

TRANSGENDER IN ACHIEVING THE SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY IN PEMATANGSIANTAR

**Donny Paskah Martianus Siburian¹, Harmona Daulay², Junjungan SBP
Simanjuntak³, Rizabuana Ismail⁴, Hadriana Marhaeni Munthe.⁵**

^{1,2,3,4,5} Sociology Master Study Program, Universitas Sumatra Utara, Jalan Dr. T. Mansur No.9,
Padang Bulan, Kec. Medan Baru, Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia, donipasca@gmail.com

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.21107/pamator.v15i2.18870>

Manuscript received 1st February 2023, Revised 6th February 2023, Published 15th February 2023

Abstract

Society expects men to behave in a masculine manner and fulfill traditional male roles, while women are expected to behave in a feminine manner and exhibit normal heterosexual behavior, such as engaging in sexual relations with the opposite sex. The existence of transgender individuals in society is often perceived as deviant. The purpose of this research is to examine the community's stereotypes towards transgender individuals in Pematangsiantar City and the adaptation strategies implemented by transgender individuals who are accepted in society. This research employs a mixed-method approach, with a focus on qualitative data analysis supplemented by quantitative data. The results of this study indicate that various negative stereotypes are associated with transgender individuals in Pematangsiantar City. Consequently, transgender individuals must use various strategies and make efforts to adapt and be accepted as themselves and as members of society. This research can serve as a reference for addressing social life and social status as a transgender individual amidst society.

Keywords: Transgender, Adaptation, Stereotypes, Social, Acceptability.

© Authors; This is an Open Access Research distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>) which allows re-distribution and re-use of a licensed work on the conditions that the creator is appropriately credited and that any derivative work is made available under “the same, similar or a compatible license”.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings and their environment are inseparable, both from the natural environment and from the social environment.¹ The natural environment, functioning as an ecosystem, plays a critical role in sustaining life. In contrast, the social environment, serving as a venue for social interaction, is equally important and contributes to the shaping of individuals.² Behavioral patterns of individuals can vary depending on the

¹ Eko Mulyadi, E Oktavianisya, and Z Rafti Ulfa, ‘Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual Self Esteem: Finding and Concerns’, in *1st Annual International Conference on Natural and Social Science Education (ICNSSE 2020)* (Atlantis Press, 2021), pp. 375–79 <<https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210430.058>>.

² Haryo Prakoso Adhi Purwanto and Irfan Wahyudi, ‘Standardized Instruments for Assessing Psychiatric, Behavioral, Sexual Problems, and Quality of Life in Male and Female Adults with Disorders of Sex Development in Indonesia’, *F1000Research*, 11.1536 (2022), 1536 <<https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.128054.1>>.

conditions of both environments. In a social environment, humans are constantly controlled by values and social norms. These values and norms become part of an individual through the ongoing socialization process. This is referred to as "acquired behavior," which assumes that humans are not fully formed at birth but are continually shaped through the processes they experience. Various theoretical perspectives regarding the development of this behavior illustrate the complexity of the human body as a biological entity, with the energy within the human system maintaining its relationship with the external world.³ According to Koentjaraningrat, the development of this behavior cannot be separated from environmental influences throughout an individual's lifetime.⁴ As a result, individuals feel compelled to remain in harmony with expected behavior and constructs based on references⁵ to certain environmental groups⁶ within which they reside.⁷

In Indonesia, there are typically only two gender categories: men and women. Each gender is constructed within its own position and cannot be interchanged. Men are associated with masculinity while women are associated with femininity. There is no room for those who do not conform to these gender norms, and they are often considered "deviant" or abnormal.⁸ However, in reality, there are men who dress,⁹ act, and look like women, commonly known as transgender individuals. In Indonesian society, the presence of transgender individuals is a controversial issue. While their existence is not always rejected in certain contexts, negative stigma towards them remains a common belief, and society does not welcome what is considered "unnatural" in the same way. Previous studies related to this research have been conducted, including research by Surahman which showed that transgender women face discrimination in the formal sector, as well as difficulty obtaining citizenship documents such as identity cards. Other studies conducted in the Western world, such as the work by Lisa R. Miller and Eric Anthony Grollman in *The Social Costs of Gender Nonconformity for Transgender Adults: Implications for Discrimination and Health in America*, have shown that transgender individuals are stigmatized in societies that adhere to a binary gender system. Society does not offer social space or recognition for individuals who identify with a gender other than the sex assigned to them at birth, therefore, decisions to undergo gender transition, including medical

³ Claire A Coyne and others, 'Evidence-Based Psychological Practice for Transgender and Non-Binary Youth: Defining the Need, Framework for Treatment Adaptation, and Future Directions', *Evidence-Based Practice in Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 5.3 (2020), 340–53 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/23794925.2020.1765433>>.

⁴ Yuda Syahputra and others, 'Development Aninventory of Homosexuality and Transgender Exposure (IHTE): A Rasch Analysis', *Konselor*, 8.4 (2019), 120–33 <<https://doi.org/10.24036/0201984105894-0-00>>.

