

# Poverty of Parmalim Indigenous People: Discrimination, Intolerance and Political Accessibility

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**Abstract:** Poverty is the estuary for all the problems of social discrimination faced by the Parmalim indigenous people who are in Toba Samosir District, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. The social discrimination then led to intolerance towards Parmalim because of their beliefs that were considered different. The purpose of this study was to map and analyze the problems of poverty experienced by the Parmalim indigenous people. This research is a constructive qualitative paradigm research by analyzing phenomena, social structure and empirical issues of poverty of the Parmalim community. The findings of this study in the field mention that poverty, discrimination and intolerance experienced by the Parmalim indigenous people are caused by the low political accessibility of the Parmalim community which makes them marginalized in the fields of social, economic, education and the difficulty of obtaining employment.

## 1 PRELIMINARY

The characteristics of Parmalim poor people in accessing policies are measured by their income. Poverty experienced by the Parmalim community has not been considered as one of the indicators in the framework of structural functional theory seen as a functioning item for the implementation of an orderly, balanced and orderly community life (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Poor people with small incomes are more likely to be vulnerable to policy discrimination.

The many needs of life reduce the allocation of health costs for individuals and their families. On the other hand, work routines continue to squeeze in to meet family needs without being accompanied by health care. Such conditions are getting worse when individual health decreases while medical expenses are not affordable. This fact further supports the view that low economic status is closely related to the low quality of health and even vulnerable to death.

Class analysis views economic conditions as representations of social class struggle as a form of individual constitutive relations with other individuals in the Parmalim community. Such assumptions will place the individual as an absolute factor determining the high quality of health and ignoring the possibility of other factors. The

determination of income and employment for the economic quality of Parmalim's people raises social class discourse in policy studies (Kara & Egresi, 2013). Economic problems are not merely variables, but constitutive vehicles of Parmalim's social relations. In fact, the socio-economic class is very influential on the social life of individuals not only related to social relations and interactions, but also to the life needs of the Parmalim community.

Furthermore, according to BPS data, the poverty rate in Toba Samosir Regency in 2017 increased by 0.32% from the previous year. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows, in 2016 the number of poor people was 14.40% of the total population of 124,496 people or 18,001 people. Then in 2017 it becomes 14.72% of the total population of 125,099 people or 18,033 people (BPS, 2018). The poverty line is the value of expenditure per capita to fulfill food, drink, housing, clothing, education, health, and other basic needs. These poor people are spread in the Toba Samosir areas inhabited by the Parmalim community such as; Toba Holbung Village, Uluan District, Binangalom Village, Lumban Julu District and Lumban Lobukparik Village, Bonatua Subdistrict.

In the conditions in Toba Holbung Village in Toba Samosir for example, Marudut Butar-butur claimed that his income as a farmer could not be calculated per month. But it depends on the harvest

from the garden he owns. This is due to the horticulture plants they harvest once every three months. Then, if the calculation is a figure of IDR 401,220.00 - as monthly income becomes an indicator of poverty according to government standards.

The average Parmalim community earns around Rp 2,700,000 every three months if there is no problem with crop failure. This means that if divided into three months, Marudut Butar-Butar's income is around Rp. 900,000 per month. The dilemma is of course that this figure is compared with the Regional Minimum Wage figure in Toba Samosir regency 2018 which is Rp. 2,276,521.00-, of course, Rp. 900,000.00 / month income is still far from the word prosperity.

The problems so far are the various policies of the local government of Toba Samosir Regency related to agriculture, for example superior seeds, fertilizers and counseling in the framework of modernizing agriculture, not touching the Parmalim community as a whole and maximally.

This means that it is related to work problems, especially the Parmalim people who work as farmers, complex problems occur related to effectiveness and efficiency in agriculture. Similar conditions were experienced by members of the Parmalim community who lived in Porsea who were also farmers. If we analyze in substance what causes them to fall into the category of poor people (Knox, 1979). The complexity of these problems disrupts their welfare. Because the programs from the government have not been obtained directly related to their welfare.

