

## ETHNOGRAPHY OF CHILD LABOR IN PAOTERE CITY OF MAKASSAR

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**Abstract:** This article uses ethnographic research method to analyze the phenomenon of child labor in Paotere. It discusses history and culture of children working in Paotere. The family environment of child laborers also influenced them to work to have secondary income earners for the family. Data collection was conducted for one year from January to December 2021. This research uses four stages: firstly identification, data collection, data reduction and directional discussion. Data collection includes observation, in-depth interviews, and group discussions. Dialogue between exploitation and culture retained by child laborers is discoursed specifically in this article.

**Keywords:** *Child Labor, Paotere, Ethnography, Family*

**Abstrak:** Artikel ini menggunakan metode penelitian etnografi untuk menganalisis fenomena pekerja anak di Paotere. Ini membahas sejarah dan budaya anak-anak yang bekerja di Paotere. Lingkungan keluarga pekerja anak juga mempengaruhi mereka untuk bekerja mencari nafkah sampingan bagi keluarga. Pengumpulan data dilakukan selama satu tahun dari Januari hingga Desember 2021. Penelitian ini menggunakan empat tahapan yaitu identifikasi, pengumpulan data, reduksi data dan pembahasan terarah. Pengumpulan data meliputi observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan diskusi kelompok. Dialog antara eksploitasi dan budaya yang dipertahankan oleh pekerja anak diwacanakan secara khusus dalam artikel ini.

**Kata kunci:** *Pekerja Anak, Paotere, Etnografi, Keluarga*

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### A. Introduction

The phenomenon of child labor in Indonesia is an interesting issue for us to talk over, in accordance with the agreement that this country will participate actively in reducing child labor since its signing of a child labor abolition program in 1992 with IPEC and the ILO has made the government issue policies to overcome the problem. The next problem that is the condition of different cultures that make the policy not implemented well even some experienced of contradiction as happened in Paotere.

Public knowledge of the child labor, disputes that they are very vulnerable to experience exploitation, marginalization, violence until physical disturbance. In reality, however, not all child labor suffers from the confrontational effects of work, as described earlier. Then the issue of formal education again becomes a problem for child laborers, while working together with school which makes many child laborers have to leave it for working, so they do not have formal education certificate (Jafar 2016).

Child labor is generally believed to threaten life and its future. The world of children they should earn is the happiness, school, attention, and affection of their families. The conditions support the growth of a child both physically and mentally as well. Various research on child labor is often found that child labor is always in unfavorable conditions. Vulnerable to various forms of exploitation and minimal access to physical, mental, spiritual and moral development as well (Benjamin 1998, Tjandraningsi 2002, and Suyanto 2010).

This article attempts to reveal the phenomenon of child labor in Paotere city of Makassar. For low socioeconomic conditions are still the main factors causing the child to be involved in the process of earning a living. It helps the family in fulfilling basic needs such as rice and side dishes. As a secondary income earner in the family would be a special burden for children, mental condition is considered not suited to the world of work so that various parties try to take precautions so that they do not work and they can continue formal education.

## **B. Research Method**

This article is a study that uses qualitative research methods with an ethnographic approach, with a thorough look at the factors that affect children to work in Paotere city of Makassar. The research is done in Paotere because it has its own uniqueness and characteristics, ideally Paotere is only visited by adults who act as sellers and buyers of fish and other marine products. However, in some other activities it involves child labor in the process of conducting trading movement. Thus, making Paotere unique adequately because it is not only interested by adults but also child labor from all over the city of Makassar participated in trading activities in Paotere.

To meet the ethics of research, the establishment of the research has conveyed the identity of researchers, as well as stated the intent and purpose of conducting research to Paotere overseer. The proposed research was projected to the leadership of UPTD Paotere at the time with the intention of academic research as the initial consideration in providing an answer to my research proposal.

