

The Village Leader as a Safety-Valve in Resolving Conflict of Shelter Aids Post an Earthquake

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ABSTRACT

Natural disasters always threaten human life, but sometimes it may prosper people in the disaster area. For example, the earthquake in Aceh, it brought material aids and employment opportunities to Acehnese. However, the aid caused a social conflict due to the aids distribution deemed unfair. In this case, a village leader, as a central figure, demanded his expertise to prevent violence or damage. This research aims to analyze the village leader's roles as a safety valve in handling conflict of shelter aids for earthquake victims. This study was conducted with a qualitative approach that involved fifteen informants as the primary data source. They were the village's apparatus and earthquake victims. The results showed that the village leader as a safety valve, he formed a community group as a new safety valve and offered his people new hope beyond the demands. Thus, this study suggests that the safety valve model may be used to pause the conflict escalates into violent behavior, but not to settle the root causes of conflict. Nevertheless, it may create harmony if the solutions proposed are beyond the promise of voice. For the next researchers, the study suggests examining the effectiveness of hope or promise in conflict resolution for disaster aids management.

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INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters and conflict do not follow the simple logic of "a disaster lead to a conflict" or peace. Many countries can experience various and potentially conflicting relationships between conflicts and disasters. For example, in Sri Lanka and Aceh in Indonesia, both countries have experienced protracted conflicts. They have been affected by the tsunami of 2004 and the overwhelming international response to it. In reality, the response to the tragedy in Aceh helped

settle the long conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the national government. In Sri Lanka, the response has exacerbated the tensions between the Tamil Tigers and the national government (Eastin, 2014); UNDP (2011).

However, one thing cannot be denied that natural disasters and violent conflicts always threaten human life. Accordingly, both invite community response to provide humanitarian aids in any form needed by the victims to meet their needs. In a disaster crisis, aid is provided for priority aspects. They are the promotion of reconstruction and recovery and the provision of basic needs. Some have argued that addressing core needs is a precondition for rapid development. At the same time, development aid is widely understood in many respects as a donor's political project. It probably makes aid lack effectiveness (Gisselquist & Tarp, 2019), then leading to social conflict.

Shafiq and Soratana (2019) also state that aid does not always provide social welfare, but sometimes even brings about social conflict. Particular patterns of aid distribution may reinforce grievances and fuel conflicts. In the humanitarian sector, they regularly argued that most of the aids delivered do not reach their client in an inappropriate situation. Furthermore, Bhavnani (2006) states that natural disasters usually lead to conflict, as they generate competition among the community for limited resources and intensify disparity with the unequal distribution of aid. Besides, natural disasters also alter power relationships between people, groups, and organizations that serve them, and build power vacuums and usurping power opportunities for warlords.

Such as social reality also happened to Acehnese because they experienced prolonged conflict and the most devastating earthquake and tsunami on December 26, 2004. Then, they were hit again by the earthquake in 2013, occurred in Pidie Regency (January 22, 2013), Central Aceh Regency (July 2, 2013), and then occurred again in Pidie Regency (October 22, 2013). Three years later, the earthquake hit Pidie Jaya Regency on December 7, 2016, with a magnitude of 6.5 on the Richter scale. It resulted in severe damage within an epicenter radius of approximately 35 km. In total, 101 people were dead (the majority was due to the collapse of buildings), more than 800 people were injured, and thousands were displaced for buildings that were collapsed or severely damaged. The estimated economic loss was approximately USD 139 million (Muzli et al., 2018). The fact made the communities experienced an economic crisis and traumatized by the earthquake.

