

# The Critical Education View of the Modern Community against the Environment

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**Abstract.** Environment is an interdisciplinary study in the field of science. Sociological viewpoint is a significant part of the environmental analysis because society and environment are inseparable. By highlighting the object culture of modern society, this article is a critical analysis of the societal risks of that phenomenon. How modern society interacts with the environment is a core problem. Based on the literature studies, modernization through the mastery of technology and science has created a technocratic society in which the risk of environmental destruction for the human being is widely open. The development of science and technology has contributed to environmental damage.

**Keywords:** *critical education, modern society, environment.*

## INTRODUCTION

Society and the environment are something that cannot be separated. Human behavior and action in daily life affect the quality of the environment in which they live. Environmental damage has become a very serious threat in all parts of the world due to climate change and its effects. In Indonesia, the environment that has suffered severe damage can be seen in deforestation, air pollution, and river pollution. Study about the community that cannot be separated from the environment and the sociological point of view are important points in the study of the environment. In addition to intersecting with geographical, biological, technological, and economic conditions, environmental studies relate closely to the socio-cultural phenomena of society. Therefore, environmental studies have always been interdisciplinary studies.

As interdisciplinary studies, it emphasizes the importance of the division of intellectual labor to overcome the problems of environmental damage. The three realms of biological, physical, and social sciences are studies that connect to environmental problems [1]. Currently, contemporary sociology and environmental sociology are dominated by critical analysis and social construction.

Based on this background, a critical analysis of the culture in society directed towards the community is at risk, and how the socio-cultural conditions of modern society are related to the risks to themselves and environment are necessary.

## METHOD

### Environmental Sociology Point of View

Environmental sociology is a study in the sociology disciplines whose development has become a necessity in the 21st century. Environmental studies are considered interdisciplinary studies because environmental phenomena intersect with geographical, biological, technological, political, and socio-cultural conditions. The intersection of the environment with the social condition is explained by Dunlap and Marshall [2] as follows: "sociology as a scientific discipline has made changes to "mainstream" sociology which has long developed as a study of social facts."

Why is there a necessity for environmental sociology is also revealed in the *Introduction to the book of Environmental Sociology, from Analysis to Action* (2009: 2-3) [3],[4] who argue that sociological analysis is essential in studying the environment because it is different from solving problems from the natural sciences. Sociology, according to Hannigan [5], can contribute positively to environmental studies because its problems need to be resolved from the social point of view of society, and this is not solely a matter of natural or exact science.

Environmental studies are interdisciplinary, Dickens [1] argues the importance of the division of intellectual labor to overcome the problems of environmental damage. The three realms of biological, physical, and social sciences are studies that closely related to environmental problems. Currently, contemporary sociology and environmental sociology are dominated by critical analysis and social construction.

### Critical Theory and Modern Society

Frankfurt's theory refers to a group of scientists working at the *Fur Socialforschung Institute* (Institute for Social Research) in Frankfurt. Some of the scientists at this institution are Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Jurgen Habermas. Max Horkheimer, who led the institute when it reached its golden age, produced a theory known as "Critical Theory." [6] 'Critical' in Critical Theory has four characters, namely: 1) Historical, which means critical theory is developed based on concrete community situations; 2) Critical theory is also critical of itself by criticizing and evaluating itself; 3) Critical theory has suspicion of the actual problems of society; 4) Critical Theory is a 'theory with practical intent', which is a theory that does not separate itself from *praxis*. Thus,

Critical Theory is created to encourage transformation in society, and this can be done with *praxis*. [6]

Two critical theory theorists, namely Adorno and Marcuse, have made critical efforts towards the study about the condition of modern society relating to the environment. Adorno states that all theories about progress from the time of enlightenment interpret history as a process involving humans and nature in conflict with one another. History is seen as human liberation from the grip of nature. Humans can only free themselves from nature by conquering the nature. Humans overcome their dependence from nature, which is achieved by organized mastery. [1] Science and technology have made humans as objects of their mastery, [7] This criticism was supported by Herbert Marcuse who stated that modern humans as human beings have one dimension (one-dimensional man). According to Marcuse, humans are creatures who naturally desire happiness and have the right to happiness. The realization of happiness depends entirely on satisfying its true needs and for the first time in history. This modern era has objective possibilities to realize this satisfaction.

A prominent feature in modern industrial societies is spotted as the role of science and technology. The rationality commonly used nowadays is technological rationality. Everything is seen and appreciated as it can be mastered, used, manipulated, and handled. In a technological view, instrumentalization is a key term. At first, this way of thinking and acting was practiced concerning nature, but over time, it was also applied to humans and the entire social field. Not only objects, nature and machines are also manipulated. The same phenomenon occurs in political, social, and cultural areas. Humans and society are no exception to technological mastery and manipulation [8].

It should be emphasized that today, it is not humans who oppress humans, not certain groups who oppress other groups, but there is a totalitarian system that controls everyone. Once upon a time in pre-technical times and also at the beginning of industrialization, humans were oppressed by humans, but now there are no people or groups who can be shown to be oppressors. The technological system entirely encapsulates all natural and social reality in its grip, and no one can influence the anonymous system. This system is, indeed, totalitarian. Totalitarian in a variety of meanings and influences appear in all fields. The technology system arouses in human desires that are needed so that the system can maintain itself and develop continuously. In the field of human material today, they can get whatever they want, but they only want what the system wants so that they want the product of the technology [9].

