

Exploitation Behind the Growth of Batik Home Industry in Lawean, Solo, Central Java

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Abstract—Batik industry has become one of the leading industries in the economy of Indonesia. Since the recognition of batik as one of the cultural wealth and national identity of Indonesia by UNESCO, batik production keeps increasing as a result of increasing demand for batik, whether from domestic or abroad consumers. One of the rapid development batik industries locations in Indonesia is in Lawean Village, Solo, Central Java, Indonesia. Batik industry in Lawean generally uses putting-out system where batik workers work in their own houses. With the implementation of this system, therefore employers do not have to prepare Environmental Impact Analysis (EIA), social security for workers, overtime pay, work space, and production devices. The data used to explain this reality is primary data from qualitative research with in-depth interview data collection technique. Information determination used in this study is purposive technique. The theory used in this study is phenomenology theory by Alfred Schutz. Qualitative method and phenomenology theory used in this study are to explain in-depth social reality of batik workers exploitation by batik employers with the implementation of putting-out system in batik home industry in Lawean, Central Java. The implementation of putting-out system causes many problems, starting from environmental pollution, the loss of workers' social rights, and even exploitation of workers by batik employers.

Index Terms—Exploitation, putting-out system, batik home industry.

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

One of the efforts undertaken by the government of Indonesia to increase the income of lower class communities is to promote the empowerment of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This SMEs empowerment programs have spawned a wide range of home industries that are considered capable to solve poverty problems that have been long experienced by Indonesian communities [1]. There are currently more than 30 million small and medium enterprises thrive and become the backbone for Indonesian communities economy [2].

The one of rapidly growing SMEs in Indonesia is batik industry. Since the recognition of batik as one of the cultural wealth and identity of Indonesia by UNESCO, batik demand has increased rapidly. According to the report from Republic of Indonesia Ministry of Home Affairs, batik export value has

significantly increased. In 2010 the export value reached USD 22.3 million, then in 2011 reached USD 69 million, and in 2012 reached USD 278 million [3]. While the latest data in 2015 reported that batik export value has reached USD 3.1 billion [4]. Thus, it is not surprising if the government sets batik industry as the most reliable SME and important strategic industry of Indonesia.

The progress of batik industry SME sector, in addition of being a solution to solve the poverty problem, also creates a variety of new problems. Environmental pollution is a common problem caused by the use of lag and inefficient technology as well as the use of non eco-friendly materials [5]. Besides the environmental pollution, batik industry also spawns a wide range of social problems that should be considered by the government. One social problem that becomes study focus of this paper is the problem of rights exploitation and deprivation of workers in batik industry SME sector. The expectation of this study is that t.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In general, the approach and the theory used in this study are the phenomenology approach and the theory by Alfred Schutz. This approach enables the researcher to understand the social reality in the form of exploitation and injustice experienced by workers in batik home industry from their own perspective. With the subjective understanding that comes from informants, this study might result a deep understanding about the condition or the actual reality experienced by batik home industry workers. In addition, this study also uses the concept of Karl Marx's theory such as exploitation and injustice in the form of oppression. Marx explained that exploitation occurred in industrial sector is caused by the differences in production devices mastery. The bourgeoisie who own the production devices will exploit and oppress the proletariat such as labor or workers who do not have production factor [6]. But apparently that theory is not entirely relevant to be used in this study. Evidently it can be found in the field that the production devices are owned by workers at batik home industry, while employers at the top structure do not have production devices that are necessary to produce batik clothing. Employers have exploitation devices in the form of access or ability to sell batik products to abroad (by exporting) or domestic consumers.

