

# Strategy of Empowering Urban Poor Families in Education (Case Study in Ujung Village, Semampir Sub District, Surabaya)

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**ABSTRACT**---- Indonesian government has introduced a School Operational Assistance (BOS) and Poor Students Aid (BSM) program to extend the coverage of education in a poor family. Limitation of BSM program lies in the nature of the program that used cash assistance. Poverty reduction program using cash would only able to help the community on short term basis, and after the money was spent then the community would be back to its pre-condition state. Objective of this study is to examine education empowerment in urban poor families in order to overcome BSM limitation. One educational empowerment models that can be used is an empowerment model done by Indonesian Street Children Organization (ISCO). Program implementation for empowering poor families conducted by the ISCO was an example of empowerment model in education as a solution for Central Government's BSM limitation and act as supplement for CSR programs in education which conducted by State Owned Company and private parties. This study was a qualitative study using case study method. This study was done at Ujung village, Semampir sub-district, Surabaya city. This study used Rational Choice Theory of Coleman to analyze participation of adults from poor families in ISCO empowerment program. Result of this study suggest that refinement and evaluation were required from implementation of ISCO's empowerment program. ISCO's empowerment program in education could overcome BSM limitation and act as supplement for CSR program in education which conduct by state owned company and private parties.

**Keywords**--- Strategies of Empowerment, Education, Rationality

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty, in essence, is a condition where people cannot meet life needs and not limited only on economic issues. Empowerment program for poor people should not solely focused on economic approach dimension, but it should also paid attention to other dimension, such as approach in improving quality of human and social resources [1]. Main source of developed countries' economic growth and advancement was not *physical capital*, but human capital. Improvement in human resources (human capital) was becoming an important factor in breaking the chains of poverty [2]. Improvement in human capital would reduce poverty through growth process. In other words, investment in education will boost growth and would automatically able to reduce poverty [3].

Education is one of the most powerful instruments to reduce poverty and inequality also to lay the basic for sustainable economic growth [4]. Education is believed to be the most effective means to break the chain of poverty. Education provides knowledge and skills provision for all citizens so that they could improve their own quality of life [5].

Government of Indonesia has taken full commitment to improve education quality and provide equal access to education for all Indonesian citizens in the last decade. In 2005, Government of Indonesia introduce subsidy program known as the School Operational Assistance (BOS) program that aimed to provide funding to cover operational costs for basic education institution as executor of compulsory learning program. BOS was given directly toward primary schools and junior high schools. Funds were allocated to cover direct educational costs and did not cover indirect education costs.

Government of Indonesia introduced Poor Students Aid (BSM) in 2008 to complement BOS. BSM program was a direct aid for poor students and it covers purchases of equipment (e.g., textbooks, stationery, shoes and bags), transportation cost to and from school or madrasah and also students' allowance for school.

Difference between BSM and BOS was, if BOS tried to overcome hurdles in terms of charges school tuition, BSM was expected to address indirect education cost for poor family. Both of these programs were expected to assist in dealing with financial constraints faced by poor families in order to complete compulsory learning up to 12 years.

BSM limitation lies in the nature of the program, which take form as charity or aid. Poverty reduction program in the form of *charity* would only able to help the community on short term basis, and after the money was spent the community would be back to its pre-condition state. Aid recipient families has the same pattern after receiving cash, and BSM was no exception for it, that is after they received the money, most of it would be spent on basic needs and only the remaining would be used for education or health expenses [6].

BSM program hasn't been able to resolve the constraints for poor families to participate in education of their children. BSM was unable to discover the needs and wants of poor families on matters related with education of their children. So far, BSM program has yet touched the matter on poor student's education after school. This program was just an effort to facilitate poor families in terms of educational financing. Learning activities that took place at home was assumed to be full responsibility of their parents. However, most of these poor families lived in a non conducive environment to support poor student's learning activities.

BSM limitation in dealing with obstacles faced by the children from poor families concerning education is a condition that should be paid attention to by all stakeholders in Indonesia. Government of Indonesia did not have any assistance or aid program other than BSM as an effort to contribute toward education continuity for children from poor families. Therefore, contribution from State Owned Company and the private sector as well as non-governmental organization (NGO) was highly necessary to overcome the limitations and shortcomings of poverty reduction program of the government related with education.

Success or achievements gained by students during his/her education did not only show the quality of educational institution itself, but it also showed the "success" of family in preparing their children for their own education [7]. Family background of poor students is the one and only important factor that would affect the after-school quality of those poor students [8].

