Hustle Culture: A New Face of Slavery

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ABSTRACT

This article offers a critical examination of the emergence of the hustle culture phenomenon happening to freelance workers in Indonesia, most of whom are millennials and generation Z. It argues that there is the situation of unequal power relations between workers and owners of capital in the form of exploitation through hustle culture that promotes the discourse of being productive by working non-stop. The workers are unconsciously carried away by the hustle culture which affects their well-being. It proposed that complex working relationships between capitalists and workers become more complicated to define because of the growing gig economy. The discussion about well-being of freelance workers and the hustle culture draws by using a literature study supported by secondary data. Furthermore, to deepen the analysis, the discussion is studied by developing a new synthesis to Karl Marx's theory of capitalism and labor exploitation and the theory of agent and structure by Anthony Giddens. This synthesis leads to strengthen Giddens's critique of Marx which ignores the knowledgeability and competence of actors; they must be built around a concept of the 'duality of structure', in which social structures are viewed as both the medium and outcome of the practices which constitute social systems. Workers are the agents of development of large industries and they have the power to control their rights and obligations. This also aims to develop a new understanding in the field of industrial sociology and share an expanded evaluative framework to inform local, national, and international worker policy and practice.

Keywords: hustle culture; freelance worker; gig economy, capitalism, agent and structure.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization which offers various conveniences in people's lives brings various changes - and of course impacts - in various aspects of human life. One of the changes produced by globalization is a change in the work culture of certain community groups. If we look back, more than two centuries after the industrial revolution occurred, various types of work, skills, and division of labor also continue to evolve. This change in work culture of course cannot be separated from the influence of technology. Until now, the term for the industrial revolution has even reached round 5.0 which is marked by the possibility of human labor collaborating with robot (George & George, 2020). By this brief definition we can take the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that actually has emerged since 1956 and is continuously being developed sophisticatedly. AI is increasingly finding its way into organization, people, even project management tools to handle many kinds of things such as scheduling, analyzing patterns of working team, and offering suggestions (Schmelzer, 2019). The changes caused by globalization in this work culture are also related

to the lives of individuals as the main actors. Most of us might even experience that since the Covid-19 pandemic has validated that it is possible for someone to work without having to leave the house and manage their own working hour. Then what about the distribution of work and the allocation of working time which is no longer regulated by the factory "bell ring"?

METHODS

The analysis developed in this article uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method. The literature study method used can be used in a study that aims to evaluate theories or fact findings that focus on a particular issue or to validate the relevance or absence of a theory used as a basis for analysis (Snyder, 2019; Tranfield et al., 2003). The type of literature study method used in this article is a systematic literature review aimed at identifying and critically assessing relevant research, as well as to collect and analyze data from that research (Snyder, 2019; Liberati et al., 2009). With this method, the analysis in this article will use previous research related to labor issues and industrial developments in general. The formulation of arguments and theoretical analysis is also supported by secondary data from various research institutions that have previously collected data on the condition of casual workers and the issue of hustle culture in several countries such as Indonesia, China, and Japan.

RESULTS

The Early Industrial Revolution and Changes in Working Culture

Before 1750, Britain was an agricultural society, 80 percent of the people lived and worked in a small farm in rural areas (The Industrial Revolution, Oxford University). Until in the year of 1760 the industrial revolution happened. The era of the first industry revolution begin with the invention of steam engine and the emergence of many factory. Following a major change in economy and social situation, the working culture of our society also changed¹. There are capitalists (bourgeois) who owned the business, constructed the factories, buying the machines,

There was the increasing number of Britain's population during the Industrial Revolution from 6.5 million people in 1750 to around 32.5 million in 1900. This happened a result of the improvement in living standards and the declining of death rates.

and figured out how the market works. While workers are those in the new middle-class group that emerges as the result of the presence of various types of professional employment such as banking professionals, lawyers, teachers, and government officials in various levels. There is also a lower class consisting of craftspeople and shopkeepers. Karl Marx, as the most famous revolutionary in the era of capitalism, describe the situation where there is an unequal power relation between workers and capital owners as an exploitation. In his theory about capitalism, Marx explain that the profit that is gained by the capitalists is the result of the exploitation towards the workers, because the value produced by workers is greater than the wages they are paid (Moseley, 1997).

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The industrial revolution then continues to industry 2.0. The development of industry 2.0 happened in the early 20th century. During this period, electrical power developed and various new technologies emerged. In the historical context, this industrial 2.0 product can be seen at the time of World War I until World War II, at that time weapons were used in war and massproduced using electricity and a new production method known as the assembly line that used conveyer belts. In a social context, industry 2.0 makes people more differentiated in their types of work because the skills needed are more specific. That way, a worker will only focus on his work in certain sections because each division has its own role and is arranged in a clear order to create a product more efficiently and quickly.

