

# Social Practice and Community Construction on Mental Retarded People (A Case Study on Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen)

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## Abstract

This research aimed to explain social practice and community's construction on mental retarded people in Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen. This research employed a qualitative method with case study research. The result of research showed that social practice of mental retarded people, having attended counseling and rehabilitation, changed. Mental retarded people with idiot category still have dependent practice, semi-dependent practice and independent practice. The social practice of mental retarded people affected the community's construction on the mental retarded people. It was indicated with the community's acceptance to the mental retarded people; the more independent the mental retarded people, the better is the community's acceptance.

**Keywords:** mental retarded, social practice, social construction

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

Disabled or difabel is considered as an individual having no ability and marginalized in his/her social world. However, everyone, either normal or disabled, has his/her own right and obligation. Mental retarded is one of disabled category with subnormal intelligence and behavioral disability appearing in developmental phase. American Association on Mental Deficiency (Amin, 1995: 22) defines mental retarded as a disorder including subnormal general intellectual function, IQ less than 84 based on test before 16-year age.

Developmental disorder a mental retarded child develops affects his/her life. Mental retarded people have limitation to associate with their social world; in addition, they are often bullied by their surrounding environment. Although physically mental retarded children are not different from their normal counterparts, their intelligence is below the mean score, thereby requiring guidance, education and training to optimize their ability. Optimizing their ability is expected to make them independent thereby not relying on others, capable of working within society, building themselves, and socializing well with others. The attempt taken to optimize their ability and intelligence, among others, is to use education channel through Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation center of Sragen.

## 2. Literature Study

The theory used in this research was Piere Bourdieu's Social Practice and Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's Social Construction theories. Basically, social practice theory is the relationship between habitus, capital and domain that can be represented in the formula  $(\text{Habitus} \times \text{Capital}) + \text{Domain} = \text{Social Practice}$ . Habitus, according to Bourdieu (in Ritzer and Goodman, 2004: 524), merely recommends what one should think of and what one should choose to do. Capital consists of four: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. Domain is an arena of power within which there is an attempt of fighting for resource (capital) and for obtaining certain access close to the power hierarchy. Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction theory builds on two ideas: reality and knowledge. Sociology of knowledge, in Berger and Luckman's thought (1990), is to always conceive life world in dialectic process between the self (individual) and socio-cultural world. That dialectic process includes three simultaneous moments: externalization (self adjustment with socio-cultural world as human product), objectification (interaction with inter-subjective institutionalized world), and internalization (individual identifies with social institutions or social organization where individual becomes its members).

## 3. Method

This research was taken place in Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation center of Sragen. This research employed a qualitative method with case study research strategy. The sample was taken using purposive sampling technique.

Purposive sampling, according to Sugiyono (2008: 218), is the technique of sampling the data source with certain criteria: the data source considered as most knowledgeable about what is expected, thereby facilitating the author in exploring the object or social situation studied; what is taken into account in qualitative research sampling is the complete information acquisition with existing variations, rather than the number of data source sample.

The sample was taken using maximum variation sampling strategy intended to capture and to represent a central theme of study through cross-sectional information from various types of respondents. The subject of research was the recipient of services in Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation center of Sragen and people surrounding the rehabilitation center. Informants consisted of 23 people: 9 mental retarded, 5 officers of Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation center of Sragen, and 9 people living around the rehabilitation center. Techniques of collecting data used were observation, interview and documentation. In this research data validation was carried out using source triangulation. Data analysis was carried out using explanatory analysis. This strategy aims to analyze the case study data by means of explaining the corresponding case (Yin, 1997: 146).

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### 4.1. Result

##### 4.1.1. Mental Retarded Habitus

Habitus can be explained into four points: the mental retarded people’s perception on themselves, their knowledge during living in Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation center of Sragen and society environment, and their habit and behavior. The mental retarded people’s perception on themselves is divided into two: physically and psychically. Physically, mental retarded people are those very self-confident, but psychically, they consider their disability as their weaknesses thereby tending to withdraw from environment. The mental retarded people’s knowledge is related to the environment where they live. They feel comfortably in Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation center of Sragen due to the feelings of shared fate and shared interest, while they are often declined in society environment. The habit of mental retarded people manifests into daily activities they do. They have deviating behavior due to their incapability of controlling emotion.

