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THE CONTRIBUTION OF HALFWAY HOUSE “LENTERA ILMU” IN THE EMPOWERMENT OF STREET CHILDREN IN JEMBER

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of street children is a problem that will not cease to be debated in both academic and practical studies. This case should be seriously treated since the street children role as the future generation and if it is not immediately overcome, it will threaten the nation's future. Indonesian nation with age range between 10 and 20 years of the younger generation today is they who will drive a great ship of this nation. The establishment of halfway houses is an alternative way to overcome problems of street children. Halfway house is a place of convergence which is informal, where the children meet each other, gain information and guidance early before getting the further coaching process. However in its implementation, halfway house still faces some problems related to its establishment goals and its functions to optimize the empowerment of street children. Starting from this phenomenon, especially in Jember, the researcher is attracted to conduct a research study on how is the contribution of halfway house “Lentera Ilmu” in the empowerment of street children in Jember. This study uses a qualitative research approach of *case studies*. The research results showed that the halfway house “Lentera Ilmu” contributes to the handling of street children in Jember, like as the meeting place (*meeting point*) between social workers and street children, as a center for the diagnosis and referral namely a place to make diagnosis of the needs and problems of street children and referral social services for street children, as the facilitator and the mediator between the street children and their families, substitute families, and other institutions. The halfway house “Lentera Ilmu” also roles as a heaven of science protection that protects the children from various forms of violence and sexual perversion or other behaviors. The activities of development

program for the street children in the halfway house “Lentera Ilmu” include coaching and mentoring, entrepreneurship service program for street children in the form of skills development (such as screen printing, sewing, and electro) in accordance with their conditions and interests, providing capital assistance and guidance of business for the street children in both individuals and groups and also finding suitable jobs or internships for street children.

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INTRODUCTION

In UUD 1945 No. 39 of 1999 about Universal Declaration of Human Rights (HAM), and the decision of the President of the Republic of Indonesia No. 36 of 1990 on the ratification of the *Convention on the rights of the child* state child rights are part of human rights that needs attention and recognition in society. The existence of street children is often encountered in urban areas around the red light district area, and under the bridges and toll roads, almost in every corner of the city. People’s attention and care for street children are very low, their awareness of the existence of street children is still low and even look down to the street children.

To understand street children as a whole, we need to know first the definition of street children. According to the Ministry of Social Affairs, street children are the children who mostly spend their time to make a living or loitering on the streets and in other public places. They are forced to become street children and they even have no choice for how they should live. This situation becomes a phenomenon that grip the society.

The psychology and emotion of the street children in certain extents are still low and less powerful but they have to get along with the world of street harsh life in which it tends to have negative influences for the children’s mental and personality development and establishment. In this case, it also affects the street children’s social aspects with their unstable mental and emotion. In addition, they also wear slum and dirty clothes that lead to create negative imaging by the people like the street children like to make commotion, steal and also they are seen just like the earth rubbish.

Those negative points of view of the society encourage the street children themselves difficult to control their social emotion. It cannot be neglected that street children are also a part

of the future generation. The cause and intensity of street children phenomenon cannot be equated each other. Economic pressure is not the only major cause of street children themselves, it may be due to the influence of the association, an escape from the family because of the pressure from their parents, or even a choice based on their own consideration.

The phenomenon of street children recently is a problem that will not cease to be debated in both academic and practical studies. Since the street children are also the future generation of this nation, this problem should get a serious treatment so that it will not threaten the nation's future. Indonesian nation with age range between 10 and 20 years of the younger generation today is they who will drive a great ship of this nation. Street children are also included in younger generation because they belong to the next generation of the elders. There are two major groups of street children, namely: 1) The group of children who work and live on the streets and all the activities that they do exist on the streets, beginning from sleep until all activities include in their groups they do on the streets; 2) The group of children who work on the streets but still they go home (their parents' house).

Street children spend almost all of their activities on streets. If we study about them more deeply, we will know that they are some communities who are left behind in every fields of life in facing competitions in the era of global markets. It can be seen that the street children often lose, they are not served well in their education school or even they may never go to formal school or forced to stop studying at school because of the limitation of costs and others. In responding to the street children phenomenon, we would think that those street children should attend an alternative education program which can be held by non-formal education outside the school system. One of the alternative ways to rescue the products of street children through non-formal education which include coaching centers and empowering programs is the establishment of a halfway house (shelter). The handling of street children through coaching centers and development programs through the establishment of a halfway house as the their home or point of convergence is informal, that is the place where the street children meet and congregate for gaining education, information and guidance that will lead to their further empowerment program.

METHODS

The focus of this research is the function of a home for street children, specifically the function that use empowerment approach of the halfway house “Lentera Ilmu” to equip and increase the children's potential to live a life in the middle of the society. This research needs to be conducted to describe the types of qualitative research which are *grounded* (depth) in the natural phenomena, wherein the data is collected in a reasonable or scientific background.

This research studies and discusses an overview of the functions of halfway house “Lentera Ilmu” for the empowerment of street children, in the form of organizing, coaching and empowering (giving skills, tutoring, venturing capital assistance, resocializing, giving scholarships and etc, associated with their characteristics (age, potential, education and economic of family situations) of the street children’s backgrounds. There are two kinds of data used in this research, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data is gained through indepth interviews with the street children and their parents and also some explanations from the manager and social workers of halfway house “Lentera Ilmu”. While the secondary data of this research covers the data archives, reports and documentation activities at the halfway house involving the children and the general condition of halfway house “Lentera Ilmu”.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The function of Rumah Singgah “Lentera Ilmu” is as a haven for the street children temporarily before they return home or as a shelter for street children who don’t have houses. The shelter is one of the places where the street children foster and inculcate a sense of togetherness, although it could not be optimal, but it is expected to provide an education for the street children.