In the 2000s the industrial revolution shifted to industry 3.0 which was marked by the presence of the internet and compact technology such as gadgets (mobile phones, computers, and laptops which were still very large in shape). At this time, society must adapt to the presence of various new technologies. There are workers (who are not able to keep up with this development) losing their jobs because they are less sophisticated compared to machines. Not only changing conditions in employment but also industry 3.0 changes the way people interact and communicate. In this era, access to mobility also becomes easy. People can even reach or communicate with their distant relatives. A Marxist who focuses on globalization and industrial development, David Harvey, calls this phenomenon time and space compression.

The next industrial revolution period continues into industry 4.0. At this time, the use of technology in the industry is increasingly expansive. The development of a technology called Artificial Intelligence (AI) is part of business development, it can even help humans manage their daily lives at work. In a study entitled Technology Industry 4.0: Problems of Employment and Unemployment Labor, developed by N. V. Gaponenkoa and J. C. Glenn who stated that the development of industry 4.0 no longer only shows industrial changes related to the use of technology. Industry 4.0 even brings changes to the media, art, education, to the work culture of the community. The era that has been going on since 2012 (based on the history of naming its momentum by the Working Group on Industry 4.0) provides a new perspective on the development of industry and the world of community work. No longer limited to depending on the work offered by business owners, at this time many individuals dare to actualize selfemployment.

Industry 5.0 and Changes of Working Culture

Industrial revolution doesn't stop at the industry 4.0. It continues to the emergence of industry that characterized by the existence of humanist considerations in the industrial world. Various new businesses have sprung up by providing products and services whose main "mission" is to facilitate people's mobility and to improve the welfare of others. The "value" that described by Marx was actually aim to explain how the capitalist abuse their workers with excessive working hours and low wages, has now adapted to a new form of "value" adopted by workers to show their contribution and commitment for the job they are "committed" to. Related to the working culture in the era of industry 5.0, the company's "value" become something that is very important to attract prospective workers to join a company.

This trend of having a "culture" in a company or corporation began in the 1980s that includes the generalized beliefs and behaviors that reflected in its dress code, business hours, office setup, employee benefits, and every other aspects of operation (Tarver, 2021). However, the main principals of being a worker remains the same. The industry demanded their worker to be self-discipline, emphasis upon productive labor, and condemnation of wasteful habits (Faler, 2015, pg.368). In addition to that, the Harvard Business Review identified six important characteristics of successful corporate cultures in 2015 and one of which is the "value" that describe as a broad concept, embody the mentalities and perspectives necessary to achieve a company's vision (Coleman, 2013). The whole idea of having a good company culture then become something that a prospective worker will considerate on finding jobs, especially for the Gen Z, that is now become the largest generation group which is also the largest labor force in many big countries. In an article entitled "Why Corporate Culture Is Becoming Even More Important" written by

Larry Alton, millennials are the generation driving the workplace changes of the near future, they desire a strong company culture (Alton, 2017).

Hustle Culture Amongst Gen Z

The growing trend of company culture course also deals with the lives of workers outside the office. Considering one of the characteristics of modern industrial society is that their work life and their personal life is interplay to each other. *Even more, working in a company has now even* become a lifestyle for Gen Z. According to an infographic by Concordia University, career ownership become one of the most important responsibilities carried out by the Gen Z. They even willing to put in the extra hours of work if there is a reward offered. The merit- based and competitive mentality has become something that they always trying to prove². This mental state of Gen Z is also related to a discourse that emerge in the past few years called "hustle culture".

Hustle culture define as a way of working that no longer has a standard working hour. Those who "hustle" must be working in a very long-hours *constantly* (Lorelie, 2020). Nowadays, hustle culture seems like a movement that brings a motivation and comes with expected rewards. Which means, those who hustle are willingly to cut down their time in a day for work. This condition is associated with the ranting of good company culture that motivates the worker to be more productive and more achieving, which also leads to more working hours in a day. The impact that hustle culture brings to workers is not only limiting the separation between private life to the work life, it is also impacting the worker to the level where it disturbs their mental health. The mental state where one person working too much and got tired mentally is called with a term "burnout". For example, a study shows that 13.7% of the Dutch working

Generation Z in the Workforce Infographic, Concordia University.

Population are said to suffer from burning out (Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017; Kant et al., 2003).