Data collection is conducted for one year from January to December 2021. This research uses four stages: identification, data collection, data reduction, and directional discussion. For data collection is done by way of observation and in-depth interview. The informants were divided into three groups: child labor, child labor parents, and fish sellers (pinggawa) using child labor services. The interview process is conducted separately with the same interview guidelines. It was done while observations were made about two months with the same observation guidelines. The last part of this research is a directional discussion with the counselors at Hasanuddin University, this is done to validate the data that has been found and ensure that the research explains the phenomenon of research problems.

### **C. Findings: Preliminary**

After a year of collecting data on child labor in Paotere, the study found some important findings relating to poverty and culture of child laborers.

#### **1. Paotere Child Labor History**

Paotere is one of the largest fish auction places in Makassar. Buying and selling of fish transaction is not only happening among Makassarese but also all parts of eastern Indonesia. This condition makes Paotere very famous as the biggest fish marketing center in the region of Sulawesi, Maluku, and Papua. However, there is a unique thing when looking at the fish trade mechanism that occurs in Paotere. It is because some activities are not carried out by adults but involves the role of child labor originating from the average city of Makassar.

In 1950 Paotere has been open universally and since then the child labor has participated in the fish trade process to help the fishermen and fish collectors to buy and sell to consumers. The initial work undertaken by child laborers was limited to helping to lift fish from fishing vessels to merchant sales locations. At that time, they

were badly required because of the shortage of labor involving child labor was ordinary.

Working as a fisherman from fishing boats to the location of the sale certainly does not require knowledge and special skills. Therefore, at that time many children labor who work are those who have no access to formal education and choose to work as a child labor. In the era of 1950, the number of child labor has reached dozens, because the interest of child labor in that era is still very little to join in Paotere. Working child labor is those who have family colleagues' relationship with fish traders. Their access goes so easily with verbal calls from their families like parents, uncles, and to cousins as well. By reason of helping the family economy, in this era the child laborers do not get wages in the form of money but they will be paid with fish by the fishermen who use their services. The unique wage system due to the number of fish obtained by child labor is 10% of the total fish they lift from fishing vessels. When the child labor managed to lift about 10 baskets of fish then they will get 1 basket of fish containing about 20 medium size fish like *banyara* ', *auau*, *katombo*, and *tawassang*.

Poverty is one of the factors a child chooses to work as a worker because the circumstance at that time that money is so hard coupled with the factor of state instability makes negative impact to society (Suyanto 2010). The centralized system undertaken at that time by the government made some people unable to have equal access to formal education. This factor is increasingly making the number of child labor is growing in Paotere. It is because the number of children who do not go to school shows more and more, especially from those who come from the family of fishermen at that time. Child labor in the decade 1960-1970 faced with various problems of poverty and education. They believe that as a child of a fisherman family they do not need to go to school until graduation completely until when they can read and count. They have achieved that their parents will allow to engage in economic activities in Paotere. The condition of poverty makes the child labor must be involved in the family economic process as a secondary income earner (Jafar 2017).

In 1990 a child labor organization was established by Paotere fisheries cooperatives with the aim of protecting child laborers. This organization aims to

identify and limit work-time to child labor. Those who are members of the child labor organization will be given yellow-colored outfits and will be supervised by the supervisors, they will be given four hours of work a day to avoid exploitation.

This child labor organization is well received by child laborers and all parties in Paotere. However, since 1992 after the Indonesian government signed the program of child labor abolition by ILO and IPEC also impact on dissolution of child labor organization formed by fisherman cooperative. In 1996 the organization was officially dissolved by the government through the education and cultural offices. In organizing child labor, they establish a fishery library that aims to provide teaching to children who are not in school especially the child labor. The establishment of a child labor organization is considered to have legalized children to work and contradict the law (Jafar 2015).

Fisheries library program implemented by the government through the education office at that time did not go well. The continuous rejection by child laborers, activities carried out by the library were not followed by child laborers. Some protests were continuously launched by fisheries cooperatives to the government because the program did not involve community leaders in Paotere.