If you look at the impact of local government policies on the phenomenon of poverty occurring in Toba Samosir Regency, in this case the Parmalim community. Directly it does not necessarily make the Toba Samosir regional government not care, the regional government has tried to respond to problems that have never been resolved. This study describes the problems of poverty experienced by the Parmalim community because of the low political accessibility they experience.

## 2 METHODS

This research is a qualitative research with a functional structural paradigm in explaining the political accessibility of the Parmalim community in Toba Samosir Regency, North Sumatra. The researcher collected data using the interview method. While the secondary data of this study was

obtained by researchers from international journals, national journals, books and releases of media coverage. The collection of research data is also carried out through a process of reviewing documents or reports relating to the focus of research in explaining the political accessibility of the Parmalim community.

## 3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Social Bias of the Parmalim Community

Empirically, the Parmalim community living in Toba Samosir District especially in Sibadihong village, Toba Holbung village and Binangalom village still exclude themselves from social interaction. This is due to the argument that if you get too close to society in general. So the values that exist in the Parmalim community can be eroded by modernization and development.



Figure 1: Map of Toba Samosir.

Binangalom Village is a village located in Toba Samosir Regency, precisely to Lumban Julu District. Although the community of Binangalom village is fairly small, it has a variety of religions and beliefs which up to now still live a harmonious and harmonious life. There is Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholic Christianity, and Parmalim itself. During the worship service, *Parsaktian* (place of worship of Parmalim) in Binangalom village on the day of worship, the congregation was very busy on Saturday, which not only came from the village

itself but there were other villages that were part of the Parmalim Binangalom people from Gopgopan village and Silatting.

However, the current conditions arise within the Parmalim internal division itself which has resulted in the emergence of 2 *Ihutan* (Parmalim's main leaders) namely Monang Naipospos with Poltak Naipospos. Such a situation resulted in divisions up to the lowest structure, which included the Parmalim community in the village of Binangalom also experiencing divisions to create two camps. This situation also created a conflict among the community about the implementation of worship between the two camps who did not want to carry out worship together. Then finally reconciled by the lumban julu sector police.

In the village of Binangalom, the Parmalim community following the Monang Naipospos camp with its *ulu pungan* on behalf of Makden Sinaga held a worship service on Saturday at 10:00 WIB at Parsaktian Binangalom. While the Poltak Naipospos camp with its *ulu pungan* named Anton Sinaga then held a worship service at 12:00 on Saturday just after the opposite side had finished worshipping. In the opinion of the speakers, with such a situation the Parmalim community is difficult to reunite. Then he said "*ikkon ujion ni debata dapot dapot akka na tiur*", which means that the problem of internal conflict in the Parmalim community is a test of the almighty and there will be wisdom behind it all.

According to Ulupunguan Binangalom, Resbon Sinaga said;

"In social life, in the village of Binangalom itself the Parmalim community had experienced discrimination from parties outside the Parmalim. He admitted that at that time often faced problems in the management of permit documents in their villages, such as the management of BPJS. Furthermore, socially the obstacles they feel are nothing but sourced from one of their beliefs. Where even in traditional events they are now starting to ignore each other between the two camps. There is no mutual assistance if they come from different camps."

In the world of education, in a number of regions in Toba Samosir Regency a "has been built *Parguruan*", a place where Parmalim school children attend their faith lessons. But until now the government has not put attention on the welfare of the Parmalim teachers. Teachers carry out teaching and learning on a voluntary basis, and are sometimes given incentives by the parent Parmalim organization in Huta Tinggi Laguboti.

Meanwhile, for social life in the village of Toba Holbung, which is very far from public roads in

Toba Samosir Regency, where uphill, rocky and clay roads are counted dozens of kilometers, it makes it difficult for people to interact between the Parmalim Toba Holbung community and outsiders. This somewhat isolated situation seemed to be agreed upon by the Parmalim community in Toba Holbung who seemed to not want their cultures to be affected and eroded by the rapid development of the times.

*Ulu Pungan* who is the leader of trust in a village must be able to guard his people, organize, teach, and educate. The Parmalim community in Toba Holbung has the term "*marmahan ihuta, marorot ibalianMalim*", how a leader must be able to guard the Parmalim community with sincerity and sincerity. The resource person explained that Malim's culture and religion were actually inseparable. Parmalim, which is an indigenous religion in Batak land, should have been legalized as one of the recognized religions in Indonesia. But what is of concern is that the religion of imports from outside Indonesian culture can be a recognized religion in Indonesia, and a religion that has always existed in the territory of Indonesia is not considered at all.

