

MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: ADAPTATION STRATEGIES OF TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS IN INDONESIA

KOMUNITAS MARJINAL PADA MASA PANDEMI COVID-19: STRATEGI ADAPTASI INDIVIDU TRANSGENDER DI INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected various sectors of Indonesian society, compelling them to adapt. As one of the gender minority groups in a relatively conservative country, the transgender community has undoubtedly been impacted by it, bringing forth its own complexities. This research aims to analyze transgender individuals' adaptation during the pandemic. This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive method employing in-depth interview techniques involving a total of ten people from various cities and regencies across Indonesia. Data analysis was conducted through transcription, categorization, and data review in alignment with existing theories. This research shows that transgender individuals in Indonesia faced a decline in income, discrimination in accessing healthcare facilities, and difficulties in securing employment. The informants who were interviewed addressed these challenges through financial planning, socializing with peers, and counseling. This research concludes that relentless advocacy efforts from both society and the government are essential to ensure that marginalized communities are treated equitably regardless of their gender identity, thus mitigating healthcare service disparities. Additionally, public education initiatives are imperative to promote the use of gender-neutral pronouns, encourage inquiry regarding preferred pronouns from conversational partners, and foster understanding of transgender issues from their perspective. The government must ensure non-discriminatory public services, acknowledge transgender civil rights, and enhance social assistance for marginalized communities affected by the pandemic.

Keywords: coronavirus, discrimination, gender identity, social inequality, survival mechanism

ABSTRAK

Pandemi COVID-19 sangat berdampak bagi setiap kalangan masyarakat Indonesia sehingga memaksa mereka untuk beradaptasi. Sebagai salah satu kelompok minoritas gender di negara yang relatif konservatif, komunitas transgender jelas terdampak pandemi dengan kompleksitasnya tersendiri. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis adaptasi individu transgender di masa pandemi COVID-19. Penelitian ini menerapkan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik wawancara mendalam yang melibatkan 10 informan dari berbagai kota dan kabupaten di Indonesia. Analisis data dilakukan dengan transkripsi, kategorisasi, dan peninjauan data dengan teori yang ada. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa individu transgender di Indonesia mengalami penurunan pendapatan, diskriminasi dalam mengakses fasilitas kesehatan, dan kesulitan melamar pekerjaan. Informan yang telah diwawancarai mengatasi permasalahan tersebut dengan cara-cara seperti perencanaan keuangan, bersosialisasi dengan teman, dan konseling. Kami menyimpulkan bahwa diperlukan advokasi yang lebih giat dari masyarakat dan pemerintah untuk memastikan bahwa komunitas marjinal diperlakukan dengan setara tanpa memandang identitas gendernya agar tidak ada kesenjangan pelayanan kesehatan. Diperlukan pula edukasi publik untuk membiasakan penggunaan kata ganti netral gender, bertanya soal kata ganti dari lawan bicara, serta mendengarkan dan memahami isu transgender dari perspektif mereka. Pemerintah harus memastikan pelayanan publik yang antidiskriminasi, mengakui hak-hak transgender sebagai warga negara, dan meningkatkan bantuan sosial bagi komunitas marjinal yang terdampak pandemi.

Kata kunci: coronavirus, diskriminasi, identitas gender, kesenjangan sosial, mekanisme bertahan hidup

INTRODUCTION

Since every person possesses sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics—collectively referred to as SOGIESC—each of these aspects of gender and sexuality is highly relevant to research (Makhmucik, 2020). Unfortunately, some nations—including Indonesia—did not recognize various forms of gender and sexuality that exist today. Indonesia is a relatively conservative and religious nation, which has enforced heteronormativity as the social norm (Christiani, 2022; Wieringa, 2012; Wijaya, 2019). Heteronormativity is a very binary concept, recognizing only males and females, thus marginalizing those beyond and between the spectrum, including transgender identity (Awijaya, 2021). As a result of Indonesia's heteronormativity, people's actions and conduct are governed by their sex at birth rather than by any other set of social norms. Males, for instance, must act manly and masculine, whereas females must act demure and feminine (Achmad et al., 2018). This norm system is transmitted by the preceding generation and adopted by the current generation (Sailana, 2020).

