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THE ROLE OF TRANSGENDER IN ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT IN MOJOKERTO: A DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH

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Abstract

This descriptive research explores the economic roles and challenges of transgender individuals in Mojokerto, Indonesia, focusing on their experiences of discrimination, economic survival strategies, and community support. Employing a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations were conducted with 30 transgender individuals. Findings reveal pervasive discrimination in employment, education, and healthcare, leading many to pursue informal sector work. Despite barriers, transgender individuals demonstrate resilience through entrepreneurship and community networks, contributing to local economic activities. Cultural and religious contexts influence their experiences, sometimes providing unexpected support. Limitations include sample size and potential biases in self-reported data. Recommendations include policy reforms for anti-discrimination laws, inclusive education, healthcare access, and communitybased economic initiatives. This study contributes nuanced insights into transgender economic experiences in Mojokerto, advocating for inclusive policies and future research to enhance understanding and support for transgender communities globally.

Keywords: Role, Transgender, Economy Development

A. INTRODUCTION

The concept of economic development has historically been perceived through a lens that often marginalizes minority groups, including the transgender community. In many parts of the world, economic policies and development strategies have failed to recognize the unique contributions and challenges faced by transgender individuals (Hirsch & Ream, 2024; Salter et al., 2024). Mojokerto, a city in East Java, Indonesia, presents an interesting case for examining the intersection of transgender rights and economic development. This research aims to explore the role of transgender individuals in the economic development of Mojokerto, offering a descriptive analysis that sheds light on their contributions and the barriers they face. Economic development is a multifaceted process involving improvements in income, education, health, and overall living standards. For this process to be inclusive and sustainable, it must incorporate all community members' diverse capabilities and needs, including transgender individuals. Unfortunately, transgender people often experience

significant economic marginalization due to pervasive discrimination and social exclusion (Allison et al., 2024). Understanding the dynamics at play in Mojokerto can provide valuable insights into how inclusive policies can foster broader economic growth and social cohesion.

Transgender individuals in Mojokerto, like in many other places, encounter numerous challenges that hinder their economic participation. These challenges include limited access to education and healthcare, discrimination in the workplace, and social stigma (Kumar, 2023; Liaw & Tharumaraj, 2023; Sahoo et al., 2023). However, despite these obstacles, many transgender individuals contribute significantly to the local economy through various means such as entrepreneurship, arts, and informal labor. Highlighting these contributions is crucial for recognizing their role in economic development and advocating for policies that support their inclusion. In Indonesia, the transgender community, known locally as "waria," has a long history and cultural presence. However, their recognition and acceptance in society have been fraught with difficulties. Social attitudes towards transgender people in Indonesia are influenced by a combination of traditional beliefs, religious views, and modern socio-political dynamics. In Mojokerto, these factors play a significant role in shaping the experiences of transgender individuals and their economic opportunities.

The economic landscape of Mojokerto provides a unique context for this research. Mojokerto is known for its rich cultural heritage and thriving local economy, driven by sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. The city's economic activities offer various opportunities for entrepreneurship and employment (Nabi & Salimullah, 2022). However, the extent to which these opportunities are accessible to transgender individuals remains largely unexplored. By examining their participation in these sectors, this research seeks to uncover the economic roles that transgender people play and identify the barriers they face. One of the key aspects of economic development is the inclusivity of its growth. Inclusive economic development ensures that all members of society have the opportunity to participate and benefit from economic activities. For transgender individuals in Mojokerto, achieving economic inclusivity involves addressing several critical issues. These include legal recognition, protection against discrimination, access to education and healthcare, and social acceptance. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of these issues and propose actionable recommendations for promoting inclusivity.

