

## Revisiting the Source of Family Income: The Economic Value of Children for Farmer Labour Family in Indonesia

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### Abstract

The economic value of children is high in a poor family. Therefore, the more children they have, the better the economic condition will be. While for families with high economical condition, the social and psychological values of children are emerged. This study is aiming at revisiting the believe that for poor family, the children are serve as the source of the family income instead of the source of family pride. The study is conducted to search what the value of children for the farmer labour family is. The method used is qualitative approach to families working as farmer labour at Cirebon Municipality. The result shows that although the farmer labour families are categorized as poor families, they valued their children as the source of security for them in the future. The informants believed that their children will do better than them and encourage the children to achieve higher education instead of forcing the children to work and earn a living. Therefore, this study has shown the contrary to the first believe that for poor family, the economic value of children is high. The study found that the social psychological values of children are emerged in the poor farmer labour family.

Keywords: Value of Children, Family, Farmer Labour, Indonesia.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

One hope of building family is having children, however, not all couples are given the opportunity to raise children. For families who do not have children, thus the couple will try many ways and methods to have children of their own. When a child is borned in the family, many couples are capable of providing care in accordance with their child's general development. This capability is influenced by culture surrounding the families' lives, therefore the care of children is different from one family to the others although all with the same goal, that is hoping their children to be human suited with the families hope in specific and suited with the hope of the community in general.

The child care is also connected with how a family is valuing its children. One of the factor included into cultural factor is the socio economical factor. This shows that the socio-economical factor plays an important role on influencing the family in valueing its children. Therefore the value of a child is connected with the strength of cultural values bonding the lives. Perception and hope toward children are different from various cultures. Children are the main and precious resources, and children are the representatives of our future.

The value of children refers to functions conducted by children toward their parent or the fulfilment of parents need by the children (Esphenshade, 1977). The value of a child for a parent is visible from the current phenomenon, where the children are considered as the place to show affection, the source of family happiness and the facts shows that most of the time, children are becoming one consideration when a couple is decided to divorce or separated (Ihromi, 1999).

Puspasari (2014) stated that the value of a child is closely connected with culture that applied in a community, where every community have their own values regarding something that exist in the community. The value in general is not easy to change because every persons in the community have been socialized with the values. Through the socialization process, every individuals have absorbed the cultural values that lives in the community, since their childhood through adulthood, therefore the concept of the values are already rooted in their souls.

Koentjaraningrat (1981) sees the cultural value system consist of lives conceptions that stay in the mind of most community members about things they consider valuable in lives, and usually functioned as highest guidance for the individual to behave within the community. The value of children is part of cultural value in the community. The value of child is individual or community

judgement toward the meaning and functions of children in the family. In general, children are considered as the need of parent, either as economical, social or psychological needs.

Hoffman & Wyatt in Fawcett (1984), mentioned some parents believed that children are the successor of culture, while some believed that children serve as agent of change on life styles and social structure, which means that children are considered and valued as tools that are economically beneficial and tool of family succession. From the usage aspect, according to Leibenstein (in Sutyastie, 2001), children are valued as the source of man power to increase the family income, and valued as the potential of security for the parents in the future. While from expense aspect, there are two categories which are direct expenses (including food, clothing, housing, education, health care, etc.) and indirect expenses (also known as opportunity cost).

In social lives, the value of children is visible in the role of inheritance and continue the legacy of their parent. In their role as the inheritance, Ihromi (1999) claimed the children are not only inherit the family fortune (tangible heritage), but also inherit the cultural legacy of the parent (intangible heritage).

Lucas et al. (1984) claimed there are two economical burden of a child, they are (1). Financial burden or the direct expenses; and (2). Opportunity cost or indirect cost such as the expense claimed for child care or missing income due to child care. This indirect cost occurs when a wife let go of her job when their children are young, thus the parent will lose the opportunity of earning which should be received by the wives. However, when the wife continues to work, then they will have to spend some money for child care, and this according to Sutyastie (2001) is considered as alternative expense.

White (1994), claimed in every household, there is a family economical system which count the "profit-loss" toward the expense and value of children. The child expense is expenses expended by the parents to ensure the livelihood of their children, while the value of a child is connected with his/her function as the source of security for the parent in their old days and the as the productive man power or useful for the household economic condition.

Study conducted by Singarimbun et al. (1977) on the value of children for Sundanese and Javanese in Java Island at 1977 found the existence of children in a family can be perceived as positive and negative values. The positive values in the study both reside in the village or in the city of the children are as economical assistance in the form of manpower to work either working with parent

or in the farm and also as the guarantee for the parents in their old days. Another important positive value is that children serve as the bonding agent for the couple and continue the heritage. While the emerging negative value is the economical burden, including school expense. For Javanese rural people, all expenses inclusive for their children's wedding ceremony is also considered as the economical burden to the family. Other than those two values, emotional burden such as concern for the children's health and negative impact from peer are also categorized as second burden to the parent (Singarimbun et al., 1977).

In line with the views of parents on children influenced by cultural factors. The Sundanese who live in urban areas expect that boys will be able to help the parent in the financial, while in the rural, the expectation to the children (boys and girls), will help the parents in their work in the future, and especially for girls, they are expected to assist with the domestic work. In addition, from the characteristic of the quality of children desired by parents from Sundanese tribe, the parents want their children to be religious and well educated, besides that parents are more concerned with aspects of psychological benefits (Singarimbun et al., 1977).

Based on the previous descriptions, the value of the child can be grouped into several values as presented by Ihromi (1999) that the value of children can be viewed from various aspects, they are religious, social, economic, and psychological aspects.

