
PRISON OF POVERTY FOR TRADITIONAL FISHERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper was a research of the traditional fishers' life and the poverty prison of the Natural Resources in Teluk Belitung Village, Merbau District. The researchers described the current situation of traditional fishers' households and their value orientation towards jobs as fishers with a bargaining position. The mix method was chosen as the approaching model to understand the subject matter with the data analysis phase, including categorizing, compiling labels, and concluding. The monopoly of the fisheries economy by some Chinese entrepreneurs has maintained poverty for traditional fishers who worked for them or not. Debt guarantees were ways to cover up detrimental situations and destroy fishery resources in the research area. The researchers used the Kluckhohn approach to uncover the actual value orientation of fishers in a tight situation. Fishers understood that using dencis threatened the environment, but this method was chosen to maintain their position as fishers with sufficient income. There were other alternative jobs such as gardening. However, when they did it, they required seeds, fertilizers, and other types of equipment. The poor economic conditions made it challenging to do gardening while the guarantee of life for their households was lacking, especially from the local government.

Keywords: Economy, Ecology, Fishers, Coastal, Poverty

1. INTRODUCTION

The characteristic of the work that the coastal people generally carry out is fishers (Ali, 2020). The fisheries sector is a potential resource that can contribute to people's livelihoods from an economic perspective (L. M. Yapanto, C. Panigoro, and F. Makasau 2021 & A. Rahim 2018). Traditional fishers are the most common form of local wisdom in every activity in equipment, advice, mantras, and traditions (N. Nadjmi, and D. Budiyantri, J. Iskandar, and R. Partasmita, 2018). The monograph of Teluk Belitung Village summarized three groups of fishers consisting of Bina Makmur Fishers and Putra Bahari Fishers. However, some fishers did not form groups because they worked without being bound by group norms. There was no factual data regarding the total number of fishers in Teluk Belitung Village. However, the results of an interview from one of the fishers in this area showed that almost half of the population in Teluk Belitung Village had a fishing background, especially from their families in the past. Meanwhile, the number of those who still worked as fishers had decreased and was getting smaller. Working as fishers were considered less promising for fulfilling their daily needs. Thus, slowly, most of them no longer worked in the fishery sector.

Located in the Selat Asam region, the fishery potential was quite significant with several types of fish, including machete fish, terubuk fish, prickly fish, lomek fish, sembilang fish, shrimp, and belukang fish. In addition, there were other types of commodities such as Lokan, Rama-Rama, and Snails. Apart from being consumed by themselves, the catch was also sold to the market or neighbors in the area where they lived. Obstacles felt by the catch included sea waves and wind. When the weather was terrible, they could not go to the sea. In addition, the high activity around the sea, both on mangroves and marine activities as a transportation route and the company's operating area, has been acknowledged to have an unfavorable impact on the sea. In the last 10-15 years, local fishers admitted that finding fish has been challenging.

Moreover, some fishers still used traditional equipment. They were faced with several fishers with quite good equipment. The fishing group with much better equipment consisted of people who worked for the Chinese. In practice, the fishers' activities in the research area could not be separated from the influence of the Chinese economy. Capital and loan guarantees, especially to meet the necessities of life, were quickly provided by the Chinese. Some people were attracted to work with them, especially as fishers. The local economy in terms of fishery resources in the research area, which was also interfered with by some of the Chinese people, was proof that they were proficient in business S. A. Christian (2017).

Regarding household social security, fishers in the research area did not receive it, especially from the local government. Their job was full of risks. Some fishers face by looking for fish or similar commodities using a chemical called dencis. The use of chemicals was a reaction carried out by local fishers to fulfill their household needs, especially food. Although in the past, there was no culture associated with fishing using chemicals, the pressures of life were a driving force behind why it was done. This research looked at how the value orientation of traditional fishers is in taking natural wealth in the form of fish and the like, as we know that using chemicals was an act that was not wise. Potentially endangering the ecology, especially the preservation of marine life, also could eliminate livelihoods as fishers themselves. Studies conducted by Syefli recognized the impact of chemical pollution from shipbuilding companies on marine ecosystems, at least explaining that chemicals that were spilled in the sea or spread in the sea would be challenging to clean and tended to kill the existing biota, especially fish that liked to swim either on the surface or in deep waters (S. E. Darza, 2020)

However, it was a difficult choice. Was there no other choice they could make? It was hard to answer. Even though some have started cultivating unproductive land into productive ones, these activities could not provide a substantial income. Then, a tug-of-war condition emerged between the use of unwise methods and marine sustainability. The importance of maintaining marine ecosystems was contrary to the necessity to meet household needs. The researchers used the Kluckhohn framework to describe the value orientation of fishers as the research subject. How they interpreted their lives, work, time, nature, and others was an integral part of this research (Koentjaraningrat, 2009).

