

Examining the Psychological Implications of the National Park Paradigm on Inequality and Poverty

Ferry Setiawan^{1*}, Suriansyah Murhaini², Erniaty³

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¹University of Palangka Raya, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Department of Public Administration, Jalan Hendrik Timang, Palangka, Jekan Raya, Kota Palangka Raya, Kalimantan Tengah 73112, Indonesia

²University of Palangka Raya, Faculty of Law, Jalan Hendrik Timang, Palangka, Jekan Raya, Kota Palangka Raya, Kalimantan Tengah 73112, Indonesia

³University of Palangka Raya, Postgraduate School, Environmental Doctoral, Jalan Hendrik Timang, Palangka, Jekan Raya, Kota Palangka Raya, Kalimantan Tengah 73112, Indonesia

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the level of poverty in the communities surrounding Sebangau National Park, as the newest national park established in Indonesia, as well as to compare the success of ecotourism in Botswana, Malawi and Namibia that provide benefits to their surrounding communities through employment as well as the "trickledown effect." The mixed-method study was conducted on 100 residents and interviews with eight-core informants. The quantitative data was analyzed descriptively and juxtaposed with qualitative results. The results show that the ecotourism policy has been running well (average 4.39 from a maximum of 5.00 in both aspects), but at the same time, social inequality is high (average 4.41) as well as poverty (4.38). The results of the interviews also revealed problems in the absence of proactivity from supporting community groups to eradicate poverty and the lack of touch from the government in general in improving inequality and poverty in society. Moreover, the results of a cross-sectional study in the Sebangau National Park, Indonesia, show the contrary situation to the national park in Africa that could lead by the different paradigm of national park management.

Keywords: poverty, inequality, ecotourism, national park

Introduction

Poverty is a global problem that continues to this day (Gibson, 2016; Pomati & Nandy, 2020; Zhou, Guo, & Liu, 2020). Poverty can take the form of income below the sufficiency line in meeting the needs of standards (Suryawati, 2004). Governments in various countries are trying to end poverty and improve the welfare of their citizens at all levels of age, gender, and region (Biggeri & Cuesta, 2020). This is confirmed by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which in 2015 confirmed that "no poverty" is the first goal and targets no more poverty in all forms by 2030 in the world (Wang, Zhao, Bai, Zhang, & Yu, 2020). There is a moral and constitutional obligation for the state to provide material support to the poor so they become more able to move from the poverty line (Carr, 2020; Farrell & Hill, 2018).

Indonesia is one of the countries that is struggling to overcome poverty (Moeis, Dartanto, Prananta, & Ikhsan, 2020). The country's ability to overcome poverty continues to increase from year to year (Hanandita & Tampubolon, 2016), but there are still problems related to the high poverty rate in certain segments, such as seniors (Priebe, 2017) as well as people living in rural areas and remote islands (Olken, 2019). Therefore, the government strives to provide good public services and to create social security and to use and respect the values of local wisdom in the community (Sujarwoto, Tampubolon, & Pierewan, 2018).

One of the efforts taken to improve the welfare of the community is to utilize the abundant natural resources owned by this country (Surya, Syafri, Sahban, & Sakti, 2020). Through the quality of institutions with increased stability, strengthening accountability, tightening rules, law enforcement, provision of primary needs, and empowerment of natural resource-based industries, Indonesia's natural resources can contribute greatly to the eradication of poverty (Anggraeni, Daniels, & Davey, 2017). In this case, the integration of natural resource management is a must (Van Noordwijk, 2019). This kind of management needs to be proactively sensitive to local needs, not only to reduce poverty, but also to maintain environmental and cultural sustainability (Fisher, Hobgen, Haleberek, Sula, & Mandaya, 2018).