⁵ Adihartono; Jocson W. Ellisiah Uy, 'A Comparative Analysis of the Status of Homosexual Men in Indonesia and the Philippines', *JSEHR*, 4 (2020), 271.

⁶ Jessie Olivia Yunus and others, 'Web-Based Multifaceted Approach for Community-Based HIV Self-Testing Among Female Sex Workers in Indonesia: Protocol for a Randomized Community Trial', *JMIR Research Protocols*, 10.7 (2021), e27168 <<https://doi.org/10.2196/27168>>.

⁷ Ngakan Putu Anom Harjana, 'Setara Mobile App: Comprehensive HIV Services for Men Who Have Sex with Men and Transgender Women during COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia', *Kumpulan Karya Esai Juara*, 1 (2022), 79.

⁸ Jessica Chandra, Marselius Sampe Tondok, and Soffy Belgies, 'Indonesian Students' Prejudice against Homosexuals: Religious Fundamentalism and Intergroup Threat as Predictors', *Humaniora*, 13.3 (2022), 255–64.

⁹ Nurul Ummah, Mokhamad Najeh, and Tongat Tongat, 'Transgender in Indonesia According to The Legal, Health and Culture Perspective', in *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Indonesian Legal Studies, ICILS 2020, July 1st 2020, Semarang, Indonesia* (EAI, 2021) <<https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.1-7-2020.2303651>>.

changes, often carry major social, economic, and legal risks, including discrimination in institutional and interpersonal arenas.¹⁰

Another study entitled "Understanding discrimination faced by transgender people in health and social care" aimed to identify whether there is a positive correlation between inclusive legal gender recognition procedures and the welfare of transgender people in Europe. The study found that there is discrimination in health and social care, leading to unmet health needs and a lower sense of well-being among transgender individuals. This population has a higher prevalence of depression, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts. Supporting this, Mia's research indicated that transgender women are at greater risk of suffering from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS due to the stigma attached to their identity, which keeps them away from health information or creates reluctance to seek health checks at health services for fear of being labeled with a negative stigma. In addition, in the Indonesian context, Afanda's research (2013) in Pinrang district showed that society dislikes transgender due to structural and cultural pressures that affect the internalization of society towards the image of transgender individuals. Negative stereotypes are attached to transgender individuals, which lead to their efforts to be accepted by society. This research is supported by another study entitled "Family and Social Acceptance of Transgender Women in the Midst of Stigmatization in Indonesia," which analyzed transgender individuals' efforts to demonstrate their existence to be accepted by families and society. The study found that transgender individuals can prove their existence through their socio-economic roles so that families and communities have no reason to reject them. From the several studies above, it can be concluded that transgender individuals are vulnerable to social pressure in various conditions, zones, and contexts.

This research shares similarities with the aforementioned studies regarding the examination of transgender individuals, yet offers a novel perspective through its analysis of the city of Pematangsiantar. This area is known for its diverse ethnic and cultural pluralism, making it an urban melting pot city in Indonesia where gender norms are particularly strong. The study's main focus is to investigate the various stereotypes held by society towards transgender individuals in Pematangsiantar, as well as to comprehensively describe the strategies used by transgender individuals to cope with social pressures stemming from these stereotypes.

Pematangsiantar is a city located in Indonesia. In this city, there is a location where transgender individuals gather at midnight, in the Pematangsiantar Train Station area. It is alleged that this gathering has been taking place since 2005, as reported by a news article published in the Medan Tribune on February 13, 2017. Unfortunately, negative stigma towards transgender individuals in Pematangsiantar has resulted in a bad reputation for the area around the Pematangsiantar Train Station. Transgender individuals in this area are often associated with social ills such as promiscuity, drug use, and homosexuality due to these stereotypes. To combat these stereotypes and seek acceptance, transgender individuals in Pematangsiantar have responded with certain interventions and treatments aimed at achieving social acceptability. This ability to seek acceptance includes all

¹⁰ Jón Ingvar Kjaran and Mohammad Naeimi, 'Politics of Modernity: Hybridity, Sexual Politics, and Queer Movements in the Global South', in *Queer Social Movements and Activism in Indonesia and Malaysia* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), pp. 73–102 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15809-4_4>.

endeavors that transgender individuals undertake, both actual and potential, that could lead to their actions being accepted and manifested through their behavior and treatment.¹¹

RESEARCH METHODS

The issue under investigation led the authors to employ a descriptive qualitative research methodology that focuses on the experiences of transgender individuals and residents living in the vicinity of Pematangsiantar. The authors utilized a qualitative approach that recognizes that humans are best understood within contextual frameworks, rather than through causal laws.¹² Data was collected using interviews and questionnaires that focused on the substance of meaning. The authors distributed questionnaires to 50 residents living in close proximity to transgender individuals in Pematangsiantar, as indicated in the table, to complement the interviews, which sought to provide a descriptive explanation of the phenomenon. According to Miles and Huberman, the activities involved in qualitative data analysis are interactive and ongoing until data saturation is achieved. The authors drew conclusions by formulating them as categories and sub-subjects for the research discussion.¹³