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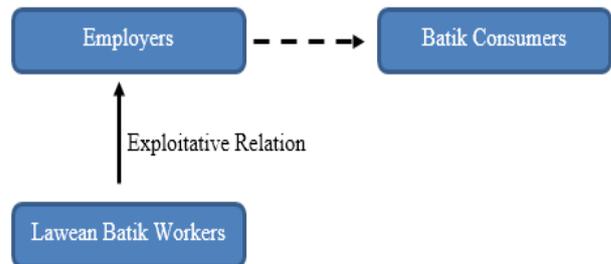
III. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to reveal the reality in the form of descriptive, qualitative research approach chosen for the purpose. The data collection techniques were chosen in this study was in-depth interviews and field observations techniques. In-depth interviews were conducted to 14 informants selected purposively using certain criteria, consisting of 8 subjects informant, 4 non-subject informants and 2 key informants. Key informants in this study are 2 academics who have previously conducted similar background research (both theme and location), which provides guidance to the researchers several important figures who meet the criteria to be used as informants. The subject informants in this study were batik employees, while the non-subject informants were 2 security guards and 2 batik business owners. Field observations conducted to analyze any risk and needs of batik employees in their daily work (batik making process), comparing the efforts of the workers, the wages they receive, to the price displayed in the shop batik business owners. Data were analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques; data collection, reduction, categorization, presentation, conclusion and verification [7]. The research was completed within 3 months. The location was selected by researcher because batik home industry in Lawean is growing very rapidly and has exported many batik products to foreign countries. Furthermore this area is also included as one of the largest industrial area of Indonesian batik.

IV. SOCIAL SETTINGS

Batik home industry communities in Lawean are still classified as rural communities [8]. The working relationship between batik home industry workers and batik agents or batik exporters is merely informal; the relationship is not written formally in legal forms. However, as rural communities who uphold the sense of "ewuh-pakewuh (or reluctant in English)", they fully respect the informal agreement that has been made. Batik home industry workers are very respectful toward batik agents or batik exporters who buy their merchandises. Although sometimes the demand requested makes the workers have to work extra hard (sometimes, overtime without getting pay), they keep struggling to fulfill all the requirements from the agents or exporters which they call "employers". Employers are batik agents or middlemen or exporters considered own the top structure in Lawean batik industry. Each employer usually supervises more than one home industry's workers. Employers in industrial activity do not own the production devices. The production devices used for the batik-making process are owned by the workers themselves in their house. The employers' power is the access to sell batik products to both domestic and foreign consumers. The second power possessed by employers against batik home industry's workers is in the form of hegemony; that is the planting of indebtedness and dependency sense. Workers consider themselves indebted to employers for giving them side job that they can earn money. The work conceived as a side job actually means just the same with main job as it takes lots of their time. Even the time taken to work in a day is far more than the normal amount of work time that has been regulated

by the Act, and they do not get overtime pay. Furthermore, workers are also set to be dependent on the employers in industrial products marketing. Workers thought that they are unable to sell their products without the hands of the employers as intermediary. Lawean communities have faithful character; they only sell their products to their employer and they do not sell their products to others. Workers might feel guilty if they betray their informal agreement which has been made. The employers however manage to take advantage of the Lawean communities' faithful; they exploit them to make a profit.



Cart 1. Lawean Batik Home Industry Doer
(Source: Primary Data Analysis)



Picture 1. Batik fabric made by batik workers in lawean batik home industry.
(Source: Author Documentation)

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained from the result of this study show that there are many irregularities occurred in Lawean, Solo, Central Java batik home industry. The irregularities mainly concern on the relationship between batik home industry workers and employers. Application of putting-out system in batik home industry environment turns out to form an exploitation that is against the Act. Apparently putting-out system becomes a strategy undertaken by bourgeoisie to exploit the proletariat in order to put up with the Act rule applied in Indonesia. Government's regulation related to the rights given by employers (the bourgeoisie) to the workers (the proletariat) practically has not been able to protect the workers. The putting-out system in guise of SMEs (small and medium enterprises) in Lawean batik industry has gradually deprived the rights that should be obtained by the workers.

Batik home industry workers who majority are women, they work over time. The presumption that batik worker is a

"side job" has turned into just a myth. The workers often work more than 12 hours a day to meet the target given by the employers. Women batik workers work until late night even until after midnight and the next morning they have to get up at dawn to perform shalat and to take care of their household needs. Surprisingly these workers never receive any incentives for their over-time work. Yet according to the prevailing Labor Act in Indonesia about employment, "workers who work 6 days a week the maximum work time is 7 hours a day, workers who work 5 days a week the maximum work time is 8 hours a day. Working done outside of that regulation should get overtime premium and the maximum of overtime hour is 3 hours a day." The employers utilize this system to get the maximum profit by exploiting batik workers without having to pay them overtime premium.

