

# Family Social Support for the Elderly Based on Human Capital (Perspective of Symbolic Interactionism in Toraja Families in Makassar City)

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Family social support for the elderly in the Toraja community is changing and quality services and human capital-based services are needed. This paper describes the new pattern of family social support for the elderly of Toraja families in Makassar City. Research methods with qualitative case study types were used and data collection was done through interviews and observations. The results showed there are still families providing social support services to the elderly. The change is the Toraja people offering assistance at home but using professional servants to provide maximum service to the elderly. The conclusion of the study is that the improvement in the quality of the socio-economic life of the Toraja community results in less time to provide social support in the form of services to elderly parents. However, the quality of service to these parents did not diminish by presenting professional servants and was agreed explicitly by family members as a substitute for assistance from their children as they are busy working. In other cases, family members have enough time to provide services to elderly parents and get material support from families who are busy working.

**Key words:** *Family Social Support, Elderly, Human Capital, Symbolic Interactionism, Indonesia.*

## Introduction

The life expectancy of Indonesian people between 2015 and 2020 is more than 71 years (Health, 2019). In line with the increasing number of the elderly population in 2013, the percentage was 8.9% of the total population of Indonesia. While in 2050, the elderly population

will reach 21.4% of the total population. In 2012, the number of older women was 10,046,070 people, and older men was 8,538,832 people, in total 18,584, 902 million people. This shows the elderly need to get attention from the state.

Related to state involvement, Indonesia issued Law Number 13 of 1998 concerning Elderly Welfare, and Government Regulation Number 87 of 2014 concerning Development of Population and Family Development, Family Planning, and Family Information Systems. These two regulations prove that Indonesia is a country that has a severe concern for the elderly population. Technically, Indonesia, through the Ministry of Social Affairs, has built infrastructure in the form of "Wreda Orphanages" for the elderly.

The existence of the Wreda Orphanage in several cities and provinces in Indonesia has become a social phenomenon for some ethnic groups in Indonesia. For example, some ethnic Toraja communities are reluctant to leave their parents (even though they are elderly) at the Wreda Orphanage. This reluctance is due to the value of "devotion" of children to parents who are still held in high esteem. This phenomenon deserves sociological attention, even though the state has facilitated the services of the elderly. Still, some people, especially those of Toraja ethnicity, view that leaving the elderly in the Wreda Orphanage is inappropriate and tarnishes family honour. The dedication of children to parents is a "must" based on the values of the Toraja community. In the Toraja community, the form of respect for parents is done through a festive ceremony with the sacrifice of buffalo and pigs according to social strata, known as "*Tana*" in the carrying out of the "*Rambu Solo*" ceremony (Hasbi, Pulubuhu, Radjab, Rahman, & Haris, 2019). Social strata or levels of "*Tana*" are namely:

- a. "*Tana' bulaan*" with high social status of the aristocrats, the choice of conventional forms is "*rapasan sapu randanan*" (providing 51 buffaloes or more) and "*rapasan sundun*" (containing 24 to 50 buffaloes).
- b. *Tana' bassi*, with a middle-class aristocratic social status, the choice of conventional forms is "*rambu solo' rapasan layu-layu*" (providing 18 to 23 buffaloes), "*dipitung bongi*" (providing 12 to 17 buffaloes), and "*dilimang bongi*" (containing 6 to 11 buffaloes).
- c. *Tana 'karurung*, with the social status of the general public (pa' tondokan), the choice of ceremonial form is "*rambu solo' ditedong tungga*" (providing one to two buffaloes) and "*ditallung bongi*" (containing three to five buffaloes).
- d. *Tana 'kua-kua*, with the social status of slaves, the choice of ceremonial form is "*disang bongi*" (providing one to three pigs)

The sacrifice of buffalo and pigs in large numbers shows respect for parents for the people of Toraja is the highest respect (Hasbi, Sukimi, Latief, & Yusriadi, 2019). Respect for a deceased parent is a manifestation of respect for the Almighty in Puya, the highest realm in the cosmology of the Toraja people. That is why, for the Toraja community, caring for parents, is

an expression of children's love for parents called "devotion". Though the Toraja community is bustling and spend almost all of their time working professionally, the Toraja people still pay special attention to their parents in various ways. Such as bringing in professional nurses for parents, giving materials for parents' care costs, or assigning family members to care for their parents.