Table 1. Habitus of Mental Retarded People

| Category of mental retarded | Habitus             |                   |                          |                                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                             | Perception          | Knowledge         | Habit                    | Behavior                            |
| Idiot                       | Not self-confident  | Never socializing | Dependent on others      | Incapable of controlling emotion    |
| Trainable                   | Self-confident      | Try to socialize  | Needing guidance         | Less capable of controlling emotion |
| Educable                    | Very self confident | Socializing       | Can deal with themselves | Capable of controlling emotion      |

##### 4.1.2. Capital of Mental Retarded People

The capital of mental retarded people belongs to very low category or almost inexistent. Mental retarded people can be said as having no economic capital, as they do not have asset and only have human capital to be used to earn money. Cultural capital of mental retarded people is low as well due to their incapability of thinking like their normal counterpart generally. Social capital of mental retarded people is also very limited in bonding and bridging social capital, and very weak in linking. Finally, symbolic capital is related to acceptance and declination socially, so that it can be said that the symbolic capital of mental retarded people is low.

Table 2. Capital of Mental Retarded People

| Category of mental retarded | Capital     |                          |  |                |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|--|----------------|
|                             | Economic    | Culture                  | Social   | Symbolic       |
| Idiot                       | Non-earner  | No thinking ability      | Weak <i>Bonding</i><br>Weak <i>Bridging</i>                            | Underestimated |
| Trainable                   | Semi-earner | Limited thinking ability | Strong <i>Bonding</i><br>Strong <i>Bridging</i>                        | Recognized     |
| Educable                    | Earners     | Having thinking ability  | Strong <i>Bonding</i><br>Strong <i>Bridging</i><br>Weak <i>Linking</i> | Appreciated    |

##### 4.1.3. Domain of Mental Retarded People

The mental retarded people reside in Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation center of Sragen. In Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation center of Sragen domain, the mental retarded people can maximize the resource they have, and rehabilitation center becomes an appropriate place for mental retarded to grow and develop. In society domain, mental retarded people have limited opportunity of developing; in addition, society is not a

mental retarded-friendly place, because of their declination.

Table 3. Domain of Mental Retarded People

| Mental Retarded Category | Domain   |           |
|--------------------------|--|-----------|
|                          | Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation center of Sragen | Community |
| Idiot                    | Accepting  | Hostile   |
| Trainable                | Friendly   | Accepting |
| Educable                 | Appropriate  | Friendly  |

#### 4.1.4. Mental Retarded Practice

Mental retarded practice manifest into every activity the mental retarded people do, as can be seen in various daily activities. Social practice of mental retarded people can be seen from their independency. Considering the formula (Habitus x Capital) + Arena = Social Practice, the social practice of mental retarded people can be represented in the table below:

Table 4. Social Practice of Mental Retarded People

| Mental Retarded Category | Habitus             |                   |                          |                                     | Capital     |                          |   |                | Domain               |           | Practice        |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|---|----------------|----------------------|-----------|-----------------|
|                          | Perception          | Knowledge         | Habit                    | Behavior                            | Economic    | Cultural                 | Social                                      | Symbolic       | Social Rehab. Center | Society   |                 |
| Idiot                    | Not self-confident  | Never socializing | Dependent on others      | Incapable of controlling emotion    | Non-earner  | No thinking ability      | Weak Bonding Weak Bridging                  | Underestimated | Accepting            | Hostile   | Dependency      |
| Trainable                | Self-confident      | Try to socialize  | Need guidance            | Less capable of controlling emotion | Semi-earner | Limited thinking ability | Strong Bonding Strong Bridging              | Recognized     | Friendly             | Accepting | Semi-dependency |
| Educable                 | Very self-confident | Socializing       | Can deal with themselves | Capable of controlling emotion      | Earners     | Thinking ability         | Strong Bonding Strong Bridging Weak Linking | Appreciated    | Appropriate          | Friendly  | Independency    |

#### 4.1.5. Socialization and Promotion

Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen conducts socialization and promotion through mobile social service, exhibition, disability, art performance, socialization in village activity, leaflet, mass media (newspaper, radio, television), and words of mouth.

