

Non-Chinese Indonesian Through The Eyes of 1998 Victim

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ABSTRACT

In 1998, a massive riot happened in Jakarta which is known as the 1998 tragedy. Lots of Chinese Indonesian people house and shops were burned, they were also raped in front of their families, some of them were burned after being raped. In the end, Chinese Indonesian people were slowly being accepted by society as their culture and national holidays were acknowledged. However, the tragedy still remains unforgettable to Chinese Indonesian people. Thus, this research is conducted to find out what Chinese Indonesians who experience the 1998 tragedy think of non-Chinese people after 23 years of the tragedy and why they think so. The finding of the study, show that Chinese Indonesia still think of non Chinese people in a good way and believe that they still have good relationship with them. Although they show symptom of being traumatize, it doesn't change how they view non Chinese people.

Key word: Chinese Indonesians, Tragedy 1998, Traumatic experience, Soeharto.

INTRODUCTION

Chinese Indonesian people have always been viewed badly in Indonesia, in the past Chinese Indonesian people worked as debt collectors and trade intermediaries. This makes Indonesian people hold a grudge and have a bad view regarding Chinese Indonesian people (Primadia, 2016). Chinese Indonesian also have a steady income and a successful job which increases the dislike of Indonesian people as a minority. This creates stigmatization and negative sentiments of the Indonesian people towards Chinese people who are considered to be oppressing and taking over power in Indonesia.

In 1998 there was a massive riot in Jakarta which ended with a lot of people getting injured and even died during that time. This tragedy was triggered due to the fall of Thailand's currency which affected many countries in Asia during 1997. During this time many companies in Indonesia fired their employees which caused a lot of people in Indonesia to become jobless. This problem became more severe day by day until it reached its peak on 13-15 May 1998. This was caused by an incident that happened to four Trisakti Students who were killed during the riot on 12 May 1998. The riot caused severe damage to many places and stores, many people were injured, raped, and even killed during the incident. Those who were raped were Chinese women. Some of the people who got away manage to go to other countries to avoid chaos (Primadia, 2016). According to the Team of Volunteers for Humanitarian Causes (1998a: 9), 1,190 people were burnt to death, 91 were injured and 31 went missing. During this, many of the stores and houses owned by Chinese Indonesia were looted and burned, while the owners were assaulted, beaten, raped, murdered, and even burned. This incident became a concern of many countries, especially where Chinese Indonesia was being mass raped. According to the Team of Volunteers for Humanitarian Causes (1998b: 8-9), 152 women were being gang-raped in Jakarta and 20 of them died. They were raped on the street, in their home, and on the car or public transportation. Many of them were raped in front of their families or friends, and some of them were burned afterward.

After the incident, some of those who went to other countries and lived there refused to return to Indonesia because they were afraid that the same thing would happen again to them in the future even though Chinese culture has been recognized in Indonesia. They also chose not to say anything regardless of the incident especially the people who got raped because some of them were threatened and some chose not to stir up old trauma. This makes the incident unresolved because the perpetrator was not found, and the victim doesn't receive any compensation or help from the government. The government is also considered not handling this case seriously and takes no action. Several parties thought that this tragedy was planned by government officials. After a few days, Soeharto resigned from the president seat and was replaced by B. J. Habibie.

Thus, the study intends to find out what Chinese Indonesian who experienced the 1998 tragedy think of non Chinese people after 23 years of the tragedy. In addition, the researcher will also find out why they think so. After the tragedy, many of the victims have encountered problems such as losing self-confidence, deep trauma, having trust issues, and a psychological problem. The researchers believe that many of the victims viewed Indonesia or the people differently after the tragedy. The researcher wants to figure out the answer of this question: What do Chinese Indonesians who experienced the tragedy of 1998 think of non Chinese Indonesian at present after 23 years? Why do they think so?.

The finding of this study will help readers understand about Chinese Indonesian who became the victim of 1998 tragedy view regarding non Chinese people and the reason they think so. This research can also be used as data or reference for further research regarding the tragedy in 1998 to know the severity of this tragedy. This might also help the government to avoid a similar event in the future.

