

# Social Habitus of Domestic Workers' Family: The Influence of Remittance to Domestic Workers' Family<sup>1</sup>

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## *Abstract*

*Teori klasik tentang migrasi secara umum menunjukkan bahwa faktor migrasi yang paling utama adalah alasan ekonomi. Kemiskinan, kurangnya sumber daya manusia dan alam, dan tingkat pendidikan adalah alasan yang membuat orang memutuskan untuk meninggalkan desa untuk bermigrasi ke kota. Teori tentang push-pull menunjukkan bahwa pedesaan kurang menarik, berlawanan dengan perkotaan yang memiliki fasilitas dan peluang jaringan yang terbuka secara luas. Di sisi lain, faktor pendorong migrasi perkotaan tidak hanya dipicu oleh faktor-faktor ekonomi. Faktor nonekonomi, seperti ide-ide, nilai, dan habitus yang diperkenalkan oleh pendatang telah membuat keputusan bermigrasi, sebagai kesempatan untuk mendapatkan kehidupan yang lebih baik, telah meningkat di kalangan penduduk pedesaan.*

## *Key Words:*

*Remittances; habitus; urban migration; social capital.*

## **Introduction**

I wish to focus the discussion of urban domestic workers on the influence of remittances to domestic workers' family—to what extent remittances give effect to alleviate poverty and economic hardship in their local area—if the reason behind migration decision is gaining financial sources. On the other hand, I wish to include the non-economic factors, for instance ideas, values, and practices, or habitus which might changes among rural community as the result of remittance sending by sojourners. Moreover, for migrants, remittance has function as medium for them to maintain the relation between them and family and relatives in their rural area. This relation is important in order to keep their social networks and gaining of so-called social capital.

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In a brief impression, expanding financial ability is main motive of migration to urban area. Since town has more work chances and opportunities, money is easier to earn. Therefore, after several while working in urban area, migrants are usually taking responsibility of their family at home, by sending several amount of money as part of their support to family who gain less financial ability in rural.

For family and relatives at home, money received commonly used as extra income or even main income. In the situation where remittance has become the main income, it indicates that generally local economics is inert and dependent to remittance—which give sign that local people is less effort and economics has potency to turn into stagnation.

In this paper, I aim to highlight remittance as one of trajectories of change of local people's habitus. With that we come up to the main questions in this article: *First*, does economics a major consideration for the decision of migration? *Second*, what have been changing in local people habitus as the result of money sending by family outside village? *Third*, how they consume and set off their investment using received remittance? *Fourth*, to what extent remittance is setting up a bridge between migrants and family at home? How do migrants built up social capital through remittance?

Based on several questions raised above, this article has objectives to describe, *first*, driven factors of urban migration, *second*, the impact of remittance to family habitus, and *third*, the effectiveness of remittance to the construction of social capital.

## **Theoretical Approaches on Migration**

Migration has risen in modern world. As cited from Beck, distribution of labor and wealth through migration has raised as result of cosmopolitan society (2000: 93). According to Elkins (1995) in Beck (2000), distribution of labor and wealth is shown by three evidence; which are (1) Global population movement, (2) Migration of labor and, (3) transnational job sharing between rich and poor countries.

This migration has been possible due to the revolution on transportation systems which has encouraged the state of "space-time compression". Having long-distance relationship with their family at home is no longer a big difficulty and problem of displacement has solved better by the availability of routes of communications. As Beck mentioned (2000: 96) "*Routes of communications is development of items sent by letter post, nationally and internationally; development of telephone conversations, nationally and internationally, of the corresponding data exchange through electronic network and so on.*"

Moreover, the availability of routes of communications discussed in *the Cosmopolitan Perspective* (Beck, 2000) has contributed to someone's decision to work and migrate to other administrative and cultural areas, since it supports to limit the problem in the new area. Therefore, act of migration is more one people's mind and considerations.