2. LITERATUR REVIEW

The research problem would be approached using the concept of cultural value orientation by Kluckhohn, an anthropologist from America (M. J. Herskovits, 1964). According to Kluckhohn's view, the cultural value system is closely related to fundamental life problems that determine the human cultural value orientation. These cultural values consist of five forms: human relations with God, human relations with nature, human relations with society, human relationships with other people, and human relationships with oneself (A. Yusliyanto, 2019).

Table 1. Basic Life Problems and Cultural Value Orientation Kluckhohn

Basic life problems	Cultural Value Orientation		
	Life is bad	Life is good	Life is terrible, but humans must try so that life becomes good
The essence of life	Life is bad	Life is good	Life is terrible, but humans must try so that life becomes good
The essence of work	The work is for a subsistence	The work is for position, honor, and so on	The work aims to add the work
Human perception of time	Present-oriented	Past-oriented	Future-oriented
Human perception of nature	Humans comply with the tremendous nature	Humans maintain harmony with nature	Humans try to dominate nature
The essence of human relations with others	Collateral orientation (<i>horizontal</i>), a sense of dependence on others (<i>cooperation spirit</i>)	Vertical orientation, a sense of dependence on superior and rank figures	Individualism, valuing effort highly in its strength

The value system, according to Kluckhohn, encourages individuals to behave as determined. The individuals believe that they will succeed in life through such predetermined behavior. It means that the community socio-cultural system has produced a set of norms and guidelines for life that community members use in various contexts, including the natural environment aspect.

With their knowledge systems, humans have encouraged the formation of a framework of action to deal with various situations in their environment. The relationship between the environment and humans is closely intertwined and influences each other. The author chose Kluckhohn's concept of thought to see the fishers' value orientation related to how they used the river as a source of livelihood and their orientation to the river and their occupation, including the five dimensions described.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The Mix Method was chosen to be a research method that explored data from the subject's activities directly. The quantitative research design was reflected in household surveys related to primary data such as education and income. The survey data was then strengthened through qualitative analysis. The two data could complete the information and were interrelated even though the data collection and presentation

models differed. The research was conducted in Teluk Belitung Village, Merbau District, Meranti Island. This research was conducted by going through three stages towards data collection, including:

a. Getting in

The researcher traced initial information on one subject, mainly formal figures related to obtaining permits and explaining research activities.

b. Getting along

The situation researcher has entered the research area and began to search for the subject and establish initial relationships.

c. Logging to data, In practice, data collection used three ways, namely:

1. Observation

The researchers observed daily research subjects' activities and the general public in Teluk Belitung Village. Furthermore, the researchers also observed behavior and daily habits through assimilation in their lives and recorded any information that supported research data.

2. In-depth Interview

The in-depth interview process was carried out with people and community leaders as the research subjects and the general public to provide information or data.

3. Documentation

The documentation stage was not only in the form of secondary literature but also collected portraits of the subject's activities in recordings and photos of field research.

3. Data Analysis

In the end, data analysis was carried out through several stages by referring to the Miles and Huberman, data collection, data reduction, data display, verification and conclusion (A. Rijali, 2018). The data collection stage that had been completed was continued with data reduction, aiming to select, retrieve, and retrieve rough data obtained from turn-in in the field. The reduction process was essentially continuous as long as the qualitative data research took place. In the reduction stage, the writer sorted based on more specific categories. The next stage was the presentation of the data. This process displayed the presentation of field processed data through the art of qualitative writing with valid data. Lastly, it was the conclusion drawing stage. Based on the three plots, the stage of concluding must be a reasonably tricky point because the author saw from two points of view, namely the point of view of the author himself. Conclusions were designed and written in a balanced manner without exaggerating these points of view.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

a. Social Characteristic

The majority of fishers who were the research objects were local Malays. For a long time, fishing has been a job they did to fulfill their needs. Ancestors in the past were introduced directly to fishing activities. When the male parents went to sea, the children would be invited and their wives. This recognition pattern had encouraged the natural inheritance of fishers as a whole livelihood with traditional techniques to support fishing and their position in coastal areas. The historical record of the life of the Malay community, especially the research object in the past, was not only men who worked as fishers. Women in the past played the role of looking for a source of livelihood from the sea and its surroundings. These sources of livelihood included looking for firewood from the mangroves, looking for fish, looking for types of marine animals and their surroundings that could be processed into money. Fishers used no special tools. Both men and women used traditional tools made by themselves. Although the education aspect was still low, creativity in creating sources of livelihood and work equipment could be said to be very good, adopting the thoughts of ancestors and natural situations.

