



SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE POETRY ANTHOLOGY *SUARA DARI KELAS KECIL*

Nurul Utami Khairunnisa¹, La Ode Syukur², Haerun Ana³

¹ Universitas Halu Oleo

² Universitas Halu Oleo

³ Universitas Halu Oleo

Correspondence: author1@email.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 2 January 2026

Revised: 10 January 2026

Published: 11 January 2026

Page: 67-73

Keyword:

Social issues; poetry; sociology of literature; social criticism

ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the forms of social issues represented in the poetry anthology *Suara dari Kelas Kecil*. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method using a sociology of literature approach. The data consist of words, phrases, and poetic lines found in ten selected poems that reflect social realities and social criticism. Data were collected through library research and close reading techniques, then analyzed by classifying and interpreting the identified social issues based on their thematic relevance.

The findings indicate that the poems in *Suara dari Kelas Kecil* portray various social issues that reflect contemporary societal conditions. These issues include poverty, crime, social conflict, violations of social norms, discrimination, and corruption. Poverty is depicted through the portrayal of marginalized groups struggling to meet basic needs, while crime and corruption are presented as structural problems resulting from weak moral values and ineffective governance. Social conflict and norm violations emerge from injustice and power imbalance, whereas discrimination reflects unequal treatment toward certain social groups. This study concludes that the poems in *Suara dari Kelas Kecil* function not only as aesthetic literary expressions but also as a medium of social criticism that voices the concerns of marginalized communities. Through a sociology of literature perspective, the anthology demonstrates that poetry plays a significant role in reflecting social realities and fostering critical awareness among readers regarding ongoing social problems.



© 2026 The Authors. Published by Sastra Cendekia. This is an open access article under the CC BY license <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a cultural product that cannot be separated from the social reality of society. Literary works are born as an author's response to the surrounding social, political, economic, and cultural conditions. Endraswara (2011) asserts that literature functions as a mirror of society because it contains reflections of social life in its era. Aligned with this view, Wellek and Warren (1995) state that literary works do not stand as autonomous entities but rather present complex social lives through the author's subjective perspective.

Poetry, as a literary genre, possesses high expressive power in voicing social criticism. It allows poets to convey anxiety, resistance, and critiques of social injustice through symbolic and imaginative language. Setyorini (2014) explains that poetry does not only highlight linguistic beauty but also carries social messages that serve as a means of ideological communication between the author and society. Therefore, poetry

is frequently used as a medium to expose issues of poverty, oppression, the violation of norms, and the abuse of power.

Within the perspective of the sociology of literature, a literary work is understood as the result of a dialectic between the author, the work, and society. Ratna (2003) emphasizes that the sociology of literature examines literary works by considering the totality of the underlying social aspects. This view is reinforced by Soekanto (2012), who states that social problems stem from imbalances in the social system—whether economic, cultural, or structural—and often become subjects of reflection in literary works.

Various studies indicate that poetry consistently represents social criticism in diverse forms. Suprpti (2023), in her study of the poetry collection *Memamah Daun Terbang*, found that poetry is capable of depicting the social conditions of society, particularly economic inequality and social system failures, through a sociology of literature approach. Similar findings were presented by Veronica et al. (2021), who concluded that the poems of Taufiq Ismail and Wiji Thukul serve as tools for criticizing political crises, economic issues, and human rights violations.

Furthermore, social criticism in poetry is often conveyed through specific aesthetic strategies. Massaguni and Hartono (2025) demonstrate that the use of irony and metaphor in political poetry plays a vital role in delivering critiques against the dominance of power and the manipulation of public discourse. Thus, poetry does not merely present social reality descriptively but also constructs critical meanings that challenge readers to engage in social reflection.

Social criticism in Indonesian literature is also prominent in studies highlighting issues of poverty, crime, and the violation of social norms. Silaban and Harahap (2025), in their research on W.S. Rendra's anthology *Doa untuk Anak Cucu*, reveal that poetry becomes an expressive medium for voicing social inequality, corrupt bureaucracy, and the moral crisis of society. This research affirms that poetry has a strategic function as a means of social control and public awareness education.

Meanwhile, studies on prose also demonstrate a close link between literature and social problems. Sya'baan and Tike (2022) found that the novels *Negeri Para Bedebah* and *Negeri di Ujung Tanduk* by Tere Liye represent social criticism in the form of white-collar crime, legal mafias, and moral degradation through a sociology of literature approach. This finding strengthens the argument that literature, whether poetry or prose, plays a significant role in exposing problematic social realities.

Other research by Dona et al. (2023) also shows that social realities such as poverty, criminality, family disorganization, and the violation of community norms are strongly represented in the novel *Merpati Biru* by Achmad Munif. The results of this study confirm that literature serves as an articulatory space for marginalized social voices that often escape the attention of official discourse.

Although much research has been conducted on criticism and social problems in literary works, studies specifically focusing on social issues within the poetry anthology *Suara dari Kelas Kecil* remain relatively limited. Previous research has generally highlighted the works of major poets or focused on stylistic and ideological aspects, while poems born from educational contexts and the voices of marginal classes have not been extensively analyzed.