In accordance to the concept of population and mobility, migration is part of population dynamics, along with fertility (birth rate) and mortality (mortal rate).

Ravestein (1885) as cited from Mantra (2007) explained several habits appeared in migration act, there are:

1. Migrants will prefer area closer to their village.
2. Place utility factor is main deliberation.
3. Information about job vacancy from family or relatives in town is important.
4. Negative information will influence the decision to migrate.
5. Charisma of town will fascinate people, thus increase mobility.
6. Higher-income people will travel more.
7. New sojourners will choose the place where their family or friend has inhabited before.
8. Migration is unpredictable movement, especially in force majeure situation, such as natural disaster.
9. Mobility is higher among single person rather to married person.
10. Well educated people will travel more.

Classical theory on mobility divides mobility into two types, vertical mobility, such as financial improvement, career achievement, etc and horizontal mobility, such as geographical movement. Based on motives, mobility is divided into forced migration, for instance due to warfare, disaster, or epidemic illness and voluntarily migration, which driven to push-pull factors. Push-pull factors identifies that the intention to migrate to town is caused by push factors of rural and pull factors of town. Rural is connoted as not so interesting place and town is a fascinating place. Rural has limit facility, full of poverty, and poor geographical access, while town is a place with good infrastructures and amenities, a lot of job opportunities, and good accesses.

On discussion about urban-rural relation, as shown in Tepus, Gunungkidul regency, specific geographical area such as drought, and poverty has forced young dwellers in the village to migrate as urban domestic worker. Finally family let their daughters go to town as soon as they finish their elementary or junior high school. As found in the field, the need of rural household to cash has become the reason why they let their children work to town.

Beside the reason to pursue the cash money for household, working outside village is seen better rather to stay at home or just helping family in the corn field or taking care the cattle. Although their family member does not earn much money, having job in town is considered as better, and once they can send money to the village or buy goods and properties, they will be considered as successful.

Thus, migrate to town as domestic worker is common among Tepus district community. Not just to earn money or economic capital, the broaden dimension of migration to town can be found in Tepus community. Before I analyze sociological background of Tepus area and their migration habitus, I will mention one concept introduced by a French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (1986) to see how another aspect beside economic capital has also been something to earn. Moreover, Bourdieu notes, *“it is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning at the social world unless one reintroduced capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic*

*theory*" (1986: 242). This notion implies that earning money or economic capital is actually not only motives behind the decision to migrate. Money does not the only thing that can define social class.

According to Bourdieu (1986: 243), capital can present itself in three fundamental guises. There are *economic capital*, which related to money and properties, *cultural capital*, as the form of embodied knowledge in the relation to economic capital, therefore it adheres to cultural practices, such as education and lifestyle, and *social capital*, as the forms of membership in social network and social connection where it can effectively mobilize the volume of capital, both economic, cultural, and symbolic capital (1986: 249).

Bourdieu exemplified the notion aforesaid above through the instance from the bourgeois class to show that the idea of having capital does not only mean she has anything in monetary form. Not just money, the practice of bourgeois people is also includes how aspects of social life are defined, and hence, it is valuable for bourgeois people to apply of what so-called "the world of bourgeois man". For example, by joining the intellectual discussion, going to art gallery, and appreciating fine-art.

These three forms of capital is foundation of social class. In *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of the Taste* (1984) he relates classes to system of disposition or what he called by *habitus*. He explained how classes exert significant influence until upon one's aesthetic taste, for instance visiting museum, attending concert, where all this reflects social classes characters. This is what we called as *habitus*, a class that characterized by the shared practices, similar living environment and same narration of cultural practices.

By this notion, this article is aimed at explaining how migrants' family *habitus* in Tepus district, Gunungkidul regency, is shaped through remittance and how remittance has also been posited as the way to build another capital instead of economic capital. i.e cultural capital and social capital.