Education for fishers in the research locations was a different obstacle. Its location on the coast was quite far from the district and provincial capitals, so it caused development to occur very slowly. Moreover, before splitting itself into its district, Teluk Belitung Village was part of the Bengkalis Regency. It can be seen from the former buildings once used as part of the Bengkalis Regency government, which were still standing strong but not being cared for. The consequences of the location and displacement of regional status had contributed to reasonably slow development, especially education. Most of the first to second and third generations did not take education even though the scale of primary education. They generally had no interest in going to school and focused on working to earn money due to poverty and limited access. However, slowly the development was carried out until it touched the educational aspect, so at that time, there was an interest in going to school even though, on average, only finished elementary school. The researchers surveyed to find the level of education of fishers who became the research objects with a sample of 30 men and 15 women. The questions asked regarding the last education completed or not, the results can be seen in the following graph:

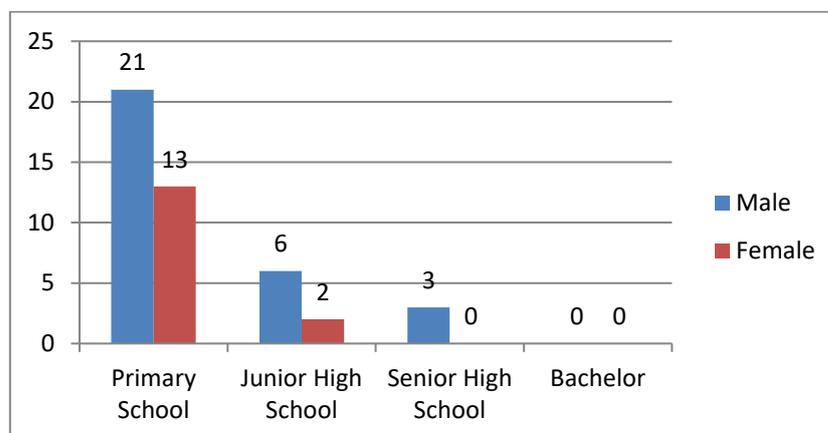


Figure 1. Level of education of fishers

The data presented above concluded that the majority of fishers had elementary school educational backgrounds. At this stage, some fishers have completed their education to the final level (high school and another), while fishers have dropped out of school. The researchers found that the highest level of education taken was Junior High School (JHS). In contrast, for the secondary school to college level, it was scarce except when they had particular interests with minimum educational qualifications. Although most of them had passed the elementary school level, some had not even completed their education. The orientation of fishers to good and proper education for their children could be relatively high. The fishing families did not limit their children to higher education and even encouraged them to go to any level they wanted. However, sometimes their children's concern with the poor condition of the household became an obstacle to taking their education to a high level. For fishers' children, in general, the highest education level was Senior High School (SHS). Only a few go on to college, especially men who preferred work over college.

Fishers' wives, in general, also had a relatively low level of education. Not much different from their husbands and children, fishers' wives, on average, only studied up to Elementary School (ES). Some of them finished until the end, and some dropped out of school. Significantly for fishers' wives, why did they drop out of school? It was inseparable from a patriarchal culture, where women are only considered more suitable to take care of the household (kitchen affairs) and bed matters (reproduction). There were very few opportunities for women to go to high school. It has happened in the past and heretofore. Even though in terms of the availability of adequate educational facilities at the research area, in some fishing households, they encouraged girls to marry or work after graduating from high school. Continuing higher education was an encouragement that was difficult to give; when the opportunity to take higher education was available, the child must bear his own educational needs. They also had to continue to meet the household needs of their parents in the village.

Second, the number of dependents of fishers' households, in general, was at three until four people. The greater the number of dependents, the greater the burden on the family[12] and the greater the potential for children to work at a young age. It was confirmed that the need for life, especially in the last ten years, tended to increase, especially for some needs, such as food and electricity. Children of fishers who were already teenagers preferred to work to help the family's economy by becoming farm laborers, washing workers, trading, or working in shops. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, many people from the research area chose to work in Malaysia as factory workers or domestic workers. They came not only from fishing families but from family backgrounds with other occupations. The primary reason was why many people worked in Malaysia, especially young people. According to them, the job opportunities in Malaysia were pretty significant in terms of salary and opportunity. Some people who wanted to work in Malaysia provided themselves with official documents. However, there were also many hidden routes, especially when they did not have the money to take care of these documents, such as a passport.