The efforts that have been made by the government turned out to be rejected so that some of the child labor in 1996 remained working in private. Conditions that continue to grow at this time, the child labor continues to experience dynamics in the fish trade in Paotere. Initially only working as a fish lifter from ship to sales location now they have worked in several sectors as lifting water, fish separator to the cleaning of fishing boats.

In 2000 became the peak of child labor in Paotere, formerly only those with family colleagues who worked effectively. However, at this time the child labor not only comes from the fishermen's family, but also from all over the city of Makassar. Their entry is so easy with uttered from friendship, family, to just play and work as a child labor with various jobs they do. The wage system has also changed, although the distribution of wages through fishing is still carried out by some fishermen. However mostly have used wages by giving money from Rp. 10,000 - Rp. 50,000 to child labor, tailored to the work they do. Conditions that make the attraction Paotere

are higher to child labor. Even some children have been satisfied with the income they get, then they decided to quit school and continue working at Paotere.

Thus, the history of child labor in Paotere have been involved since Paotere opened in general. It has even become a separate culture in Paotere. Working child labor has different entry access to Paotere but the same goal is to work.

## **2. Paotere Child Labor Culture.**

Paotere in the eyes of the general public is only a place to buy and sell fish. However, unlike what the child laborers do, they make Paotere a playground together, which should be a place to buy fish and other marine products. They jump to the left and right, even jumping into the ocean when there is a ship that will lean with laughter together. This activity makes Paotere a city park for child laborers. The facts show an unusual pattern of behavior. Children should be at school to learn and play together. However, the child labor experience is different, although some of them claim to be in school but most of them have been out of school and choose dropping out to work in Paotere. Working as a child labor is concerned with the rights of the child. They are so vulnerable to being mistreated, to the exploitation of others, especially adults (Irwanto 1996).

Speaking ethically and morally, children are well aware that they are not supposed to work, because their world is a world of children which utilized to learn, play, rejoice in a peaceful, fun and opportunity. His tone corresponds with his physical, psychological, intellectual, and social development (Kartono 1985). What happened at Paotere is a complex thing because the existence of working children has happened long time ago, decades ago since Paotere started to operate. They seem to have regenerated from year to year and until now there has been no successful way to solve this problem.

The presence of child labor in the fish trading system is unique, but there is an unusual occurrence when viewed from the general view of the behavior of the child labor in Paotere. When making observations to find out the activities they do turn out the child labor is accustomed to taking fish without the permission of the fish owner but they are not stealing at all. They take the fish without the owner's permission and the behavior is then taught in the fish trading system in Paotere.

Loading and unloading of fish is common in Paotere, but when we look closely, in every ship loading and unloading fish in Paotere, there are some child laborers around the boat, some are swimming to the sea and then approaching the ship, who jumped directly to the ship. Initially they just look-see the process of loading and unloading fish, it was not once they approached the pile of fish and then take one or two fish that are in the pile. It turns out they like to take fish even though not given by skipper ship or ship agent, but the strange thing again. The children are not reprimanded, either by skipper and ship agent who are around the ship, even they just smile at the children who take their fish catch. After conducting an interview with one of the ship's agents, they were already used to the behavior of the children.

The children's behavior was so well trained in the fish trade in Paotere, they took the fish that fell on the ship. Occasionally they took one or two fish that had been separated in the ship, when I interviewed with the informant there was a child who approached us. I think this boy just wanted to see me do the interview, it was not casually his son took a red tail that was separated in front of the fish owner. However, no one reacted, all just smile and no one scolded. Such behaviors very well-known but only valid when the fish are still around the ship. No one dare to do such action.

A very unique behavior in my opinion that occurs in a fish trading system, children are allowed to take fish without permission from the ship owner or any ship agent who has bought the fish and this behavior is taught, no oral reprimand given to the child who took fish around the loading vessel of fish, but again this behavior is only preached in the fish trading system that occurred in Paotere.