Modern people think that they are completely free and live in a world that presents all of the abundant possibilities to be chosen and realized. It was just rectified by what was determined by the production and consumption apparatus, mass media and advertising publicity, and technocratic management. Humans think that they have everything they want, but in reality, they do not make anything other than wanting what the

totalitarian technological system deems necessary to defend.

Adorno and Marcuse have long realized that science and technology can be a double-edged knife, on the one hand increasing human dignity, but on the other hand, through technocratic rationality, it has demeaned humans with environmental destruction. Quoting Agger's opinion [7], the romantic effort of the Frankfurt school over its criticism of industrial societies that controlled the environment, was a step further and even practiced by environmentalists and technology and natural theorists. Adorno warned that social change should be measured to what extent it can save nature.

The basic problem now is how modern society interacts with the environment. Dickens [1] gives a distinction of how modern and traditional societies interact with their environment, which appears in the division of labor. Division of work refers to a system of occupational specialties that characterizes all human societies in the world. As a result of these specialties, people become dependent on one another. Division of labor may be used to understand the relationship between people in paid workplaces, the concept also applies to relations between people, for example with households concerning domestic work, race and age, and class and gender, which also form the basis for the division of labor in modern society. The important thing that is ignored is the inability of modern society to understand things related to nature adequately.

### **Environment Problem in Risk Society**

Anthony Giddens questions about how technology and science affect human life at the risk of creating unintended consequences for the environment, health and well-being. In a daily perspective, the adverse effects produced on risks to the environment are increasingly seen. In cities around the world, people use breathing gauze regularly to combat air pollution, and flooding is routine in many areas. Meanwhile, a series of disease afflicts agricultural and livestock areas in many countries. It is as the consequence of capitalist expansion, which is predicted to bring disaster and considered exaggerated 40 years ago, and now it becomes a reality. The impact, which is detrimental to human activity on the environment, is now accepted by scientific experts and policymakers [1].

The point of view of a risk society provides an understanding of the environment in a way: first, Beck's thesis was addressed as one of the most urgent and significant problems in modern times. Increasing environmental hazards is a difficult question to answer, with a lot of data and comparison. As far as scientific technology has enabled us to uncover environmental threats, many dangers have been going on for years. By taking a macro view, it is possible that environmental risks have increased, both in terms of their geographical range, and the scale of potential effects that will occur. Simply put, if the journey of capitalist development is not changed, the planet's longevity will be limited. In the future, environmental hazards appear to be riskier; larger

ozone holes, trends in climate change, more land under threat, infrastructure and industrial development uncertified, and the state of the world's oceans declining. Second, the appropriate risk society extends to the economic sector, political and scientific parties involved in the production and management of environmental risks. On a practical level, the risk community argument highlights significant weaknesses in institutional procedures in law, politics, and science. References to Beck's work on high-profile documents have likely served to correct political attention to the inadequacy of existing environmental regulations

Finally, there is a close link between *risk society* and *risk culture*. The idea of society is at risk in contact with cultural ideas at risk. The idea of society is at risk of focusing on their society and the social world. Ideas about society are related to institutions, norms, rules that are binding and always hierarchical among individual members to their interests and goals. Cultural risk, on the other hand, lies in non-institutional and anti-institutional associations but includes substantive values [1].

#### RESULT

#### **Criticism of Modernization and its Linkages to the Environment**

Through sociological studies, environmental problems will be examined from aspects of behavior, actions, and culture of the society in interacting with the environment. Although the focus of this field is the relationship between society and the environment in general, environmental sociology places special emphasis when studying social factors that result in environmental problems, the impact of society on these problems, and the efforts to solve these problems. Besides, attention given to social processes with certain environmental conditions can be defined as a problem. This viewpoint is important because humans in their lives cannot be separated from the environment. Environmental problems have links with the community as managers.

As a study that emphasizes on social factors related to social problems, one important thing to do is to give criticism to human beings on how they interact with the environment. The Frankfurt school has criticized how human and environment were related more than half a century ago. Modern society is a blueprint of a long series of the history of modernism. There are many paradoxes in the culture of modern society. While worshipping rationality, various crises occur, and conditions of feeling are contradictory or ambivalent to modern society. Poverty and destruction of the values of life accompanied the promise of prosperity and progress echoed by modernism. Additionally, the development of science and technology has contributed to environmental damage.

The application of modernization and the development ideology in the third world countries, including Indonesia, has led to the dominance of the role of the state and the owners of large capital that have

impacted environmental damage. Indonesia, as a country that is late in the process of industrialization, carries out the process of economic development in various ways. The state and capital owners carry out economic development processes which then encourage capital accumulation, establish state enterprises, invest, and encourage the creation of the business world and regulations in the fields of industry and trade, all of which are conducted without sensitivity to the environment. In its implementation, modernization with the dominance of the state and the owner of capital raises environmental biases that pose a risk to society.

#### CONCLUSION

Environmental problems are a reality that must be faced by all humans on the face of the earth today. Environmental problems are complex problems and need to be solved by a variety of multidisciplinary approaches. Industrialization is the success of development to spur the pace of economic growth, but industrialization also carries environmental risks, which also pose risks to human life.

Environmental issues are not merely technical and biological problems but are social problems that must be approached with socio-cultural studies of the community. With the study of environmental sociology, environmental problems can be investigated more comprehensively.

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