



# Poverty and Crime in Brian Khrisna's Novel the Darkest Side of Heaven: A Portrait of Jakarta's Marginalised Communities

Heny Subandiyah<sup>1</sup>, Rizki Ramadhan<sup>2</sup>, and Bella Ananda Dwi Umifa<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia  
henysubandiyah@unesa.ac.id

**Abstract.** This research aims to raise the issue of poverty and crime in the slums of Jakarta in the novel the darkest side of heaven by Brian Khrisna. This type of research is qualitative with sociology of literature approach. The research data are in the form of sentences, fragments of paragraphs, and whole paragraphs that describe the problems of poverty and crime in the novel. The data were obtained using reading and note-taking techniques which were then analyzed using descriptive interpretative techniques (content analysis). The results showed that the social problems that occur in Jakarta are dominated by poverty and crime. From the novel, the author tries to convey to readers, especially policy makers, that the problem can be one of the references on how to handle these two problems in the city of Jakarta.

**Keywords:** Poverty Issues, Crime Issues, Marginalized Communities.

## 1 Introduction

Jakarta is the center of the economy in Indonesia. According to Isnaini and Sasana the economic development is relatively faster from year to year compared to other provinces, making Jakarta get the nickname as the business heart of Indonesia [1]. Due to the rapid economic development in the city, it encourages many people from other regions to flock to find better jobs to improve their standard of living. However, Ishak said that if the increase in population actually causes competition for jobs in the city of Jakarta to be very tight [2]. Additionally, Edelman and Gunawan also state that approximately half of Jakarta is comprised of slums [3]. Of these slums, 50% are situated in proximity to rivers, while the remaining slums are dispersed along railway lines or under motorways. The lack of job opportunities, especially for immigrant communities with low education and do not have the skills to compete in the world of work, creates difficulties for the community itself in fulfilling their needs. So what happens is not increasing the quality of life of the community, but instead creating vulnerable people who live on the outskirts of the city or often referred to as marginalized communities.

Ginting points out that behind the splendor of tall buildings in Jakarta, there are still many slums inhabited by marginalized communities [4]. Based on that, the mar-

ginalized community can be defined as the urban poor. The problem of poverty that occurs can trigger other problems, one of which is crime. When basic needs are not met, some individuals may feel they have no choice but to commit crimes to survive. According to Ariyanto, et al the increasing number of poverties in Jakarta has an effect on the increase in crime or crime that occurs in the jurisdiction of Polda Metro Jaya [5]. The problems of poverty and crime that occur in the city of Jakarta can be depicted in literary works. According to Ganti, employment in the informal sector is concentrated in various types of work, such as selling food and beverages (either self-produced or taken from others), selling cigarettes and the like around, or using “*lapak*” as street vendors. Other types of work mostly done are as vagrants, beggars, scavengers, laborers, conduction workers, and other menial jobs [6].

According to Ratna, literary works contain cultural aspects rather than individual ones [7]. That is, literary works are the result of writing by the author, but the problems told are the problems of society in general. In this connection, it is stated that the author is a representative of society in conveying the problems that occur around him. One type of literary work that depicts problems in society is called as novel. This is because novels have more complex characteristics than other types of literary works. One of the authors who describe the problems in people's lives in his literary works is Brian Khrisna [8].

The novel „The Darkest Side of Heaven“ is Brian Khrisna's latest work that raises the theme of the struggle of marginalized communities in facing social problems in the slums of Jakarta, especially the problems of poverty and crime [8]. The problems that occur in the novel are in accordance with Soekanto's theory of social problems which states that social problems are a form of misalignment between elements of culture or society, which can harm or endanger the lives of social groups [9]. Furthermore, Soekanto said that there are generally nine types of social problems faced by society, namely poverty, crime, family disorganization, youth problems in modern society, war, violation of community norms, population problems, environmental problems, and bureaucratic problems [9]. Purnomo et al. will therefore resort to any means at their disposal in order to achieve their goals, including the commission of criminal acts such as theft, robbery, assault and even murder [10]. There are a number of ways in which income can be increased, even by doing crimes.