Based on the explanation above, it emphasises that research on human capital-based family social support, with case studies in the Toraja community, is essential and that it should be published with descriptions of the reasons for their refusal to include parents in the Wreda Orphanage and that they prefer to provide services to parents at home. In this regard, providing the best services to the elderly certainly requires their skills and expertise. Therefore, the link between the concept of family social support and human capital in elderly services is worth looking at. Also, this study is essential because it contributes to the idea of parental services in an alternative way, namely participatory family involvement in elderly care. Thus, the burden on the state is lighter because of the charged cost of service to families.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Family Social Support***

Family social support by providing assistance from children to parents still plays a considerable role in Indonesian society. If related to Indonesian culture, extended family culture is still valid, allowing the elderly to live with family (children, son-in-law, grandchildren, or other family members). Older people in traditional societies in Asia still live with families (Liu, 2009). Therefore, an in-depth understanding of the function of the family and providing services to the elderly from Indonesian cultural aspects needs exploring.

According to Law Number 13 of 1998, the family is the smallest unit in a society consisting of husband and wife, children, or father and mother, along with grandparents. While Government Regulation No. 87/2014 formulates the family as the smallest unit in a society consisting of husband and wife and children.

This regulation also formulates the concept of a quality family. That is, a family formed based on legal marriage and is characterised by being prosperous, healthy, advanced, independent, having an ideal number of children, forward-looking, responsible, harmonious, and devoted to God Almighty; this includes family function.

The functions of the family are namely; economic support functions, emotional support, socialisation functions, sexuality and reproductive control functions and status functions (Chanmugam, 2014). Related to this, Government Regulation Number 87 of 2014 formulates



the family function, namely the religious service, socio-cultural function, love function, protection function, reproductive function, socialisation function, education, economic function and environmental development function.

The concept of family service, suggests responsibility for caring for parents tends to change from family to government (Si Hyun Park & Sook Park, 2014). In other words, the source of insurance for the elderly population seems to shift from the family support system to the government support system. This opinion is then necessary to review in the context of this research. Meanwhile, in a large family, the social and economic burden of the family can be shared by parents and children (Laskar, Gupta, Kumar, Sharma, & Singh, 2010). Meanwhile, in the elderly, parental service can be carried out by children. But in the nuclear family, there is a shift in family function. The role of children in social fields such as helping with housework is replaced by others, usually household helpers. Likewise, in accompanying and serving parents, the purpose is no longer performed by children but is taken over by other institutions or the government.

### ***The Concept of Elderly***

The concept of the elderly, referring to Law No. 13 of 1998 concerning the welfare of the elderly, is a person who is over 60 years old. Meanwhile, Hammond and Paul Cheney (2016) suggest the elderly can be divided into three levels: young-elderly is 65 to 74 years, middle-aged is 75 to 84 years, and elderly are aged 85 years or more.

This discussion about family social support for the elderly is important because the elderly are a group of residents who are at high risk of frequent illnesses and suffering from chronic pain, as well as experiencing disability. There are three suggested main patterns of disease in the elderly, namely: 1) degenerative disorders such as circulatory disorders due to the hardening of the arteries; 2) metabolic disorders such as arthritis, anaemia, and hypothyroid; 3) other health problems such as infection, trauma and lack of appetite (Sci, 2014).