Kalimantan is an area with substantial peatland natural resources in Indonesia. Peat swamp forest ecosystems have important functions, among others, as a large carbon storage; producing various types of wood, medicine, food and other non-timber forest products; locations for high biodiversity and endemic flora and fauna habitats; regional water management and ecotourism areas (Harrison & Rieley, 2018; Husson et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2016). The sustainability of the ecosystem function of peatland areas needs to be managed wisely with regard to ecological balance for the benefit of current and future generations because peat areas are difficult to repair if damaged. One form of peatland damage is massive utilization and without consideration, both by large companies and surrounding communities. In 2005, the government made Peat Area in Central Kalimantan as Sebangau National Park area to prevent further degradation of this land (Amalia, 2018). This has a positive impact with the disappearance of logging companies, but at the same time, it causes poverty in the surrounding communities who previously utilized peat forests for daily life (Meilani, Thwaites, et al., 2019). As a result, the public enters into a situation of uncertainty regarding their future (Eriksen, 2016). As a solution to the problem of poverty in the area around Sebangau, the government issued various policies, including peatland utilization management policies and ecotourism (Meilani, Andayani, Faida, & Maryudi, 2019; Meilani, Thwaites, et al., 2019). Ecotourism development is expected to benefit from natural resources and conservation value through an economical approach (I. Nugroho, Pramukanto, Negara, Purnomowati, & Wulandari, 2016). This is especially important with the limited budget owned by the government (Rhama, 2020). Ecotourism will be able to become a major economic sector that takes into account environmental and cultural values so as to provide many benefits for stakeholders who support sustainable development (I. Nugroho, Negara, & Yuniar, 2018). Meanwhile, peatland utilization management enables significant socioeconomic benefits for people who really need them (Dohong, 2016). This utilization is top down, with the nature of consultative participation (Tata & Tampubolon, 2016).

Previous research has identified substantial poverty due to development policies that have not reached all levels of society in the area which is now the Sebangau National Park area (Pradhan, Suryahadi, Sumarto, & Pritchett, 2000). The existence of Sebangau National Park is a new pressure that can create poverty due to the prohibition of cutting down forests. Various studies have been conducted to assess whether the policies issued by the government are able to alleviate poverty while maintaining the existence of Sebangau National Park. In general, this research focuses on the effects of ecotourism on community welfare (I. Nugroho et al., 2018; Rhama, 2017, 2020) or on the positive effects of biodiversity generated by Sebangau National Park on the welfare of the surrounding community (Amalia, 2018; Meilani, Thwaites, et al., 2019; Tata & Tampubolon, 2016). Even so, these studies are still not conclusive because they only indirectly look at legal and social problems in society. Some, for example, still find the ineffective programs were attempted to empower the community (I. Nugroho et al., 2018; Nurleni, 2018). The current research comprehensively seeks to consider not only ecotourism policies, but also the government's peat utilization policies in the Sebangau National Park area.

Literature Review

The legal basis for the management of peat utilization in Central Kalimantan, and all parts of Indonesia, is Government Regulation No. 71 of 2014 concerning the Protection and Management of Peat Ecosystems (Government of Indonesia, 2016). According to this regulation, areas that can be utilized include forest areas and non-forest areas. Communities are only allowed to work on people's plantations and production forests, which are not encumbered with rights. Meanwhile, forests that are encumbered with rights are still being discussed by the government, especially in agrarian reform. The government claims to partner with the community in managing forest resources that are included in customary forest areas.

This policy was further strengthened by the formation of the Badan Restorasi Gambut (BRG) based on Presidential Regulation No. 1 of 2016. BRG aims to manage the revitalization of peat swamp forest so they can return to its proper function and benefit the welfare of the community. This agency has the task of coordinating and facilitating peat restoration in priority provinces, namely Riau, Jambi, South Sumatra, West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, South Kalimantan and Papua. The formation of this agency was motivated by the incidence of very large forest and land fires in 2015, which destroyed 2.6 million hectares of forest and land including peat ecosystems with economic losses of up to 16 million dollars (Rachmanadi, 2017).