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The social nature of human existence is an undeniable attribute bestowed upon humanity by a divine power. Humans, in addition to being individuals, are also social beings. Abraham Maslow identified five fundamental human needs, including physiological needs, security needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. The social needs identified in Maslow's hierarchy can be met through positive interactions with the surrounding environment. Acceptance is the ability to relate to others without feeling the need to control them, recognizing and respecting them as individuals deserving of respect. Social acceptability, according to Chaplin (1995), emphasizes the appreciation of an individual's values as a whole, creating appreciation and providing comfort to individuals or groups. As previously mentioned, Maslow's hierarchy comprises five basic human needs: physiological, safety, social, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs. Social acceptability is a part of human social needs that leads to feelings of security. Chaplin (1995) posits that social adjustment efforts are actions taken by individuals or groups to foster a harmonious relationship with their social environment. This process occurs continuously during individual or group interactions with others. With proper adjustment efforts, individuals can effectively perform their functions in society. The degree to which individuals or groups can respond to social situations without causing significant conflict is a visible manifestation of successful social adjustment efforts. Social

¹¹ Walter O Bockting and others, 'The Transgender Identity Survey: A Measure of Internalized Transphobia', *LGBT Health*, 7.1 (2020), 15–27 <<https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2018.0265>>.

¹² Chana Etengoff and others, 'Bisexual Indonesian Men's Experiences of Islam, the Quran and Allah: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Spiritual Resistance', *Journal of Bisexuality*, 22.1 (2022), 116–44 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2021.2022557>>.

¹³ Rezki Pratami and Togi Prima Hasiholan, 'Representasi Maskulinitas Pria Dalam Iklan Televisi Men's Biore Cool Oil Clear', *Jurnal Komunikasi*, 14.2 (2020), 119–38 <<https://doi.org/10.20885/komunikasi.vol14.iss2.art2>>.

adjustment can be categorized as either autoplasic (changing oneself to fit environmental conditions) or alloplastic (changing the environment to fit personal circumstances).¹⁴

The social pressures experienced by transgender women stem from the concept of compulsory heterosexuality, which views the connection between gender identity and biological sex as essential for reproduction. Constructed gender identity always refers to normative gender orientation based on one's biological sex. Sex or gender is akin to a seed, while gender is akin to a leaf or stem that grows from it. Judith Butler contends that the body and sex cannot be predicated solely on an individual's biological means of reproduction. Butler defines gender as an identity that is tenuously constituted in time and in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of an act. This explanation highlights that gender identity is formed without a clear foundation or basis, and that over time, gender becomes institutionalized through the repetition of actions. The concept of gender and gender relations is shaped by power relations that control knowledge. Butler proposes a theory of performativity, which suggests that the relationship between gender and sex in society is not essential in shaping one's gender identity. According to Butler, the transgender phenomenon demonstrates that gender construction has no clear basis and can change.¹⁵

According to Butler, gender is not formed based on a singular "something", whether it be an individual's biological identity or the construction of gender through certain concepts. Rather, gender is formed without a clear foundation and is not a one-time event, but rather an ongoing process that is created through the repetition of certain actions. Gender is a "performance", not an essence, or a reflection of the biological sex that is present in the body. For instance, when an individual is asked to indicate their gender on a form, they are not merely informing others of their gender, but rather actively forming and constructing their gender. Beginning in childhood, individuals internalize certain language and gestures, which they continue to repeat throughout their lives, giving rise to notions of masculinity and femininity. Transgender individuals perform certain actions that reference previous actions which are associated with femininity, such as long hair and graceful body language. Gender in relation to sex is instilled in individuals during childhood through the socialization of what it means to be a man or woman, and this process continues throughout their lives.¹⁶ When someone expresses their body in a way that does not conform to the gender performativity enforced in heterosexual society, they are considered abnormal.

Causal factors of transgender

The etiology of transgender identity is a multifaceted phenomenon, involving both biological and environmental factors. Hormonal and chromosomal abnormalities have been suggested as potential biological causes, while environmental influences, such as childhood trauma or social pressures to conform to gender norms, have also been

¹⁴ Novita Ashari, 'Konsep Diri Waria (Fenomena Waria Di Akademi Pariwisata Makassar)', *JIVA: Journal of Behaviour and Mental Health*, 2.2 (2021), 167–79 <<https://doi.org/10.30984/JIVA.V2I2.1769>>.

¹⁵ Marhaeni Munthe, Pakpak Community, A Case Study, and Julu Village, 'Phenomenon of Women Marginalization in Poor Family In', 06.06 (2017), 38–51.