The worst affected areas due to the earthquake were Meureudu and Ulee Glee Sub-District. While other sub-districts such as Bandar Baru also experienced the adverse effects of the disaster. For example, in Langgien Sagoe Village, many people experienced building damage, both housing and shops, so their situation also needed any supports from various stakeholder parties. In this case, the Indonesian Central Government provided emergency response aids. They were temporary shelter (Huntara), basic food, medicine, money, and other equipment needed by the local community. The aids had caused social conflict in the community, especially related to temporary shelter aids. This is because only a few victims received the aids, and Huntara was given to people whose houses were moderately damaged, but they claimed to be severely damaged. As a result, the people scoffed at each other and were hostile. In addition, this condition was more worsen by other aspects. The people of Langgien Sogoe often

compared with surrounding villages, such as Meulasah Sagoe, Cut Langgien, Dayah Langgien, Tua Lada, and some villages in other sub-districts. They received temporary shelter aids as a whole, not only a few victims.

However, the fact did not escalate the conflict to physical violence. Besides, the aids for damaged buildings had been provided to some earthquake victims successfully. This was inseparable from the leader's shrewdness in overcoming problems that arise due to the humanitarian aids he managed. It means that to resolve conflicts due to such as aids, the role of community leaders is strongly needed. As the lowest formal leader in a country and a central figure, the village leader can play his role in dealing with social conflicts related to aid distribution in post-disaster and conflict areas.

Many scholars have researched disasters and conflicts, both those who examine the impact on human life separately and examine the relationship between the two in influencing situations in society. It is undeniable that natural disasters have adverse impacts on people's lives, such as physical damage, death, and, preferably, environmental harm. Kryvasheyev et al. (2015) state that in terms of wealth, political stability, and lost lives, natural disasters are costly. During a disaster, people will respond to it through shelter, security, retreat, and not doing anything (Takeuchi, 2002). Humanitarian aid distribution in the response and aids of victims in a natural disaster has become a significant effort to alleviate the burden on victims of a disaster. All stakeholders in disaster management are expected to cooperate with and provide compassionate aids to disaster victims through shelter, nourishment, medical care, and basic needs. Limited knowledge regarding humanitarian aid management may lead to several problems such as food redundancy and uneven distribution of food supplies to disaster victims (Mohd, Fathi, & Harun, 2018) that fuel social conflict.

Therefore, responses to disasters need to be conscious of dynamics to avoid harm and further fuel the conflict. Conflict is not only shown in an aggressive form, but conflict also forms in a hostile feeling, a struggle for power, and a struggle for resources (Coser, 1957). Similarly, many peace scholars agree that peace is not only an absence of war but also a reality of prosperity and justice. It can be argued that conflict emerges depend on how just prosperity is distributed and perceived among society. Thus, the priority way to build a peaceful society is addressing poverty and structural inequalities through sustainable development. By doing so, the development does not lead to the abuse of economic, social, and cultural rights that fuel social conflict (Laplante, 2008).

Wood and Sullivan (2015) stated that humanitarian aid is linked to a rise in rebel violence but less support of the aid and state violence relationship. One popular measure to address these problems is all programs needed to place in conflict sensitivity framework. Conflict sensitivity not only reduces the potential for violence but also increases the effectiveness of aids. Adaptation of aid policies and programs to the context and enhanced environmental risk assessment will enhance project sustainability and minimize risks for programs, collaborators, and recipients. Various problems relating to asymmetric power relations, cultural diversity, and the local community's values and views must be taken into account when operating in a conflict environment. Development initiatives can also help to bring peace, such as promoting shared

stakeholder interest, constructive contact space, constructive communication, and collaboration mechanisms (Haider, 2014).

Lange and Quinn (2003) stated that in a conflict area, humanitarian agencies could go beyond avoiding negative impacts of aid such as social conflict, contributing positively to support victims in a way that is compatible with their core mandates and basic humanitarian principle. This may be achieved by incorporating a 'conflict-sensitive' approach to humanitarian aid planning and programming. The conflict sensitivity can be defined as the organizational capacity to understand the context it works in; understand the relationship of its interference with the context, and act based on the understanding of this interaction to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on the context and the intervention.