Meanwhile, regulations on the use of peat areas, especially in conservation areas for ecotourism activities, are generally clearly regulated in the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 33/2009 concerning Guidelines for Ecotourism Development in Regions and Government Regulation No. 18/1994 concerning Exploitation of Nature Tourism in National Park Use Zones. , Forest Park, and Nature Park. The role of local governments is very important to operationalize ecotourism development based on the principles in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs (Permendagri) Number 33 of 2009 concerning Guidelines for Ecotourism Development in Regions, in Article 2 (Minister of Home Affairs, 2009):

1. Conformity between types and characteristics of ecotourism.
2. Conservation, namely protecting, preserving, and sustainably utilizing natural resources used for ecotourism.
3. Economical, namely providing benefits to the local community and being a driver of economic development in the region as well as ensuring that ecotourism business can be sustainable.
4. Education, which contains elements of education to change a person's perception in order to have concern, responsibility, and commitment to environmental and cultural preservation.
5. Provide satisfaction and experience to visitors.
6. Community participation, namely community participation in planning, exploiting and controlling ecotourism activities by respecting the socio-cultural and religious values of the communities around the area.
7. Capturing local wisdom.

Through Permendagri No. 33/2009, it can ensure the achievement of targets, namely regional economic growth, visitors gain experience and skills, communities and local residents get job and income opportunities, the private sector gets added value and local governments get taxes / levies to be returned to conservation efforts.

Methods

This study uses a mix-methods approach to achieve research goals, namely to eco-tourism, wildlife, and poverty in the area of the Midlands National Park. The mix-methods approach can be used for one of three purposes: complementary, triangular, and theoretical development (Ostlund, Kidd, Wengstrom, & Rowa-Dewar, 2011). This study uses a drilling method approach for triangular purposes.

Quantitative studies are directed at 100 randomly selected heads of families from the population living in the Palangka Raya, especially local communities nearby the national park. The cohesion is divided into 100 heads of the family by measuring three variables, which are: (i) Ecotourism policy has indicators taken from the principles of conservation of the environment in accordance with the Minister's Rule of State (Permanent Representative) No. 33 of 2009 on the Promotion of the Development of the Environment in the Area, in Paragraph 2: policies consistent with the type and characteristics of the location, the restoration of natural resources, benefits for regional economic development, environmental education functions, satisfaction and experience for visitors, roles and communities, and local expertise. (ii) Social gap has indicator taken from the disparities between sectors, disparities between regions, and disparities between economic groups (Mubyarto, 1995). (iii) Poverty has indicators taken from the poverty classification are absolute poverty, relative poverty, cultural poverty, and structural poverty (Suryawati, 2004). The ratio of each indicator can be seen in Table 1 to Table 3. All the indicators are measured with a 1-5 Likert scale where 1 is very disagreeable and 5 is very agreeable.

Meanwhile, for qualitative studies, researchers interview directly with the research-related informants, using structured interviews using questions that essentially replicate questions in the survey cohesion. As for being an informant in this research selected with particular consideration and purpose, it is set that the source of information as an informant in this research is as many as eight people, as follows:

1. Head of the the Sebangau National Park.
2. Office of the Directorate-General for Forest Protection and Natural Conservation.
3. Head of the Sub-Division Program and Central Intelligence Center.
4. Tourism community leader nearby the park.
5. Indigenous people leader nearby the park.
6. Communities member nearby the park.

Quantitative data analysis is carried out with a descriptive approach by calculating the response frequency of the research participation in the five options given. Meanwhile, qualitative data analysis is done by comparing the same question answers between interview and survey questions. Overall, the results of the survey are reported on the results while the results of the interview are reported only on quotes that the researchers believe are very important in understanding the research problem.