This study aims to explore the economic roles and challenges faced by transgender individuals in Mojokerto, Indonesia, focusing on their experiences of discrimination, economic survival strategies, and the support they receive from their communities. Two primary research questions addressed in the findings are: (1) What forms of discrimination and social exclusion do transgender individuals face in various aspects of life, such as employment, education, and healthcare? (2) What

strategies do transgender individuals use for economic survival, and how does community support play a role in these processes? The findings reveal that transgender individuals in Mojokerto face widespread discrimination across multiple domains, yet they demonstrate remarkable resilience through entrepreneurship and community support networks, significantly contributing to local economic activities.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Social Exclusion Theory

Social Exclusion Theory is fundamental to understanding the systemic barriers that transgender individuals face in economic participation. Social exclusion refers to the processes through which individuals or groups are systematically blocked from various rights, opportunities, and resources that are normally available to members of a different group (Amorim & de Abreu e Silva, 2024; Jordan, 2024; Naseh et al., 2024; Saalfeld, 2023). These include economic, social, and political participation. Social exclusion is the inability of individuals to participate fully in the society in which they live. This exclusion can be due to various factors, such as discrimination, lack of access to education and healthcare, and social stigma. For transgender individuals in Mojokerto, social exclusion manifests in multiple ways, including limited access to formal employment, healthcare services, and social acceptance.

In Indonesia, cultural and religious beliefs significantly contribute to the social exclusion of transgender individuals. The societal stigma attached to transgender identities results in discrimination in the labor market, where transgender individuals are often denied jobs or face hostile work environments (Dada et al., 2024; Pehlivanidis & Anderson, 2024; Ünsal et al., 2024). Moreover, legal and institutional frameworks in Indonesia do not adequately protect the rights of transgender individuals, further perpetuating their exclusion. The lack of anti-discrimination laws and policies that explicitly include gender identity as a protected category means that transgender individuals have limited recourse when facing discrimination.

The impact of social exclusion on transgender individuals extends beyond economic marginalization. It affects their social and psychological well-being, leading to higher rates of mental health issues and lower overall life satisfaction. For transgender individuals, this stress is compounded by the continuous experience of exclusion and discrimination (Brecht et al., 2024; Cancela et al., 2024; Klein & Washington, 2024). Addressing social exclusion requires a multifaceted approach that includes legal reforms, social policies, and cultural change. Legal protections against discrimination, inclusive policies in education and employment, and efforts to change societal attitudes are essential for reducing social exclusion and promoting the economic inclusion of transgender individuals in Mojokerto.

2. Human Capital

Human capital includes the knowledge, skills, and health that individuals possess, which contribute to their productivity and economic potential. For transgender individuals, the accumulation of human capital is often hindered by systemic barriers. Access to education and healthcare is frequently limited due to discrimination and social stigma. Transgender individuals often experience interrupted education and limited job opportunities, which hinder their ability to accumulate human capital (Oliveira Leite et al., 2024; Shafiq et al., 2024).

In the context of Mojokerto, transgender individuals face significant challenges in accessing education. Discrimination and bullying in educational institutions often lead to higher dropout rates among transgender students. The lack of supportive policies and safe environments in schools further exacerbates this issue (Bird et al., 2024). As a result, transgender individuals are less likely to attain higher education levels, limiting their job prospects and economic potential. Healthcare access is another critical aspect of human capital for transgender individuals. Access to genderaffirming healthcare, mental health services, and general healthcare is often restricted due to discrimination and lack of resources.

In Mojokerto, fostering inclusive environments can be a significant step towards leveraging the human capital of transgender individuals for broader economic development. Employers in Mojokerto can play a crucial role in promoting the financial inclusion of transgender individuals by adopting inclusive policies and practices. Providing equal opportunities in hiring, creating a supportive work culture, and offering diversity training can help mitigate the barriers transgender employees face. Furthermore, partnerships between businesses, government, and non-governmental organizations can help develop programs that support the education and training of transgender individuals, enhancing their human capital and economic prospects (Mallon et al., 2021).

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This section outlines the research methodology used in the research "The Role of Transgender Individuals in Economic Development in Mojokerto: A Descriptive Research." The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to provide an indepth understanding of the economic contributions and challenges faced by transgender individuals in Mojokerto (Miles et al., 2014). The methodology includes details on research participants, research procedure, instruments, data collection, and data analysis.