Consequently, there is a research gap that needs to be addressed: a study that systematically identifies and describes the forms of social problems in the poetry

anthology *Suara dari Kelas Kecil* using a sociology of literature approach. This research is essential to enrich Indonesian literary studies while reaffirming the role of poetry as a medium for social criticism and a reflection of contemporary societal realities.

Based on this background, this study aims to describe the types and forms of social problems found in the poems of the anthology *Suara dari Kelas Kecil* through a sociology of literature approach.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. Qualitative research was selected because the data analyzed consist of linguistic expressions, meanings, and interpretations found in literary texts rather than numerical data. The descriptive orientation of this study aims to systematically describe social problems represented in poetry based on textual evidence.

The research applied a sociology of literature approach, which views literary works as reflections of social reality and as a medium for social criticism. This approach enables the analysis of poetry in relation to the social conditions, values, and structures that influence its creation. Through this perspective, the poems are examined to reveal representations of social issues such as poverty, crime, social conflict, discrimination, violations of social norms, and corruption.

The data source of this study was the poetry anthology *Suara dari Kelas Kecil*. The data consisted of poetic lines, phrases, words, and stanzas that contain indications of social problems. The unit of analysis was textual evidence within the poems that reflects social realities and social criticism.

Data were collected through library research and close reading techniques. The poems were read repeatedly to achieve a comprehensive understanding of their meanings and contexts. Relevant data were identified, noted, and classified according to the types of social problems they represent.

Data analysis was conducted through several interconnected stages. First, relevant data related to social problems were selected and reduced. Second, the data were classified into categories of social problems. Third, the classified data were interpreted using the sociology of literature perspective to reveal the relationship between poetic expressions and the social realities they represent. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on recurring patterns and dominant social issues identified in the poems.

To ensure the validity of the findings, theoretical triangulation was applied by comparing the interpretations with established theories in sociology and literary studies. Continuous reading and re-examination of the data were also conducted to maintain interpretive consistency and minimize subjective bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results indicate that the poems in the book *Suara Dari Kelas Kecil* (Voices from the Small Classroom) do not only represent the social issues of their time but also remain profoundly relevant to the contemporary social conditions of Indonesian society. These poems serve as a medium for critical reflection on structural inequality, moral crises, and the lopsided power relations between the elite and the common people.

1. Poverty as a Contemporary Structural Issue

The representation of poverty in the poems *Ini Sandiwara Apa* and *Dari Atas Menara* shows that poverty is understood as a product of social and political systems, rather than merely an individual's economic limitation.

The verse:

“What kind of drama is this staged upon the screams of the destitute”

illustrates a reality where public policy often appears as a symbolic performance—welfare rhetoric, political promises, and aid programs—that fails to touch the root causes of poverty. This condition remains relevant today, as poverty alleviation programs are often administrative and unevenly distributed, while disparities in access to education, employment, and economic capital remain high.

Poverty is also depicted as a structural inheritance in the verse:

“runny-nosed children tugging at the clothes of pilgrims”

This imagery parallels modern urban social realities, such as the increase in child labor, street beggars, and informal sector workers due to limited formal employment. The poetry thus reflects the state's failure to guarantee equitable social mobility.

2. Crime and the Crisis of State Governance

The issue of crime in the poems *Karena la Bernama Indonesia* and *Indonesiaku* represents structural and systemic crime, which remains a primary concern for the Indonesian public.

The verse:

“There should be no unemployed on the streets or families lacking food”

depicts the irony between natural wealth and the suffering of the people. This analysis is relevant to contemporary conditions where Indonesia possesses abundant resources, yet the distribution of development outcomes is not yet fully just. Phenomena such as educated unemployment, illegal migrant workers, and extreme poverty show that structural crime does not always take the form of conventional criminality, but also policies that do not favor the people.

The poem *Indonesiaku* reinforces this crisis through the verse:

“A land full of questions a den of thieves”

which reflects the decline of public trust in state institutions. In the current social context, this crisis of confidence is visible in the widespread public criticism of public policies, law enforcement, and political elites perceived as failing to represent the people's interests.

3. Social Conflict and Tension Between State and Citizens

Social conflict in the poems *Seribu Malu* and *Demo I* indicates that conflict arises as an accumulation of collective disappointment due to prolonged injustice.

The phrase:

“a thousand shames breaking through”

represents the internal and social conflict experienced by the community when values of justice and social dignity are violated. Currently, such conflicts manifest in increasing social polarization, agrarian disputes, and tensions between local communities and corporate capital.

The poem *Demo I* shows a form of open resistance through the verse:

“Those mothers push forward their eyes burning”

This imagery is relevant to contemporary phenomena where civil society groups—including women—actively voice protests against policies deemed unfair. Demonstrations are positioned not as anarchic acts, but as an expression of citizens' rights within a democratic space.

4. Violations of Social Norms and the Public Moral Crisis

The poem *Ini Zaman Apa* highlights the violation of social norms as a result of the normalization of deviant behavior within power structures.