Results

After going through the process of editing, coding, scoring, and tabulating (Hasan, 2006), the following research results were obtained. The average value of the quality of ecotourism policies in the national park is 4.39 from a maximum value of 5.00. The compliance of the policy with the characteristics of the national park and the preservation of natural resources was seen as being implemented by 96% and 98% of the participants, respectively. As many as 85% of participants reported that the ecotourism policy had provided benefits and economic development for the local community, and as many as 99% saw that the environmental education function was running well. In addition, 94% of participants claimed that ecotourism policies have provided satisfaction and experience to visitors. Among the participants, as many as 86% considered that there has been community participation in ecotourism. As many as 99% reported that local wisdom has been applied in ecotourism policies (Table 2).

Table 1. Quality of Ecotourism Policy in Sebangau National Park (N = 100)

Ecotourism Policy	Strongly Agree	Agree	Hesitate	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Ecotourism policy according to the type and characteristics	47	49	4	0	0
The preservation of the natural resources has been underway	43	55	2	0	0
Benefits and economic development of the region	36	49	15	0	0
Implementation of environmental education function	62	37	1	0	0
Satisfaction and experience in visitors	53	41	6	0	0
Community participation	38	48	14	0	0
Local wisdom	43	56	1	0	0

The results above are the same as what the informant stated in the interview:

"Yesterday I heard that this ecotourism arrangement was regulated in a Decree of the Director General of Natural Resources and Ecosystem Conservation on Sebangau National Park Zoning. The zoning in Sebangau National Park consists of the core zone, jungle, utilization, traditional, rehabilitation, cultural and social religion, and a special zone. Apart from that, there is also Government Regulation No. 12/2014 on Types and Tariffs on Types of PNBP that apply to the Ministry of Forestry." (Interview, 08 September 2020).

Regarding local wisdom, the informants said:

"Certainly, because the policy itself was born from the initiation of local wisdom, you can see that at the entrance it reflects Dayak culture from physical and non-physical forms in the forms of facilities and infrastructure in Sebangau National Park." (Interview, 07 September 2020).

Regarding social inequality, Table 3 shows that 87% of participants still view industrial and agricultural disparities. Furthermore, as many as 97% view that there is still a gap between cities and villages, and 98% of

participants see economic and income disparities in the community. The total mean for social inequality is 4.41, which means that social inequality in Sebangau National Park is still very high.

Table 2. Social Gap in Sebangau National Park (N = 100)

Social Inequality	Strongly Agree	Agree	Hesitate	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Industry and agriculture gaps	47	40	13	0	0
City and village disparities	51	46	3	0	0
Economic/income inequality	42	56	2	0	0

The informant stated that this gap was partly due to the lack of community initiative because the government and community leaders had tried their best:

"It is clear, if there are people who say they have not received the benefits because they are lazy to work, so if they want to work then just send them to Pokdarwis, then we are ready to put them to work and be able to enjoy the effects of this ecotourism." (Interview, 07 September 2020).

Some others considered that the problem was with the government. One source provided a supportive narrative for this statement:

"In my opinion, it has been carried out but there has not been equal distribution where we can still see that the poor do not get significant benefits because they cannot be involved because of capital and skill factors." (Interview, 08 September 2020).

The average poverty score in the national park is 4.38 from a maximum value of 5.00. The existence of the poor and the lack of access to these communities by development policies is seen to still occur by 94% and 88% of respondents. As many as 98% of participants reported that there was resistance to modern methods to improve life by the community itself, and as many as 88% believed that the socio-cultural and political order still did not support poverty alleviation (Table 4).

Table 3. Poverty in Sebangau National Park (N = 100)

Poverty	Strongly Agree	Agree	Hesitate	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
There are members of the community who are not able to meet basic needs	56	38	6	0	0
Development policies have not reached the whole community	39	49	12	0	0
Rejection of modern methods to improve living standards	43	55	2	0	0
Socio-cultural and political orders do not support poverty alleviation	47	41	12	0	0

Regarding the last point about the structure, the resource person gave quite a lot of narration, especially touching on the political aspect:

"I think there is a gap, where in the past, the community could take natural products in Sebangau National Park, especially for wood to build houses. Meanwhile the political problem is clear because political people will come to our poor people just when they want to vote; after that they don't come again." (Interview, 08 September 2020).