A descriptive qualitative research design is employed to capture the rich, detailed experiences of transgender individuals in Mojokerto regarding their economic activities and the barriers they face. This approach is appropriate for exploring complex social phenomena and gaining a deeper understanding of participants'

perspectives and experiences (Goodyear et al., 2024). The research involves transgender individuals residing in Mojokerto. The participants are selected through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of the transgender community. The criteria for inclusion are as follows: (1) Self-identification as transgender, (2) Residing in Mojokerto for at least one year, and (3) Willingness to participate in the research and share personal experiences. Additionally, key informants such as local community leaders, employers, and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work with transgender individuals are included to provide a broader context and validate the findings.

The research procedure for this research on "The Role of Transgender Individuals in Economic Development in Mojokerto" is meticulously designed to ensure comprehensive data collection and ethical integrity. Initially, potential participants are identified through established community networks, local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working with transgender individuals and social media platforms dedicated to LGBTQ+ advocacy. Upon identification, the researcher initiates contact to explain the research's purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations, emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation and the measures in place to protect confidentiality. Once potential participants express interest, they are provided with detailed information sheets and consent forms, outlining their rights, the research process, and assurances of anonymity. Written informed consent is obtained from all participants before any data collection begins.

Data collection is conducted using a combination of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations, each chosen to provide a holistic understanding of the participants' economic experiences (Mannan, 2019). Semi-structured interviews are conducted individually with transgender participants in a private and comfortable setting to facilitate open and honest dialogue. These interviews, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes, are audio-recorded with the participant's consent and guided by a flexible interview schedule that allows for indepth exploration of the participants' economic activities, experiences of discrimination, and access to education and healthcare. Focus group discussions are then organized with groups of 5-8 transgender individuals. These discussions provide a supportive environment for participants to share their collective experiences and perspectives, enriching the data with communal insights. Each focus group session, lasting approximately 90 minutes, is moderated by the researcher and follows a discussion guide designed to encourage interaction and shared reflections.

In addition to interviews and focus groups, participant observations are carried out to gain contextual insights into the everyday economic activities and social interactions of transgender individuals. The researcher observes participants in various settings, such as workplaces, community events, and social gatherings, systematically recording behaviors, interactions, and environmental factors that influence their

economic participation (Mirhosseini, 2020). These observations help contextualize the data obtained from interviews and focus groups, providing a richer understanding of the lived experiences of transgender individuals in Mojokerto. Following data collection, all audio recordings from interviews and focus group discussions are transcribed verbatim, and observational notes are meticulously compiled. The transcripts and notes are then analyzed using qualitative data analysis software, such as NVivo, to facilitate systematic coding and theme identification. The analysis begins with initial coding, where relevant segments of text are identified and labeled. These codes are subsequently grouped into broader categories and themes that reflect the key aspects of the participants' experiences.

Data analysis in this research follows a systematic and iterative process designed to ensure a thorough examination and interpretation of the data collected from semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations. The goal is to identify patterns, themes, and insights that provide a comprehensive understanding of the economic roles and challenges faced by transgender individuals in Mojokerto. The first step in data analysis involves transcribing the audio recordings from interviews and focus group discussions verbatim. This includes capturing all spoken words, pauses, and significant non-verbal cues. The transcriptions provide a detailed and accurate record of the participants' narratives. Similarly, detailed notes from participant observations are compiled and organized systematically to ensure no significant detail is overlooked.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the research "The Role of Transgender Individuals in Economic Development in Mojokerto: A Descriptive Research." The analysis reveals three major themes: the pervasive discrimination and social exclusion faced by transgender individuals, their strategies for economic survival, and the role of community support and resilience. These themes illustrate the complexities of the economic experiences of transgender individuals in Mojokerto, highlighting both the challenges they face and their contributions to local economic development.