¹⁶ Hadriana Marhaeni Munthe, Harmona Daulay, and Napsiah Napsiah, 'Kebertahanan Janda Kristen Batak Toba Dalam Hidup Menjanda Setelah Cerai Mati Dan Cerai Hidup', *Kurios*, 2020 <<https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v6i2.178>>.

implicated. In addition, external factors such as peer group dynamics and parental attitudes may play a role in the development of transgender identity, as observed. Specific limiting factors that have been identified include parental encouragement of feminine behavior, excessive maternal care and protection, the absence of a male role model, and a lack of male playmates. It is important to note that transgender identity arises from a complex interplay of multiple factors, and cannot be attributed solely to one specific cause. Therefore, a holistic perspective is necessary to fully understand the process of transgender formation.

The economic aspect of being transgender is a significant issue as transgender individuals are often not accepted in public. Unfortunately, the Labor Law of Indonesia (No. 13/2003) does not explicitly include sexual orientation or gender identity as a basis for prohibited discrimination. As a result, their employment options are limited to busking, working in salons, and some even resort to prostitution to meet their material and biological needs. This further complicates the ability of transgender individuals to negotiate fair wages and working conditions. The implications of such discrimination have a direct impact on employment opportunities and access to the economy. In the experience of some transgender individuals, they are forced to abandon their transgender identity in order to achieve economic stability. This often leads to a reliance on nightlife activities, such as singing and prostitution, for income.

The denial of access to gender normativity violates a person's identity and results in a fundamental breach of state obligations. The lack of legal recognition of a person's gender has negative implications on various aspects of their life, including exclusion from social settings and work opportunities. In the Pematangsiantar area, field observations and informant interviews revealed that working as a freelancer, such as opening a beauty salon, is the most feasible option for transgender individuals. However, the wages received as a worker in a salon are disproportionate. For instance, according to Novi, a transgender informant, they are paid only Rp. 20,000-30,000 for each person for a haircut or make-up. Although the average number of salon visitors per day is around 10 people, when divided among four employees, each would only earn a daily salary of Rp. 40,000-60,000. In contrast, if transgender individuals engage in prostitution, they can earn a much higher salary despite shorter working hours, with an average of four clients per day at a rate of Rp. 30,000-50,000 per client, resulting in a daily salary of Rp. 120,000-200,000. In Pematangasiantar, transgender individuals face a vicious cycle of economic and social difficulties due to the prevailing discriminatory attitudes and denial of their existence in society. This lack of equal opportunities to access resources and opportunities forces them to take inappropriate shortcuts, such as engaging in sex work as transgender prostitutes.

Social Acceptance

While some gay and lesbian individuals may avoid being identified as such to escape stigma and discrimination, transgender individuals are particularly vulnerable to discrimination. In Indonesia, phobias surrounding transgender issues are often rooted in views and attitudes that stem from a lack of compassion. In other words, certain individuals are unable to recognize and respect others as individuals and instead adhere to conservative interpretations of religious teachings. Ignorance can drive some individuals to act aggressively towards transgender individuals.

Tabel 1. The social acceptance towards transgender

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Accept	24	48
Refuse	26	52
Total	50	100

The existence of transgender individuals is not always viewed positively and can become a source of conflict within communities, as they may be either accepted or rejected by society. Initially, transgender individuals faced rejection and conditional compromise as they attempted to integrate into society. This conditional rejection and compromise arose due to the varying levels of acceptance among community members. As a result, a process of externalization took place within society. The results of the study, as illustrated in the table above, indicate that out of the 50 participants, 24 individuals (48%) accepted the presence of transgender individuals in the community, while 26 individuals (52%) did not accept or rejected their presence. There are two opposing perspectives within society regarding the existence of transgender individuals: those who support their presence and those who oppose it. Society's rejection of transgender individuals is often based on their status or label as deviants who are perceived as unworthy of living among "normal" people. One of the informants, Erick Sitanggang, expressed discomfort with the presence of transgender individuals in his community, stating that "sometimes their (transgender individuals) behavior is inappropriate, such as throwing their used contraceptives in public areas. However, there seems to be little that can be done about it."

The results of this study indicate that acceptance of transgender individuals in society is often divided into two contexts: individual acceptance and community acceptance. Individual acceptance is based on the daily social behavior exhibited by transgender individuals, regardless of the community. In the second context, the social construction of transgender individuals is often associated with prostitution, free sex, and sexual disease. This reflects a dialectical relationship between transgender individuals and their social environment. The dialectical relationship arises due to the objective and subjective dimensions of everyday life, where humans create objective social realities through externalization processes that subsequently affect them through internalization processes.

Transgender Stereotypes and Social Construction in Society

The Social Construction of Disease in Society

The term "social disease" refers to a condition that is deemed to be inconsistent with prevailing legal norms, customs, and practices. This perception of a social disease represents a consequence for members of society who fail to conform to and align with prevailing values. Transgender individuals are often regarded as a social disease that is capable of being contagious.