The verse:

“Husband and wife rob the people's money”

shows that the violation of norms has permeated the private and family spheres. In today's social context, this aligns with the rise of corruption cases involving family networks and power circles, demonstrating the blurred lines between public and private interests.

The expression:

“Corruption becomes the solution”

reflects a social reality where success is often measured materially, making instant methods—despite violating laws and norms—a chosen path. The poem criticizes the degradation of ethical values that remains a serious issue in national life.

5. Discrimination and Inequality of Social Rights

The issue of discrimination in the poems *Kredo* and *Ketakutanku* shows that injustice is not only economic but also touches upon basic rights and the sense of security.

The verse:

“the state birds that you set free”

represents the preferential treatment given to certain groups, while others remain confined. This phenomenon is relevant to current social conditions, such as discrimination based on social status, ethnicity, gender, and region, which is still frequently found in access to education, employment, and legal justice.

In the poem *Ketakutanku*, the verse:

“Only my fear pierces my chest”

shows the psychological impact of discrimination. This collective fear is still felt by the public when facing legal uncertainty, repressiveness, and power imbalances, which ultimately weakens social participation.

6. Corruption as a Persistent Social Disease

Corruption in the poem *Aku Merindukan Lirih Pidato Politikmu Kepada Koruptor* is positioned as a chronic social disease that has not been fully resolved.

The verse:

“crying in front of the screen but laughing behind the curtain”

represents the political hypocrisy that remains relevant in the context of elite "image-building" in the media. This poem criticizes symbolic anti-corruption practices that are not followed by systemic change.

The phrase:

“corruption makes this nation mentally ill”

asserts that the impact of corruption is not only economic but also destroys morals, social trust, and the future of generations. This condition is still evident in Indonesian society, where corruption cases continue to emerge, fueling public skepticism toward law enforcement commitments.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the poems in the anthology *Suara dari Kelas Kecil* strongly represent various social problems that reflect the realities of contemporary society. Through the perspective of the sociology of literature, the poems function not only as aesthetic expressions but also as a medium of social criticism that articulates the voices of marginalized groups and exposes structural inequalities.

The analysis reveals that social problems depicted in the poems include poverty, crime, social conflict, discrimination, violations of social norms, and corruption. These issues are presented through symbolic language, imagery, and poetic expressions that reflect the poets' sensitivity to social injustice and moral degradation in society. The findings confirm that poetry serves as an effective literary form for conveying criticism of social conditions that are often normalized or ignored in everyday life.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the sociology of literature approach is effective in uncovering the relationship between literary texts and social realities. The poems in *Suara dari Kelas Kecil* illustrate how literary works are shaped by social contexts and, in turn, contribute to raising social awareness among readers.

In conclusion, this research reinforces the role of poetry as a reflective and critical medium that not only documents social problems but also invites readers to engage in critical reflection on societal conditions. Future research is encouraged to explore similar themes in other literary genres or to apply interdisciplinary approaches in order to broaden the understanding of literature as a form of social discourse.

REFERENCES

- Dona, M. R., Dinar, S. S., & Sya'baan, A. M. R. (2023). Realitas sosial dalam novel *Merpati Biru* karya Achmad Munif. *Bastra: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 8(3), 307–316.
- Endraswara, S. (2011). *Metodologi penelitian sastra*. CAPS.
- Massaguni, M., & Hartono, B. (2025). Ironi dan metafora sebagai kritik sosial dalam puisi “Mayat Politik Ditutupi Koran Pagi”: Telaah stilistika. *Jurnal Riset Rumpun Ilmu Bahasa*, 4(3), 236–245. <https://doi.org/10.55606/jurribah.v4i3.6892>
- Ratna, N. K. (2003). *Paradigma sosiologi sastra*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Setyorini, R. (2014). *Kajian sastra: Teori dan praktik*. Graha Ilmu.
- Silaban, P., & Harahap, R. (2025). Potret kritik sosial dalam antologi puisi *Doa untuk Anak Cucu* karya W. S. Rendra. *CARONG: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Humaniora*, 1(4), 603–614. <https://doi.org/10.62710/m2h4az78>
- Soekanto, S. (2012). *Sosiologi suatu pengantar*. Rajawali Pers.
- Suprpti. (2023). Kritik sosial dalam kumpulan puisi *Memamah Daun Terbang* karya Widi Suharto, Sri Kuncorowati, dan Bangkit Adi Swasono. *Technical and Vocational Education International Journal*, 3(2), 1–8.
- Sya'baan, A. M. R., & Tike, L. (2022). Masalah-Masalah Sosial Dalam Novel Negeri Para Bedebah Dan Negeri Di Ujung Tanduk Karya Tere Liye Sosiologi Sastra Ian Watt. *Jurnal Bastra (Bahasa Dan Sastra)*, 7(3), 523-531.
- Veronica, C., Athira, S., & Azmin, G. G. (2021). Kritik sosial dalam puisi “Dari Catatan Seorang Demonstran” karya Taufiq Ismail dan puisi “Puisi Sikap” karya Wiji Thukul. *Seulas Pinang: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 3(2), 18–24.
- Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (1995). *Teori kesusastraan*. Gramedia.