Batik home industry workers also do not get any social security, whereas according to the primary legal of Act number 13/2003, 3/1992, 1/1970, Presidential Decree number 22/1993, Government Regulation number 14/1993, Ministerial Regulation number 04/1993 and 01/1998, workers and their families shall obtain employment social security such as Work Accident Security, Death Security, Retirement Security and Health Security. Batik home industry communities admitted that they never received any assistance or subsidy from their employers even if they are experiencing pain.

Health problem is one of the main problems experienced by batik workers. In fact womenworkers interact directly with chemical that can damage their health when they are producing batik. This condition is worsened by the absence of particular safety equipment to protect the batik workers from negative impacts of hazardous chemical as a staple of batik making. Batik makers usually sit on a very short stool (dhingklik: Java language) with a 10 cm height chair. This condition forces batik makers to sit with legs bent for many hours. Sitting in this positionforces batik makers to experience pain in their ankles and waist.

Furthermore, batik workers also have to interact directly with the kerosene stove for batik making process. This stove lits up for many hours in front of the batik workers. In this regard, either consciously or not, the batik workers directly inhale carbon from the kerosene-burning. As the result batik workers might frequently experience respiratory disorder.

Batik workers also interact directly with the chemical dye used to paint batik design on a fabric. Batik workers hold the fabric painted on their left hand and then hold the "canting: Javanese term" (a particular device to paint batik which has similar function to a brush) on the right hand. Frequently the hazardous chemical dye drips on workers' wrist or also other body parts. It makes their body and clothes look messy, full of dripped colors as many as the colors used to make batik. As housewives, they have to take care of their children, usually in a haste condition, without washing their hands they feed their children and prepare milk for their children, even they sometimes feed their children without using spoon. Under these conditions of dye dripped hands due batik making process, women batik workers usually wash their hands using bleaching chemical. This substance has been selected by batik workers because it is considered more quickly to clean their hands from the dye which makes their hands dirty. As a result,

many women batik workers experience skin diseases such as peeled skin and sore skin.

To meet the target number of batik production that had been ordered, frequently batik workers have to consume energy drinks and supplements. Energy drinks and supplements have been selected to make them stay awake and work until late night. Women batik workers sometimes also take headache medicines that they purchase at stalls around their house to relieve their headache because of working overtime. According to the communities, there are many batik workers who experience kidney failure when they are still in their middle-age. Mrs. Sarti is one of the unfortunates, a batik woman worker of Mr. Kusni, the employer. Her batik production is very smooth, neat and fast. Mrs. Sarti passed away at the age of 36 due to a kidney failure and she did not have enough money to pay the hospital treatment. When she was frequently in and out of the hospital, Kusni never gave any compensation money for her hospital treatment. Finally, after three years suffering from illness, Mrs. Sarti passed away leaving her two children.

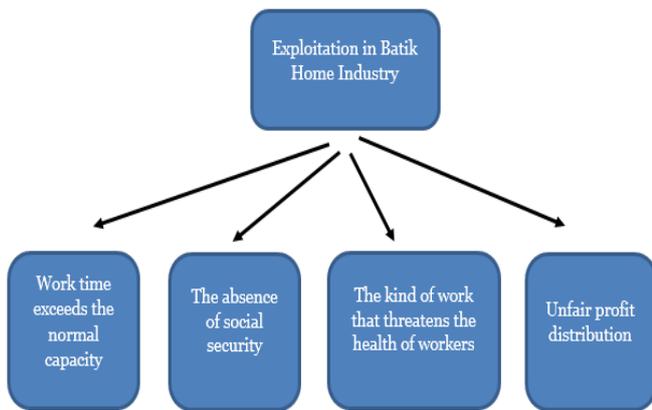
In this case, social security in the form of health and death security is actually needed by batik workers. Job as traditional batik workers has a high risk influencing the workers' health. Moreover, there is no particular safety equipment to protect their body from negative effects of hazardous chemical. It seems that the employers do not care with the condition of workers's health. It can be inferred as they do not provide any medical protection equipment for the batik workers. When doing their work, the batik workers just wear their usual daily clothes; they do not wear gloves, mask or other particular clothing. Communities stated that they feel comfortable working wearing such clothes; they do not understand the dangers that lurk their health when they are working.



