

Social Inequality: Claiming the Responsibilities of Citizen Engagement

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Abstract

Social inequality occurs due to the difficulty for the lower class to enjoy access to the results of the government's development. Symptoms that arise in society due to differences in ability limits and social status between people are called social inequality. The weak quality of life caused by socio-economic inequality will affect the future of the Indonesian nation. The involvement of citizens in solving a problem is indeed significant. The issue of social inequality certainly requires the participation of citizens. In this article, we analyze social inequality by looking at the perspective of the responsibility of citizens' involvement in overcoming this inequality. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a literature review method. This study found that social inequality in society is caused by two things that come from internal and external factors. This social inequality has caused various social ills, such as poverty, increased crime, and moral decadence. The involvement of citizens is necessary for overcoming this social inequality, which can be done through a persuasive approach by inviting the development of harmony and complying with applicable regulations. The second is independent community empowerment through increasing human capacity and optimizing social capital.

Keywords: Social Inequality, Citizen Engagement, Community Empowerment, Human Capacity, Social Capital.

Introduction

The year 2000 marked the beginning of the process that would eventually result in the creation of the global development agenda, also known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). 189 nations issued declarations once the MDGs were completed (Hulme & Scott, 2010; Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2011). Since 2015, the year in which the Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs) were supposed to be achieved, world leaders have spent the past seven years reworking the global development agenda into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Langford, 2016).

Of course, these SDGs have global development goals that are more comprehensive than their predecessors, the MDGs, with 17 development goal points. On its official website, the 17 SDGs points include "no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry innovations and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities, and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace justice and strong institution & partnership for the goals" (Randers et al., 2019; Breuer et al.; 2019; Boar et al., 2020). With the birth of these 17 points, the countries that signed the SDGs agreement – including Indonesia- must take several actions to achieve the targets that have been determined together.

This goal is even more comprehensive because it is based on human rights, inclusivity, and anti-discrimination principles. The SDGs agenda does not solely focus on efforts to meet current development needs but also considers meeting future development needs (Parnell, 2016). In addition, the SDGs aim to ensure that all humans can enjoy a prosperous life and that current development is in harmony with the environment, then designed to encourage peace so that a just society can be realized (Gore, 2015).

Social inequality is in the international spotlight because this happens in various countries (Lomborg, 2020). It becomes a problem when countries agree to reduce inequality as one of the points of the SDGs, and the inequality rate is increasing (Lakner et al., 2019). Oxfam International notes that currently, there is a concentration of wealth in the world; 50 percent of natural resources are controlled by wealthy people, who account for only 1 percent of the approximately 8.5 billion world population (Tempo, 2015). A minimal number of people from the total world population only own access to and ownership of capital.

In general, social inequality is a condition where an imbalance or distance occurs in society, which can be caused by differences in social, economic, and cultural status (Szreter, 2002). Significant differences will trigger inequality, starting from the different treatment of people around to the risk of injustice (Dorling, 2015). Inequality in social life is very diverse and can be experienced directly by oneself. There are many forms of inequality in people's social life because the triggering factors are very diverse (Tierney, 2006). A person can get unfair and unfair treatment when dealing with those whose social, [economic](#), and cultural status is considered superior.

In the INFID research report, it states that there are at least 5 to 6 areas of inequality; out of the ten domains asked, what is currently being felt include income inequality, employment, housing, property, family welfare, education, living environment, involvement in politics, law, and health. The amount of inequality according to residents' perceptions in the report, income 71.1 percent, work 62.6 percent, house or residence 61.2 percent, property 59.4 percent, family welfare 56.6 percent, education 54 percent, neighborhood 52 percent, involved in politics 48 percent, law 45 percent, and health 42.3 percent (Ismail, 2019). Indonesia currently ranks as the 4th most unequal country in the world, with 1% of the wealthiest people controlling 49.3% of national wealth and 10% of the wealthiest people controlling 77% of total national wealth (Tribun News, 2017). Despite recording good economic growth, inequality in Indonesia is still relatively high. Inequality occurs between the rich and the poor, which is reflected in the Gini ratio, and the deposits of the rich still dominate bank deposits (Neaime & Gaysset, 2018). Inequality also occurs between regions where Java dominates the economy while others still need to be developed, especially the

Eastern Indonesia Region. This cannot be underestimated, considering that inequality is severe and can potentially cause the nation's disintegration (Fuady, 2019).