The lack of attention to the survival of the Parmalim community turned out to have an impact on their social life. Where according to the Parmalim Ulupunguan in Toba Holbung, one of the children experienced one form of religious discrimination. When he left for Jakarta to work he was required to take care of KTP and other administrative requirements by choosing one of the legitimate religions in Indonesia while he was clear from his birth that he had adopted the Parmalim belief which had been handed down from great-grandfather to his parents.

However, if in the Toba Samosir area, the resource person claimed to have had the ease of managing the administration about filling out religious identity. In some cases the Toba Samosir government was willing to fill their religious identity with the Parmalim belief status.

In the education sector, Ulupunguan Parmalim now has a teaching team from the Parmalim community in several schools in the Toba Samosir Regency area. They specifically teach about Parmalim beliefs to school children who have a background in Parmalim beliefs. But the government did not pay attention to the continuity of the teaching and learning process carried out by the Parmalim. It can be seen how the regulation of the Parmalim trust education curriculum is not regulated at all by the regional government, nor about the welfare of teaching teachers who are not paid by the

government. Regarding the salaries of teachers who teach Parmalim trust education given by the Parmalim organization itself (Mufid, 2012).

Given this, Lisbet Butar-Butar, which is a parmalmim Ulupungan in Toba Holbung, emphasizes that there is no reason to do good. Even when other people come to the house of a believer in the religion of Malim, they must be treated to drink and eat. Better giving than receiving is a life motto that is still held today. Because basically humans have been given abundant natural resources, therefore the people of Parmalim must be diligent in "*mulaolaon*", which means working to support themselves and their families to live well. This means avoiding poverty but not too much. At this point, there is a sensitivity of Parmalim individuals to make them angry emotions because some factors feel that they are not considered because they are considered different. People's mistakes in understanding or concluding related to their beliefs occur in each individual almost every day.

The causes of angry emotions in some people who feel discriminated are more influenced by social factors (Delgado and Zwartveen, 2008) The feelings of hurt experienced by the Parmalim community associated with emotional disturbances have the potential to interfere with the breakdown of consensus in society, especially related to cooperation and mutual cooperation.

### 3.2 Discrimination Faced by Parmalim

Discrimination is one of the destructive things experienced by the Parmalim community in the area of Toba Samosir Regency, North Sumatra. In the 1960s, the Parmalim community was forced to fill in the religious column on the KTP and register with the religious department when conducting marriages, find work and enter educational institutions. Whereas the Parmalim community trusted Debata Muljadi Nabolon (the Almighty God). If the Parmalim community refused, they did not get access to government facilities and had difficulty finding jobs in private institutions. The position of the believer in this context is the Parmalim community, in a binary position towards superior power relations.

The Parmalim community is in a subordinate position. The absence of recognition as citizens, makes it seem as if there is no social protection and guarantees for safe living. The discrimination process received by the Parmalim community is not only done horizontally, but also vertically. The central and regional governments in the name of the

will to improve, intervene (are coercive) with the mission to be civilized despite the uncivilized steps that are shown.

Since the state passed Law No. 1 / PNPS / 1965 on Prevention of Abuse and blasphemy which contain restrictions on religion in Indonesia is the cornerstone of the country to make efforts uniformity of the various religious groups in the archipelago (Hasse, 2011).

Efforts are made considering the number of religion or belief adopted by local communities spread in various places. In all corners of Indonesia there are various local religions that are only adopted by the local community. To equalize perceptions of nationality, the state also made efforts to uniformize through efforts to *merge* these local religions into one of the recognized religions (Avellaneda, 2006).

Constitutionally Article 29 paragraph 2 of the 1945 Constitution which is very clear as the basis of the constitution of religious freedom does not necessarily become a reference in regulating religion and its adherents. This article clearly states the rights given to anyone to carry out what is believed. However, at the implementation level as in Law No. 1/PNPS/1965, precisely limits the freedom of followers of religion to carry out their beliefs. State recognition of the six religions has an impact on the difficulty of developing local religions. They continue to be under the shadow of the issue of desecration of religion (Hasse, 2011).

