

Middle Class in Indonesia and Public Intellectual Responsibility

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ABSTRACT

This article reveals the phenomenon of the middle class in Indonesia which is economically progress but in terms of social responsibility it is declining. This study was conducted using literature research method. Through this literature research found the low level of economic middle class involvement in Indonesia on issues of democratization. The middle class like this in Indonesia is called middle class *ngehe*'. But in the social middle class perspective they are at university for example student activist and lecturers who become public intellectuals have an involvement on various issues of democratization. Although the numbers are few, they show their social and political responsibilities as public intellectuals as well as the middle class.

Keywords: *middle class 'ngehe', indonesia, public intellectual responsibility*

INTRODUCTION

The Sociologically (social criteria), college students' and lecturers' can be positioned as a middle-class entities. The position of the middle class is due to college students' and lecturers' is a social layer that feel the higher education. As a social layer that feels high education certainly feel how university life. However in a university, lecturers' and college students' should struggle with university culture such as an academic and non academic which then systemically make college students' have more personal qualities than their age who didn't get higher education. This social qualities that make the lecturers' and college students' in the social position as the middle class. According to Talcott Parsons quoted by Kingsley Davis & Moore Wilbret in the book *Some Principles of Stratification* which also

cites the work of Bendix & Lipset (1966:47) in the book class, social status and power suggests five determinants of social status such as birth, ownership, personal qualities, authority and achievement. Because as individuals and social entities lecturers' and college students' have personal qualities that exceed other entities due to the quality of himself who struggled with science and technology at the University, then sociologically lecturers' and college students' have a certain social status which is then referred to as the middle class.

The struggle of lecturers' and students' at the University has culturally enhanced its intellectual capacity. This intellectual capacity is then able to encourage college students' to be college activists' and lecturers' to be public intellectuals. But several college students' didn't make their plunge into a college activist. Their like science and technology. His science is only for science, not for change. They didn't involve in various of college student' organization. There are also lecturers' who are only focus on educated. There are those who focus on educated in higher education but didn't concern with situations outside of around themselves that threaten others and even threaten the continuity of democracy. Then this is some circles in Indonesia popularly referred to as the middle class of *ngehe*.

DISCUSSION

The Middle Class in Indonesia

In general there are two approaches to defining the middle class namely the absolute and relative approaches. Lester Thurow (1987) of MIT defines the middle class in the United States as a society group that has income in the range between 75% and 125% of the median (midpoint) per capita income. The middle class floor bound by this definition is 75% of the median income per capita. While the upper limit of 125% of the median income per capita. According to Easterly (2001) of New York University defines the middle class by dividing the population into five quintiles of consumption groups, from the poorest to the richest. The middle class according to Easterly is obtained by issuing the lowest quintiles (20% of the poorest) and the top quintiles (20% of the richest people). As we knew the middle class is a group of people who have per capita expenditure in the second, third and fourth quintiles (Yuswohady, 2012). The disadvantage of a relative approach that each country has a different income median number so the definition of the middle class from different countries will

vary. The absolute approach fixes this weakness by defining certain income expenditures or deficiencies to define the middle class.

According to Ravallion (2009) of the World Bank uses the lower limit of the median poverty line in 70 developing countries as the lower limit of per capita income per day of \$ 2, meanwhile for the upper limit it uses the poverty line number in the United States for \$ 13. Because it uses the upper limit of poverty in the United States, this definition is applicable to developing countries. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) defines the middle class with per capita spending per day of \$ 2-20. The per capita expenditure span is subdivided into three groups, there are (1) lower middle class with per capita expenditure per day of \$ 2-4. (2) Middle Middle Class with daily per capita expenditure of \$ 4-10. (3) Upper Middle Class, with per capita expenditure of \$ 10-20 per day. Study of World Bank (2012) mentions, Indonesia has middle class reach 56.5 percent from 237 million population of Indonesia. Based on the research Institute for research and development newspaper Kompas (2012) the middle class of Indonesia reached 50.3 percent. The study found the middle class formed at the time was a mix of elements. Some of middle-class who is middle-class, some of newly graded from lower to middle and fewer are those handed down by upper or upper middle-class parents. Although a few, their influence significantly transmits middle-class lifestyle to the middle class.