One of the NGOs in education empowerment is *Indonesian Street Children Organization (ISCO)*. ISCO is a non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to improve the quality of life for street children through education. Main objectives of ISCO were to help improve marginal communities's quality of life and give them an opportunities to change their own futures for the better. In this case, its main program consists of provision of ISCO scholarships and educational assistance for children from pre-school until high school, and there are number of cases, if it was possible and feasible, until higher education [9].

Empowerment strategy implemented by ISCO was an example of program implementation in empowering urban poor families in education. Empowerment program as implemented by ISCO is one of the possible solutions for BSM limitation. Empowerment strategy implemented by ISCO would need to be examined as an empowerment model for urban poor families in education.

This study was necessary to get an overview related with participation of adults in poor families regarding empowerment program and implementation of an empowerment model for poor families in education which was done by NGOs in Indonesia. Implementation of empowerment program for poor families that has been conducted by ISCO was an example of empowerment model as a solution for BSM limitation and also act as complementary part for CSR program in education conducted by State Owned Company and private parties. An overview regarding empowerment implementation can become the evaluation strategy for all the things that has been done until now.

## 2. STUDY METHOD

This study was a qualitative study with case studies. The author conducts observations and interviews in a poor family neighborhood, in Ujung Village, Semampir Sub-district, Surabaya City to obtain data in accordance with problematic outline and focus of the research. Data collection was done by interviews, observations, and documentation. Interview was done to obtain primary data by interviewing 21 informants, consists of 10 people from poor families whose parents participate in ISCO empowerment program, 2 people from poor families whose parents did not followed the ISCO empowerment program, 4 people from ISCO and 5 person were ISCO personnels.

Data obtained from observations consist of home living conditions of poor families, environmental conditions surrounds the house of a poor family, condition in learning sites, and situation for each meetings in class. From this observation author get the picture on how an ISCO child would act naughty as in being indifferent and unwilling to pay attention to the tutor who was teaching at that time.

Documentation used by author was in the form of data documents related with empowerment program conducted by ISCO at Ujung village. These data includes:

- 1) List of children from poor families who participate in ISCO empowerment program;
- 2) Complementary and supporting documents from village office and from Semampir Sub-district office in Surabaya city.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Rational Choice Theory Analysis of Poor Parents in Implementation of Empowerment Program**

Rational choice theory contain one element that differentiate it from other theoretical approach in sociology. This element called optimization. This theory stipulates that by acting rationally, an actor would involve in some kind of optimization [10]. This optimization was expressed to maximize the usefulness or benefits, to minimize costs, or by other means. This was seen in poor families related with its decision to participate in ISCO empowerment program as the wishes from parents of poor families to optimize any opportunities they have. Parents from poor families wishes that their children could be registered in ISCO empowerment program. Parents from poor families expect that their children would graduate from high school, to have their own income and lead a better life by participating in empowerment program by ISCO. As expressed by Siti Ramsah, one of the parents of ISCO:

“If there was no ISCO, it was possible they (the children) would not be able to go to school. Thus I divide them into two group since ISCO was only for two children and I sent my other children to PPAY (Yayasan Anak Yatim). If ISCO could take all my children, I would sent them to ISCO. Since it was not possible to do so, I divide them into two group. It was better than not going to school,” (Interview, September 21, 2015)

Hope from parents of poor families to register their children in empowerment program by ISCO act as participation in empowerment by ISCO. If all children could be assisted by ISCO, parents would feel that they were able to minimize expenditure for education of their children.

Rational choice theory compared actions in order to achieve expected result and suggest that actor will choose action with best possible results [10]. This is the exact conditions of Sahrimah, parents of ISCO children, who said:

“Whenever I should pay for my children, I never use installments. Ms Ainun (field assistant) said if using installment it would take long time just to get the books and the uniform.. I never use installments for that. How much for it, Miss? Well, Rifai thirty, Nasrullah one hundred. I just paid it directly after borrowing the money. If you paid it in cash, it would be faster to receive the book and uniform, as Ms Ainun said. Thus I try to borrow some money and pay it in cash.” (Interview, October 19, 2015)

Sahrimah expect immediate cash redemption when school equipment such as uniform and books could be met by ISCO. Sahrimah thinks that rather than paying in installments, paying it cash would be the better option since the books and uniform would be delivered faster than if paying in installments. Thus Sahrimah choose to borrow money for paying it in cash since she feels the benefit outweigh the disadvantage of having to pay interest over loan money.