The next finding concerning child labor is the career path in Paotere, from interview data of some informants they start to work with the same profession as child labor that is (1) the 'jene' suspect where their duty is easy and do not need knowledge and a special skill, (2) the second level of employment is a boat-picker into Paotere to be handed over to the fish retailers, in this second job they have to have a good relationship to the skipper or the ship's agent so they can get (3) Fish separator, for the third job they already have to have special knowledge and skills about the types of fish they will be using based on their type. Especially in this work

they have to go through oral selection conducted by ship agents and skipper ships, before work. After being declared eligible for work then they will participate in the work on board, (4) Fish Traders (Retailers) after a very old age, have the capital and knowledge and skills in trade (bargaining), many of them who then went on to work as a fishmonger at PPI Paotere, (5) Pinggawa, the most recent job level was to work as a pinggawa who had plenty of capital and partners (pa'cato) in this PPI, being a pinggawa is not it is easy that only a small percentage succeed in reaching this most recent level of work, as it requires material capital, social capital, and special skills such as leadership.

### **3. Cultural Versus Exploitation: Child Labor**

Child labor will continue to be the center of consideration. This phenomenon is certainly a unique thing to be studied culturally. The presence of a child in each family has respective roles in which there is a status. Culturally the child is considered as an individual who has a role and is formed through the inheritance of the value of the nearest person such as father and mother as well as from the environment. This is for both physical and non-physical.

Then it is seen in the adaptive strategy of the family with regard to the economy that all people around the world, when talking about the economy then the focus of the conversation is always connected with the way of production, distribution, and consumption as a way of providing food or other commodities necessary in life. These modes can vary by culture that influences the way humans relate to and utilize the natural environment, how humans relate to each other, how the public institutions and governments of a country manage the economy that will lead to a change (Liliweri 2014). The phenomenon that takes place to child labor in Paotere can be said that this child becomes a family adaptive strategy in solving economic problems, when family economic problems cannot be solved by the main breadwinner.

One of the efforts of poor families to supplement family income, in addition to involving their wives into public activities, is to utilize child labor even though often they are not old enough to work. Children who are not old enough to be utilized not only limited to carry out domestic work. However, they also work outside the



household to make money by becoming a child labor. The facts show that the work contribution of children often contributes significantly to the survival of poor families.

Poverty in the cultural view is as a process of impoverishment itself, within the context of the culture in which the perpetrators are located. In this case culture is considered as a community reference containing the system of values, social systems, and physical culture or material (Koentjaraningrat, 1985). In other words, what is meant by "culture" is not only based on ideology, social system or material culture only, but also unity among all three that appear to be practiced in cultural practice. Meaning, poverty can be an ideology, whose community is in the social system and possessions belong to the material culture

In the cultural aspect it is still a dilemma whether the child involved in a job can be said to be a laborer. This reason is interesting when parents have a purpose to provide cultural knowledge to them by inviting them to participate in economic activities. The knowledge in question is the skills and attitudes that parents must give to the child. A child can be a child in a family, a student in a school setting, and may be a worker in an informal and formal workplace. Meanwhile, the role is a dynamic aspect of the status. Here it is supposed that a person who has exercised his rights and obligations in accordance with his status means he has performed a role. The distinction between status and role is for the benefit of science whereas both cannot be separated because one depends on another and vice versa (Linton 1964).

#### **D. Conclusions**

Having analyzed the phenomenon of child labor in Paotere, it makes us collide with two views of an exploitation or culture that they have together. Child labor in various perspectives is seen as an exploitation of people who have dominance and power in an arena, with the aim of gaining more profits and being paid less than adults and women. Based on the history of child labor in Paotere we can underline that the conditions that occur have been very long happened and regenerated even have a career path so that culture cannot be said an exploitation. Seeing their point of view in doing the work is a necessity in addition to being social security for the child labor family. When looking from the cultural aspect it turns out

that child labor is not entirely the result of exploitation. This article seeks to reveal that child labor is one way to ensure the socio-economic life of child labor families. The status of children as workers is not necessarily negative in a culture that has legitimized them to be part of the family's social security.

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