b. Economic Characteristic

In the past, fishing could be the main occupation. It was because finding fish was not complicated and even abundant. However, lately, especially in the last two decades, fishers have begun to find it challenging to find fish. Several reasons caused this condition. First, large-scale fishing by fishers was given

the capital of confident entrepreneurs, including the Chinese. Working as a fisherman carried a high risk of economic vulnerability. Their income was uncertain because they were very dependent on nature. When the weather was terrible, fishing activities in the sea had to be stopped for a while. As a result, income was reduced while expenses must be issued every day. When the weather was normal, the fishing results were good. They could earn 100-300 thousand from selling machete fish, stingrays, shrimp, and other types of fish. However, this income was reduced by 50% more when the big wave season or bad weather came.

To strengthen the household economy, some fishers' wives worked looking for seafood such as Lokan, Rama-Rama, bongon, and snails. This catch was sold for IDR 20,000 for five months, the price of IDR 20,000 per kilogram for bongon, snails, and lokan. The pressure to fulfill the daily cost of living that was felt heavy had prompted some fishers to use a chemical liquid called dencis. The use of dencis began to bloom in recent years. Women who spent their spare time looking for seafood sometimes also used the liquid to make the fish die quickly and be easily caught.

c. Cultural Characteristic

Working as a fisherman was a derivative work from parents that had been done for a long time. It was observed that the Malays had introduced to their socio-economic life for children starting from an early age. Since childhood, fishers' children have been introduced to the sea. They started from simple things such as swimming, fishing to the occasional invite to take a boat for a moment to the middle of the sea. Fishers carried out no unique traditions at the research area in certain rituals. They respected nature, especially the sea, where they fish every day. They stopped activities at certain hours, including prayer time. The sea, apart from being a place to find a source of livelihood, was believed to have ancestors who must be respected even though the form of respect was not in the provision of offerings. When it rained and or after the waves were high and significant, there were no activities carried out by fishers. It was done because parents used to teach them the dangers of fishing as fishers in conditions after the rain or before it rained, including the risk of the boat sinking. In terms of social life, fishers lived adjoining with other ethnic groups such as Chinese, Javanese, Akit, and mixed.

d. Number of Household Dependents

In the research area, generally, the number of dependents of fishers was between three until four people per household. Kitchen affairs were carried out not only by husbands as fathers as well as heads of households. Their wives and children sometimes also help even though they do not give excellent results. The more the number of family members, the greater the burden of expenses that must be met both related to food needs and other needs such as school fees. Other needs such as transportation could also be said to be quite large. To buy fuel oil, the amount of money spent was quite large. At least in a day, about IDR 10,000-20,000 was spent on buying the fuel. Meanwhile, the price of essential commodities, including food needs, in the research area was relatively high because this area was an island, so for some commodities, it had to be a long journey. There was a difference between IDR 5,000 and 10,000 for necessities such as rice, eggs, sugar, cooking oil, and chicken meat. The price above was uncertain. Meanwhile, under certain conditions, it could soar and vice versa. However, in general, the prices of essential commodities were in moderate to high conditions. Why did some family members work to help with household income? It was intended to meet household needs, especially food. Moreover, the work carried out by the head of the household also did not provide significant benefits.

e. Household Income

Currently, the livelihood as a fisher was no longer as promising as in the past. Poverty surrounded fishers' households because their income tended to decline, especially in the last 15 years. In the past, fishers could be the primary job, while nowadays, working as a fisherman did not guarantee the ability to meet household needs. Fishers were currently only a side job except those who worked for other people, especially Chinese investors, who could work almost every day. The income from selling fish or other catch was less than IDR 150,000/day. Based on the explanation above, it was known that the most significant factor that affected working as a fisherman was the weather or natural factors. When the situation was safe and suitable for fishing, their income was much higher. However, what happened was that no saving effort was made. The money earned was used up for daily living expenses. Savings in the form of money or other assets were very rarely found in fishers' households.

f. Source of Livelihood other than Fishers

Some fishers have started cultivating their idle land into productive gardens for about the last ten years. Crops such as sweet potatoes and vegetables were grown to be sold or for personal consumption. Work was done alone or with other family members. Furthermore, plant seeds were sometimes obtained by buying or asking neighbors. Social capital in the scope of their lives was relatively good. They did not only oriented to material gain but also prioritized aspects of togetherness and kinship. It was a source of sustainable livelihoods, but seriousness, assistance, and access were needed in obtaining capital or marketing (A. M. Gai, 2020).

