1993).

The second approach argues that at the initial phase of industrialization process, labor

input is generally kept with low wage to allow capital accumulation as a mean to improve productivity and revenue. In this regard, those of secondary workers i.e. women and children were commonly preferred by employers (Weber, 1993).

It was found by several studies that many of children workers were suffering from poor and dangerous working environment. (Prisma 1989; Tjanraningsih and White, 1992).

It is suggested that effective policy needs to be formulated for these young workers, to help them in improving their skill and HR quality and in the same time to facilitate them in performing their economic activities (Effendi, etal, 1990).

METHODOLOGY

1. Population

The population of this research was those children under 15, and involving in economic activities in the rural and urban areas of the Provinces of South, South-east, and Central Sulawesi.

2. Sampling and Areas

Research areas were purposively selected in the existing districts within these provinces. Each Province is represented by two selected districts, one is situated in urban area and a nother in rural. As regard the rural area, the research has devided it into coastal and inland areas. For the whole areas, the number of sample was 1000 children workers and 100 (10%) parents, as indicated in detail on the following table.

Sample Distribution

| Province | Urban | R u r a l | | Total |
|----------------------------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|
| | | Coastal | Inland | |
| <i>South Sulawesi:</i> | | | | |
| - Children | 200 | 100 | 100 | 400 |
| - Parent | 20 | 10 | 10 | 40 |
| <i>Central Sulawesi:</i> | | | | |
| - Children | 150 | 72 | 75 | 297 |
| - Parent | 15 | 7 | 8 | 30 |
| <i>Southeast Sulawesi:</i> | | | | |
| - Children | 150 | 75 | 73 | 298 |
| - Parent | 15 | 8 | 7 | 30 |
| <i>Total:</i> | | | | |
| - Children | 500 | 247 | 248 | 995 |
| - Parent | 50 | 25 | 25 | 100 |

Data evaluation indicated that five of the 1000 children respondents were giving invalid answers, and hence, excluded from the analysis.

3.Data Analysis

The data were analyzed in the descriptive qualitative way, employing both single and cross tabulations. The analysis has been supported by additional information resulted from interviews with local informants.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS**1.Demographic Composition**

Only children under 15 years were included in the research population. The largest proportion of respondents were at 13-14 years group(57,3%), followed by group of 11-12 year (35,8%), and 9 years or below (6,9%). The research found that some of the respondents were at 6 years of age which is indeed still too young to work for income earning.

Almost half (45,5%) of the respondents were the first and the second children of their parents, and the rest were the third or above of the birth order. 80,8% of the respondents were boys, which reflect the traditional pattern of division of labor within society. It was also found that 87,3% of them were still living together with their complete parent or father and mother.

2. Education

There were 64,1% of respondents still attending formal school beside working. This means that there were 35,9% who merely work for additional income for their household.

Among those who were still schooling, 72,7% still at Primary School. On the other hand, 92,7% of the non-schooling respondents were having only 6 years or less of formal education background.

3. Household Economy

Data on household economy of the respondents were informed by parents respondents. The research found that most

respondents have more than Rp. 200.000,- of average monthly household income (72,0%), and there were even 32,0% of them could earn above Rp. 300.000,- each month.

If only the income of household head were included, the data indicate that the largest proportion of them (85,0%) earn Rp. 200.000,- or below, and there were even 36,0% who only earn Rp. 100.000,- or below each month.

The relatively large gap between total household income and Head of household's income indicates the high contribution of other household members (incl. children) to their household economy. This is supported by the fact that each household has an average of 3,25 working members for income earning, in which 1,28 of them were children of 14 years or less.

PATTERN OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND INCOME ALLOCATION OF CHILDREN WORKERS

1. Age at first entrance to the work

The data indicate that about 20% of the respondents started to work when they were still 6-9 years of age. The largest proportion of them work first at their 10-12 years (63,0%), and another 17% entered the work while they were still at 13-14 years.

