

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Research Background

In social media, we often find stories about people suffering from poverty who look helpless or depressed in the form of pictures or videos. It is not uncommon for us to see pictures of poverty, such as the condition of small, emaciated children on the side of the road selling newspapers under the hot sun, or portraits of parents who are still working hard to collect trash to support their families. Sometimes there is also content that displays visual stereotypes about poverty such as single mothers, troubled families, unemployed people, orphans, or children abandoned by their parents (Jensen, T. 2014). Some other content is even packaged in the form of events with inspirational themes. For example, the story of a poor student who can study at his favorite university or the struggle of a poor young man who struggles against life's obstacles to eventually become a successful entrepreneur, and so on. These stories are often excellent and have great success in society.

Poverty is often stereotyped in the form of people who are helpless, hopeless, and have nothing with the aim of gaining public support or assistance by arousing feelings of guilt, shame, and compassion for the audience through these events (Plewes and Stuart 2007 ; Cameron and Haanstra 2008). Stories about poverty have their own appeal which is based on emotional mechanisms in the hope of gaining affection and giving behavior (Bayram, A. B., & Holmes, M., 2021). So that the form of content that makes us feel sorry, sympathize, and want to provide assistance is usually often followed by a narrative to donate.

Content that exploits poverty in the hope of getting donations or benefits also has its own psychological background. Poverty has a visual appeal that can evoke negative emotions. These negative emotions stimulate the viewer's desire to de-escalate the situation depicted so that they will want to take action to change it (Dyck and Coldevin 1992; Small and Loewenstein

2003). Situations of tension in the form of visual graphics depicting poor people as hopeless and helpless. Visuals like this cause negative emotions in the audience, where they will also feel the suffering portrayed in the show. For example, when the audience sees a child who is hungry and can't do anything. As they watch, they will also feel empathy for the child's emotional suffering. This deep sense of empathy can drive action (Holmes and Traven 2015). In previous research (Yoo and MacInnis 2005; Fisher, Vandenbosch, and Kersi 2008; Zhang et al. 2014; Bail, Brown, and Mann 2017; Paxton, Velasco, and Ressler 2020) it was stated that there is a close relationship between emotion and giving behavior. . So that with an impression that touches this emotion, it makes people want to give or feel sympathy for the object that is experiencing this suffering.

This type of content that invites sympathy and compassion is known as poverty porn. Compassion becomes a trigger in poverty porn content, so that the audience feels close to and understands the person's position. Poverty pornography content like this is widely available in Indonesia and gets a lot of impressions, both on television and social media. This phenomenon continues to this day where there are many content creators who take advantage of other people's poverty to be used as broadcast material, or conversely, people with poor backgrounds make themselves objects of poverty porn.

In conventional media such as television, namely MNCTV, Indosiar, Trans7, RCTI, and GTV, they also present poverty porn through home renovation shows, marginalized people, shock money, and debt settlement microphones. The objects that are usually highlighted also vary, such as the struggle of single parents to send their children to school, old people who are still working, people with disabilities, to those who do not have a proper place to live. Not only on television, but similar programs can also be found on YouTube and other social media, where a number of artists or wealthy people provide assistance to people in need, both in the form of money or goods. However, as time went on and the development of social media, many poverty porn content turned to TikTok. Through the Live TikTok feature, more and

more people are creating poverty porn content and they are willing to do various things to get attention and donations from the audience.

According to Costner and Kohli (2018), poverty porn content has several indicators such as Passive Vs Active, Saviourism, Vulnerability, Lack Of Context, and Lack of Voice. This is demonstrated through several live TikToks featuring a group of orphanage children raising donations through singing. There are also grandparents who display their daily activities in their humble home. Some even display their illnesses such as Treacher Collins, hydrocephalus, or physical disabilities to get donations through TikTok giveaways. This shows that the development of social media has made the space for poverty pornography content wider. Finally, the phenomenon of exploitation of poverty continues to appear massively. The development of social media allows one person to produce so much poverty content. When other people see that this form of content gets success, sympathy, and even monetary value, it makes many other people participate in creating this type of content.