### ***Human Capital***

CPID Championing Better Work and Working Live, in collaboration with Ulster University in the May 2017 Edition of Technical Report, said that human capital is at the level of individuals and organisations. According to this report, the term social capital began around the 1960s, when Schultz (1961) proposed a human capital proposition consisting of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of people working in an organisation. Schultz defines social capital as a whole of human capabilities, both innate talents, which are characterised by being valued and can be added to the value of their investments, so that is human capital. While Becker (1993) defines social capital as knowledge, information, ideas, skills and health possessed by individuals, and

also describes people and all the achievements of their abilities and potential in the organisation (Wiegand & Geller, 2005). The word "potential" shows that employees can develop their skills and abilities over time.

Meanwhile, essential health services based on practical, scientific, systematic, and technological experiences that are acceptable to society, are universally accessible to individuals and families in society through their participation. In terms of this, the community and the state can provide this service at every stage of development (Lee, Kiyu, Milman, & Jimenez, 2007). The first level is connecting individuals, families and communities with the health care system as close as possible to where people live, work and carry out sustainable activities.

### ***Symbolic Interactionism***

The theory of symbolic interactionism is essential as a reference analysis of the care of elderly families concerning human capital. This is based on the view that symbolic interactionism and human capital are micro-sociology theories that are urgent in the study of social processes and the interaction of social actors. Veeger (1986) suggests there are five concepts offered by Blumer in symbolic interactionism theory:

- (i) The concept of self is the first concept. Here, humans are not merely organisms but are self-conscious. Thus, humans can see themselves as objects of their thoughts and interact with themselves. Man directs himself to objects, including himself. It is a distinctively human form.
- (ii) The concept of action, the second concept, in this case are human activities that are formed from social interactions. Humans expose themselves to various phenomena, such as meeting the needs, feelings, goals, actions of others, expectations, rules of others, the provisions of society, the self-image of himself and his ideas for the future. Thus, humans can design their futures.
- (iii) The concept of objects sees humans living together with purpose. The objective is the whole thing that is the target of active human attention – the nature of objects determined by people's interests and meanings to these objects.
- (iv) The next concept is the concept of social interaction. Interaction means the parties who interact move mentally into the position of others. They try to find meaning and intent given by other parties to the action, so that interaction can occur. That interaction does not only take place through gestures, but mainly occurs through

symbols that need to be understood. Thus, new things happen as a form of interpretation.

- (v) The fifth concept is the concept of joint action. This concept shows that collective action is born from synchronising and adjusting the effects of the parties, for example, trade transactions and eating with the family. The nature of society, according to Blumer, must be sought in the process of ongoing action.

## Method

This research uses a qualitative method of case study type. Data is collected through interviews, observation did not participate and studied documents. The research took place from January to February 2020 in Makassar City. Informants are three cases of Toraja families living in Makassar City.

## Results and Discussion

The results showed that the informant acknowledged that his male parents were already elderly. Also, he had suffered a stroke, so he had to use a wheelchair. These parents already need special services. The problem is that his eldest child is busy working to meet family welfare.

The informant admitted, although busy, that he visited his parents at the time he had prepared. Although the frequency of visits is too intense, sometimes once a week, and once a month, or several months. According to an informant, the services of his parents was entrusted to one of the brothers who was considered to have more time to take care of the parents. But sometimes he also has a busy life, so all family member agree to use the services of professional servants to serve their parents in the younger brother's house. This is explained by the informant as follows:

"We meet the needs of parental services, including the cost of professional services for parents, by providing fees together with other relatives who are also busy. Meanwhile, relatives whose homes are in place of parents also have the support of their siblings. "

The explanation from the informant and his family shows that he cannot leave his parents in the Wreda Orphanage. For the Toraja community, leaving the parents in the nursing home is a family disgrace and shows a lack of devotion of children to parents and a lack of respect for their parents.

For the Toraja community, according to the informants, parents are a symbol of honour. Therefore, respect for parents is highly valued by the people of Toraja. Thus, it is not surprising

if the cost of the death ceremony (rambu solo') for the dead parents can be to the value of hundreds to billions of rupiah. All of that is a form of cultural teachings of the Toraja people to respect their parents.