It was found that more children in Southeast Sulawesi entered the work when they were still below ten years (26,7%), compared to those from South and Central Sulawesi with 20% and 13,3% respectively. The data also indicate that boys generally entered the labor market faster than girls.

2. Types of Work

There were 44,6% of respondents engaged in sale activities (Petty traders), followed by services (21,7%), farming (20,0%), small industries (9,5%) and disposals collector (2,5%). As regard the research area, it was found that respondents in Southeast Sulawesi have higher proportion of farm worker (32,2%) compared to Central Sulawesi (15,5%) and South Sulawesi

(14,3%).

The types of respondents' work seem to follow the stage of economic development in the provinces under study, in which South Sulawesi - favoured by its strategic geographic and political positions has had greater economic achievement compared to others, and the non farming employments have accordingly increased considerably, both formal and informal sectors.

In relation to sex difference there appear particular works which could be viewed as "boy specific works" such as fish catching, newspaper sellers, construction, transportation, and other heavy and risk-taking jobs.

3. Time Allocation and Source of Capital

According to the formal regulation of minister of Manpower, children workers are only allowed to work at the maximum of 28 hours per week (4 hours per day). However, the research found that slightly more than half (50,7%) of the respondents work longer than the allowed hours.

The longest working hours of the respondents were found in South Sulawesi, where 64,8% exceed the normal working hours, compared to Central and Southeast Sulawesi with 47,6% and 34,6% respectively. If related to residence, those who reside in urban area have higher proportion of respondents working longer than the normal hours (66,0%), followed by those living in rural - coastal (53,1%) and rural - inland (35,2%).

The jobs with longer working hours were mostly in non-farming, particularly in construction, petty trading, newspaper sellers and disposal collectors. On the other hand, only 29,6% of respondents in farming activities who spent longer than the allowed time.

Most of respondents had entered the work with only labor capital, while only some 21,5% started to work with their own capital in cash. None of them have ever received any capital assistance from outsiders, and only six of all respondents stated that they have been provided with technical assistance from social agency.

4. Income and its allocation

1. Income

The average income of respondents was Rp. 61.400,- per month. The highest average income was found in South Sulawesi (Rp. 71.000,-) while Southeast Sulawesi records the lowest average income of Rp. 37.100,- each month. On the other hand, urban respondents earn higher income (in average Rp. 73.500,- per month) compared to rural inland with Rp. 50.100,- and rural - coastal with Rp. 48.300,-.

The research found that there were four jobs of the children which provide higher income (Rp. 75.000,- or above in average per month), these were : newspaper sellers, goods carrier, transportation, and fishing. The first three jobs were commonly found in urban economy, while the last in rural economy.

In relation to the newest government regulation of Regional Minimum Wage (UMR) in which South, Southeast, and Central Sulawesi have to pay a minimum wage of Rp. 102.000,-, Rp. 109.500,-, and Rp. 96.000,- per month respectively to employess, the research found that 80,3% of South Sulawesi respondents earn lower than the minimum wage, and the same condition was found in Southeast Sulawesi (97%) and Central Sulawesi (84,2%).

2. Contribution to Household Economic

The respondents income contributes in average 21,1% or about one fifth to their household' total income. This contribution varies according to research areas, where South Sulawesi exhibit the highest contribution (25,2%), followed by Central Sulawesi (20,9%) and Southeast Sulawesi (15,4%). The variation seems to be affected largely by the availability of non-farm activities particularly is services and sales. Such a variation is also reflected by differences of residence, where the urban respondents have higher contribution to their household economy (23,9%), followed by rural coasted (19,0%) and rural inland (17,2%).

3. Allocation of Income

It was found that the respondents income has been generally spent to meet their basic needs every day. There were 45,1% of them spent their income for food and clothes, 31,3% for educational expenses, 19,0% for saving, and 4,6% for others.