Conflict sensitivity may be defined as the ability to understand the context in which an organization operates, understand the interaction between intervention and the context, and take action on recognizing this relationship to prevent harmful effects and optimize positive effects (Brown, et al., 2009). The concept of "Doing no harm" is exceptionally considered a minimum standard in the running in any development programs and distinct from active peacebuilding (Garred & Olarte, 2006).

Although conflict is prevented and avoided, perhaps conflict is necessary due to an unsatisfactory interaction of society because human needs and interests are different and continually changing. Therefore, some experts in the peace sector state that conflict does not need to be avoided, but the vital needs to be done is to transform it into positive energy for the implementation of a development program. Even further, conflict is seen as having a positive impact on the development of social systems (Coser, 1957). However, when a social conflict escalates to confrontation, the resolution is needed to avoid violence or damage. To resolve the conflict, the frameworks of peace theory or conflict resolution commonly practiced in conflict resolution efforts. One of them is the concept of a safety valve developed by, and this study considered it to elaborate on the research problem.

Coser (1957) states that individuals under stress may relieve their tension through 'acting out' in particular safety-valve institutions as far as they are provided for in the social system. Alternatively, they may 'act out' in a deviant manner, which may have severe dysfunctional consequences for the system and thus lead to change in this way. The safety valve is a unique mechanism that can be used to defend groups from possible social conflicts. The safety valve manages a conflict when it does not damage all existing structures, and it helps to improve the situation of a group experiencing conflict. Thus, the practice or institution of a safety valve allows the expression of dissatisfaction with the structure. According to Coser (1957), through the safety valve (safety-value), hostility is inhibited from turning against the original object. Nevertheless, such substitution also includes costs for the social system and for the individual: reducing the pressure to perfect the system to meet changing conditions and stemming the tensions within the individual, creating the possibility of destructive explosions growing (Poloma, 2013).

Given the previous explanation, this study is perceived urgent because it shows that in assisting disaster victims, donors, field workers, and scholars are more focused on preventing conflicts

arising from the distribution of aid. It can be understood that the study of conflict resolution due to natural disaster aids is still minimal. In addition, it is not only useful in response to a conflict of natural disaster aids but also may be used in handling conflict due to pandemic disease aids distribution or other disasters inviting humanitarian aids. Thus, this study aims to analyze a safety valve model operated by the village leader in resolving the conflict of shelter aids distribution to earthquake victims Langgieng Sagoe Pidie Jaya – Aceh Indonesia. This study was conducted with a qualitative approach that the primary data source collected by non-participant observation and dept interview. The results showed that the village leader was not only as a safety valve, but he also formed a community group and offered the disaster victims a new hope beyond the demands functioned as a sub safety valve. Thus, this study suggests that the safety valve model may be used to pause the conflict escalates into violence, and transform the root causes of conflict to new hope.

METHODS

This study was conducted in Langgien Sagoe Village, Lueng Putu Bandar Baru District, Pidie Jaya Regency, Aceh - Indonesia. The research used a qualitative approach by descriptive analysis. The primary data collection involved fifteen informants, consisting of the village leaders and apparatus, the earthquake victims who received shelter aids, and who did not receive the rehabilitation aids. The informants were interviewed face to face and one by one with open interviews. This study did not use focus group discussions during interviews. Secondary data were derived from books, scientific journals, media, and other related documents. These data were collected before, during, and after primary data were gathered completely.

In the next phase, the data were analyzed through interactive developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), such as described in the following figure.