At this level of analysis, crime can be seen as a rational response to the prevailing socio-economic conditions. Unitasari and Nastiti have demonstrated that rising poverty rates are associated with increased crime rates [11]. Reported from the data of the Central Bureau of Statistics mentioned that the crime rate recorded by the Police of Metro Jaya is highest crime in Indonesia, namely (31,934 cases throughout 2020) which is divided into various cases.

Based on these things, researchers are interested in studying the novel the darkest side of heaven by Brian Khrisna using Soekanto's theory of social problems [8]. However, this research focuses more on the problems of poverty and crime because these two problems are the most dominant social problems. So, this research aims to 1) describe the poverty problem in the novel the darkest side of heaven by Brian Khrisna, and 2) describe the crime problem in the novel the darkest side of heaven by Brian Khrisna.

## 2 Methods

This research is descriptive qualitative research with a literary sociology approach. The data source in this research was the novel „The Darkest Side of Heaven“ by Brian Khrisna with data in the form of sentences, fragments of paragraphs, and whole paragraphs regarding the problem of poverty and crime contained in the novel. The data collection technique used was reading and note-taking technique. Moreover, Moleong (in Hosang, et al.) states that data analysis techniques are inferences through the discovery of message characterization, conducted in an objective and systematic manner [12]. In this case, the data obtained will be subjected to analysis in order to provide clarity, after which the final result or conclusion can be drawn. Lastly, data collection was carried out by reading the novel and then recording data on the problem of poverty and crime. The interpretive descriptive technique (content analysis) was used in order to analyze the data. In this case, the data obtained was analyzed to bring clarity.

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Poverty Issues

Behind the rapid economic development in the city of Jakarta, there is still poverty experienced by most of its people. According to Fadhila, et al. based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in March 2023; it shows that there are 477.8 thousand poor people in DKI Jakarta [13]. The poverty that occurs reaches 4.44% of the total population. The data is inversely proportional to the high cost of living in the city. According to Soekanto poverty is a condition that occurs when a person is unable to meet his own needs in accordance with the standard of living of the group and is also unable to utilize his mental and physical energy in the group [9]. The problem of poverty experienced by people in the city of Jakarta can be depicted in literary works, such as in the novel *The Darkest Side of Heaven* by Brian Khrisna. The novel, which is set in the city of Jakarta, illustrates the problems of poverty faced by people in the city's slums. Therefore, the creation of the novel *The Darkest Side of Heaven* by Brian Khrisna is based on the reality of the problem of poverty in the lives of the people of Jakarta. It is analyzed and presented in the following description.

**Data.** Do you think we never tried? We've tried hundreds of times to get away from this job, but the necessity of survival keeps us coming back for more. Why? Don't bother listening to our excuses. You just want to see us doing things according to your standards, right? You think it's easy for us to compete with those who have higher education, connections, and are more tech-savvy. Even if we get a halal job, the salary may not cover our daily expenses. Many of us have mountainous dependents and mounting debts [8].

The data illustrates the problem of poverty experienced by Juleha's character. As a single parent raising her child alone, working to fulfil her basic needs is a must. However, with a low education and no skills to compete in the world of work in the city of Jakarta, Juleha's character has difficulty finding a suitable job. This makes Juleha's character choose to become a prostitute (Commercial Sex Worker) because she has no other choice to overcome great economic pressure. Generally, commercial sex workers do not have special requirements such as education, age, certain skills, and so on, making this job more accessible. The considerable income of commercial sex workers is seen as a solution to fulfill needs in a quick way.

Despite having a substantial income, the choice to do such work comes with many risks and challenges, one of which is the bad stigma of society. However, the demands of survival in the city of Jakarta with its high cost of living make it difficult to give up the work of commercial sex workers (PSK). An example of the reality of these problems also occurs in Emporium Jakarta. Annisa said that Emporium prostitutes admitted that it was difficult to get a decent job in the city of Jakarta, which made them take shortcuts to get money by carrying out this work [14]. Therefore, encouraging access to education, training, and decent work is important for the government and society in providing better alternatives to those involved in this work due to economic pressure. The difficulty in finding a decent job that causes poverty is also experienced by Pulung's character. This can be seen from the following data.