The research also found that respondents in South Sulawesi tend to spent their income more in non-productive things such as education or saving compared to other provinces.

As regard the residence, respondents of rural inland, interestingly, spent their income largely for educational needs compared to other residences. There is a common tendency in agricultural based community that parents encourage to work mainly for their own educational needs (e.g.weber, 1991).

As it was indicated earlier that non-schooling respondents earn higher income than the schooling respondents do, and hence they are expected to utilize their income in preparing their better future, but the research found that 74,5% of those non-schooling workers spent most of their income for consumptive purpose particularly food and clothes. Only 17,6% allocate the incomes for other purposes mainly for saving.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY OF RESPONDENTS AND PARENT PERCEPTION

As indicated earlier, 64,1% of respondents were performing dual roles, working while schooling. The largest proportion of schooling respondents were found in rural-coastal (70,2%), followed by rural-inland (68,4%) and urban (59,0%). It is argued that children in rural areas have long been socialized to help their parents in economic activities, while children from low household economy of urban areas have been mostly forced to work to help their parents.

Accordingly, that would create a more conflicting sphere with their educational activities, compared to children workers in rural areas where both spheres of activities - work and school - are commonly compromised.

1. Educational Performance of the Schooling Respondents

Among the respondents who work and schooling, there were 86,7% stated that their work does not disturb their school. However, this statement seems to be simplified as the respondents' statement has neither been related to their academic record nor to their learning time at home. If the time to learn at home is concerned, the respondents generally feel that their work activities do interrupt their learning time outside the school. In this regard, those of urban respondents were experiencing more conflicting conditions between both activities, followed by those of inland and coastal rurals.

Again, such a phenomenon indicate that the nature of economic activities in rural areas (mostly of traditional agriculture) were more tolerant to schooling workers.

The data also indicate the very influential role of respondents' parent to motivate them to place high priority on school while work. Yet a number of factors which they feel as discouraging their school activity in the future. These factors are : education cost (59,6%); shortage of time (19,0%); apathetism (18,7%); learning ability (15,8%) and others (9%).

The problem of education cost has been particularly encountered by urban respondents (70,8%), compared to those of rural inland and rural coastal with 55,0% and 44,8% respectively.

However, a large enough of respondents proportion were optimistic to obtain higher education (35,2%), but the largest proportion was those who believed that they only would be able to continue their study until Senior High School (47,0%).

2. Educational Performance of the Non-Schooling Respondents

Among those of the "working only" respondents, 92,7% have primary school of

formal educational background, and 62,7% of which were leaving before completing the six years primary school.

There were 73,9% of them leaved the school on financial reason. Other factors such as apathetic, incapable of learning, and time conflict constitute 26,1%. Perhaps because of such complicated factors, most of non-schooling respondents (63,0%) were stating that they have no more intention to resume their formal school.

For their very low formal educational background, they were poor in knowledge and skills that are necessary in performing more remunerative jobs. They accordingly generally involved in non skilled works. Their main capital were only physical labor and high motivation.

The low educational background of them, also implied low aspiration toward the need for knowledge and skill improvement activities in addition to their daily works. There were 38,4% of then who do not feel any need to attend specific skill improving programs, compared to 22,4% who have particular efforts to improve their skill and knowledge.

3. Parents Perception Toward their Children Education

Most of parents do motivate and support their children to perform their educational activity well beside their work for income. Kinds of support were generally in the form of financial assistance, supervicing children learning activity both at school and at home, and helping their children in co-curricula activities.

It was interesting that most parents (65,0%), wish their children to obtain higher education although they do aware of their low economic condition.