Picture 2. Workers who make batik with conventional tools
(Source: Author Documentation)

Batik home industries which implement this putting-out system, apparently the great profit will only be obtained by people who occupy the top structure, that is the employers. Employers will obtain far greater profit than batik workers' profit. From the survey of batik price sold by middlemen or exporters (the employers), a written batik cloth can reach the price over one million rupiahs. Batik clothes that have been sold can be profitable products for employers with the profit

achievement up to 50% of the sale price. Meanwhile, for the hard-working batik workers who paint the batik clothes, their profit is only from fifty thousand to one hundred thousand rupiahs for a piece of batik cloth. Whereas the making process of a piece of written batik cloth can take more than 2 days. This condition clearly shows a form of injustice or it can be said as exploitation if we borrows the concept of Karl Marx's theory. Ministerial Regulation number 1/1999, Government Regulation number 8/1981 and the Act number 13/2003 have mentioned that workers must obtain the right to earn a decent wage. This regulation has further clearly explained that the profit from industrial goods production should be shared equitably in order that batik workers can achieve a better economic condition [9].



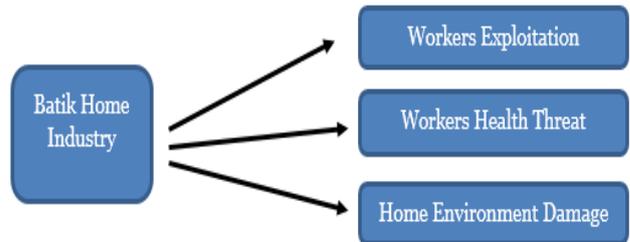
Cart 2. The Form of Batik Home Industry Exploitation in Lawean (Source: Primary Data Analysis).



Picture 3. Batik fabric sold in stores with high price. (Source: Author Documentation).

The coming of home industry mode conceived as SMEs apparently robs communities' domestic space and damages the surrounding environment. Batik home industry, where the whole production processes are inside the workers' house, apparently has disturbed the comfort of batik workers' family residence. House condition functioned as the factory turns dirty, messy and polluted by production waste. The house is supposed to be used as a comfortable place to live, in fact it looks messy because of industrial devices and materials. Splattered colorful dye and spilled wax as materials to make batik cloth are visible staining at every corner of batik workers' house. The smell of dye mingled with kerosene burning fumes is always inhaled by batik workers' family everyday. Gossamer waste resulted from cutting and sewing

clothes process also contributes to the respiratory disorder of batik workers' family. Liquid chemical waste remained from the dyeing and fixation process that is thrown on the yard without the existence of EIA can threaten batik workers' family health. It might happen as the location of wells used for eating, drinking, washing and bathing in their home environment is near with liquid waste disposal location. Home environment is supposed to be used by children to play, learn and gain the affection of the parents, yet it has turned into an uncomfortable factory for family living.



Cart 3. Lawean Batik Home Industry Threats Presence

(Source: Primary Data Analysis)



Picture 4. River pollution caused by batik industry waste. (Source: Author Documentation)

VI. ANALYSIS

If exploitation is viewed from the standpoint of Karl Marx's theory, the source of power which led to it is the capital in the form of production devices ownership. Marx said that the bourgeoisie or capitalists will use their capital as an implementation of power to exploit the workers (proletariat). Proletariat who do not have capital have to be submissive and dependent on the bourgeoisie in order to earn a living. However in this case, the workers (proletariat) have sufficient capital to buy materials along with devices needed to produce batik. In addition of having sufficient capital, the workers also have adequate ability (skill) to make batik. Subsequently in this case the bourgeoisie do not even have devices used to make batik. Tool of exploitation owned by the bourgeoisie is a form of access or service to sell batik products to consumers or batik middlemen who come from domestic and abroad. Thus it can be said that the capital owned by the employers who occupy the top class is in the form of knowledge about access or service to sell batik products to consumers and middlemen.