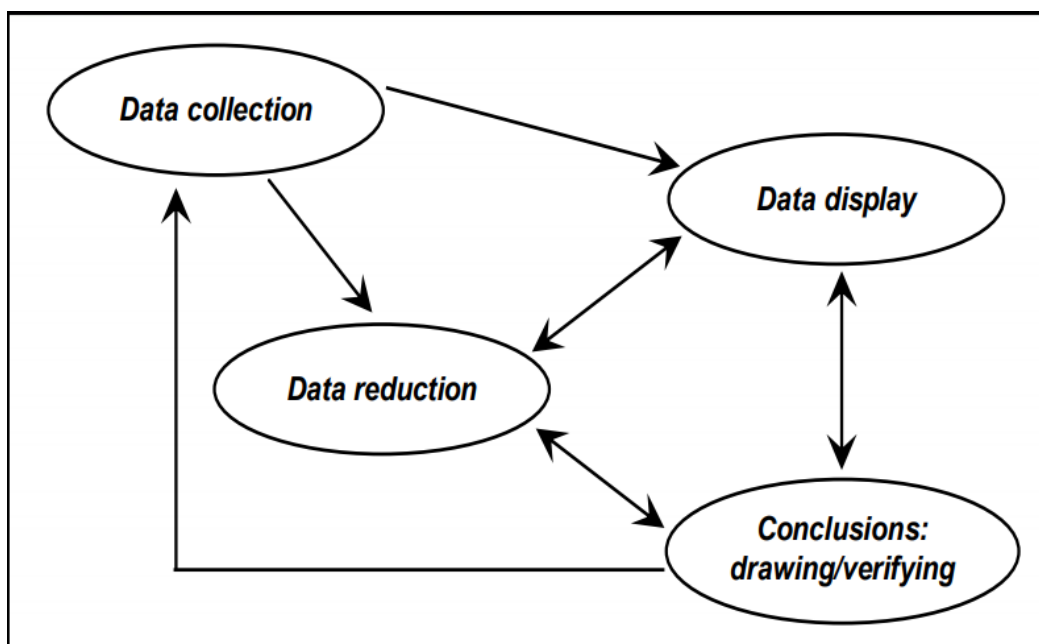


Chart 1: Interactive Model of Miles and Haberman modified by Gunawan (2013) in Qualitative Research Method (Translated).

During data collection, the researcher shifts continuously around these four "nodes," Then, for the remainder of the analysis, there are shuttles between reduction, display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Analyzing data is a continuous, interactive undertaking. Issues of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing/verification are presented successively as episodes of analysis follow each other. However, the two other things are also part of the ground (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The researchers operated the model with the following steps: **Data collection**, primary data, the researchers met the village leader of Langgien Sagoe to ask permission to do the research in the village he leads, and interviewed him as an informant. Next, researchers interviewed other informants and observed the facts of shelter distribution to the earthquake victims. **Data reduction** means summarizing, choosing the main points, focusing on the essential things, and looking for patterns and themes. Thus the reduced data will provide a clearer picture and make it easier for researchers to do further data collection. The process took place during data collection in the field; **Data display**, the data were presented as an assembly of information that enables the researcher to make conclusions. Data were displayed in a table to ensure the data answer the research problem, and the last phase was **drawing conclusions**. Temporary conclusions were made based on the results of interpretations of the data obtained. Then the researcher verified and reinterpreted the previous conclusions to ensure it valid.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Village Leader as a Safety-Valve in Resolving Conflict

Social conflict is a reality that arises due to a dynamic social interaction. Conflict arises when parties involved in the interaction perceive the goals, wishes, and needs are not met or satisfied. Therefore, a leader is required to manage and utilize all resources to meet these issues; at least he provides a fair opportunity for all members to meet their needs and goals. In dealing with social conflicts due to temporary shelter aids, the village leader of Langgien Sagoe has taken several actions; deliberations, re-verification of disaster victims' data, and forming community groups to distribute the aids. In detail, it is explained as follows.

A conflict is a struggle between or among people to gain goals or valued things. In this case, people in Langgien Sagoe struggled to receive temporary shelter. In response, such as the situation, the village leader held a meeting to resolve the problem. The meeting was attended by village officials, disaster victims, and other communities not affected by the disaster. This is consistent with the informants interviewed, Mr. Muhammad Husen, a victim of the earthquake disaster. He suffered severely damaged, and also as a member Tuha Peut (village consultative assembly) stated that he, village leader, community, and the ranks of the village officials had held a meeting to resolve conflicts between communities Interview, December 28, 2017).