Regulations governing the issue of religion make the followers of local beliefs, especially the Parmalim community, as followers who have identities that are isolated from those of other religions. This gave rise to the stigma towards Parmalim's belief followers who were discriminated against.

This is experienced by Tetty Veronika Manurung who is a Police Woman (Polwan) who is on duty at the Tobasa Police Precinct Narcotics Unit which adheres to the belief of Parmalim. Many times Tetty Manurung experienced discrimination because she often filled Parmalim's trust column since she joined the police unit.

Tetty Manurung said at least four times experienced discrimination during the registration process to become a police officer and placed in the area. In fact, some members of the committee and their friends did not hesitate to suggest that they replace their beliefs with a religion recognized by the state.

What was experienced by Tetty Manurung was based on her determination by remembering the

words of King Revealed Manakok Naipospos who said;

"If the dead ant is stepped on by an elephant, it cannot be said to be a winning elephant. If elephants and elephants fight, one dies, then the living is the winner."

This understanding is enough to encourage Parmalim followers to survive in the world of undesirable suffering as the core practice of teaching Hamalimon to behave on the Caller.

Parmalim has the belief that the ancestors of none were imprisoned and oppressed for stealing, murdering, slandering cheats, adultery which all violated Hamalimon's ethics. They were imprisoned and vilified for the truth believed to be because of worshiping Mulajadi Nabolon which they called Debata and the supreme Lord. Although Parmalim regards independence is still imprisoned in the sense of not physical, it must still be guided that it all happens not based on crime. Always cling to the message of the ancestors not to avenge the act of ignorance in a foolish way, crime in a malicious way, slander by slandering.

Parmalim encourages intellectual thinking through deepening the teachings and intellectual balance through education. That has been done since 1939 when Parmalim founded the Parmalim School. Parmalim intellectuals have sprung up since then, duping and ignorance are still struggling on the other side (non-Parmalim) until now claiming Parmalim is misguided and not given space.

The Parmalim, which is said to have no adat, still maintains the refusal of westernization in Batak customs by Parmalim. Gondang Batak is maintained even though some say it contains an element of animism. Gondang Batak for Parmalim is a media offering to Mulajadi Nabolon. Batak indigenous people are run as a media to establish solidarity, strengthen friendship, respect each other and respect human rights in accordance with the customary order imprinted in the Batak culture. If because Parmalim does not give pork it is called uncivilized, it is very surprising, because Parmalim gives beef or buffalo meat, which is the highest component of adat in batak culture (Mufid, 2012)

### 3.3 Intolerant Policy

The issue of intolerance against people Parmalim only a tiny fraction of the tens of indigenous communities of Indonesia are spread in various regions of the country who have a problem with self-actualization as a citizen who is also a part of a unified identity stateless (Brian, 1993).

This issue is actually underway already since a long time ago, the problem of the population administration information system was when followers of the belief community felt that emptying the religious column on the e-KTP issued based on Law No. 23 of 2006 concerning Population Administration, has had a detrimental effect on the implementation of basic rights of trustees in gaining access to public services, such as marriage, birth, employment, funeral, and education.

The ebb and flow of trust groups is closely related to the repression carried out by immigrant religious groups who later built a sacred system of state power and ideology. In this case the dominant religious group uses the power of the state to repress through policies issued by the government. So that the original religions, for example, formed a community organization and those who lived it individually continue to experience pressure and eventually experience depreciation. Most of them are scattered in areas that are not safe because of the terror of religious paramilitary forces, in economically disadvantaged corners, and in large cities the detraditionalisation places that continue to run rampant, under the pretext of civilizing them (Burger, 1987).

The problem they faced then became very serious. Because even though Indonesia has become an independent nation of more than seven decades, despite the existence of the local religious groups of the archipelago, they still do not enjoy the results of such independence. They seemed to be guests in their own country. This is because they continue to experience serious, structured, systematic and widespread discrimination. There are still many groups that adhere to local religion who have experienced discrimination since their birth until their death.