Furthermore, the form of exploitation in this case can also be explained by the theory of power by Emile Durkheim. There is a deep upheld conviction and it is considered very valuable in Lawean communities. This very valuable conviction is in the form of attitude "ewuh-pakewuh or sungkan; Javanese" (a kind of uncomfortable feeling or reluctance if they do offending acts to others). Such conviction will lead them to a loyal attitude and an endless indebted feeling to the help ever given by the employers. The employers are considered as people who have helped Lawean communities in distributing their merchandises to consumers. Lawean communities believe that the employers are people who have made their merchandises sold in the market. They feel indebted and eventually they accept the various forms of exploitation which they have been experienced sincerely. Communities accept little profit from their hard work that they have done sincerely. Although they are aware that their work is so heavy and it takes long time, they already have the conviction that their work deserves to be appreciated for that profit. Lawean communities are also considered as very loyal communities to their employers. They will never sell their batik products but to their employers. Mostly batik workers have their own employers who have become their old intermediary seller and that relationship between batik workers and employers was inherited by batik worker's previous generation. Therefore Lawean communities' loyal attitude arises as a result of value "ewuh-pakewuh or reluctant" when selling products to another employer, because it will offend their previous employers.

Whereupon, Mark Weber's theory also can be used to explain this reality. Exploitation in Lawean batik industry occurs because of the role distribution upheld by the workers and maintained by the employers. That role distribution is divided into two elements that are the workers act as batik makers and the employers act as batik distributors to consumers or middlemen. This role distribution that is considered as rasional distribution actually harm the batik workers. Batik industry worker communities do not know how to sell their products because of the presence of role distribution that has been lasting for a long time. Employers' hegemony, that batik workers will not be able to sell batik products, will strengthen the employers' position to exploit batik workers. As a result of this hegemony, batik workers are very dependent on their employers and they think that they will not be able to sell their batik products without the help from their employers.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

From the above explanation, it can be concluded that there has been exploitation in batik industry environment in Lawean, Solo, Central Java. This exploitation is done by the employers who occupy higher positions than batik workers. This exploitation practice is done in a silent way by means of putting-out system in the guise of SMEs (small and medium enterprises). In terms of manpower and time, batik workers often work more than 12 hours a day, frequently they work overtime without getting any incentives or overtime premium. In terms of safety, batik workers are forced to make direct contacts with the chemicals contained in batik making

materials without wearing any clothes or materials for protection during working and it is worsened by the absence of work standard and procedure in that lead to physical damage such as peeled skin and sore skin. Furthermore, these exposure and contamination of chemical materials make both batik workers and their families vulnerable to various diseases. While batik employers themselves never give any social securities (including health cost assistance). Apart from those all conditions, researcher found that batik industry that is in the form of batik home industry turns out to be less friendly to the surrounding environment and even tends to disturb the ecosystem as its industrial waste is thrown freely without the existence of EIA. This exploitation practice occurs due to differences in access and network to sell batik products. Employers are able to sell batik products to domestic and foreign consumers and middlemen because they have networking and connection for marketing. Meanwhile batik workers are only able to produce batik without being able to sale it as they do not have networking and connection. Furthermore, Lawean communities' characteristics as a rural community that upholds traditional values "ewuh-pakewuh or reluctant" causes Lawean communities to very easily be controlled or exploited by the employers who are included as the capitalists in the way of exploiting the workers to obtain profit as much as possible.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION

The relation built between batik worker and employer (agent/wholesaler/exporter) should be based by synergy principle. This principle has the sense that relation between batik worker and employers should be both mutual need and mutual help. In the other hand, the relation between batik worker and agents are not oppressive or exploitative.

Some actors such as government / local government, Non Governmental Organizations, Universities also have a responsibility in building the synergy principle. The colleges are also have contributes to look after the process of this UKM that related to research health conditions of workers (batik) and their family members. For instace, whether the environment batik communities around the house has been contaminated hazardous chemicals have poor health conditions. Furthermore, the other research to come across substance environmental friendly of batik maker but has a good quality and affordable price. As we know, nowadays there existed materials batik makers environmentally friendly but the purchase price is still relatively expensive and the results (color quality) were deemed to be good enough so that Lawean people are still reluctant to use the material of batik makers that environmentally friendly with consideration of price and quality of the results. NGOs are also expected to supervise and assist workers (batik) and raise the awareness of employers (agent / middlemen / exporter). in the other hand, do a research that related to the most suitable (ideal) empowerment for Laweyan villagers to lift them from domination and exploitation by batik entrepreneur.

The results of the research or evaluation by both universities and NGOs can then be used as the basis of local governments to establish regulations for worker protection that answere the injustice that had been experienced by

UKM workers in Indonesia generally and in Lawean in particularly. Moreover the government is not only focused on improving the quality or raise the quality of production for the economy, but also pay attention to how the production process is carried out humanely so that there are no losers.

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