**Data.** The data explains the poverty experienced by Pulung and his family. When he was a child, Pulung had to sleep with his family members in a wooden cart with a tarpaulin roof when the rain arrived. But when he grew up, he had to leave so as not to burden his parents and give his two younger siblings room to grow in the cramped living space. Working as a scavenger, Pulung had to look for empty bottles along the streets of Jakarta to sell to collectors. Pulung uses the money from the sale to buy food every day. However, working as a scavenger often has an uncertain income because it depends on the number and type of items collected each day.

The reality of this problem also occurs in the city of Jakarta. Pratiwi and Bahari revealed that waste pickers in Jakarta are very diverse, ranging from those who carry baskets, sacks, use large carts, medium carts, and even carry carts and bring their families with them [15]. The work they do is picking up used bottles to make a living. Economic empowerment programs carried out by the government are very important to help marginalized communities such as waste pickers improve their welfare. The lack of prosperity due to poor economic conditions is reinforced in the following data.

**Data.** Resti's only child almost died due to malnutrition and dengue fever at the same time. Fortunately, there is BPJS, but other expenses still loom large [8].

Through this data, there was a description of the difficulties experienced by the character Resti due to economic limitations. Economic limitations can have a serious

impact on children's health, one of which is malnutrition. Due to her husband's unemployment, Resti's character cannot buy nutritious food for her child because she does not have enough money. Severe malnutrition coupled with DHF at the same time can threaten a child's life if not treated immediately.

Riznawati and Eryando revealed the fact that this problem was also true in the city of Jakarta; DKI Jakarta is one of the provinces with a prevalence rate that is still quite high at 16.8% which is included in the acute stunting category [16]. There are two factors that affect child nutrition that led to stunting, namely direct factors related to characteristics and indirect factors that lead to the availability of proper food. Although the use of BPJS allows poor families to obtain health services at health centers and hospitals without having to pay fees, the considerable expenditure for other needs such as food and transport can be burdensome for people with limited economic conditions.

### 3.2 Crime Issues

One of the problems that is difficult to overcome until now in various regions, including Jakarta, is crime. According to Bahtiar dan Nurhayati according to the Central Statistics Agency, the second highest crime rate in 2021 occurred in DKI Jakarta at 20,370 cases [17]. Moreover, Noviansah revealed that Ditreskrimun Polda Metro Jaya and the ranks of Polres managed to reveal a total of 352 cases and arrested 409 people in just 15 days through community crime operations [18]. This shows that the crime rate in Jakarta is still very high. According to Soekanto crime in sociology is caused by the same social conditions and processes, which in turn produce other social behaviors [9]. The problem of crime in Jakarta can be reflected in literary works, such as in Brian Khrisna's novel *The Darkest Side of Heaven*. It was analyzed and presented in the following description.

**Data.** "Hopefully tonight I'll get another motorbike. Hopefully tonight I won't be caught and not beaten by the residents. God, please take care of me. I'm just trying to be a filial son. People say I'm a thief, a bastard, a scoundrel, the scum of the earth. I'm just a kid trying to earn money for his parents' recovery. Working in a factory or as a construction worker doesn't earn much money. The money will run out just for food [8]."

The data describes the problem related to the crime committed by the character Gofar. Working as a *begal*, who commits crimes by forcibly seizing or stealing other people's motorbikes and even using violence, can have a serious impact on the victim and himself. However, the reason why Gofar commits crimes is because of his poor economic condition. The need to buy medicine for his sick mother forced Gofar to commit a crime because he had no other choice.

Like Gofar's character, according to Ibumasy in community life there is also a person with the initials WA (15) and NA (21) who admitted that they were forced to commit a robbery in Depok, West Java because of financial problems [19]. Therefore,

addressing the problem of poverty is an important step that needs to be taken by the government to reduce crime. At present, many crimes are committed by people with good economic conditions. This can be seen from the following data.

**Data.** Sometimes, God reaches out not through religious leaders or houses of worship, but from high school students who look ignorant but know more about tolerance than those who are busy corrupting pandemic social assistance funds for themselves [8].