In this case, one of the speakers also said:

"Certainly, because when there was a Governor's Circular, we closed for 4 months without any assistance from the government. The poor became poorer because they had no work for about 5 months, and now every candidate has started to seek our sympathy." (Interview, 07 September 2020).

Discussion

Inequality can be reduced by providing benefits to the people who are most disadvantaged in terms of production factors and available resources. Peatlands, especially those that are homogeneous, can provide benefits to local communities because they allow for agricultural land (Sani, 2011). There are 5,072.25 ha of peatland on the island of Kalimantan, which has the potential to be utilized by the surrounding community, by paying attention to the signs of peatland management to prevent fires and economic losses (Rachmanadi, 2017). Optimal use of peatlands for the community should be able to help reduce inequality and gaps between sectors, between regions, and between economic groups by targeting the people who need it most, especially people from underdeveloped areas (Sjafrizal, 2012). The quantitative study we conducted shows positive community attitudes towards peatland regulations, but on the other hand, it also shows how the community assesses that there are still gaps and poverty around them. As a result, the law on peatland utilization can be said to be still regular in nature, and it has not yet reached the elements of justice and humanitarian elements, which are the ideal goals of the law (Notohamidjojo, 2011).

Likewise, ecotourism has become a policy focus of the Sebangau National Park Office in recent years (Rhama, 2019). Ecotourism in national parks is still a new field, and its use is a subject of long debate. In an ideal position, ecotourism should also be able to encourage community welfare by providing income. Even so, we also found that people's welfare is still problematic, so it can be said that the existing ecotourism policies have not touched the poor.

While on the continent of Africa, there are many studies that say that national gardens can impact the population and ensure that the decay effect happens on the ecology in Africa. Tourism remains one of the most important service industries in Botswana; it is responsible for exports and vital for jobs and poverty reduction. Tourism in Botswana is currently based around the country's natural resources, although it has the potential to grow more than this with diversification facilitated by the development of tourism products. The success of this industry in Botswana can be linked to low volume, high value, natural-based journeys in the national gardens and natural cages that most occur in the north of this country globally. Travel development is increasingly seen as an important tool to promote economic growth and poverty eradication.

Botswana's ecology is developed to facilitate the association between the local community and the government for the conservation of natural resources while giving the local community the right to natural resources. Wildlife hunting has produced income quickly and easily for the local community.

Other research (Bello, F.G., Lovelock, B., Carr, 2017) also said that ecotourism is in the protection area in Malawi through qualitative studies conducted at about two locations of case studies of National Park Liwonde and Cagar Satwa Wild Majete. Data is collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, and analyzed thematically. This finding reveals an ecology in Malawi with an impact on poverty alleviation in Malawi. The results of an environmental impact study in the African shelter often claim to share the environmental benefits with the surrounding rural population through work and the "declining" effect of income generated by the operation. This study studies the effects of environmental work on study sites in Botswana, Malawi and Namibia. Analysis of household incomes, the impact on social welfare and the number of people who are not directly affected by the ecological field show that rural communities are moving towards market economy involvement as a result of ecological operations. Monthly income from ecological work has proven to allow households to invest in assets, education and luxury goods, which enhance financial security and social welfare in remote rural areas (Snyman, 2012).

Conclusion

The results of the interviews also revealed problems in the absence of proactivity from supporting community groups to eradicate poverty and less consideration from the government in general in improving inequality and poverty in society. Moreover, the results of a cross-sectional study in the Sebangau National Park, Indonesia, show the contrary situation to the national park in Africa that could lead by a different paradigm of

national park management. The ecotourism organisers and supporting community groups, as well as the attention of local and provincial governments to the community, is needed to maximise the benefits that can be obtained by the community from Sebangau National Park, especially indigenous people who experience inequality and poverty.

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