As we have seen with our own eyes at the environment around us or we often encounter on the roads in general, such as, bus stations, markets, railway stations and traffic light intersections that there are so many street children. It is not a delight choice for them to live their lives as street children. They do that because of the reality coercion they received so they go back to the streets, eventhough actually in that time they should have been playing and studying at the school like other children do in general. In running their everyday life and doing activities on streets, the street children often face some problems like they often become the victims of physical and sexual violence, prone to have accidents, could be arrested, have conflicts with other street children and also could be rejected or isolated by or from the society.

For the street children, there is not any difference with the other children that they desperately need compassion, protection, education, health, and nutrition from their parents. There are so many people assume that the street children are criminals. This fact is reasonable because they indeed lack of affection, guidance, and protection from the elders on the streets.

The Background of Street Children

The results of the interviews with the coaches of halfway house “Lentera Ilmu” stated that street children are children who stay on the streets (such as at traffic lights)and have various activities such as labor beggars, scavengers, paperboys and shoes polishers. The problems faced by street children like become the victims of family (parents) exploitation, prone to got accidents or health disorders, to be arrested by the police, have conflicts with others, got engaged with inacts, to be assumed as criminals,to be denied by the public or the environment, become the victims of sexual abuse especially among the girls, they are utilized as a tool for distributing drugs and majority of street children are dropped out of school because they have to be on the streets. One of the major causes of the existence of the street children is the economic

factor, wherein their economic situation relatively disadvantages families, so the children are forced to help to fulfill the needs for them themselves and their family. The problems happened in family relationships often make children as the victims. The children with family relationship problems would find other care and affection outside their home. They often face difficulties in living in their society because their low education and also they lack of connection. Therefore, the atmosphere of learning at school which is less conducive makes them feel uncomfortable, and mostly they cannot study at school because of the cost limitation and the absence of special attention from the school to their problems.

From the result of interview above it can be concluded that commonly the street children have the same characteristics have been described above. As we have seen with our own eyes at the environment around us or we often encounter on the roads in general, such as, bus stations, markets, railway stations and traffic light intersections that there are so many street children. It is not a delight choice for them to live their lives as street children. They do that because of the reality coercion they received so they go back to the streets, although actually in that time they should have been playing and studying at the school like other children do in general.

In running their everyday life and doing activities on streets, the street children often face several problems like they often become the victims of physical and sexual violence, prone to have accidents, could be arrested, have conflicts with other street children and also could be rejected or isolated by or from the society. For the street children, there is not any difference with the other children that they desperately need compassion, protection, education, health, and nutrition from their parents. There are so many people assume that the street children are criminals. This fact is reasonable because they indeed lack of affection, guidance, and protection from the elders on the streets.

The Process of Guidance and Empowerment Activities of Street Children

Based on the results of the interviews with the coaches of halfway house “Lentera Ilmu” there are some development activities provided there, including: **Outreach and advocacy on the streets**, covering the establishment of a relationship with the street children, the formation of a group of street children and the activity of counseling and mentoring. **Resocialization**, covering the religious activities like commemorating the great religion of Islam, teaching or counseling on some emerged cases, such as drugs, HIV-AIDS, reproduction of health, and home visiting in order to unify the children back to their parents. **Provision of food (nutrition) and health services**, which result in the improvement of the nutrition and health of the street children, cooperate with several health agencies. **Empowerment for children** covering education, scholarship and registration for the street children as well as tutoring, and giving entrepreneurship care to the street children in the form of skill training (such as screen printing, sewing, and electro) which is suitable with the conditions and interests of the street children, giving capital assistance and guidance for street children, helping them both individuals and groups to find jobs or internship for the street children who have no interest in school education and helping the street children to find another job with human resources and opportunities to get a decent job. **Empowering the parents of street children**, provides guidance and support for capital venture in order to increase the family income so the children should not work on the streets again. The

guidance and counseling could be done through directly visiting their house, group meeting, or inviting them to the halfway house and these activities are done both individually and in groups.

Every child has a right for education, as well as the street children who also need education and guidance. The process of development and empowerment of street children in halfway house “Lentera Ilmu” is one of the activities to empower street children so that the children could have the ability or skill to plunge back into the society, can be beneficial for the family, the community of nation and religion.

CONCLUSION

One factor that leads the children plunge to the streets is economic factor, where the economic condition of the family said as less-prosperous, so the children are forced to help the needs of their family and themselves. Moreover, the problems happened in family relationships often make the children as the victims, wherein the children tend to looking for care outside the house by going to the roads or streets.

The process of empowerment of street children in halfway house “Lentera Ilmu” is as follows: awareness and advocacy, food (nutrition) provision and health service, entrepreneurship service to street children in the form of skill training (screen printing, sewing and electro) which is suitable with the condition, interest and residence, capital assistance and guidance for street children both individually and in groups, job seeking or internship provision for the street children who have no interest in school education, helping street children to find another job with human resources and opportunities they have to acquire decent works and scholarships.

For the Halfway House “Lentera Ilmu”

The improvement of the cooperation between halfway house “Lentera Ilmu” and various parties, both the government agencies and NGOs in order to establish the service of the halfway house is good so that the guidance and social welfare services for the street children can meet the needs of their rights, fostering the basic needs and developing materials for education and skills so that later the street children would have the knowledge and skills which are useful for themselves and the others. Furthermore, the halfway house also should be able to improve the supervision and care of the street children.

For the Street Children

They should learn to obtain education, experience and train their skills for their success in their future life.

For the Government

It is expected to be more responsive and caring to reproduce the conditions of street children through the help of inculcation and the establishment of halfway houses for intensive treatment by providing welfare service, education and fulfillment of their rights.

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