The data also explains the problem of crime in the case of corruption of pandemic social assistance funds (*bansos*). The occurrence of the covid-19 pandemic has a major impact on the lower social class. Therefore, there is a social assistance program including financial assistance, basic food, and so on as a government strategy to help affected communities and provide support to lower social class communities during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, these assistance program provide opportunities for some irresponsible parties to gain illegal profits through corruption. Funds that should have been used to help people affected by the covid-19 pandemic were misused for personal interests or certain groups.

According to Prabawati in Bungs, the most popular case of Covid-19 social assistance corruption is the case that ensnared social minister Juliari Batubara [20]. Juliari was alleged to have received a bribe amounting to 32.2 billion rupiahs for his part in the scheme [21]. This shows that there is a greedy attitude in the perpetrators of corruption because they cannot feel and understand the feelings of the people who are being affected by the covid-19 pandemic. Another bad attitude that is actually carried out by people with good economic conditions is seen in the following data.

**Data.** Her breath caught in her throat as she saw *Bapak* relaxing at the dining table. His face looked satisfied. She wondered how much money he had spent on bribing the policemen. The money could have been used by his own wife for daily living [8].

Through this data, there is a description of the practice of bribery involving the police and corrupt *Lurah* figures. The practice of bribery often involves the police and several parties who have financial power. Giving large amounts of money is done to avoid legal sanctions. The amount of money involved in bribery has a significant influence on the police's decision to acquit.

Bribery cases also occurred in public life, such as the case that ensnared the Head of Criminal Investigation Unit of Penjaringan Police. According to Dewi, the Head of the Criminal Investigation Unit of the Penjaringan Police Station, Ajun Komisaris Polisi (AKP) Muhammad Fajar and seven of his members allegedly received bribes from an online gambling case [22]. Based on this, it shows that criminals with financial strength can get away with giving bribes, while those with weak finances must face full punishment. The law, which should be applied fairly and equally to all citizens, creates inequality. Therefore, a joint effort is needed from the government, law enforcement institutions, and the community to create a clean and integrity legal system.

## 4 Results and Discussion

Based on the results and discussion of the research previously described, it can be seen that the novel „the darkest side of heaven“ by Brian Khrisna revealed the problems of poverty and crime that occurred in the slums of Jakarta as the setting of the story. The problem of poverty was described about Juleha's character who worked as a commercial sex worker to make ends meet, Pulung's character who worked as a scavenger to buy food, Resti's character who experienced financial difficulties that made her child malnourished. The crime problem was described as a *begal* job run by the character Gofar due to poor economic conditions, corruption of pandemic social assistance, and bribery practices involving the police and corrupt *Lurah* figures. The problems in the novel the darkest side of heaven by Brian Khrisna were a real picture faced by the marginalized community in Jakarta.

## References

- [1] A. Isnaini and H. Sasana, “Determinan Pertumbuhan Ekonomi Di Dki Jakarta,” *Transekonomika Akuntansi, Bisnis Dan Keuang.*, vol. 2, no. 6, pp. 468–482, 2022, doi: 10.55047/transekonomika.v2i6.327.
- [2] K. Ishak, “Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Pengangguran Dan Inflikasi Terhadap Indeks Pembangunan Di Indonesia,” *Iqtishaduna J. Ilm. Ekon. Kita*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 22–38, 2018.
- [3] D. J. Edelman and D. S. Gunawan, “Managing the urban environment of Jakarta, Indonesia,” *Curr. Urban Stud.*, vol. 8, no. 01, p. 57, 2020.
- [4] R. I. P. Ginting, “Perancangan Informasi Lingkungan Masyarakat Permukiman Kampung Kumuh Di Jakarta Melalui Media Buku Fotografi.” Univeristas Komputer Indonesia, 2021.
- [5] S. T. W. Ariyanto and A. Tjalla, “Analisis Pengaruh Meningkatnya Jumlah Kemiskinan Di Jakarta Dalam 20 Tahun Terakhir Terhadap Jumlah Kriminalitas Di Wilayah Hukum Polda Metro Jaya,” *J. Litbang Polri*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 50–55, 2023.
- [6] M. Ganti *et al.*, “The Issues and Social Economic Potentials of Urban Marginal Groups in Indonesia,” in *International Conference on Sustainable Innovation on Humanities, Education, and Social Sciences (ICOSI-HESS 2022)*, 2022, pp. 246–259.
- [7] N. K. Ratna, “Teori, metode, dan teknik penelitian sastra,” 2022.
- [8] B. Khrisna, *Sisi Tergelap Surga*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2023.
- [9] S. Soekanto, “Sosiologi: suatu pengantar,” 1986.
- [10] S. D. Purnomo, D. A. Supriyo, R. Rusito, T. Anindito, W. Hariadi, and D. Jati, “How Economic Indicator Drive Crime? Empirical Study in Developing Country, Indonesia,” *Int. J. Econ. Financ. Issues*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 94–99, 2023.
- [11] M. Unitasari and R. S. Nastiti, “Poverty Analysis in DKI Jakarta,” in *Proceeding of International Conference on Social Sciences and Education*, 2021, vol. 1, no. 1.
- [12] N. J. Hosang, M. F. Toliwongi, and S. F. Lensun, “Literary Sociology of Kobayashi Sotaku In Novel Madogiwa No Tottochan,” 2019.
- [13] A. Fadhilah, R. Ramdani, and M. F. Rizki, “REHABILITASI SOSIAL