Tabel 2. Views on social diseases

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	29	58
Disagree	21	42
Total	50	100

According to the findings of this study, the community's perception of transgender individuals reveals that 29 people (58%) agree that being transgender is a social disease, while 21 people (42%) disagree. Transgender individuals are viewed as deviants who are not in line with societal norms and are considered to be a contagious social disease. This negative stereotype towards transgender individuals is perpetuated by the societal belief in a "stable point of reference," which asserts that there are only two sexes: male and female. The formation of gender and biological sex are interconnected with the normative status and hegemony of heterosexuality, where gender is perceived as a direct manifestation and result of biological sex. Biological sex is considered the "essence" or "interior core" that must be excluded and actualized into gender roles and expression. Sex is also viewed as the root cause of gender desire. For instance, if someone has a penis, they must wear male attributes and like women, while if someone has a vagina, they must wear female attributes and like men. The concept of a "stable point of reference"¹⁷ creates role differentiation, behavior, mentality, characteristics, and emotions for individuals based on their sex in social life. Society determines the actions of individuals and groups by citing and referring to the norms of knowledge that are part of the heterosexual matrix. This standard of values reinforces normative heterosexuality and stigmatizes transgender individuals by questioning their gender identity and rejecting them as "real" men or women.

Sexual Orientation Deviance

The sexual behavior of transgender individuals is characterized by engaging in oral and anal activities. This study views such behavior as deviant, given that transgender individuals are attracted to males, which is considered abnormal from a normative gender perspective, as they are expected to be attracted to the opposite sex, namely females..

Tabel 3. Views on sexual orientation deviations

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	44	88
Disagree	6	12
Total	50	100

According to the survey conducted, 44 respondents (88%) agreed that transgender individuals are part of sexual deviance, while only 6 respondents (12%) disagreed. Transgender individuals are often viewed as deviant due to their sexual orientation, which is perceived as incompatible with compulsory heterosexuality. In society, sexuality is considered a natural and innate factor determined by an individual's biological reproductive organs. However, individuals who identify as transgender often feel a gender that does not align with their biological sex. Similar to homosexuals, transgender individuals experience sexual attraction to individuals of the same gender. In order to align themselves with their preferred gender, transgender individuals may engage in sexual practices such as anal sex or oral sex, where they stimulate their partner's sexual organs using their anus or mouth respectively. This behavior is perceived as deviant by society, not only because of their gender uncertainty but also due to their perceived inappropriate sexual behavior that is inconsistent with the destiny assigned by God.

¹⁷ Roby Yansyah and Rahayu Rahayu, 'Globalisasi Lesbian, Gay, Biseksual, Dan Transgender (Lgbt): Perspektif Ham Dan Agama Dalam Lingkup Hukum Di Indonesia', *LAW REFORM*, 14.1 (2018), 132 <<https://doi.org/10.14710/lr.v14i1.20242>>.

The Social Construction of Transgender as a Curse

In social discourse, the label of curse is often attached to certain groups or individuals who are perceived as bringing misfortune or suffering to society. Transgender individuals are one such group that has been subjected to this label, where they are considered to be cursed and bring bad luck. This negative perception of transgender individuals is often perpetuated by societal beliefs and norms that are informed by religious, cultural, and historical contexts. As an example, Tini, a transgender woman aged 55, shared her experience of being labeled as a curse by society. She revealed that people often sneered and cynically looked at her, viewing her as someone who brings bad luck similar to the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, Tini denies this label and asserts that transgender individuals do not actually bring bad luck. This stigmatization of transgender individuals as a curse is a form of social construction that is influenced by prevailing societal norms and beliefs. Such labeling has far-reaching consequences on the lives of transgender individuals, as it leads to their marginalization and exclusion from mainstream society. Therefore, it is crucial to challenge these negative perceptions and promote a more inclusive and accepting attitude towards transgender individuals.

Tabel 4. The Respondents of Transgender is a curse

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	10	20
Disagree	40	80
Total	50	100

The findings of this research suggest that transgender individuals are often subjected to discrimination by certain religious groups who doctrinally reject their existence. This stereotype is influenced by conservative interpretations of religious texts, such as accounts of the Sodom incident in religious books like the Quran and the Bible. For instance, the Quran in Surah Al-Naml 27: 54-55 states that Lot said to his people, "Do you approach men with lust, not women? Even you are a very stupid people." Similarly, in the Bible in Ezekiel 16:49-50, it is said that Sodom's fault was "committing abominations" before God, with the root of the word "abomination" referring to detestable lack of morality, as in Leviticus 18:22 where it is used to describe homosexuality. These religious interpretations have contributed to the social construction of transgender individuals as a curse or a source of bad luck, as seen in the statement of Tini (55 years) who reported being viewed as a bringer of bad luck like Sodom and Gomorrah. This stigmatization can have serious consequences for transgender individuals, including discrimination, marginalization, and even violence. It is therefore important to challenge such harmful stereotypes and promote greater acceptance and understanding of diverse gender identities. The impact of religion on people's attitudes towards transgender individuals in their social environment is significant, as it serves a positive function in regulating their behavior and preventing practices that are prohibited in the story of Sodom. However, it cannot be denied that religion also has a negative function in this context. In a religiously-inclined society, religious teachings and symbols can become a potent social force, as religion is considered the ultimate concern. Throughout history, there have been numerous instances of human tragedies stemming from religious fervor. This phenomenon needs to be anticipated and addressed to prevent the legitimization of acts of violence against transgender individuals.