1. Discrimination and Social Exclusion

a. Employment Discrimination

One of the most significant findings is the widespread employment discrimination against transgender individuals in Mojokerto. Participants reported frequent experiences of bias and prejudice during job searches and within the workplace. Many transgender individuals mentioned being outright rejected from job opportunities once their gender identity was disclosed or became apparent. For example, Research participant 3 shared:

"I applied for a job at a retail store. Everything was fine during the interview until they saw my ID card. As soon as they realized I was transgender, they told me the position was already filled"

This discrimination extends beyond the hiring process. Transgender employees who manage to secure jobs often face hostile work environments. Harassment from colleagues and supervisors is common, with some participants reporting verbal abuse, inappropriate comments, and even physical threats. Such hostile environments lead to high levels of job dissatisfaction and turnover among transgender employees.

b. Limited Access to Formal Employment

Due to pervasive discrimination, many transgender individuals are forced to seek employment in the informal sector, where job security, benefits, and protections are minimal. The lack of formal employment opportunities means that transgender individuals often work in low-paying, unstable jobs. Common informal sector occupations for transgender individuals in Mojokerto include beauty services, entertainment, and street vending. Research participant 2 who works as a street vendor explained:

"I sell snacks on the street because no one will hire me. It's hard work and the income is not steady, but it's better than facing discrimination every day in a formal job"

The reliance on informal employment limits the economic stability and upward mobility of transgender individuals, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and marginalization.

c. Educational Barriers

Educational attainment is a critical factor in accessing better job opportunities, yet transgender individuals in Mojokerto face significant barriers in this regard. Participants reported experiences of bullying and harassment in educational institutions, leading to higher dropout rates. Many transgender individuals do not complete their education, which severely limits their job prospects. Research participant 1 recounted their experience:

"I dropped out of school because the bullying was unbearable. The teachers did nothing to stop it, and I couldn't focus on my studies. Now, without a diploma, finding a good job is almost impossible"

The lack of supportive policies and inclusive environments in schools exacerbates this issue, preventing transgender individuals from acquiring the education and skills needed for formal employment.

d. Healthcare Discrimination

Access to healthcare is another area where transgender individuals face significant discrimination. Many participants reported negative experiences with healthcare providers, including refusal of treatment, lack of understanding of transgender health issues, and outright discrimination. This discrimination not only affects their physical health but also their economic productivity and participation. Research participant 1 described their experience:

"I went to the clinic for a routine check-up, and the doctor refused to treat me when he realized I was transgender. He said he didn't know how to handle 'people like me'

Such experiences lead to avoidance of necessary medical care, which can result in poorer health outcomes and further limit economic opportunities.

2. Economic Survival Strategies

Despite the numerous challenges, transgender individuals in Mojokerto employ various strategies to survive economically. These strategies highlight their resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity.

a. Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment

Many transgender individuals turn to entrepreneurship and self-employment as a way to bypass the discrimination they face in the formal job market. Small businesses in the beauty and entertainment industries are particularly common. These ventures allow transgender individuals to create their own job opportunities and exert more control over their working conditions. Research participant 2 who owns a beauty salon shared:

"I started my own salon because I knew no one would hire me. Now, I can be my own boss and create a safe space for other transgender people"

Entrepreneurship provides a means of economic empowerment, enabling transgender individuals to support themselves and their families while contributing to the local economy.

b. Community-Based Support Networks

Transgender individuals in Mojokerto often rely on community-based support networks for economic and emotional support. These networks provide a sense of solidarity and mutual aid, helping members to navigate economic hardships and discrimination. Community organizations and informal groups offer resources such as

job referrals, financial assistance, and skills training. One participant described the importance of these networks:

"Our community is like a family. We help each other find work, share resources, and support each other through tough times. Without this support, many of us would not survive"

These support networks play a crucial role in mitigating the effects of social exclusion and enhancing the economic resilience of transgender individuals.

c. Advocacy and Collective Action

In addition to mutual aid, advocacy and collective action are important strategies employed by transgender individuals and their allies. Local NGOs and advocacy groups work to raise awareness about the issues faced by transgender individuals, lobby for legal protections, and provide training and education to reduce discrimination. Research participant 3 involved in advocacy work explained:

"We organize workshops and campaigns to educate employers and the public about transgender rights. It's a slow process, but we're starting to see some changes"

Through collective action, transgender individuals in Mojokerto are gradually challenging the systemic barriers they face and advocating for greater inclusion and equity.