A. Case in Indonesia, Japan, and China

In Asia, the hustle culture trend has been going on for a long time. The rise of hustle culture originally emerged in countries such as China and Japan, which are now known as countries with rapid economic and technological progress. In China, one of the biggest technology-based companies, Alibaba, introduced a "productive" work culture called 996 culture. In practice, workers at Alibaba have to work from 9am-9pm (12 hours per day) 6 days a week (72 hours per week). Jack Ma, founder of Alibaba said that "This type of intense work culture is, in fact, necessary for and the key driver of performance." And that Alibaba's success somehow hinges on its employees committing to a 996 schedule.

While in Japan there is such a thing as Karoshi, a phenomenon where people work too much to the point of death. This condition is of course inseparable from the cultural values held by the Japanese which manifest the teachings of one of the Japanese Buddhist sects, Jodo Shinshu, such as the Protestant ethic. Those teachings emphasizes discipline, hard work, honesty and professionalism in work. Exactly, as Weber also explains in his theory of religion and its relationship to capitalism in The Protestant Ethic of Capitalism, that a person's success in life and death is determined by his hard work (Weber, 2011; Kalberg, 2016). Besides, the perseverance and loyalty of the Japanese nation is based on the Bushido philosophy derived from the moral values of the samurai, often emphasizing some combination of modesty, loyalty, mastery of the martial arts, and honor to the death. According to the Washington Post, in 2015, 189 deaths were recorded due to karoshi. Meanwhile in 2016, a study examining cases of karoshi found that 20 percent of 10,000 workers in Japan worked at least 80 hours per month. Nearly a quarter of Japanese companies has employees working more than 80 hours of overtime per month and often go unpaid. Then 12 percent of the companies has employees working 100 hours per month.

A similar condition also occurs in Indonesia, where the hustle culture is glorified by workers (If it refers to the context of space, it can be said that hustle culture in Indonesia generally occurs in urban communities.) - especially those belonging to generation z - to show their success at a young age. Not only happens to professional workers who work in an office, the hustle culture in Indonesia also occurs to workers who do not have a clear contract status with a company, or can also be referred to as freelancers. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency, the number of freelancers in Indonesia reached 5.89 million people. They work with a system called "gig work" which is the result of the growing gig economy.

Gig work is usually typified by four characteristics: irregular work schedules; workers providing some or all capital (e.g., mobile phones, cars, or bikes); remuneration; and work being arranged and/or facilitated by digital platforms (Newlands, 2021; Stewart & Stanford, 2017). Current scholarship argues that the gig economy is eroding working conditions due to widespread designation of workers as independent contractors, as opposed to formal employees (Newlands, 2021; Goods et al., 2019; Healy, Nicholson, & Pekarek, 2017; Stewart & Stanford, 2017; Valenduc & Vendramin, 2016). Labor scholars have also argued that these 'flexible' employment arrangements result in precarity, with workers absorbing market risks and social responsibilities (Newlands, 2021; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018). This risky condition is related to the absence of clear obligations that must be fulfilled by freelancers for their wellbeing because there is no mutually agreed work contract, except for the obligation to pay for their work.

In an interview conducted by Joan Aurellia, editor of online media Tirto.id with Arif Novianto, a researcher on Public Policy from Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia, who discussed the hustle culture, it was explained that as a culture that does not have clear work rules. hustle culture can defined as a form of coercion for workers to work excessively. In fact, in the Manpower Law no. 13 of 2003, the applicable working hours are 7 hours in 1 day and 40 hours in 1 week for employees with 6 working days. As for employees with 5 working days in 1 week, their obligation to work is 8 hours in 1 day and 40 hours in 1 week. However, the fact is that workers do not fight back or ask for more rights than they receive because this hustle culture is accepted as something that measures a person's consistency in achieving success, without

complaining, without feeling that they should be able to receive more for the work they also do excessively.

Marxist Theory of Capitalism

In the perspective of sociology, the condition that the workers are experiencing looks like slavery in the pre-industrial era. The working class-men and women, have to work long-hour a day (more than eight hours, can be up to twelve or fifteen hours) to fulfil their needs. It's no different with the current situation happened with the "hustler", they work long-hours a day to fulfil their standard of being productive and achieving more. In a podcast entitled "Hustle Culture: Are We Hustling Ourselves to Death" hosted by Dr Susan Carland from Monash University, an explanation of hustle culture related to lifestyle and the desire to be judged successful by the public that even when a hustler is on vacation, they feel that their vacation must remain productive by working.