The researcher will use Psychological Trauma theories and Social learning theory to help identify the data obtained from the interview. The researcher will limit the timeline to now because it is the focused of this study. The informant will be chosen based on specific requirements that have been set to fulfill the needs to answer the research question by using purposive sampling methods. It requires the informant to be Chinese Indonesian people, must be the victim or experience the riot indirectly, at least 18 years old during the tragedy, and many others. From the criteria above the researcher decide to choose H because he lived in Jakarta during the tragedy, experienced the tragedy directly, and old enough to understand the situation.

METHOD

This research will be done in the span of 5 months. In this research, the researcher will be using the qualitative method in the form of semi-structured to interview several Chinese-Indonesians who became a victim of tragedy 98. The interview will mostly, be done online through a phone call, Whatsapp, or through online platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet. If allowed by the informant, the interview will be recorded as a backup for research purposes. The researcher will choose 2-3 people to be the informants based on specific requirements that have been set to fulfill the needs to answer the research question by using purposive sampling methods. It requires the informant to be Chinese Indonesian people, must be the victim or experience the riot indirectly, at least 18 years old during the tragedy, and willing for the interview result to be put on the paper or published for academic purpose. The researcher will gather as much information as possible about Chinese Indonesian who experience the tragedy think of non Chinese people after 23 years of the 1998 tragedy, their reason, and why they think so before analyzing and compiling it into one.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Background Information

Basic information about informants is necessary for comprehensive understanding. The first respondent with initial H (56) was born in Jombang and moved to Jakarta when he was five years old. According to simplypsychology.org (2016) Social learning theory, emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Social learning theory considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behavior. When H was a kid, he often got told by his father that there are a lot of things that happen to Chinese Indonesia, so he needs to be strong to face all kinds of things. H thought that Chinese Indonesia is a citizen who has the lowest position. When H was still in school, he faced some people who were racist toward Chinese people. H and his wife lived in a shophouse near a market at that time. He worked as an entrepreneur specifically in grocery business. Although H lived in a place mixed with Chinese and non Chinese, H said that the people who live there don't seem to harbor any bad feelings toward Chinese people. During the tragedy, his shophouse almost got burned, but fortunately it didn't.

The second respondent named David was born in Jakarta. He moved to Jombang when he was in fifth grade in elementary school. He returned to Jakarta when he was in junior high school. During his school life, David never encountered any bad things that happened to him. This was mainly due to him being in private school. When asked if he sees or experienced some kind of racism during his school life, David replies that he never experienced or seen anything related to that which is different compared to the first informant H where he experienced it. During the tragedy, David was on his way to his office when the riot happened. He saw a lot of people marching toward the city, then he quickly went to his office. His friend told him that he should hide and stay in the building for the day until the riot subsides. From inside the building, David saw a lot of smoke in the distance which indicated that something was burned. The next morning at five o'clock, David returned to his home to meet his family. After a few days, David went to some of his friends to check on their condition, there he saw the remains of a car that was burned during the riot. Even so, David still thinks that non Chinese people are good people.

Sign of Anxiety

After analyzing the data the researcher finds out that the effect of the 1998 tragedy still can be seen from the victim in the form of anxiety. The feeling of anxiety still linger until now, although the riot happened 23 years ago. This means that the tragedy really left an impact toward the victim of 1998 tragedy. This was due to the fact that some of them experienced a cruel thing before and during the tragedy. This was proved during an interview with the first informant. As stated in the background information, the first informant named H often got told by his father that he needs to be excel in all aspects during his childhood. His father also told him about what happened to the Chinese Indonesian in the past. H also faces some kind of racism when he was in high school. Social learning theory considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behavior (McLeod, 2016). Taking this into consideration, H should show some kind of hatred or grudge toward non Chinese people, but the researcher found out that H doesn't think like that. Rather H thought of non Chinese people as nothing out of ordinary. H doesn't show any form of hatred or grudge toward non Chinese people, this can be seen by how he reacts and answer the question during the interview. H never once say a bad thing about non Chinese people, but he showed a symptoms of being traumatized which is anxiety. A person who has experienced trauma may feel denial,