1. Child value in terms of religion, based on the principle (duty) between the parents and children. The debt repayment can be made by executing one's liability to the other. Sacrifice of parents to children began since the baby is still in the womb (Ihromi, 1999). In addition, children are gift from God, thus must be treated and guarded well. And vice versa, the Children must respect and please the parents during their lifetime.
2. Child value in social life, can be seen from the role of children as the hereditary successors and heirs of their parents. In the role as heir, the child does not merely inherit the estate of parents (a material heritage), but also inherited customary obligations (an inheritance that is immaterial), as well as replace the parents in performing custom process.
3. Child value in economic terms, that the economic value of children can be seen from the role of children in providing economic assistance to parents (Ihromi, 1999). The assistance is mainly in the form of labour assistance as well as material assistance. Child assistance as labour is generally done in farming families. This is a feature of traditional communities whose members are mostly farmers. Meanwhile, in communities whose members have worked in the industrial sector, child assistance as labour assistance is no longer needed. In industrial societies, the

child's economic assistance is in the form of material that is felt to be very important in relieving the household economic burden.

4. Child value in terms of psychology, have both, positive and negative values. Positive psychological values can be seen from situations experienced by parents that children can create feelings of security, assurance, pride, and satisfaction. These feeling are usually felt by couples who have sons. They feel satisfied, safe, and secure, because they believe that in the future, their child can carry out the customary obligations both in relatives and communities. In addition, children can also entertain their parents, give encouragement to more morale work, and warm the relationship of married couples. Negative psychological value can be seen from situations experienced by some parents such as children often get sick, which causing the feelings of worry or anxiety. In addition, there is also the fact that some parents complain after having children, because they feel less free to go or work. In this case, the child is perceived as a hassle. However, when compared between the positive and negative values, more parents feel that the child has a positive value in their life (Ihromi, 1999).

Family of farmer labour, is considered as identical as families of low income and categorized as poor. The measurement of poor is referred to the measurement used by the Indonesian Statistical Bureau Centre, which is having an income of equivalent to 30 kg of rice per month. This study is aiming at describing the value of children to the farmer labour family.

## METHOD

This article is formulated based on the field study result conducted using descriptive method with qualitative approach. The data is gained from primary source, that is the farmer labour families who have child/children at Municipality of Cirebon and secondary source namely literatures related to the value of children. The data collecting technique used is interview, observation, and literature as well as documentation studies. The validity of data is conducted by triangulation technique by cross checking data gained from various sources. The interview conducted to seven mothers working as farmer labour.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study strengthens the results of previous research (Saefullah, 1979) which shows that the parent's view of the children is more toward the economically valued, especially in terms of helping with the housework. Similarly, based on the results of research by Masri Singarimbun et al. (1977) who finds that the parents of Sundanese and Javanese both residing in rural and urban areas, view the child primarily from economic assistance in the form of labour to work either at home, in parent's current work, or in agriculture, and also as assurance in their old age. In accordance with the results of this study, such a view is stronger in families with lower social and economic status.

The empirical findings at this study site can be explained theoretically that parent's views on the value of children will certainly be influenced by cultural factors. In fact, in accordance with the findings of this study, these cultural factors are stronger in families with lower social and economic status within community structures. The cultural factor provides a pattern for social action in certain families in the study sites related to social values and rules concerning working children. In short, the parent's view of the value of the child is a social fact, that is the factor outside the individual which encourages the individual to perform social action, including for children to enter the occupation world immediately in the hope of helping their families as soon as possible.

The socioeconomic conditions of the family will affect their views on the value of the child. In poor families, characterized by low levels of education, their livelihoods generally as laborers, in farmer or other sectors, and have a low income. Views of the value of children from such family group emphasize the child from the economic value, which means that the child used as the sources of labor in the family. Whereas in the relatively wealthy family, the child is seen more from the social and psychological aspects, where the child is considered as able to improve the parent's social status, provide satisfaction and pride for their parents. This is in line with Hoffman and Wyatt's opinion in Fawcett (1984) that some parents have the view that the child is the cultural successor, while others see the children as the source of change (agent of change) on lifestyle and social structure, which means that the children are appreciated and assessed as an economically advantageous tool and also as a tool for the successor's family. Such differences of views are influenced by social and economic factors of the family.

The family, in this case is the father and mother, low levels of education, employment as a worker, with low income will affect the motivation of children to work. Parents with this characteristics will directly or indirectly encourage the children to help the family, in which the children from the poor

families usually have a strong motivation to work (earn money), thus they are often expected as the family's backbone.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, there are several points that become the findings of this study. First, the family of labour farmer searn averagely low income therefore they optimize the whole family, in this case their children, to be able to help the family. The assistance provided by the child is still limited to assisting domestic work and helping with parent business activities.

Second, another finding, the family of labour farmers with poor economic conditions in view of children are more dominant in social and psychological aspects. The presence of children is defined by the family as social savings of the future, because someday parents will depend on their children for their lives. In addition, the child is identical with social status. Families who have children will be viewed as family in line with the community's expectation. On the contrary, if they do not have any children, the couple will be vulnerable to divorce.

In the theory of value proposed by Faucett, which states that the value of children for the poor is dominant on the economic aspect, but on the contrary, in families with moderate and high economics, the value of children is dominant in psychological social aspects. The findings of this study finally concluded that the dominant aspect exists in the psychological social. Children are expected to strengthen the marriage relationship and gain social status in their environment.

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