Caring alone is not enough if it is not accompanied by an attitude of courage to answer existing problems as a form of implementation of caring so that later on it will become social responsibility; therefore, it requires individuals who are willing to take on the challenge of addressing issues of social inequality (Salam, 2019). People who have social responsibility reflect more concerns than themselves (Luthfi, 2018); Hadiwijaya further stated that social and environmental responsibility are ethics and abilities. Social responsibility should be attached to everyone, groups of people and organizations, as well as the community environment. Improve the quality of the social environment by prioritizing public priorities and concerns (Subagyo, 2014). In this vein, a number of earlier research have demonstrated that individuals who have a self-consciousness to be accountable for certain social issues are more likely to overcome social inequality when compared to those who believe that responsibility is the concern of another party (Scott & Serek, 2015; DeGroot & Steg, 2009).

However, the deteriorating sense of social responsibility in society is directly proportional to the fading respect for cultural and language values, the values of social solidarity, kinship, and a sense of love for the motherland, as well as various behaviors that are inconsistent with values, norms, materialism, and apathy. Moreover, the deteriorating respect for cultural and language values is directly proportional to the deteriorating respect for social responsibility in society. In this context, it demonstrates the significance of the participation of each and every person as an essential component of the solution to the issue of social disparity that is inherent to the society as a whole (Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). The type of participation that is desired is called civic engagement, which can be defined as a condition or a norm in which citizens individually or collectively participate actively in social life based on skills, expertise, and knowledge, combined with values, motivation, and commitment to make changes that improve the quality of life. To the benefit of society generally (Adler & Goggin, 2005). The evidence provided by community involvement demonstrates that the home setting, the school system, and the many organizations all play an important part in persuading each and every person of the community to participate.

Methods

The purpose of this study is to investigate social inequality from the standpoint of the responsibility that citizens bear in terms of their participation in efforts to eliminate such inequality. Moleong, 2014). This research falls under the category of qualitative research. In the process of carrying out data analysis by means of data reduction, data display, and an overview of conclusions so as to get a conclusive picture of the study of literature to be developed in this research and to validate the data using data source triangulation, data collection techniques such as listening to and recording important information will be utilized (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The following research should focus on a more diverse population and a wider range of locations. It is possible that the outcomes of research will vary depending on the context in which it is applied before conclusions can be drawn.

Results and Discussion

Social Inequality

There are many forms of inequality in society because the triggering factors vary. Someone can get wrong and unfair treatment when dealing with those whose social, [economic](#),

and cultural status is considered superior (higher). Many experts define social inequality, including Boudon (1974), explaining that social inequality is the failure of development in the era of globalization to meet citizens' physical and psychological needs. Inequality is increasingly felt in the era of globalization and is caused by many factors that make the gap bigger and inequality higher. This inequality is considered a failure in development, so residents' physical and psychological needs are challenging to fulfill.

Meanwhile, Price & Feinman (1995) explained that social inequality is a form of injustice in the development process. So that social inequality will accompany the development process in the community. The development process, which required many funds, was then carried out in stages. Starting from one area to another area. Neckerman (2004) explains that social inequality is a social change involving elements in society that are interconnected. It can be concluded from the definition of social inequality presented by a number of experts. Social inequality is a condition in which considerable differences are formed due to the development process only focusing on economic aspects.