The middle class is also a blend of those who experience the direct impact of the economic crisis and when the crisis occurs, their haven't a job responsibilities because they are aged 0-17 years. This pre-crisis youth group, especially now occupy positions as upper-middle class citizens-currently the most enthusiastic group buying luxury goods. Only about 2 percent of the rich young group didn't have smart gadgets (smartphones), several of them have more than one smartphone. The research of compass is interesting because the researcher found the middle class in Indonesia they are only limited to the audience of various problems of the nation today (litbang, 2012). Five years after the Kompas Research and Development Research, on December of 2017 the World Bank released an important article titled Indonesia's National Secondary Class Important for the Future States which states is one of five Indonesians is in the middle class or about 52 million people. According to World Bank, Indonesia's middle class which contributes to 43 percent of total household consumption. At the same time there are 45 percent of the population who are groups want to

become middle class, if this group fails to rise in economic level it will impact on people who are more polarized and split (kompas, 2017).

The research of Kompas newspaper found that the middle class in Indonesia hasn't been able to become an element of social change, has not become an important part of democratization efforts, they are only limited to the audience of various national problems that occur, is the findings on 2012 which is still enough relevant. This conclusion is reinforced, for example, by the lack of middle-class involvement in democratization efforts. The most obvious implication among them is the fact that Indonesia democracy index decline in 2017 from position 48 to position 68. As stated above that in December of 2017 in the World Bank analysis mentioned there are 45 percent of Indonesia's population who are a group that wants to become middle class, if this group fails to rise in economic level it will impact on people who are more polarized and divided. On 2018 will be the year of the momentum of the middle class increase amid the rupiah exchange rate continues to slump and the economic situation that has not fully improved. At the same time, political turmoil on 2018 and 2019 also continues to show increased tension. The fact of the weakening of the rupiah, the unfavorable economic situation and the political year on 2018-2019 which continues to heat up, there isn't properly anticipated by the government, the polarization and split of social entities of Indonesian society as analyzed by World Bank is possible.

The situation is unlikely to occur if the new middle class from a more qualitative perspective (non-absolute perspective) but able to participate in a participatory process in the both political process and economic democratization. In this context, the definition of the middle class constructed from a sociological and political perspective has meaningful because of the quality of education, intellectual capacity and concern for the surrounding socio-economic problems to mainstream the problem in the middle class in Indonesia. Therefore, college students' activists and lecturers' who will choose their public intellectuals are in the middle class in sociological and political definitions very important entities for contributing constructively to the problems of the middle class in general in Indonesia.

Public Intellectual and Responsibility

Based on a psychological point of view, intellectuals are more viewed in the context of mental ability or intelligence, which is a representation of cognitive processes, thought processes, linking power, judgmental aspects and the ability to consider (Joyce, 2016:98). From a sociological and political point of view, intellectuals are more viewed in the context of the ability or capacity of individuals to respond to issues outside of themselves with a logical perspective and have a preference for universal truth, justice and universal values of humanity. One of intellectual aspect isn't only see from how far a person has gone through education, but rather by his ability to digest information and connect to a logical cause. The relationship will be a source of consideration in decision making to resolve the problem.

This point of view must have an impact on who deserves to be labeled an intellectual individual. The level of education is no longer seen as a starting point, but also must take into an account aspects of thinking, problem-solving skills, and of course the effectiveness in decision-making. According to Lewis Coser (1965) quoted Sven Eliaeson (2008:112) argued that intellectuals are the people of knowledge who never feel satisfied to accept the reality as it is. They always think about the best alternative of everything that people have considered good.

This is confirmed by Edward Shils (1972) cited Rajendra Pandey (1990:247) argued that the intellectuals are always looking for truths whose boundaries do not culminate. The perspective of Lewis Coser and Edward Shils as described above shows that intellectuals are entities who never stop thinking of issuing ideas to answer various issues in the midst of society or find new ideas to make a change from the social and economic realities of politics and culture around it. An intellectual in this sense means he will never remain silent to see the circumstances surrounding him. Based on Indonesian Dictionary, the word intellectual is related to the word intellect. Intellect comes from the Latin vocabulary: the intellectus which means understanding, understanding, intelligence. In the everyday sense then means intelligence, intelligence, or reason.