A. Workers as an Object of Exploitation and The "False Consciousness" — The condition that shows how hustler find work in long hours as their achievement that will brings them joy is related to the rise of company culture trends. Employee voluntarily increase their working hours when they feel what they are doing is really making a positive contribution to the company or to their position. This situation can be seen as a phenomenon called false consciousness in Karl *Marx's theory of capitalism, in which the working* class and other class actors in capitalist society, are not aware of the intrinsic exploitation of social relations between classes. In this situation, hustlers don't realize that their 24/7 work has exploited even their private lives. This condition is indeed accompanied by the lure of "increase in social status". This study on false consciousness related to opportunities for social mobility was also developed by Marshall I. Pomer. Pomer stated that members of the proletariat denying the true nature of class relations because of their belief in the probability or possibility of upward mobility (Pomer, 1984).

Giddens Theory of Agent-Structure

A. The Workers is the Agent — In relation to the company culture issues, the Gen Z is the agent

whose social practices might affect the changes in working culture, specifically in

how a company might try to develop a culture suited for the business and also attracting prospective worker for the company. For example, Google is referred as a company with a good company culture, it provides a friendly working environment for those who work for the company. But it is not only about providing a good benefit for the workers since the workers is also the agent who determine how good a company is. As it is written by Rob Markey in the Harvard Business Review article entitled "Transform Your Employees into Passionate Advocates":

"Loyal, passionate employees bring a company as much benefit as loyal, passionate customers. They stay longer, work harder, work more creatively, and find ways to go the extra mile. They bring you more great employees. And that spreads even more happiness

— happiness for employees, for customers, and for shareholders." (Markey, 2012).

This condition can then be analyzed using the structuration theory developed by Anthony Giddens. The basic domain of study of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time (Giddens, 1984, pg.3). In the structuration theory, there are two main term that is used: agent and structure. Agent refers to the human action but not all agents are human, while the structure in social analysis, is referring to rules and resources as a structuring properties allowing the 'binding' of time-space in social systems, the properties which make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space and which lend them 'systemic' form (Giddens, 1984, pg.17). Agent and structure intertwined to each other.

According to Giddens, humans are "knowledge agents" operating in certain contexts, not just pawns of forces - whether economic or social greater than them (Yates, 1997). Due to the emergence of hustle culture, workers actually have the power to control how the entire industry treats them. The risks experienced by workers who are carried away by the hustle culture are related to the increasingly fluid status of workers

in the current era of industry 5.0. This situation is also related to the online gig economy phenomenon which is glorified as the future economy and forms complex work relations, namely the job market which is identical to shortterm work contracts or freelancers, flexible in hours, and minimal workplace working protection. Workers become a status that cannot be clearly defined because their work relations are not clearly identified. If we traced further, workers should be the agent who also determines the sustainability of a company based on their assessment of a decent work culture for their day to day jobs. Given that various industries and labor markets also depend on workers as agents themselves. But they have to be aggressive to clarify their position in the industry, especially for the freelancers as described in the previous case tend to be workers who are carried away by the hustle culture.

CONCLUSION

Globalization which is closely related to various inventions in the field of technology related to social change, affecting many aspects of people's lives. In terms of work culture, globalization has indeed made it easy for someone to get new opportunities, work in the fields they like, and develop skills that are in line with the needs of the current job market in Industry 5.0. In Giddens' theory of structuration, this condition can be seen from the attachment between workers as agents to influence the overall work structure, and vice versa. Not only that the companies trying hard to fit in the culture trend to be able to attract prospective workers, the workers also act as an agent that determine the companies to have a good culture. These changes may lead to a positive impact for the business. But on the other hand, this change in work culture can have an impact on the wellbeing of workers. In many countries even awork culture that overlaps with the personal lives of its workers, can be life threatening.

There are many cases of workers experiencing burnout and are isolated from their personal lives - even though they themselves apply productive and high achieving standards to themselves. In Karl Marx perspective this phenomenon is related to the false consciousness which also lead to the new face of slavery. People are willing to work to achieve their needs, the difference is the needs is not only limited to the primary needs but it is also related to the life style and social status in their group or society. The more they work, the more prestigious it is for them. This concept of false consciousness is also being developed by Marshall I. Pomer who stated that workers are denying the fact that there is a nature of class relation - where the workers will always have to work tirelessly and the capitalist will always be in the higher position to exploit them - belief in the probability or possibility of upward mobility.

In the context of changes in working culture in globalization and industrial revolution according to Marx and Gidden theory, it can be concluded that the status of freelancers has a high risk in the hustle culture phenomenon which will greatly harm their well-being. Yet they are agents who can demand proper welfare for the work they do. From Giddens's view that humans are "knowledge agents", workers can influence the operation of industry and labor market standards if they are able to activate the awareness that they are being exploited. The challenge indeed is how they can get the stakeholders to move also to protect them. In this case, the government can pay more attention to the position of freelancers and provide protection for them by clarifying their employment status through written laws that apply to companies that use freelance workers.

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