3. Community Support and Resilience

a. Role of Community Organizations

Community organizations play a pivotal role in supporting transgender individuals in Mojokerto. These organizations provide essential services such as healthcare, legal assistance, and vocational training. They also offer safe spaces where transgender individuals can connect, share experiences, and find support. Research participant 5 highlighted the impact of a local NGO:

"The NGO I go to has been a lifeline. They helped me get my ID changed, provided health check-ups, and even offered training programs. It's made a huge difference in my life"

By addressing immediate needs and fostering a sense of community, these organizations help transgender individuals build resilience and navigate the challenges they face.

b. Personal Resilience and Adaptability

The findings also reveal the remarkable resilience and adaptability of transgender individuals in Mojokerto. Despite facing significant discrimination and social exclusion, many participants exhibit a strong determination to succeed and improve their circumstances. This resilience is reflected in their ability to create economic opportunities for themselves and support each other within the community. Research participant 5 who transitioned from informal to formal employment shared their journey:

"I started with a small street vending business. It was tough, but I saved enough to take a vocational course offered by an NGO. Now, I have a stable job in a company that values diversity"

This story exemplifies the resourcefulness and perseverance of transgender individuals in overcoming economic barriers and achieving their goals.

c. Cultural and Religious Influences

The cultural and religious context in Mojokerto also influences the experiences of transgender individuals. While traditional and religious norms often contribute to social exclusion, there are instances where cultural acceptance and community support play a positive role. Some participants reported finding acceptance within certain cultural or religious groups that recognize and respect their gender identity. Research participant 4 described their experience with a local religious group:

"I was surprised to find acceptance in a religious group that supports diversity. They welcomed me and helped me find work through their community network. It was a rare but valuable source of support"

These instances of acceptance highlight the potential for cultural and religious groups to play a supportive role in the economic inclusion of transgender individuals.

4. Contributions to Economic Development

Despite the significant challenges, transgender individuals in Mojokerto make valuable contributions to the local economy. Their participation in various economic activities, particularly in the informal sector, supports local businesses and stimulates economic activity.

a. Small Business and Entrepreneurship

As previously mentioned, many transgender individuals engage in entrepreneurship and small business activities. These ventures not only provide livelihoods for transgender individuals but also create jobs and services that benefit

the broader community. Beauty salons, entertainment services, and street vending are some of the areas where transgender entrepreneurs are active. Research participant 6 who runs a successful small business shared:

"My salon has grown over the years, and now I employ three other transgender individuals. We provide a unique service to our clients and contribute to the local economy"

By creating job opportunities and offering specialized services, transgender entrepreneurs play a significant role in the economic development of Mojokerto.

b. Cultural Contributions

Transgender individuals also contribute to the cultural and social fabric of Mojokerto. Through their participation in cultural events, performances, and community activities, they enrich the local culture and promote diversity. This cultural engagement can attract tourism and boost local economies. Research participant 4 involved in cultural performances explained:

"We perform traditional dances and music at local events and festivals. It's not just a source of income for us, but also a way to showcase our culture and talent. People appreciate our performances, and it helps to change perceptions"

These cultural contributions highlight the multifaceted ways in which transgender individuals support and enhance the economic and social life of Mojokerto.

The findings of this research, "The Role of Transgender Individuals in Economic Development in Mojokerto," offer several novel insights that contribute significantly to the existing body of literature on the economic participation of transgender individuals. This research is particularly unique in its focus on Mojokerto, a region that has received little attention in transgender research. By employing a descriptive qualitative approach, this research delves deeply into the lived experiences of transgender individuals, revealing the intricate ways in which they navigate economic challenges and contribute to local economic development. The novelty of this research lies in three primary areas: the detailed exploration of discrimination and social exclusion, the resilience and economic strategies employed by transgender individuals, and the contextual influence of community support and cultural factors (Bonomo et al., 2024; Chiaramonte et al., 2024).