In rational choice theory, it requires that cost and benefit of an action should be determined, actor would take optimization measure and choose an action that would maximize the benefit and minimize the cost [10]. Muyasaro, parents of ISCO children, suggested:

“You can buy uniform right, ma’am? I think it would be fine if you have to borrow some money. It was better than not going to school. Half of it would be helped by ISCO. Well that’s it... The plan was until junior high for Fahatur. The problem would be for senior high school. I was afraid if there was no money to buy the uniform” (Interview, September 23, 2015)

Muyasaro was taking rational choice to borrow money for buying uniform. Decision to borrow money was assumed to have more benefit and outweigh the cost. The cost in this matter would be interest paid for loan money. Muyasaro choose to borrow money after deciding that total interest that should be paid is less than the benefit of having uniform to go to school.

#### **Implementation of ISCO Empowerment Program**

Implementation process of ISCO empowerment program consist of three stages, namely pre-program, core program, and post-graduate program stages. Details and description of each program were given below:

##### **1. Pre-program stage**

This stage was used by ISCO, particularly by field assistant, PO and AM to collect data such as children from poor family that is eligible for assisted entry in ISCO empowerment program.

##### **2. Core program stage**

Core program or core of empowerment program was the stage where implementation process of ISCO empowerment program was taking place. This stage begins with kindergarten entrance for ISCO children until they graduated from junior high school. Implementation process of core program consist of regular and conditional program. This program contain regular empowerment program for children and adults.

Empowerment program for ISCO children were:

a. Children's Activity Workshops

Children's activity workshops are activities that contain the need for children needs: first, need for learning, which describe materials obtained from school and homework assistance. Second, need regarding values of life that were not taught in school. Values must be inculcated to poor kids in addition to lessons in schools. Those values contain the importance of school, the importance of study and if they were smart they could go to higher education with free tuition.

b. Health Nutrition Protection (HNP)

Health Nutrition Protection (HNP) was an additional feeding program given during study in Children's Activity Workshops. It was given four times a week, in the form of meals and snacks. The selection of food was designed to fulfill complete nutritional needs.

c. Children Education Support (CES)

This program took a form of scholarships. ISCO met the operational needs of children in school. Operational needs for children would include: subsidies for uniforms, textbooks, exercise book, study course for preparation for national school exam only for grade 6, grade 9 and grade 12, as well as transportation subsidies for them to attend school.

d. Teen Class

Teen Class was a program designed by ISCO to address cases of ISCO children who dropped out of school due to juvenile delinquency and free lifestyle, sometimes resulting pregnancy outside of marriage. Teen classes were expected to be the solution in preventing similar incident to occur among ISCO children.

e. Annual Events

Annual events was a program designed to gather ISCO children from kindergarten and primary school in all parts of Surabaya for once a year. Goal of this event was as a leisure events, to establish familiarity with fellow friends and get to know new friends from ISCO *field* to one another.

f. Youth Day

This program has the same concept with Annual Events and only different in terms of participants and events. Youth Day gathered together all junior and senior high school of ISCO children from all ISCO *fields* in Surabaya.

g. Home Visit

Home Visit was an activity whereas tutor would be doing home visit to the home of ISCO children. This activity was done on Saturdays for once a month for each ISCO children. Objective of this program was so that tutor would be able to understand the background of the children.

h. Reward Program

Reward or gift, was done by giving gifts or reward for children rank 1-3 in class and diligently came for course in workshops. This prize was also given for those who pass the standard value for entering junior or senior high. Objective of this program was to encourage children so that they would diligently come for course in children's activity workshop.

Empowerment programs for parents or adults from poor families were:

a. Group Discussion

This was an activity for meeting with parents of ISCO children whose house were closest to the studio/workshop for once a month. Activities done in this program were making bread, making jelly, creating crafts, and sewing. Objective of this program was so that parents would feel close enough with ISCO personnels.

b. Class Meeting

Class Meeting was done so that parents of ISCO children would be able to find out about habit and behavior of their own children when they were taking courses in the studio/workshop. Thus parents would know about things that should be fixed from their children's behavior from their time studying in the studio.

In addition to its regular program, ISCO has conditional programs, those were:

a. Purchasing eyeglasses for ISCO children with vision disorder that needed eyeglasses to be able to see clearly.

b. Advocacy

This program was implemented by ISCO to address problems that occur in school related with inappropriate policies or rule breaking in school ground.

c. ISCO assistance for children from poor families with low graduate score

This program was held once a year. Objective of this program was to help children with low graduate score to be able to attend public school. Through this program, ISCO could indirectly help parents from poor family to minimize their children education cost that become their responsibility. Attending public school has fewer cost than attending private school.

3. Post-program stage

Post-program stage was an empowerment process by ISCO after graduating from high school or vocational school and continuing his/her study to higher education or to choose work immediately. Empowerment program from ISCO in this stage was by lending money without interest for higher education tuition.