## **Tepus District, Gunungkidul Regency as Field Site**

Gunungkidul regency stated in Yogyakarta province. It is inhabited by 758.895 people, and consists of 48,9% male and 51,1 % female (Gunungkidul dalam Angka, BPS, 2005). Poverty is one of major problems in Gunungkidul. Statistics in year 2004 shows that Gunungkidul regency had poor community, reached 25,26% or about 173.487 households. Unfortunately, this number had risen in the year 2005, where poverty number was up to 28% or 135.702 households.

The landscape of Gunungkidul is dominated by mountainous areas, and mostly karst areas. Inhabitants of Gunungkidul majority work as peasants (69%), home-based industry traders (10%), service sectors (8%), construction (5%) dan industry (5%) (Gunungkidul dalam Angka, 2000). Although most of inhabitants are working as peasant, soil fertility is low, especially in karst areas. Land can only be cultivated in rainy season.

The poverty rate in Gunungkidul can be found in 9 districts out of 18 districts or about 50% of total districts in Gunungkidul. These districts have more than 50% poverty rates in their areas. See the table below.

**Table 1. Numbers of Poor Household**

No	District	Numbers of Poor Household	Percentages
1.	Paliyan	3216 out of 6205	51,8 %
2.	Saptosari	6333 out of 7197	65,0 %
3.	Tepus	5206 out of 7602	65,5 %
4.	Rongkop	5864 out of 6788	85,4 %
5.	Girisubo	4751 out of 5463	87,0 %
6.	Semanu	6863 out of 12371	55,5 %
7.	Ponjong	7549 out of 11319	65,7 %
8.	Gedangsari	4088 out of 7421	55,1 %
9.	Nglipar	4001 out of 6714	55,5 %

(Sources: *Studi Awal Kemiskinan di Gunungkidul*, Maarif Institute, 2007).

The table above shows that poverty is a main problem in half of districts in Gunungkidul regency. Hence, in the year of 2007 the government of Gunungkidul regency declared three development priorities, that are poverty alleviation, eliminating unemployment rates, and increasing rapid local development.

### **Remittance, Forms of Capital and Migrants' Habitus**

Poverty in rural area is sometimes pointed out motivation of urban migration, at least that what urban domestic workers found in the field have said. But that was not the only main reason. Having family of relatives have previously been work in town is also a pull factor for family at home to do the similar thing.

The information brought by migrants to their family about job vacancy in town is getting easier since information technology such as mobile phone is widely used among villagers. The success story of domestic worker in Tepus, is usually shown by their ability to buy mobile phone for their family—as the first electronic good they can afford after working in the city.

By working as urban domestic worker, a migrant can frequently send money to their family once in every 3-4 months. For migrants, sending remittance is not only aimed at giving financial support to their family and relatives. Furthermore, it functioned as social support. Through remittance, the bridge between family and worker has been built and maintained.

According to Asis (2000) in Yeoh, Huang, Lam (2007: 4), remittances will keep connections within family. Not only through remittance, other mode of communications is also initiated to stay in touch with family and relatives at home, such as phone-calling, letter, gift, or other form of long-distance communication. Generally speaking, it gives sense of caring, intimacy, as well as social and financial support to their family.

Moreover, as said in Yeoh, Huang, Lam (*ibid.*), remittance and communication has its meaning to substitute their absence in their community.

A range of work focusing of the lived experiences of being a transnational family has examined the way family members maintain communication with one another to substitute for physical absence or negotiate the rearrangement of care work across the multiple spaces of everyday members. (2007: 4)

Not only to maintain the sense of connection between migrants and family, by sending remittance and giving gifts to family in their hometown, has brought a valuable meaning to instigate and to maintain social network or social capital.

Initiating social network and social capital is part of migrants' way to cope with the problem of displacement in their new place. On the other side, in certain condition, social network lead to ensuring social support in the form of reciprocity.

Jemma Purday (2005) gives excellent example. During economic crisis which overwhelmed Indonesia in 1997-1999, being a villager has advantage since in the time of financial crisis, villagers had higher subsistence level which was so valuable for durability in facing economic hardship. Unlike villagers, urban poor community had lower social support and social network (social capital) due to its individual characters.