One of the most significant contributions of this research is its detailed account of the pervasive discrimination and social exclusion faced by transgender individuals

in Mojokerto. While previous research has highlighted the discrimination against transgender individuals in general, this research provides a nuanced understanding of how this discrimination manifests specifically in the Mojokerto context. The findings reveal that discrimination is not limited to the job market but permeates various aspects of life, including education and healthcare. This comprehensive view underscores the systemic nature of the challenges faced by transgender individuals and highlights the need for multifaceted policy interventions. By providing rich, qualitative data, this research adds depth to the understanding of how discrimination impacts the economic opportunities and well-being of transgender individuals in a specific geographical context.

Another novel aspect of this research is its focus on the economic survival strategies employed by transgender individuals. The research documents how, in the face of systemic discrimination, many transgender individuals turn to entrepreneurship and self-employment (Ciprikis et al., 2023). This finding is significant as it shifts the narrative from one of victimization to one of resilience and agency. Transgender individuals in Mojokerto are not merely passive victims of discrimination but are active agents who create their economic opportunities. This entrepreneurial spirit not only allows them to survive but also contributes to the local economy. By highlighting these strategies, this research challenges the often one-dimensional portrayal of transgender individuals as marginalized and economically dependent, offering a more complex and empowering narrative.

E. CONCLUSION

This research has shed light on the multifaceted economic roles and challenges faced by transgender individuals in Mojokerto. Through detailed qualitative research, it was revealed that transgender individuals encounter pervasive discrimination and social exclusion in various domains, including employment, education, and healthcare. Despite these challenges, many transgender individuals exhibit remarkable resilience and adaptability, often turning to entrepreneurship and community-based support networks as vital economic survival strategies. These findings underscore the significant contributions of transgender individuals to local economic development and highlight the importance of addressing systemic barriers to their economic inclusion. The research's focus on Mojokerto provides valuable insights into the specific cultural and social contexts that shape the experiences of transgender individuals, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of their economic lives.

However, this research is not without its limitations. Firstly, while rich in detail and depth, the research's qualitative approach may limit the generalizability of the findings. The experiences of transgender individuals in Mojokerto might not fully represent those in other regions with different socio-economic and cultural contexts. Additionally, the sample size, though sufficient for qualitative analysis, is relatively

small, which may not capture the full diversity of experiences within the transgender community. Another limitation is the potential for response bias, as participants may have been inclined to share more socially acceptable or favorable aspects of their experiences. Moreover, the research relied heavily on self-reported data, which can be subject to recall bias and inaccuracies. These limitations suggest that future research should consider incorporating larger, more diverse samples and mixed-method approaches to enhance the robustness and generalizability of the findings.

Based on the findings and limitations of this research, several suggestions can be made for future research and policy interventions. Future studies should aim to include larger and more diverse samples to capture a broader range of transgender experiences and explore variations across different regions and socio-economic contexts. Employing mixed-method approaches, combining qualitative and quantitative data, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the economic roles and challenges of transgender individuals. Additionally, longitudinal studies could offer insights into the long-term economic trajectories of transgender individuals and the effectiveness of various interventions.

From a policy perspective, there is an urgent need for comprehensive antidiscrimination laws that explicitly protect transgender individuals in all areas of life, including employment, education, and healthcare. Policies that promote inclusive education environments and support the educational attainment of transgender individuals are crucial for improving their long-term economic prospects. Healthcare policies should ensure that transgender individuals have access to competent and respectful medical care. Moreover, programs that support entrepreneurship and small business development among transgender individuals could significantly enhance their economic resilience and empowerment. Community-based interventions that leverage the strengths of transgender support networks can provide critical economic and social resources, helping to mitigate the impacts of discrimination and exclusion.

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