According to the table presented, it can be observed that 20% of the participants regarded transgender as a curse in society, whereas 80% disagreed with this notion, indicating a relatively mature and tolerant interpretation of the role of religion towards respecting human dignity, including towards transgender individuals. However, such stereotypes, particularly those with religious connotations, have the potential to become pervasive and hence require a thorough investigation from various angles. At the structural level, stigma and discrimination can negatively impact the access of transgender individuals to healthcare services, including HIV/AIDS testing and treatment, as they may avoid seeking such services due to shame arising from their gender identity. To address this, the local government in Pematangsiantar City has provided free contraceptives to transgender individuals in the area to prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases. Understanding the history and consequences of stigma, such as discrimination, can help develop better strategies to combat or mitigate its effects. Therefore, the authors recommend that sexual health and prevention measures should not be limited to risk behaviors and practices but should also promote a culture of non-discrimination and respect for gender differences and sexual orientation.

Transgender Adaptation: Achieving Social Acceptance

Transgender individuals often face social pressure due to the stereotypes and negative attitudes towards them. In order to survive in such an environment, they employ strategies and make efforts to gain social acceptance. These efforts are both internal and external in nature. Additionally, transgender individuals may also engage in activities that aim to change social attitudes towards them, such as participating in advocacy and awareness campaigns or sharing their personal stories to increase understanding and empathy. These efforts require significant courage, perseverance, and resilience on the part of transgender individuals, who often face significant barriers in achieving social acceptance.

Get involved in public activities

To increase their social acceptability, transgender individuals can also get involved in public activities. This includes participating in community service, volunteering for charitable causes, and engaging in political advocacy. By doing so, they can show their commitment to making a positive impact on society and break down negative stereotypes about the transgender community. Additionally, public involvement can help build connections with others who may not have had previous exposure to transgender individuals, leading to increased understanding and acceptance.

Making Transgender organization

The organization held regular meetings to discuss various issues related to the transgender community, as well as to plan and organize activities aimed at promoting transgender rights and combating discrimination. One of the strategies used by the Perwasis organization to gain social acceptance and combat discrimination was to actively participate in public activities. For example, members of Perwasis participated in the annual Pematangsiantar City anniversary parade by dressing up in colorful costumes and joining the parade. This helped to raise awareness and visibility of the transgender community in the city, and also showed the community's willingness to be involved in public activities. Another way in which Perwasis members sought to gain social acceptance was by providing educational sessions on issues related to transgender identity

and sexual health. For example, they organized discussions and workshops on HIV/AIDS prevention, safe sex practices, and other health-related topics. Through these activities, Perwasis members aimed to educate both the transgender community and the wider public about the importance of accepting and supporting transgender people. In summary, the Perwasis organization provides an example of how transgender individuals can come together and organize themselves in order to gain social acceptance and combat discrimination. By participating in public activities and providing educational sessions, the organization works to raise awareness of transgender issues and promote a culture of tolerance and acceptance.

Adjusting Masculine Appearance During the Day: The Rational Action

Transgender individuals realize that their acceptance or rejection in society is largely determined by the positive activities they engage in as part of their social environment. Although they strongly desire to be recognized as women through their clothing and make-up, ambivalence arises as they also desire a normal social life without negative labeling. As a result, they adjust their appearance to appear as manly as possible during the day, which enables them to socialize and mingle with others. This positive image as a manly man is meant to gain the trust of society, as they follow the rules of society, reducing negative bullying and enabling them to freely associate with others. In line with Max Weber's theory of rationality action, this adaptation is due to expectations of the behavior of objects in their environment, which are then manifested in actions taken to achieve these rational goals. Transgender individuals thus engage in rational actions to adapt to the norms of society.¹⁸

Cohesion Among Transgender People

Group cohesion refers to the force that binds group members together and keeps them within the group. In the case of transgender individuals, group cohesion gives them a sense of solidarity and belonging, preventing them from leaving the group. Transgender individuals exhibit strong cohesion with each other, as evidenced by their choice to live in close proximity to one another and their tendency to engage in daily activities together. According to Devi, "We live close together (laughs) so we are already like sisters." The labeling and stereotypes associated with transgender individuals often lead them to mingle and live within their own community and circles. This shared sense of fate and destiny further strengthens the bonds among transgender individuals. Many transgender individuals have moved away from their families due to unacceptance or to maintain the family's reputation, as having a transgender child is often seen as a disgrace in Indonesia. This shared experience of rejection creates a sense of protectiveness and mutual support among fellow transgender individuals.