In the case of other informants, all of their children work abroad. So, his parents, who were sick and despite being old and in need of special care, the informant's family did not put his parents in a unique home for the elderly. This family decided to look for close relatives who have family ties who they could ask to care for the parents of this informant who is suffering from an illness. Children meet all their parents' needs.

Meanwhile, in the case of the next informant, his parents (mothers), although they were already elderly, were around 75 years old but were still active in their worship activities in the church. For the informant, his parents are a symbol of his honour so that even though his parents are no longer able to work, the informant claimed he would not admit his parents in the Wreda Orphanage. The informant is willing to serve their parents at any time. The informant emphasised that for the Toraja people, parents are a source of pride. Therefore, it must be respected with all efforts. However, the informant noted that he would make every effort to meet the needs of his parents, disagreeing if his parents were turned over to the Wreda Orphanage.

Based on the explanation of the informant above, it can be stated for the Toraja people who live in Makassar City that parents are an honor. Therefore, we need special services for parents. In the first case, the informant presents a professional servant to serve his parents. Their siblings bear the parents' service costs. In the second case, elderly parents bring other family members (not children) to help the parents. All cost is covered by the child and the parents' retirement salary. While in the third case, parental care is carried out by the child himself. The child will bear all costs.

The above description shows that it is vital to implement the concept of human capital practically in the care of elderly parents. In this case, special attention is needed in the form of knowledge, skills, even affection and all individual resources that provide services to elderly parents. It shows that human capital plays an essential role in the service of elderly parents.

Based on the data above, the self-concept of a member of the Toraja community, according to the perspective of symbolic interactionism, puts parents as a part of himself. Parents are symbols of the Toraja identity. Showing the concept of self (self-awareness), Toraja people see parents as an integral part of themselves. Thus, the act seeks to show self-image and his ideas for the future. Therefore, in old age, the Toraja people want to be treated as a symbol of their family's honour.

Thus, the concept of self and the idea of action encourages the creation of cohesion between self objects, activities and objects in a holistic whole. Torajan people view their parents as an honour, an integral part of themselves so that parents and themselves as objects are an integrated family element. This then encourages the birth of shared values of the Toraja people who emphasise that parents are a symbol of honour. Therefore, every child must devote their lives to the happiness of their parents.

The concept of respect and devotion to parents is manifested in the idea of social interaction. Interaction means the parties interact with moving themselves mentally into another person's position. In this case, Torajans are people who uphold the honour and happiness of their parents. This still happens in Torajans today, including those who live in Makassar City.

Thus, the concept of joint action as a whole of individual Toraja people's actions merges into one collective action, namely respect and devotion to parents as personal values and social values of the Toraja community. Therefore, parents must receive special attention in their old age – the benefit of human capital in family service, especially parents.

The cases above are following Coleman's (1988) opinion in *The American Journal of Sociology*, that human capital creates changes that occur in a person because of the skills and abilities that enable the person to act in new ways. The skills and knowledge of a servant or family member for the health services of parents are needed, so that elderly parents do not feel abandoned by their children. Servants or family members who perform services for their parents without having good human capital will tarnish the respect and devotion of children to their parents, the potential to cause generational conflict and as a result, older parents can feel unhappy and depressed.

Therefore, the role of human capital for professional servants and family members explicitly assigned to serve the elderly is needed to maintain and build a harmonious family. Consequently, it cannot be denied that children who are busy working to obtain family welfare have little time to care for their parents. Thus, an alternative method used is to use care by professional servants or family members who have the unique ability to serve the elderly.

## **Conclusion**

Improving the quality of the socio-economic life of the Toraja community results in less time to provide services to parents. On the other hand, the quality of parental services should not reduce. Therefore, the pattern of parental services in the Toraja community's family has changed from traditional services, namely services that are purely done by children and has turned into services performed by professional servants and family members who specialise in serving parents as a substitute for service by children who are busy working. Because the Toraja



community's family views their parents as an honour, they cannot live in a nursing home and parental services must still be carried out at home even though service activities are carried out intensively by designated professional or family servants. It also must provide the best quality service to their parents.

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