There seems no considerable difference in parents perception and aspiration toward their children education between rural and urban respondents, although the urban parents tend to be a bit more realistic in considering their economic condition.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

Conclusion

1. A considerable number of children in the research areas entered the labor market at very young age, i.e. 6-9 years. Rural coastal was found to contribute highest proportion of workers aged below ten years.
2. The most common jobs occupied by those children workers were sales (petty traders), followed by services, agriculture and manufactures. More than half of respondents worked longer than the normal working hours for children approved by government, and most of them were found in non - agricultural works.
3. Physical labor was the only capital for most of the children to enter the labor market. Only about one fifth of them started to work using capital in Cash which were generally provided by their family. The involvement of Social agency in promoting or improving their works performance has been still unconsiderable.
4. The average income of the children was apparently very low, particularly if compared to the regional minimum wage currently applied by Indonesian government. The average income was only Rp. 61.400,- per month, and seems to follow the types of jobs. Non-farm works that are mostly found in urban area provide them higher income. It was therefore ironical, that while they spent much longer time to work than the normal time allowed for children workers, they were poorly rewarded.
5. The children's contribution to their household economy was considerably high. In the average of more than one fifth (21,1%) of the total household income has been resulted from their children's income.
6. Most of children's income were spent to meet their basic needs particularly food and clothes. In the meanwhile, those of schooling respondents have largely spent their income for education costs (45,1%).

There was an indication that consumerism has been widely adopted by children workers. This can be reflected by the relatively high proportion of them who have frequently committed to deviant behaviors, particularly among urban children.

7. For most schooling respondents, their work generally not disturbing their school activities. The only problem which some time appear among them has been on time allocation between both activities.

However, the most principal barrier for them to continue their formal schooling would be educational cost.

Such a problem had also been stated by most of non - schooling respondents as their major reason to leave school, although other minor reasons also stated such as apathetism, incapable to learn, and lack of time.

8. Parent's aspiration toward their children's education apparently high. Most of the parents want their children to obtain higher education. They accordingly maintain their support to the children's dual roles and have frequent discussion with them concerning various issues around the children's Social life. However, urban parents seem to be more pragmatic in viewing their children's dual roles, where they tend to give more priority on income earning activity.

Policy Implication

1. Considering the substantial and influential roles of children's works on their household's economy, it is argued to a need for integrated policy to support the children's economic activities in which include Human Resource Improving Programs. The children workers should be viewed as potential human capital that highly contributes to the whole economic development. In line with this perception it is ultimately needed specific regulations to protect the children workers and encourage their welfare.
2. The children workers should be directed to allocate their income mostly for productive expenses as well as for saving to help them in

preparing their better future.

In this effort the government together with various social and economic institutions could take necessary steps.

3. The high proportion of children suggesting the financial problems as their major barrier to continue their formal schooling, implies a call for effective programs and schemes to generate funds for those children to ensure their education continuity.
4. It is proposed to take effective measures to prevent the children from deviant behaviors that may destruct their human resource potential, and hence discourage their life improvement. The fact that those behaviors are associated mostly with urban characteristics, it is therefore recommended to focussed such measures on this urban group. In viewing the influential role of parents on children's daily life, it would be more effective accordingly if the measures are to be integrated in various family oriented programs.
5. For children with dual roles - school and work, the following recommendation is believed to be constructive :
 - (a) All parties, especially those involving in children's economic activities, have to pay special attention toward the children's education interest. It should be directed that their work would not preventing them from educational activities.
 - (b) Charitative programs such as foster parent and fellowship schemes could be integrated with children's economic activities, although their education interest should be placed on the higher priority.
This policy could encourage the continuity of children's dual roles, and could maintain the self reliance of those children.
6. For those of non - schooling workers, necessary steps and programs are urgently required to help the children to resume their formal school. Such the steps or programs are particularly recommended for those parties having work relationship with the children. The programs could be in the forms of, for

example, "Education Saving Scheme" which is directly promoted by employers or patrons. In addition, the awareness of the importance of skill and education should always be inculcated in the children's mind.

In order to meet their needs for education and skills, the existings educational and skill training agencies are encouraged to develop specific programs for children workers.

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