- GELANDANGAN DAN PENGEMIS DI PANTI SOSIAL BINA KARYA HARAPAN JAYA,” *Community Dev. J. J. Pengabd. Masy.*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 5115–5119, 2024.
- [14] D. S. Annisa, “Presentasi Diri Pekerja Seks Komersial Emporium Jakarta (Studi Dramaturgi Mengenai Presentasi Diri Pekerja Seks Komersial Di Emporium Jakarta).” Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, 2016.
- [15] I. W. Pratiwi and R. J. P. Bahari, “Kebermaknaan Hidup Pemulung Di Jakarta,” *J. Psikol. Pendidik. dan Pengemb. SDM*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2018.
- [16] A. Riznawati and T. Eryando, “Wilayah prioritas penanganan stunting di Jakarta Timur tahun 2021,” *J. Penelit. Kesehatan" SUARA FORIKES"(Journal Heal. Res. Forikes Voice)*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 123–128, 2023.
- [17] H. Bahtiar and S. F. Nurhayati, “Check for updates Analysis of the Influence of Economic Factors on Crime Rates in East Java Regencies/Cities in 2017-2021,” in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Economics and Business Studies (ICOEBS-22-2)*, 2023, vol. 247, p. 240.
- [18] W. Noviansah, “Polda Metro Ungkap 352 Kejahatan dalam 2 Pekan, Ada 3 Kasus Pembunuhan,” 2024. <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-7264575/polda-metro-ungkap-352-kejahatan-dalam-2-pekan-ada-3-kasus-pembunuhan> (accessed Jun. 26, 2024).
- [19] M. R. Ibumasy, “Pengakuan Begal Sadis yang Bacok Anak Sekolah di Depok\_ Lagi Butuh Uang buat Bayar Kontrakan - Wartakotalive,” 2024. <https://wartakota.tribunnews.com/2024/04/26/pengakuan-begal-sadis-yang-bacok-anak-sekolah-di-depok-lagi-butuh-uang-buat-bayar-kontrakan> (accessed Jun. 27, 2024).
- [20] A. Bungsu, “Citra KPK Pada Kasus Korupsi Menteri Juliari Batubara (Analisis Wacana Kritis Fairclogh),” *Ishlah J. Ilmu Ushuluddin, Adab dan Dakwah*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 152–175, 2019.
- [21] D. Mulyaman, A. Ismail, A. A. Rahmani, and A. Damayanti, “The case of corruption in Covid-19 pandemic in Asia Pacific: Study case of Indonesia,” *J. Soc. Stud.*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 41–54, 2023.
- [22] C. M. T. Dewi, “Diduga Terima Uang Suap Kasus Judi Online, Kanit Reskrim Polsek Penjarangan Terancam PTDH - Metro Tempo,” 2022. <https://metro.tempo.co/read/1631558/diduga-terima-uang-suap-kasus-judi-online-kanit-reskrim-polsek-penjarangan-terancam-ptdh> (accessed Jun. 27, 2024).

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