Inequality in social life indeed only forms with clear reasons or causes. According to various sources, this inequality can arise from two factors (Adger, 1999). That is:

Internal factors

Internal factors in social inequality are the factors that cause inequality that originate from within each individual. Everyone has internal factors that can cause inequality. Internal factors can make a person behave unfairly and want to win alone. Internal factors also cause a person to realize that there is a condition of inequality when experiencing an event, experience, and so on. This internal factor refers more to the quality of an individual or someone somewhat limited (Boyce et al., 2013). For example:

- 1). A low education could be due to economic problems, so it is difficult to get an education to the character of the individual who is lazy to go to school.
- 2). Low skills, where skills can be an asset to earn and improve one's economic condition.
- 3). Health quality still needs to improve; for example, access to health facilities is still tricky in remote villages.
- 4). Cultural barriers, such as a culture of poverty, make a person used to having minimal access to various fields, whether education, health, or so forth.

External Factors

The second factor causing social inequality is external factors. Namely, factors that cause inequality come from the outside environment and beyond a person's ability to prevent or overcome it. These external factors can be in the form of policies of an organization or company, policies from the government, and so on. The existence of external factors makes inequality that occurs in society not caused by someone's laziness. Instead, policies, rules, and culture make it difficult for someone in society to develop (Fischer et al., 2020). For example, when working in a company, there are rules that those who can hold high positions are from the founder's family. Policies like this will prevent employees without blood relations with the directors from having difficulty holding strategic positions. So, most of them will always be subordinates and find it challenging to develop their careers.

Even though social inequality has existed for a long time and still exists today. Not that this condition can only be understood and left alone. This is because inequality that goes too far and drags on can have many negative impacts. Like:

The quality of education is getting lower

The first impact of inequality in social life is the decline in the quality of education. The number of uneducated people will continue to grow, which can have a broader impact. This can happen because access to education requires economic strength. Because in Indonesia itself, education is not entirely free, especially for higher education. There are scholarships, but there are conditions attached to them, and in the end, many lower-income people still find it challenging to get this facility. Suppose inequality continues to occur where a person has a low income all his life and only enough to eat. Then they will have a generation with low education and then repeat the fate of their parents or great-grandfathers. Because parents who have difficulty giving proper education make their children suffer the same fate. Working hard with low pay (Setiawan, 2020).

Rising Crime Rate

Social inequality can trigger an increase in crime rates. At one time, there were very wealthy people in an environment because they were highly educated or had blue-blood descendants. At the same time, more neighbors are poor and even very poor to the point of having difficulty eating. Then they will think of stealing from the rich man's house. According to the previous explanation, inequality is caused by economic factors and other factors. So that criminal figures that have various modes will stick to the surface (Dulkiah, 2018).

Increasing Poverty

The low level of community education can affect the income of these people. When working, elementary school graduates will earn lower wages than high school graduates and college graduates. If the number of people with low education is too high and there are too many, the poverty rate will also be higher. This can affect a country's economic conditions, making it difficult to develop (Nadya & Syafri, 2019).

There is a moral decadence.

Inequality in social life can also cause moral decadence. Moral decadence is eroding identity related to declining religious values, culture, nationalism, and so on. There are many examples or forms of social decadence as the impact of inequality. Call it promiscuity among teenagers, high cases of obscenity, high levels of corruption from officials, brawls, and so forth.

Inequality in life can lead to moral erosion. Initially, the kind-hearted person may be forced to commit immoral acts out of necessity. Like officials who later become corrupt because their salaries are small or because too high a prestige pressures them.

Social inequality is then known to have several forms. There are six forms of this inequality, namely:

- 1). Inequality of human self-development. This is related to the low education of a person. The lower the level of education, the more difficult it is to develop.
- 2). Inequality between Village and City. This is a form of inequality where infrastructure and technological developments in cities are more massive. This happens because people in urban areas already think modernly and have a high level of education as well as many skills so that they are stronger economically and have mental readiness to encourage the development of urban areas.
- 3). Regional and Subregional Inequality. The third form is inequality between regions and sub-regions, for example, between the provincial capital and the surrounding districts. Development in Bandung is far more massive than in the West Bandung district and its surroundings.