Because the notion of social capital arises most sharply in the situation of crisis, social network can be effectively used to solve the problem among low-income community. In accordance to this, Silvey and Elmhirst (2006) said that maximization of social capital in low income community is "self-help" for economic hardship, because of its openness space for reciprocity.

Remittance acts as initiatives to strengthen social capital. Once money has already been sent, both capitals can be embraced by the senders. On one side, social capital has tightened the relation, and on the other side the senders will gain cultural capital in the form of honor and respectfulness. Silvey and Elmhirst (2006: 866) emphasized that social capital can be easily converted in other forms of capital; that are economic capital and cultural capital.

In Tepus, remittance is one of main financial sources, since many of households do not have permanent income. Remittance sending by urban migrant workers in the city is various in amounts. New comer normally could not send money in their first month. After several months, usually after 3-4 months, urban migrant workers can send money home. Basic needs such as accommodation, food, and toiletries are provided by the employer. Working hour of domestic worker is about 14 hours (from 7 am to 9 pm).

In general, urban domestic workers can only earn small amount of money. Though, they still try to send money to their family, as sending remittance is akin of social responsibility for migrants. Money transfer regularly been done through money draft or occasional home visit. The total money send is various in every months. One of informants, Kastuti said that money transfer can reach 1 million rupiah per transfer.

The existence of remittance can support migrants' bargaining position in front of their community. For instance, immediately after finish elementary school or junior high school, a girl usually will be asked to get married, instead of just stay at home to help

her parents. But by migrate to the city and followed by her ability to send money back home will make her excluded from 'duty' to involve with this arranged marriage.

It was not only raised up migrants' bargain position in front of her family, remittance will also increase migrants' family position in front of their neighborhood. One example shows through the story of Nana, a domestic worker in Yogyakarta from Tepus. By using remittance, her parents in the village can afford to buy a new motorcycle—something that quite impossible for her parents who work as peasant labor and can only get income less than 10.000 rupiah per day. For villagers in Tepus, having a motorcycle is a symbol of prosperity. Moreover, Mariyem, Nana's parent, said that;

"After her (Nana) moving to city, she can afford a new motorcycle for her father, although by installment, not pay in cash. Not only that, she also bought us a mobile phone. Now, we can talk to her anytime we want. Her success inspires her cousins to work in the city too..."

Having family members who are successfully working in town has shaped the positive image of being a worker in the city. Workers are able to gain the better income as well as able to apply a city lifestyle—these are make villagers positively admit that working in the city has brought many benefits for family.

Another success stories were come up from the story of Desi. Desi moved to town after her completion of junior high school. She was working as domestic worker. She was lucky that her employer admitted her to English course as well as accounting course. Later on, she quit from her job as domestic worker and now she is working as an accountant staff in one company. Desi's success story has inspired many of her fellows in the villages. Now, she can afford such 'luxurious' goods for her family: two motorcycles, mobile phones, a pocket camera, and home furniture by her own income.

Herewith, money or extra income gained by migrants does not appear in its exchange form. Money and goods are also functioned as medium to build the bridge between migrants and their family, and thus, social connections are still can be initiated. Along with that, social capital can still be maintained. A sociologist, George Simmel, in his manuscript, *The Philosophy of Money* (1978), noted that money not just has its exchange value, but also perform itself as initiator of social relations. That so, money is not only defined in rational instrumental perspective (economic capital), but also has its value as generator of social capital.

Taking into account to the conception of reciprocity, Marcel Mauss (2004), a French anthropologist in *The Gift, the Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* highlighted that none of gifts are free. Furthermore, he said,

*Hence, it follows that to make a gift of something to someone is to make a present of some part of oneself. Next, in this way we can better account for the very nature of exchange through the gifts or everything that we call "total services" (2004: 16).*

In line with the opinion aforesaid, remittances or gifts for family has intention to show to other people that someone (migrant) is exist. By sending it, somebody benefit

respectfulness. However, in the same time, cultural capital can be hold by the remittance sender, and social position can be preserved.