This conflict emerged due to the limited temporary shelter aids provided by the central government for their village. The meeting or deliberation resulted in an agreement to re-record the community of victims who suffered severe damage. Then re-propose to the government to be given additional residential aids. However, this cannot change the previous results, so the recipient of temporary shelter aids remains. As a result, those who did not receive shelter aids did not receive basic food needs during the emergency response phase.

This matter was worsened again in the next rehabilitation phase. Those who did not receive temporary shelter were not provided with rehabilitation and reconstruction aids. These aids were grouped into three categories, namely severely damaged, moderately damaged, and slightly damaged. The funds were also allocated varying; those who were severely damaged received IDR 85,000,000, the moderately damaged got IDR 20,000,000, and the lightly damaged only got IDR 350,000 for cleaning costs.

Furthermore, in the distribution of the aids, the village leader and his apparatus formed three community groups, called POKMAS. They were the Jabon Merah Group, the Bayu Jati Super, and the Bayu Putih. Each group consisted of 17 members or 16 members and led by a Chairperson, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. Some of them were severely damaged victims and moderately damaged victims. The groups were functional as the executor of the reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged houses. They had full responsibility to successfully implement the program because the government delivered the funds to the POKMAS account in Indonesia National Bank (BNI), not to the beneficiary's account or the victim's community, excluded cost aids for slightly damaged people. They only got IDR 350,000 for cleaning costs, and the fund was delivered directly after the earthquake.

Therefore, the groups should manage the rehabilitation and reconstruction funds provided to the recipients. In this case, the funds directly transferred to the suppliers or shops that had been recommended during data collection. Then, they supplied the relevant goods for rehabilitation and reconstructions of damaged houses. Therefore, the victim's community did not receive money; but they only got settled houses that were built with a sum of money intended for disaster victims (Interview, December 28, 2017, till July 4, 2018).

Based on the facts, the results demonstrate that the village leader acted as a safety valve of the social conflict resolution in the following ways:

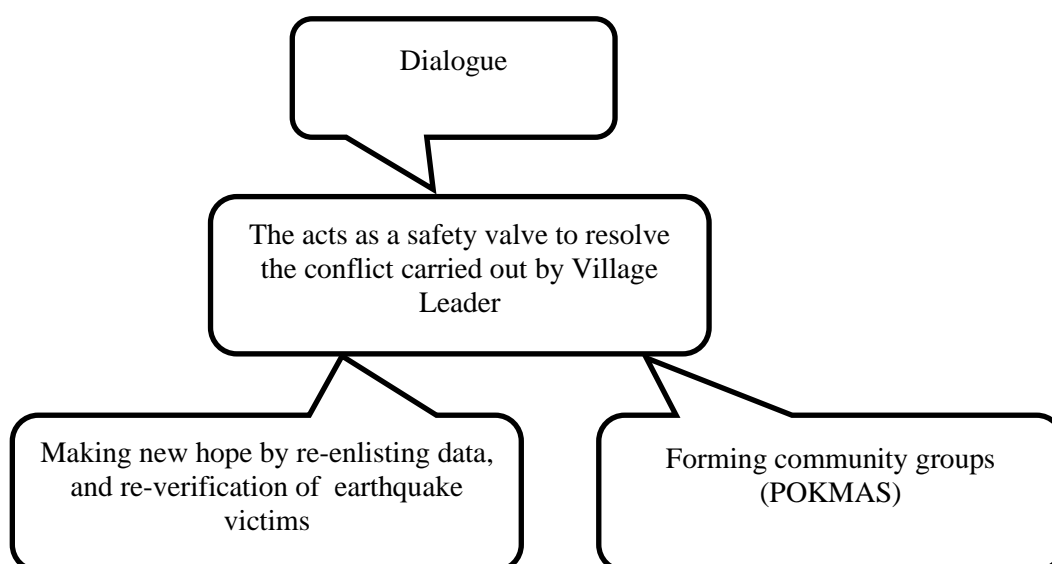


Chart 2: A Safety Valve Model of Conflict Resolution in Langgie Sagoe Village

These findings do not only strengthen the theory of Coser (1957), where an institution in the community can be used as a safety valve in handling social conflict. The findings also improve