This notion of intellect is different from the notion of intelligence or intelligence level. Intellect more shows what man can do with his intelligence; things that depend on exercise and experience. Intellect here represents a higher power or thought process with respect to knowledge, reason and intelligence of thought. The word intellectual also connotes to call the educated or the intellectual. Therefore, intellectual attitudes are usually shown by

thinkers who have the ability to analyze a particular problem or potential in the field. Intellectual also a change maker, that is person making change. Then the characteristics of intellectual: First, have science and religious knowledge that can be diteorisasikan and realized in the community; Second, can speak the language of his people and be able to adapt to the environment; and Third, have a social responsibility to transform a static society into a dynamic one (Syamsul, 2018).

According to Mohammad Hatta speech, once perceived the intellectuals as well as the intelligentsia. For Hatta, intelligence shouldn't be passive, but leave everything to whoever happens to be in office. They are part of the citizens who share rights and obligations. Hatta's appeal necessarily implies that an intellectual, obviously an entity that is expected to be able to give consideration to the role of the State in political, economic, and social management. Hatta said, they are a big responsibility bearer, bigger than the other classes because of the quality it has as an educated person (Mohammad Hatta, 1983). Noam Chomsky (2017) in *The Responsibility of Intellectuals* says that an intellectual with his special status is obliged to promote freedom, justice, humanity and peace. According to Chomsky intellectuals are not only in charge of exposing the lie of the authorities, but also explaining how far we are involved in a crime and how we stop it.

A number of perspectives above assert that an intellectual has a great sense of responsibility for various social, economic, political and cultural issues surrounding it. They academically have enough capacity to analyze and respond to various problems of the public (public interest). If intellectuals understood as human beings whose capacity is concerned with others and in the public affairs, public intellectuals would understood as intellectuals who understand the public, voicing public interest as well as accepted by the public both as a reference and as part of the public. Budhiana Kartawijatya (2012), public intellectuals can be understood as someone who has knowledge and authority about various kinds of actual issues in depth and have ability to convey to public. There are several stages in the process of attaining status as a public intellectual. In the beginning, public intellectuals convey ideas and write exclusively about the discipline of their knowledge. Then at a later stage, public intellectuals can talk or write about their discipline and how to relate it to the social, cultural, and political world around it. Budhiana also reminded that public intellectuals do not have to write things down. Writing everything can make a person not a public intellectual but stuck into a celebrity intellectual.

Public intellectual position in Indonesia becomes very important. Public intellectuals as intellectuals who openly voiced public interest and become part of the public amidst the middle class economic phenomena that are indifferent to the socio-political and cultural economic problems, it becomes a major agent for promoting the awareness of the economic middle class in Indonesia to take responsibility for bringing about democracy quality in Indonesia. Such a public intellectual position is a form of responsibility as an intellectual. Or some kind of academic university accountability.

CONCLUSION

Until this article was written, the middle class (economy) in Indonesia has not been able to become an element of social change and hasn't become an important part of democratization efforts, they are only limited to spectators from various national problems that occur. First, this fact is reinforced for example by the lack of middle-class involvement in democratization efforts. The most obvious implication among them is the fact that Indonesia democracy index decline on 2017 from position 48 to position 68. Second, on December of 2017 in the World Bank analysis mentioned there are 45 percent of Indonesia's population who are a group that wants to become middle class, if this group fails to rise in economic level it will impact on people who are more polarized and divided. Third, the middle class built from a sociological and political perspective is much more meaningful because it is measured from the level of education, intellectual capacity and concern for the socioeconomic and cultural problems surrounding it.

Therefore, college students' and lecturers' who are in high education as a middle class in sociological and political definitions, very important entities to contribute constructively to the problems of the middle class in general in Indonesia. This is the side of intellectual responsibility. Fourth, public intellectual position in Indonesia becomes very important. Public intellectuals as intellectuals who openly voiced public interest and become part of the public amidst the middle class economic phenomena that are indifferent to the socio-political and cultural economic problems, it becomes a major agent for promoting the awareness of the economic middle class in Indonesia to take responsibility for bringing about democracy quality in Indonesia. This public intellectual position is a form of intellectual responsibility. Or some kind of academic university accountability.

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