From description above, it can be concluded that empowerment program for urban poor families in education were as follows :

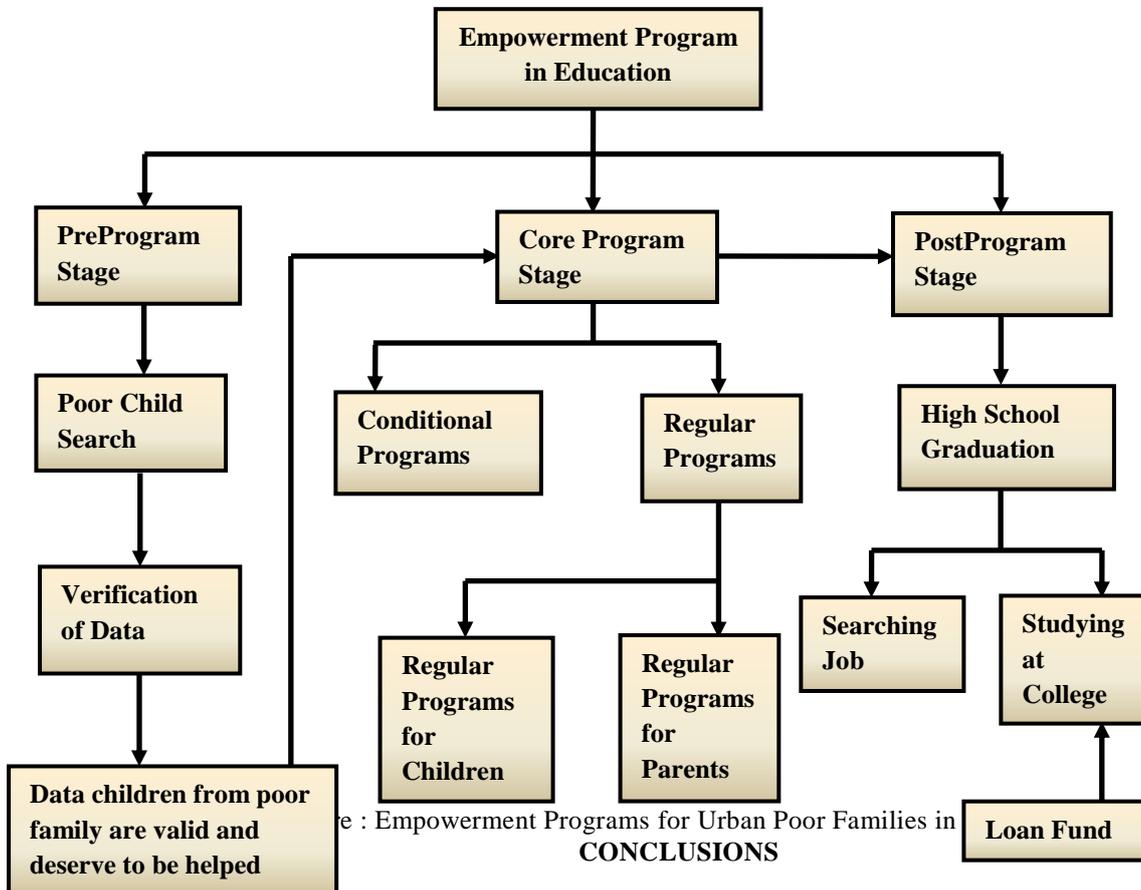


Figure 1: Empowerment Programs for Urban Poor Families in Education  
**CONCLUSIONS**

1. Participation of parents from poor families in ISCO empowerment program has been reviewed and analyze by author using Rational Choice Theory. Rational choice theory paid attention toward two forceful actions, namely resources limitation and social institution. Parents from poor families as actor decided to participate in ISCO empowerment program due to their resource limitation, that is low income of their family. Second action related with social institution. ISCO as a social institution has decided to establish positive sanction for parents from poor families who was unwilling to fulfill the commitment that has been mutually agreed upon registration in ISCO.
  2. Implementation of ISCO empowerment program was an example for empowerment program in education that holistic or comprehensive in nature and covers most of children’s need in their education. These empowerment programs were:
    - a. Empowerment programs for ISCO children were:
      - 1) Children's Activity Workshops
      - 2) Health Nutrition Protection (HNP)
      - 3) Children Education Support (CES)
      - 4) Home visit
      - 5) School Teens
      - 6) Annual Meeting
      - 7) Youth Day
      - 8) Reward
    - b. Empowerment Programs for parents from poor families were:
      - 1) Class meeting
      - 2) Discussion group
- ISCO also has several conditional empowerment programs. Those were:

- 1) Purchase eyeglasses
- 2) Advocacy
- 3) Assistance for children with low graduated score

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