Conditional Ignorance

Conditional ignorance is a coping mechanism employed by transgender individuals in response to social stigma and exclusion from society. Transgender individuals choose to ignore mocking and verbal harassment, as long as it does not escalate into physical harassment. From a symbolic interaction perspective, conditional ignorance can be seen as

¹⁸ Dianita Halim and Tundjung Herning Sitabuana, 'Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Narapidana LGBT Di Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Menurut Konsepsi Hak Asasi Manusia', *Prosiding SENAPENMAS*, 2021, 1385 <<https://doi.org/10.24912/psenapenmas.v0i0.15209>>.

a reaction to the symbols used by others. This behavior is a common response to the symbolic stimuli present in society, as reported by all of the informants.

CONCLUSION

In Pematangsiantar, social perceptions about transgender people are heavily influenced by religious values, patriarchal culture, and heteronormativity. As a result, transgender individuals are marginalized in society and face significant discrimination and stigmatization. However, it was found that transgender individuals often survive by adapting to be accepted by society. This acceptance is divided into two contexts: individual and community acceptance. Individual acceptance depends on the daily social behavior of the transgender individual, while community acceptance is hindered by historical and social constructions that perpetuate negative stereotypes and rejection of transgender people. Despite this, transgender individuals strive to be recognized and accepted for who they are, but are often marginalized due to societal stereotypes, which limits their access to economic, social, and health resources. It is crucial to address these issues and create a more inclusive society that values and respects all individuals, regardless of their gender identity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ashari, Novita, 'Konsep Diri Waria (Fenomena Waria Di Akademi Pariwisata Makassar)', *JIVA: Journal of Behaviour and Mental Health*, 2.2 (2021), 167–79 <<https://doi.org/10.30984/JIVA.V2I2.1769>>
- Bockting, Walter O, Michael H Miner, Rebecca E Swinburne Romine, Curtis Dolezal, Beatrice "Bean" E Robinson, B.R. Simon Rosser, and others, 'The Transgender Identity Survey: A Measure of Internalized Transphobia', *LGBT Health*, 7.1 (2020), 15–27 <<https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2018.0265>>
- Chandra, Jessica, Marselius Sampe Tondok, and Soffy Belgies, 'Indonesian Students' Prejudice against Homosexuals: Religious Fundamentalism and Intergroup Threat as Predictors', *Humaniora*, 13.3 (2022), 255–64
- Community, Pakpak, A Case Study, and Julu Village, 'Phenomenon of Women Marginalization in Poor Family In', 06.06 (2017), 38–51
- Coyne, Claire A, Jonathan L Poquiz, Aron Janssen, and Diane Chen, 'Evidence-Based Psychological Practice for Transgender and Non-Binary Youth: Defining the Need, Framework for Treatment Adaptation, and Future Directions', *Evidence-Based Practice in Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 5.3 (2020), 340–53 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/23794925.2020.1765433>>
- Etengoff, Chana, Eric M Rodriguez, Felix Kurniawan, and Elizabeth Uribe, 'Bisexual Indonesian Men's Experiences of Islam, the Quran and Allah: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Spiritual Resistance', *Journal of Bisexuality*, 22.1 (2022), 116–44 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2021.2022557>>
- Halim, Dianita, and Tundjung Herning Sitabuana, 'PERLINDUNGAN HUKUM TERHADAP NARAPIDANA LGBT DI LEMBAGA PEMASYARAKATAN MENURUT KONSEPSI HAK ASASI MANUSIA', *Prosiding SENAPENMAS*, 2021, 1385 <<https://doi.org/10.24912/psenapenmas.v0i0.15209>>
- Harjana, Ngakan Putu Anom, 'Setara Mobile App: Comprehensive HIV Services for Men Who Have Sex with Men and Transgender Women during COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia', *Kumpulan Karya Esai Juara*, 1 (2022), 79
- Ismail, R. (2009). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. USUpres.