his theory, which does not explain the role of the safety valve in handling a social conflict, especially in the implementation of aid programs for disaster victims. As a formal leader, the village leader is not only a safety valve for channeling conflicts due to the social programs of higher institutions or other institutions as donors. Besides, he can form other safety valve institutions to move conflicts that should be targeted to him. In this case, the village leader formatted a Community Group in the implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction programs post-disaster.

In addition, this study also shows that social conflict resolution can also be made by negotiating other alternatives as new hope beyond the demands. In this case, the village leader did not provide temporary shelter anymore, but his people were promised and offered rehabilitation and reconstruction aids in another alternative. In the negotiation process, it certainly requires a lot of language or words that can convince the public that this new hope will not fool them. In this case, it can be said that language also plays an important role in influencing people's actions, whether they are violent or act peacefully. This is similar to Siddiq (2016) that language and words influence on the mind and heart of the listener(s) as well as the reader(s) on a permanent, long-term, and short-term basis. These provide listeners/readers for meaning-making, then lead them to perceive and behave. The words and metaphors give tremendous insight into how people perceive, react to, and encounter conflict in their daily settings (Cohen, 2001; Lederach, 1996).

Accordingly, the findings suggest that in handling social conflicts, especially the conflicts that do not cause yet physical violence, the safety-valve concept is beneficial. Moreover, by the safety-valve, social conflict can be solved by refusing the requests that are impossible to be met. In such a situation, an immediate apology is a right way to avoid violent conflict. An apology is a strategy to avoid social conflict and maintain harmonious social relations (Dyah, 2017). However, an apology should not be viewed as a final stage in the conflict resolution process, because apologies are not just an act. It should be used as a mechanism that reflects on the prospect of a good future relationship (Maddison, 2015). Besides, it more effective to resolve such conflict is by giving other balanced alternatives or better alternatives than demanded, at least by giving the conflict parties a new and better hope in the future. It is similar to (Mitchell, 2002) reveals that finding alternatives is a way of changing that avoid the costs of violent conflict, and it is a process of conflict resolution. If no alternatives are immediately available so that a 'conflict habituated' system will exist in an organization.

However, this study suggests that the safety-valve model may pause the conflict escalates into violent behavior, but not to settle the root causes of conflict. It is following Halim and Pahrudin (2020) that safety-valve is proved capable of preventing an anarchic conflict in the community, and has a significant potential to help promote peace in communities. Therefore, after finding a safety valve mechanism in the conflict resolution process, it suggests immediately look for other alternative solutions that are considered able to solve the root causes of conflict and transform conflicts into sustainable peace relationships.

CONCLUSION

Conflict is a reality of social interaction that exists in every society. It cannot be eliminated at all because social interaction takes place very dynamically due to different and changing human

needs and interests. However, every conflict needs to be resolved, so it does not cause violence or damage. This study concludes that a village leader as a safety valve in dealing with social conflicts, he may act in some ways; holding consultations with his apparatus, the recipient community, and the community that has not yet received aids, re-enlisting and re-verifying the victim data that had been pre-recorded to be submitted to the donor, and then he should form sub safety valve institution, such as community groups. Finally, the study suggests that the actors in implementing disaster relief programs should consider the conflict-sensitive implementation to prevent social conflict and consider implementing the program by many alternative conflict resolutions to handle conflict that may arise due to the aid's distribution.

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