- 4). Inequality between socio-economic groups. The existence of differences in social class will create inequality between socio-economic groups where middle and upper-class people have facilities to access better services. For example, accessing education in schools that are of better quality even though they are more expensive. So that they have more diverse skills as their capital for success when they enter the career world.
- 5). Inequality in the distribution of assets. This inequality can be seen in the distribution of assets, where urban areas are superior. An example is the construction of toll roads which are more often carried out in urban areas than rural areas.
- 6). Inequality between economic sectors. Differences in economic sectors will determine the type and number of jobs, the skills needed, etc. So, when you are in another area, you are required to have skills appropriate to the economic sector in that area to survive.

Claiming the Responsibilities of Citizen Involvement in Social Inequality

Social inequality is a social imbalance that exists, so it becomes a striking difference. Alternatively, it can also be interpreted as a situation where people with an economy above have a higher position and are more potent than those below. The problem experienced by Indonesian citizens is regarding the lack of community services, causing social inequality between people who have an economy above and those who have an economy below (Santi, 2022).

Based on the research results obtained by researchers, to support and support citizen involvement in minimizing existing social inequalities, it is not only carried out by the government, but all citizens must contribute to support this government program. The approach taken first can be carried out by utilizing the role of community leaders in the community by using a persuasive approach by persuading, changing, and believing the community that community leaders care about what is needed by them.

What is meant by a community leader here is a person who still needs an official appointment. However, because he has several superior qualities, he achieves a position as a person who can influence a community's psychological condition and behavior, such as Religious Leaders, Traditional Leaders, and Existing Stakeholders. The roles that community leaders can play in reducing social inequality are as follows:

- a. It must balance religious insight with governmental insight in caring for its people.
- b. Appeal to immediately stop the use of religious symbols for the benefit of power, wealth, and certain groups.
- c. Building harmonious relationships between religious leaders, fellow religious leaders, religious leaders with formal figures (executive and legislative), and traditional leaders so that they can lead a safe life together without discrimination during a pluralistic government.
- d. Play a role in enforcing customary rules that apply in their respective regions.
- e. Fostering and controlling community members' attitudes and behavior so they follow applicable regulations.

The problem of social inequality cannot only be borne by the government; of course, it will take quite a long time. Considering that inequality is a highly complex problem involving many aspects and the government's limited ability. Therefore, the effort to overcome this gap lies with all of us or the community.

Second, citizens' involvement in reducing disparities in development can be done one way by empowering the community. This is due to the purpose of empowerment which leads

to "independence." In addition, community empowerment also has advantages when compared to other forms of activity. Given that community empowerment can directly target those parties who feel they are experiencing a condition that is powerless or powerless (Wallerstein, 1992).

So far, there have been many parties that are active in community empowerment. They empower various community groups, such as farmers, women, homemakers, people with disabilities, etc. Various fields such as health, reproductive health, education, economy, and entrepreneurship have also been carried out. Nevertheless, nationally, inequality still occurs. Even so, we cannot deny that community empowerment also produces results that the local or local community feels.

To overcome the gap, the community empowerment efforts that have been carried out need renewal and improvement. The novelty in question is that it has paid attention to aspects of one's capabilities since the beginning. One's freedom and ability to access opportunities in life need to be emphasized. Because so far, it has always been understood that poverty, for example, is seen or considered due to a lack of sources of income. Nevertheless, the conditions that prevent people from accessing sources of income should be addressed.

Community empowerment should consider and pay attention to these aspects of capability from the start because community empowerment is also an effort to strengthen not only from the economic dimension but includes social and political dimensions. In other words, every community empowerment effort should be attached to efforts to make the community self-sufficient economically, socially, and politically (Gillies, 2005).

Not infrequently, what happens in the field is that many efforts to empower the community are carried out by various parties but only target economic independence, namely by increasing the income (material) of the community alone. Meanwhile, expanding community opportunities or opportunities to access other resources such as information, knowledge, skills, participation in organizations, and political aspirations that need to be heard or even accommodated are not touched by community empowerment efforts. Therefore, the concept of human capability must always include in every empowerment effort.