The discrimination experienced by the Parmalim community involves discrimination involves government actors on behalf of the state through policy products. At the state level, the government is aware or not has built a policy system and / or regulation system for the management of diversity that is all ambiguous, overlapping and minus the perspective of human rights.

Then the practice of intolerant policies towards people who believe in God Almighty involves academics. Educated people and academics perpetuate the stigma and academic categorization of a belief, through the categorization of religion and not religion. The belief that comes to the archipelago is called religion with all the rights inherent in it, while local beliefs are not considered as religion

with all the problems attached to it. Even more tragic, the belief in God Almighty was stigmatized as a primitive belief called the stigma of animism or dynamism and others.

The Parmalim community complained about the obstacles in arranging official personal documents (such as marriage certificates, family cards, birth certificates), as well as other interests such as: entering the world of formal education, the world of work, health papers, arranging SIMs, STNK, or even in daily interactions. These constraints limit Parmalim's access to various interests. In order to facilitate this access, some Parmalim included other religious identities in the religious column on their KTP such as: Christianity, Catholicism and Islam. But in the practice of daily life they continue to implement Ugamo Malim teachings, because basically the Parmalim belief contained the teachings of *hamalimon* taught by the Malim Debata as the core of Ugamo Malim. The limited access is as expressed by the teachers who teach around Laguboti and Balige. Minar Naipospos who is a follower of the Parmalim faith in Sibadihon Village stated:

"When entering school and looking for work. There is a feeling of inferiority when at school then when looking for work. Many feel that we (Parmalim) are different from them because our identity is considered unclear because it is not part of religion in general.

Moreover, there are limitations which are very substantial in nature as the main reason, some people finally chose Parmalim to use other religious identities. This was revealed by Pardomuan Simanjuntak who said:

"Like the community in general, many members of the Parmalim community also tried to become civil servants. At that time, for example, when I registered to become a civil servant, I included Christianity in order to be able to fulfill the requested documents. Because in that column there is no Parmalim or other trust column".

According to Ihutan Parmalim Monang Naipospos, it was confirmed that the limited access tends to cause some Parmalim who have an interest in changing the identity of their KTP. Because they have to choose one of the religions recognized in the religion column so that they can be recognized administratively by state. If not, then there will be many obstacles that they will face starting from education issues, population administration to other special matters, such as birth certificates and marriage certificates.

Furthermore, Monang Naipospos has so far chosen to keep emptying the religious fields on the KTP in its name. According to him it is an identity

that is inherent in him and does not need to be changed. According to Monang Naipospos who said that;

"There are a lot of events when students from the Parmalim community write Islam or Christianity on their ID cards. I can understand this because it is difficult for them to answer what courses they will take on campus. This condition is a routine problem that I hear and find on campuses because they are confused".

Moreover empirically the world of campus has not accommodated what it believes in the world of academics. The courses provided refer to the types of religions that are officially recognized as religions according to Indonesian laws and do not provide courses for groups called the state as believers.

## 4 CONCLUSION

The approach used in this study views poverty from the aspect of fulfilling basic needs. The approach to basic needs relating to social conditions is very complex seeing poverty as an inability of a person, family, or community to meet minimum needs, including food, housing, clothing, health services, education, and provision and other policies (Cobo, 2016). Knowledge of the community This local Parmalim has a focus on the relationship between humans, animals, plants, and aspects of trust that exist in the local and specific environment, some aspects have differences with universal laws that usually apply and are known by other communities outside of them.

Empirically, the Parmalim people living in Toba Samosir District, especially in Sibadihon village, Toba Holbung village and Binangalom village, still excluded themselves from social interaction. This is due to the argument that if you get too close to society in general. So the values that exist in the Parmalim community can be eroded by modernization and development. This is due to the view of the general public towards the Parmalim community who consider the belief group as "*sipelebegu*" (devil worshiper) to make the Parmalim community experience social problems.

It must be acknowledged that the Parmalim community still exists until now on the one hand accepting all forms of structuring or constructing the state against the mourners of local beliefs. They adhere to a religion determined by the state. In the matter of population administration, they included one of the country's official religions as their official religion. But on the other hand, they also carried out

resistance or defiance of all forms of state regulation and regulation of the Parmalim community itself.

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