- Kjaran, Jón Ingvar, and Mohammad Naeimi, 'Politics of Modernity: Hybridity, Sexual Politics, and Queer Movements in the Global South', in *Queer Social Movements and Activism in Indonesia and Malaysia* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), pp. 73–102 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15809-4_4>
- Kosho, Philippa Philomena, Deassy Jacomina Anthoneta Hehanussa, and Yonna Beatrix Salamor, 'Perlindungan Hukum Bagi Transgender Sebagai Warga Binaan Masyarakat', *TATOHI: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum*, 1.6 (2021), 609–17 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47268/tatohi.v1i6.644>>
- Kurniawati, Nur Hafni, Endang Sri Lestari, Siti Aizatin, and Arbert Kristanto, 'Transgender Dalam Perspektif Hukum Kesehatan', *Spektrum Hukum*, 16.2 (2019) <<https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.35973/sh.v16i2.1205>>
- Maharani, Suci, and Ashif Az Zafi, 'Respon Masyarakat Kepada Pelaku Transgender', *Jurnal Intelektualita: Keislaman, Sosial Dan Sains*, 9.1 (2020), 193–202 <<https://doi.org/10.19109/intelektualita.v9i1.5603>>
- Mulyadi, Eko, E Oktavianisya, and Z Rafti Ulfa, 'Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual Self Esteem: Finding and Concerns', in *1st Annual International Conference on Natural and Social Science Education (ICNSSE 2020)* (Atlantis Press, 2021), pp. 375–79 <<https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210430.058>>
- Munthe, Hadriana Marhaeni, Harmona Daulay, and Napsiah Napsiah, 'Kebertahanan Janda Kristen Batak Toba Dalam Hidup Menjanda Setelah Cerai Mati Dan Cerai Hidup', *Kurios*, 2020 <<https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v6i2.178>>
- Panonsih, Resati Nando, Ade Utia Detty, Arif Effendi, and Rika Arianofela, 'Hubungan Pendidikan Dan Pekerjaan Dengan Kecemasan Pada Gay, Transgender, LSL Bandar Lampung', *ARTERI: Jurnal Ilmu Kesehatan*, 1.3 (2020), 212–18 <<https://doi.org/10.37148/arteri.v1i3.62>>
- Pratami, Rezki, and Togi Prima Hasiholan, 'Representasi Maskulinitas Pria Dalam Iklan Televisi Men's Biore Cool Oil Clear', *Jurnal Komunikasi*, 14.2 (2020), 119–38 <<https://doi.org/10.20885/komunikasi.vol14.iss2.art2>>
- Purwanto, Haryo Prakoso Adhi, and Irfan Wahyudi, 'Standardized Instruments for Assessing Psychiatric, Behavioral, Sexual Problems, and Quality of Life in Male and Female Adults with Disorders of Sex Development in Indonesia', *F1000Research*, 11.1536 (2022), 1536 <<https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.128054.1>>
- Putri, Nadila Utami, Samudera Wijaya, Amirudin Imam Nur, and Sulistya Eviningrum, 'Kepastian Hukum Bagi Transgender Di Indonesia', in *Proceeding of Conference on Law and Social Studies*, 2022 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47268/tatohi.v1i6.644>>
- Sekerbayeva, Zhanar, 'Processes, Main Actors and Narratives Employed in Shaping Transgender Subjectivities in Kazakhstan', in *Understanding Actors and Processes Shaping Transgender Subjectivities: A Case Study of Kazakhstan* (Springer, 2022), pp. 73–114 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-4563-2_5>
- Sibirian, Donny, 'MENGUGAT PERCERAIAN: KEKERASAN GENDER DALAM PRAKTEK PAULAKHON PADA MASYARAKAT BATAK TOBA', *Sosiologi: Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Ilmu Sosial Dan Budaya*, 23.2 (2021), 211–25 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.23960/sosiologi.v23i2.111>>
- Syahputra, Yuda, Stefanus Soejanto Sandjaja, Afdal Afdal, and Zadrian Ardi, 'Development Aninventory of Homosexuality and Transgender Exposure (IHTE): A Rasch Analysis', *Konselor*, 8.4 (2019), 120–33 <<https://doi.org/10.24036/0201984105894-0-00>>
- Ummah, Nurul, Mokhammad Najeh, and Tongat Tongat, 'Transgender in Indonesia

-
- According to The Legal, Health and Culture Perspective’, in *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Indonesian Legal Studies, ICILS 2020, July 1st 2020, Semarang, Indonesia* (EAI, 2021) <<https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.1-7-2020.2303651>>
- ‘View of Problematika Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Kelompok Lesbian, Gay, Biseksual, Dan Transgender (Lgbt) Dalam Perspektif Ham Internasional’ <<https://ejournal2.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/GLR/article/view/1501/738>> [accessed 3 February 2023]
- W. Ellisiah Uy, Adihartono; Jocson, ‘A Comparative Analysis of the Status of Homosexual Men in Indonesia and the Philippines’, *JSEAHR*, 4 (2020), 271
- Yansyah, Roby, and Rahayu Rahayu, ‘Globalisasi Lesbian, Gay, Biseksual, Dan Transgender (Lgbt): Perspektif Ham Dan Agama Dalam Lingkup Hukum Di Indonesia’, *LAW REFORM*, 14.1 (2018), 132 <<https://doi.org/10.14710/lr.v14i1.20242>>
- Yunus, Jessie Olivia, Anak Agung Sagung Sawitri, Dewa Nyoman Wirawan, I Gusti Agung Agus Mahendra, Dewi Susanti, Ni Kadek Ayu Dwi Utami Ds, and others, ‘Web-Based Multifaceted Approach for Community-Based HIV Self-Testing Among Female Sex Workers in Indonesia: Protocol for a Randomized Community Trial’, *JMIR Research Protocols*, 10.7 (2021), e27168 <<https://doi.org/10.2196/27168>>
- Zulfi, Danang Ardiansyah, ‘Larangan LGBT Menjadi Aparatur Sipil Negara Di Kejaksaan Agung’, *Mimbar Keadilan*, 14.1 (2021), 51–62 <<https://doi.org/10.30996/mk.v14i1.4356>>