anger, fear, sadness, shame, confusion, anxiety, depression, numbness, guilt, hopelessness, irritability, and difficult concentrating, they also may have emotional outbursts, find it difficult to cope with how they feel, or withdraw from others (Leonard, 2020). In the interview, H said that he is cautious toward non Chinese people especially those he didn't know about, this indicated that he feels anxiety toward non Chinese people. Even so, H doesn't seem to harbor any hard feelings toward non Chinese people, H also added that he couldn't bear a grudge toward non Chinese people even though H was one of the victims. The reason for that is because of what he experienced, knew, and saw during and after the tragedy. During the tragedy, his shophouse was almost getting burned by the demonstrate, but his neighbour and the people who live there helped prevented it from happening, H also added that the victim from the tragedy was not only Chinese people but also non Chinese people as well. H mentioned that a lot of non Chinese people were burned to death inside of a mall. According to Merdeka.com (2014) around 400 people were burned to death in a mall named Yogya Plaza during the tragedy. From the researcher's perspective, H seems to believe that not all non Chinese people are bad people which is the reason why he couldn't bear a grudge against non Chinese people.

No Hard Feeling

On the other hand, despite the fact that there is traumatic experience, Chinese Indonesian still thinks of non Chinese people in a very good way. They still think that that non Chinese people are not bad at all, they also believe that they still have a good relationship with non Chinese people. This was proven during the interview with the second informant. As stated in the background, when David was a kid, he had already socialized and being friends with non Chinese people. This makes him very familiar with non Chinese people. According to simplypsychology.org (2016) Social learning theory, emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Growing up with that, David emphasizes that the most important thing to do is to get along with each other. Since Chinese people are a minority in Indonesia and were hated at that time, they need to get along with non Chinese people to improve their relationship. This proved to be handy for David since he lived in a place mixed with Chinese and non Chinese people. David house wasn't targeted during the riot as he lived in mixed housing, the non Chinese people also helped protected him from being abused. Another aspect that could support the analysis is the fact that David knew about a person who got fired from his company after participating in the riot. Judging from his tone, David seems to be surprised by this news since the one who fired the worker is a non Chinese person. The researcher assumed that this news improves what David thinks about non Chinese people. David and H have a similarity in what they experience which is where the non Chinese people helped them during the riot. In H case, the non Chinese people helped protect and prevent his shop from being burned while in David's case they helped protect him and the company where he works from getting burned or looted. From a researcher's perspective, this is the reason why David views non Chinese people as friendly.

David doesn't seem to show any sign of being traumatized. A person who has experienced trauma may feel denial, anger, fear, sadness, shame, confusion, anxiety, depression, numbness, guilt, hopelessness, irritability, and difficult concentrating, they also may have emotional outbursts, find it difficult to cope with how they feel, or withdraw from others (Leonard, 2020). In the conversation, David didn't show any of these symptoms at all. Although the researcher could see his face during the interview, the researcher couldn't find any sign David being traumatized. Moreover, David doesn't seem to hold any grudge toward non Chinese people. When the researcher was talking about how David felt after the tragedy, David replies that those who are minorities will always be the victim since they don't have any power. David also said that the riot occurred as a result of provocation from the provocateurs, so the non Chinese people couldn't be blamed, a similar thing was also stated by H during the interview. The

researcher assumed the reason David doesn't bear a grudge against non Chinese people is that it would be unfair to judge them by something they didn't start. The researcher also finds out that David isn't afraid to non Chinese people. Even after the tragedy, David still communicates with his non Chinese friends, he also added that the shop that was looted during the tragedy reopened again after a few months which makes him less scared toward non Chinese people. Nevertheless, he believes that as long as we are getting along with non Chinese people, the non Chinese people will also help and protect us.

CONCLUSION

Tragedy 1998 is known as a tragedy that befell Chinese Indonesian. After the tragedy, many of the victims believed to view the people differently. Upon interview with several informants, The researcher concludes that even though they were part of the victim during the 1998 tragedy, they view non Chinese people in a good way, one of them even go as far as to say that non Chinese people are friendly. None of them harbor any grudge or bad feeling toward non Chinese people, however it might be because of what they know, experience, taught, and saw before, during, and after the tragedy which shapes how they view non Chinese people. Although one of them show symptom of being traumatize, it doesn't affect their views regarding non Chinese people.

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