To this concern, besides its role as social and cultural capital arranger, money has also intensively shaped social habitus. Concept of habitus is elaborated deeply by Bourdieu, as he defines habitus as,

*A system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to the outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (1990: 53).*

Bourdieu argued that perception, thought, and action are a system of durable disposition. Human beings are always set up their position in society; how they interact, how they adapt, how they react to life challenges and furthermore, human beings establish a durable and transposable disposition.

Habitus is shaped by the certain social structures. As Bourdieu said, family, social class, or level of education are giving influence to the level of perceptions and actions. Remittances are giving influence on determining habitus. Within this theory, Bourdieu explain how habitus is described as a set of cultural practices, and entail several selection processes. Here, I will mark selection process to see habitus and to examine how far local villagers in Tepus perceive education as part or their habitus.

This view is aimed at explaining why remittances received by family at home tend to allocate money for consumption, instead of other kind of social investments. As found in the field, most of my informants confessed that education is too high cost—not only financially, but also because it requires long-term investment needed. Consequently, most of people in the field preferred to work outside village. Other relatives will also be encouraged to work to town, by always to keep information about job vacancy in town.

Inasmuch as their new ability to access regular income, they can afford consumption goods higher. Rather to invest for education, most villagers prefer to buy goods which can imply the symbol of prosperity and symbol of urban migrants' success, for instance motorcycle, electronic equipment, mobile phone, and home furniture.

In response to this phenomenon, Bourdieu relates the notion of habitus and social classes. He argues that the opportunity to success can not separate from society's views and perspectives about the meaning of success. Life challenges and opportunities are referred by social status and reproduction of social structure.

Kastuti is an urban migrant worker aged 16 years old, who has started working since she was finish elementary school. She dropped out from school at her own initiatives, and preferred to work to Yogyakarta city. Now, she regularly sent money to her parents and sisters. Yuni, 10 years old, will soon coming to town after completion of her elementary studies, although Kastuti, now can afford school for her sister. For parents, having two working daughters is better rather to put them in school and spend money for that.



Bourdieu (1984) in Swartz (1997) describes that social condition no to choose education or state of being dropped out from school is really figured by perspectives on their social stratum;

*A child ambitions and expectations with regards to education and career are structurally determined products of parental and other reference-group educational experience and cultural life (1997: 197).*

Moreover, Bourdieu exemplifies that working class in France does not have a positive perception about education. He highlights that hopes and dreams in someone's mind is really defined by her class socialization. As cited from Swartz (1997)

*Working-class youth do not aspire to high levels of educational attainment because they have internalized and resigned themselves to the limited opportunities for school success that exist for those without much cultural capital (1997: 197)*

The different situation can be found within middle class who has different view to see education. This process is what Bourdieu called as self selection, a state where every social class things on their own Pandora box.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In this final section, I will argue that on the first initiative, economics has been a driven factor behind the decision to migrate and to work in the city. But moreover, non-economic factors have also encouraged urban migration. Social network which been built by urban migrant through remittance and other forms of communication has inspired their village fellows to do the same thing.

The ability to send remittance, and furthermore, the ability to afford higher level of consumptions (consumption to goods and properties) imply that migrants and their family has reached some degrees of success. Remittance also shaped migrants' family's habitus. As taken from conception of Bourdieu about habitus, this low-income community is clearly prefer to spend money for consumption, instead of spending money for more valuable social investment, such as education. Using money for simply consumption will imperil society since its potency to stay on state of poverty.

Therefore, this article recommends that in the future, researchs should be done more intensively to migrants' family, instead of migrants themselves. Since from family level, ideas and values about migration and social changes, through remittance or other form of internalizations brought by migrants, is actually been imposed.\*\*\*\*\*

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