g. Analysis

In the context of the study of maritime anthropology, the main thing to see was how social relations between humans (fishers) and others were. The unequal power relations between traditional fishers and investors from ethnic Chinese made them difficult to escape the shackles of poverty. This situation maintained the structural poverty of traditional fishers, both those who worked independently and under Chinese influence. Although some traditional fishers worked under Chinese influence in terms of capital and technology, it did not guarantee much better welfare than traditional fishers who worked alone without help from other parties, such as the Chinese. Instead, a system of slavery to parasites benefited one side while the others became the object of exploitation. Traditional fishers who worked under their Chinese influence were imprisoned in a self-defeating system. However, it was considered normal because of the various conveniences promised related to household guarantees by the capital owner (Chinese). The work system had exploited workers and the natural resources of their homeland that were also being exploited unwisely.

The maintained poverty was a consequence of not focusing on solving poverty in the field context. Attention to poverty, households, and fishers' sources of livelihood in the research area has never been touched by the government's attention, especially in preparing new alternative sources of livelihood if they were not promising as fishers. This particular stimulus during the Covid-19 period was not enough to help the fisher for his household life. However, the fishers did not simply respond to the bargaining position they faced. There was an initiative that currently inherited lands and shrublands were processed into places for planting crops. It was an independent response of fishers to maintain the economic resilience of the household at this time and in the future, especially from the less promising jobs as fishers. Bargaining position could cause the transfer of thought to be unwise through the thinking of Kluckhohn, an anthropologist who tried to systematically compile the meaning of culture from every action taken by a person due to their environmental and internal factors (R. Boroch, 2016).

In daily life, humans always think about the principles of right and wrong problems. Concerning this, the measurement of excellent or wrong varied from person to person (V. F. Bagit, 2017). Thus, a response to the problems faced by individuals and groups was reflected in action due to an individual's or group's meaning (M. Syawaludin, 2017).

1. Interpreting Life

Fishers viewed life as something that must be fought for. An inadequate life was a consequence of not having a job. Everyone needs to try to change their life destiny (A. B. Wijaya and A. Fauzie, 2020). Traditional fishers had two different patterns of the meaning of life. First, traditional fishers who worked under Chinese influence interpret life with resignation and depend entirely on the help of the "boss." Meanwhile, the traditional self-employed fishers were not under the influence of the "boss." Some of them also used an unwise way, namely using dencis to find fish. Others chose not to use anything. They just cultivated inherited land into their plantations. The meaning of life between one person and another in a specific work had differences depending on the value of life that they each carried.

2. Interpreting Work

Research subjects did not pursue a particular position. They only aimed to work to make money and meet the needs of their wife and family. Their work was interpreted only as meeting the needs of nowadays' life, not for tomorrow or in the future.

3. Interpreting Time

Currently, the occupation of the research subject was based on life needs. Other things that became a form of teaching from the past were no longer applied. They pursued how to meet the current life needs and paid less attention to future aspects. Traditional values were no longer the central part. Although the fishers believed that the traditional values still existed, when they had to choose something, the priority was fulfilling the food needs and their families.

4. Interpreting Nature

The research subject understood that using some actions such as chemicals to find fish or the like could damage the environment. They also understood that nature has something to be respected, but they put that aside in search of the necessities of life. Nor in the context of mastering nature, what was done to fulfill daily needs for some time was buying rice.

5. Interpreting Each Other

Collateral, there was still a spirit of cooperation (N. Hanapi, 2017). However, it was no longer like before. The form of cooperation was shown in the form of *rewang* when there were activities such as marriage (B. Aswar, E. Rochmiatun, and S. Suriana, 2021). In addition, there was also the case of mutual assistance in helping the affairs of death. Value orientation was developing. It meant that it was not something static. Every fluctuation or emergence of a problem or demand could affect their value orientation.

The developed value orientation system gave color to attitudes and behavior both when they faced problems in social life and when they carried out an activity to find a source of livelihood (H. Asriwandari, 2016).

5. CONCLUSION

The orientation of fishers' cultural values could not be separated from the situation and conditions of the internal and external environment. The working culture of the past never taught the fishers about the other ways to search for fish or other types of commodities from the sea or its surroundings used the wrong methods. However, once again, they did by using chemical liquids as part of how to survive. It did not mean that this method was correct because it had the potential to damage marine ecosystems and was at the same time a threat to the sustainability of their livelihoods in the future. The minimum guarantees in their household, both for health, education, especially the economy, increasingly encouraged unwise actions in utilizing marine resources. Thus, the government's role is required in overcoming this problem and preparing sustainable sources of livelihood that can have a positive effect on the fishers' household economy and the surrounding ecosystem.

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