#### 4.1.6. Social Construction

Society considers mental retarded people as the one with mental disorder, thereby treating them unwell. However as long as the mental retarded people do not harm others, the members of society are not objected with the existence of Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen in their neighborhood. Guidance and rehabilitation provided by Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen enable the mental retarded to have skill and expertise to change the society’s perspective, thereby impacting on the community’s acceptance to mental retarded people. There are three categories of community’s acceptance: not accepting, common, and accepting.

Table 5. Community’s acceptance to mental retarded people

| Category      | Characteristics  |
|---------------|--|
| Accepting     | Some of society members consider that mental retarded people is as same as their normal counterpart. Through guidance and rehabilitation, they can have expertise/skill to equip them in living better within society. Mental retarded people accepted are often involved in societal activity despite not in all activities |
| Common        | Some of society members consider that mental retarded people can achieve independency, thereby not bothering and worrying the community. They are also involved in some but not all societal activities.   |
| Not accepting | Some others do not accept mental retarded people as the ones with mental disorder thereby will harm and worrying the community, despite guidance and rehabilitation. These mental retarded people are never involved in societal activity.   |

## 4.2. Discussion

The author employed Pierre Bourdieu’s social practice theory explaining about habitus, capital with formula equation (Habitus x Capital) + Arena = Social Practice. In every action, the mental retarded people are affected by their impulse to do some action, represented as habitus. Habitus can be explained in four things: perception, knowledge, habituation, and behavior of mental retarded people. The knowledge of mental retarded people is related to the environment in which they live in Disgranda “Raharjo” Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen and society environment. In rehabilitation center, mental retarded people get friends with shared fate and interest and good service, while community often bullies and decline them, despite some acceptances. The habit of mental

retarded people is reflected on the activity they do every day. In behaving, most mental retarded people cannot control their feeling, thereby being entrapped easily into prohibited action such as destroying, stealing and sexual abuse. Bourdieu (Ritzer and Goodman, 2004 : 524) explains that habitus merely recommends what one should think of and what one should choose to do. Perception, knowledge, habit, and behavior are structure internalized by mental retarded people affecting how they think and act, while they can make improvisation over the action they will do.

In social practice theory, in addition to habitus, Bourdieu also explains the capital divided into four types: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals. Firstly, economic capital is the type of capital in the form of financial resource that can be converted into property (possession). Considering the definition of economic capital, mental retarded people can be said as having no economic capital as they do not have their own asset, but they have human capital that can be used to utilize the existing asset to earn money (financial capital). Regarding this, financial capital the mental retarded people have is still dependent on others' help. Secondly, cultural capital can be insight, knowledge, and mindset considered as creating an identity. In this case, learning capacity the mental retarded people have is very limited and difficult to receive stimulation. In institutionalized condition, cultural capital manifests in typical form, participation and recognition of education institution in the form of *purna bina* certificate. Thirdly social capital, according to Robert Putnam (Winter, 2000 : 167), is a belief, norm, and network that facilitates the cooperation for the sake of mutual interest. Mental retarded social network builds on the most beneficial cooperation, in which bonding social capital is established well among the mental retarded people as they feel shared fate and interest manifested into friendship. Meanwhile, bridging social capital established in unparallel relationship between the employees of Disgranda "Raharjo" Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen and the mental retarded people. Finally, symbolic capital refers to any form of capital as long as they are represented, meaning that symbolically they are understood in their relation to knowledge or more exactly in relation to declination and acceptance. The symbol the mental retarded people have such as inadequate thinking ability, poor acceptance to new stimulation, bad temper, poorly-maintained physique, makes them unappreciated within society. Symbolic capital enables an individual to have what obtained through physical and economic power, due to mobilization. Because mental retarded people do not have those abilities, they cannot get power and respect in their neighborhood.