The term poverty porn is generally defined as media that exploits poverty to gather sympathy or support for a cause (Nathalie, D. 2016), and this term has been popular since the 1980s. Starting from the Live Aid charity concert featuring pictures of hungry children with the aim of raising funds for these hungry children. However, this created controversy which was eventually given the term poverty porn. This concert was considered controversial because it was considered a form of exploitation based on the use of stereotypical images of poverty without depicting its original context (Kurzyk, 2014).

The existence of pornographic poverty content raises many pros and cons because it exploits poverty (Elly, 2021) without paying attention to the factors that cause poverty and does not eliminate the source of the problem of poverty itself. Poverty pornographic content focuses on subjects experiencing poverty without looking at the actual structural factors and obscures the true root causes of poverty. The poverty situation presented gets a lot of attention and can lead to wider exploitation of poverty. Those who are rich will get

richer, and those who are poor will get poorer. So that the main problem of poverty is not answered, but instead creates inequality.

The use of the word "porn" in the term poverty porn does seem cliché because there is a discrepancy between the sexual fetishization of classic pornography and the use of visuals that hint at poverty as a form of pornography. The term porn usually contains intentional erotic behavior to provide sexual arousal. However, the term porn here is used by taking advantage of the nature of the word itself. The term porn is a word intended to describe situations that aim to arouse and stimulate the audience, provoking emotional sensations through visuals (Jensen, T. 2014). We often find this term in content tagged with food porn or travel porn. So that porn here can be interpreted as a denotation in the media that intends to exaggerate objects (Feona, 2011), and contains implied euphoria in its presentation (McBride, 2010).

The term poverty porn used here is also based on the element of consumption. Both classic pornography and poverty porn make people consume certain narratives and want to do something (Mascovich, 2017). Both have the same monetary value that comes from the exploitation of individuals or groups. It is this exploitation that has an impact on public perception, policies, creating power imbalances between the poor who are exploited and the audience that watches the media.

Therefore the researcher chose this topic to be explored further. Especially about how the audience responds to the content. This research will use qualitative methods, and data will be collected through interviews and researchers will also collect various comments in the content. Researchers hope that this research can open our horizons about poverty porn content in Indonesia.

## **1.1 Research Objective**

This study aims to study audience perceptions that lead to the behavior of giving donations in any form in poverty porn content. So the results of this study are to show audience behavior in today's new media, which describes the perceptions, habits, and behavior of audiences in poverty porn content.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Based on the research background and research focus, the researcher formulates research questions, among others:

- a. How is the audience's assessment (in the poverty porn category perspective) of poverty porn content on social media?
- b. What are the intention factors that drive the audience to give gifts online to poverty porn content?

## **1.3 Significance and Contribution**

Each research has theoretical and practical benefits and advantages that can be applied in human life.

### **1.3.1 Theoretical Contribution**

This research is expected to be able to develop knowledge in the study of Communication Studies, especially related to audience studies of poverty porn content circulating in Indonesian society. With this research, researchers hope to be able to describe how the development of behavior, habits, and audience perceptions in social media.

### **1.3.2 Practical Contribution**

Practically, it is hoped that this research can provide input to the community about poverty that is traded, does not develop, and maintains the myth of poverty in society. So that the root causes of poverty can be addressed properly. In addition, with an overview of poverty porn content that is increasingly developing, it is expected that the government will contribute in making policies on social media.

#### 1.4 Time and Location of Research

*Table 1. 1 Time and Research Period*

No	Activities	2022		2023								
		11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1	Selection of research themes											
2	Preparation of proposals											
3	Desk Evaluation											
4	Content Analysis											
5	Interview											
6	Processing and data analysis											
7	Preparation of chapters IV and V											
8	Thesis Submission											
9	Thesis Defense											

(Source: researcher, 2023)