In addition to capabilities, community empowerment in overcoming disparities requires utilizing or optimizing social capital. This is important because social capital itself has a role in human development. Several dimensions of human development are even heavily influenced by social capital, including the ability to solve collective problems, drive rapid wheels of change in society, expanding shared awareness that there are many ways that each member of the group can take to improve their lot together, improve the quality of life, such as increasing welfare (Haridison, 2013).

A high level of trust characterizes high social capital in a society, and cooperation among its citizens positively impacts community empowerment efforts. First, this makes it possible for empowerment programs or activities to be carried out to be successful because the habits of mutual trust and cooperation have been well established. Second, high social capital characterizes excellent and smooth communication between citizens, so solving problems or finding solutions is more effective. Third, high social capital in a community will support the sustainability of community empowerment programs or activities.

Community empowerment that has begun to pay attention to human capabilities and the use of social capital is one way to overcome the problem of inequality. This is due to community empowerment which is carried out directly touching the target, namely those who

are victims of inequality or those who are powerless and powerless. In addition, these efforts also recognize and provide space for each human being to be empowered individually and as a group or community (Rahman et al., 2020).

Empowerment as an individual or human being is emphasized with attention to expansion and opportunities to access life choices, namely capabilities. Meanwhile, the space for empowerment as a group and/or community is also in line with the high social capital of the community. In other words, community empowerment that begins to pay attention to human capabilities and the utilization of social capital whose ultimate goal is independence can accommodate empowered spaces individually and as groups or communities.

Social capital plays a role in empowering the community. In every community empowerment effort that is carried out, social capital must be attached to it. Of course, in the process, good community empowerment should be attached to the implementation of visible empowerment efforts between the power giver and the power recipient. This is to ensure that the process goes well.

The presence of social capital continues beyond the community empowerment process, which is still ongoing. Because many community empowerment efforts in Indonesia are temporary and less sustainable, this is generally related to limited funding. Community empowerment programs are more of a form of temporary projects than ongoing, consistent, and ongoing efforts. Social capital is, at the same time, the key to efforts to realize community empowerment that can take place continuously, consistently, and sustainably. Social capital plays a significant role in the sustainability of the empowerment process. This means that the social capital that will later be built in the empowerment process by the giver and recipient of resources can continue even though the empowerment is only a temporary program or project (Hamid, 2018).

Many community empowerment programs or projects are temporary and therefore need help related to sustainability. The limited availability of funds and resources usually causes this. Therefore, social capital needs to be developed, including trust, norms, and links between the power giver and the recipient of the power. This social capital also shows that even though there are no more funds, the relationship between power providers and power recipients still needs to be finished and just cut off. Apart from that, empowerment itself does not mean merely providing financial resources. Nevertheless, more than that, providing assistance, care, and concern for the beneficiary is an important thing that needs to be sustainable. Even until they are in the same position, namely equally empowered.

Conclusion

Social inequality is a gap or unequal access to obtain or utilize available resources. Social inequality is a social imbalance that exists in society, so it makes a very striking difference. Alternatively, it can also be interpreted as a situation where the rich have a higher position and are more powerful than the poor. Social inequality is often associated with differences, including property wealth, goods, and services, from one party in society to another. Social inequality that occurs in society has caused various negative impacts, such as low quality of education, increased crime rates, worsening poverty due to high unemployment, and moral decadence or erosion of identity-related to the decline of socio-cultural and religious values. In overcoming this social inequality, one cannot rely solely on the government; the involvement of citizens is needed. The involvement of citizens in this research is divided into two kinds, namely first with a persuasive approach through community leaders so that citizens

avoid friction such as that caused by religion, ethnicity, and race, enforce the laws that apply in their respective areas and invite citizens country to comply. The second is to empower the community independently by increasing human capacity and optimizing social capital in the community.

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