Friendliness is a structured relationship unconsciously governing the position of individual, group or institution at community level created spontaneously. In this case, mental retarded people existing in Disgranda "Raharjo" Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen. Domain generates the presence of various potencies the mental retarded people have in their position as the beneficiary (service recipient), through guidance and rehabilitation. Rehabilitation center gives the mental retarded people to maximize the resource they have, so that rehabilitation center becomes the appropriate place to them. Mental retarded people also fight for society's social domain and serve as the members of society, but the society accepts their existence poorly so that their opportunity of developing and maximizing their resource is very limited.

Habitus, capital and domain are interrelated directly and aim to explain social practice. Bourdieu explains the relationship using formula equation (Habitus x Capital) = Social Practice. Mental retarded people belonging to idiot category have dependency social practice existing in daily life and any aspects of its life are still dependent on others' help. The mental retarded people belonging to trainable category have semi-dependency social practice in which they had been independent at least in dealing with themselves daily, without bothering others, while they sometimes still like to harm others. The mental retarded people belonging to educable category have independent social practice. They have been able to deal with themselves, thereby is considered as being independent.

Considering the practice conducted, not all mental retarded people have achieved independency. Independency, according to Parker (2005: 22), can be defined as a condition in which an individual is not dependent on authority and not recurring direction completely. Mental retarded belongs to under social behavior because their inclusive needs have not been met completely by their family in their lifetime thereby creating distance with surrounding people and considering them as non valuable people.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1990) build themselves on two ideas: reality and knowledge. The community starts to conduct externalization process by means of disclosing what they understand about mental retarded people through mass media, socialization, and words of mouth. The habit usually done by mental retarded people can be used to build communication with others according to their type, called typification. Ability and attitude of mental retarded people creates category corresponding to their action. This typification then creates categories of mental retarded people, including idiot, trainable, and educable. The habit of mental retarded people in interrelated, interacted and expressing typification becomes common-sense knowledge for the community, so that the institutionalized inter-subjective interaction is established in the form of Disgranda "Raharjo" Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen. This habit of mental retarded people then becomes objective reality for the community. The mental retarded people no longer become the ones harming and bothering others, but they are educable and trainable to achieve independency at least in dealing with themselves. The reality is

then internalized into next generation in which social institution and organization exists. Out of those processes, the community's acceptance to mental retarded people divided into three categories: accepting, commons, and not accepting.

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1.1. Mental retarded habitus is divided into four: understanding, knowledge, habit and behavior. These four categories can be stated as mental retarded habitus as they recommended what they should do. The mental retarded people decide whether they will decline or accept to attend guidance and rehabilitation as reflected on their habit, mindset, and action.
- 5.1.2. Mental retarded capital is very limited and almost inexistent, due to their limitation. The capital applies to the close-to-normal mental retarded people including trainable and educable ones.
- 5.1.3. The mental retarded people reside in Disgranda "Raharjo" Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen. In those two domains, the opportunity of fighting for habitus and capital they have to achieve power is very limited and almost inexistent. The capital the mental retarded people have is only used to survive in the domain.
- 5.1.4. Social practice explains the interrelation between habitus, capital and domain as expressed in the formula  $(\text{Habitus} \times \text{Capital}) + \text{Domain} = \text{Social Practice}$ . The practice of mental retarded people is varying by its category. Mental Retarded people belonging to idiot category have dependent practice, those belonging to trainable category have semi-dependent practice and those belonging to educable category have independent practice.
- 5.1.5. Disgranda "Raharjo" Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen conducts socialization and promotion through mobile social service, exhibition, disability, art performance, socialization in village activity, leaflet, mass media (newspaper, radio, television), and words of mouth.
- 5.1.6. Society's Construction on the mental retarded people in Disgranda "Raharjo" Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen is as follows: firstly, some members of society accept it as they consider that mental retarded people is as same as their normal counterpart. Secondly, some members of society have common construction as they consider that in the presence of Disgranda "Raharjo" Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen, the mental retarded people achieves independency, so that they do not bother and make others worry. Thirdly, some others do not accept Mental Retarded people as they consider mental retarded people as the ones with mental disorder thereby will harm and worrying the community, despite guidance and rehabilitation from Disgranda "Raharjo" Social Rehabilitation Center of Sragen.

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