Boza & Perry (2014) defined “transgender” as a term or label to describe an individual or a group of individuals whose gender identity and/or expression is incongruent with their sex at birth (Rimes et al., 2019). In a heteronormative and conservative society like Indonesia, transgender persons are considered social deviants because “they stray from society's norms” (Murdiyatomoko et al., 2016). As a consequence of being marginalized, transgender people in Indonesia are susceptible to an increased risk of experiencing additional challenges. These challenges can take the form of stereotypes, prejudice, labeling, discrimination, hate speech, threats, and many others. As a result of rigid societal expectations, transgender people in Pakistan, the United States, and the Netherlands, among other countries, frequently face similar challenges (Butler, 2004; Carlson, 2020; Haimson, 2016; Kattari & Begun, 2017; Sevelius et al., 2020; Swiebel & van der Veur, 2009; Tabassum & Jamil, 2014; Veldhuis et al., 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a concern in Indonesia since early 2020. It continues to enormously impact everyone from every walk of life, including marginalized people. People who identify as transgender must, like everyone else in society, adjust to the “new normal” as a result of the pandemic's effects. However, this group faces more challenges compared to cisgender and heterosexual people because transgender identity is often perceived as going against cultural norms and religious beliefs due to most Indonesian society's heteronormative interpretation of religion and religiosity (Wieringa, 2012). Discrimination continues to be a significant obstacle for transgender communities. Discrimination against transgender people can occur at any time and in any location, including when seeking healthcare, applying for jobs, in the workplace, or even on campus (CNN Indonesia, 2021; Jarrett et al., 2021). Consequently, a transgender person's well-being, particularly their mental health and body image, might be negatively impacted by it (Tabaac et al., 2018). This is the primary reason why studies on these minority groups should be academically conducted, so that they are not left behind or excluded from the discourse on human well-being.

Based on the literature search, the authors acknowledged that many studies have explored trans people's experience during the COVID-19 pandemic (Banerjee & Rao, 2021; Perez-Brumer & Silva-Santisteban, 2020; Suhomlinova et al., 2022). However, a limited amount of study is found within the context of Indonesia (Gedela et al., 2020; Liem et al., 2022; Mallay et al., 2021; Septarini et al., 2021; Wahyu et al., 2023). This study might enrich the study of gender and sexuality in Indonesia, primarily related to disaster risk management, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This study offered a holistic approach from various perspectives, such as economics, governance, public health, anthropology, and psychology, for analyzing the lived experiences of transgender individuals in Indonesia. Therefore, this study will fulfill the research gaps for qualitative trans research in Indonesia from a holistic, anthropological approach.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the adaptation process experienced by transgender individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. This study has social significance since the public should be made aware of the diversity of gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as obstacles experienced by this minority group. The outcomes of this study can hopefully raise public awareness of the prejudice and discrimination experienced by transgender communities as a result of the rigidity of interpreting human sexuality.

METHODS

This study utilized a qualitative approach. The primary data were collected by in-depth interviews with ten eligible informants. These informants were considered eligible as they are transgender people living in Indonesia and have lived through the COVID-19 pandemic. Most importantly, they were selected due to their connection and proximity to the authors. Before conducting the interviews, the potential informants were made sure to agree to participate in this research. The informants live in various locations: Semarang, Jakarta, Bali, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Maumere, and Bekasi. Four of them were interviewed offline, three in Semarang and one in Bekasi, because they live in the same city as the authors. The rest of the interviews were done virtually via Zoom, WhatsApp, and the Line chat app. To broaden the results of this research, the online interviews were conducted with six informants who live in various cities or regencies in Indonesia aside from Semarang and Bekasi. The questions that were asked were mainly about their opinions regarding the pandemic, their conditions during the pandemic, their struggles and how they overcame them, their mental health status, and their experience when accessing healthcare, specifically vaccines.

Following the informants' interviews, the transcripts based on audio recordings were created. Then, the data based on the transcripts were categorized and sorted into several categories

or subchapters for further discussion. The final step of the data analysis is to review them based on existing theories. Additional literature was used as a secondary source to deepen the research result. They were obtained from Google Scholar, Academia, ResearchGate, and Publish or Perish search engines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Increased Transphobia, Economic Crisis, and the Government's Involvement

During the interviews, the authors asked the ten informants about their perspectives on the pandemic, as seen in Table 1. Out of ten, eight of them identified as trans women, and two identified as trans men. There was no particular reasoning for the ratio of the informants' gender identity because the authors solely focused on obtaining the data from both trans men and women. Their gender identity is proven to correlate with the amount of transphobia they receive, where Informant 5 admitted that he did not receive as much discrimination compared to his trans women friends (Yerke & DeFeo, 2016). He further mentioned that presumably, society or at least those who were closest to him tend to discriminate against women and femininity in general, yet at the same time, they are more likely to accept men and masculinity.

The occupations of the informants also vary; three of them are students, two are staff and managers at Non-Governmental Organizations, one is a teacher, and the rest worked in various informal sectors, such as makeup artists, baristas, and salon owners. While they all agreed that the pandemic affected everyone, the authors noted that the pandemic affects minority groups, particularly transgender people, in a different way that is more severe. These differences are also acknowledged by the informants, who state that there are numerous prejudices, stigmas, and societal biases directed towards them as a community.

Table 1. List of informants.

Informant	Age	Profession	Gender Identity
1	41	Make-up artist	Trans woman
2	35	Public official, salon owner, wedding organizer	Trans woman
3	20	Side job of managing an online shop	Trans woman
4	23	Student	Trans woman
5	28	Barista	Trans man
6	27	Communication consultant	Trans woman
7	19	Student, program manager	Trans woman
8	25	Student, side job	Trans man
9	37	Paralegal, salon owner	Trans woman
10	38	Teacher	Trans woman

Table 2. Financial conditions during the pandemic.

Informant	Affected	Explanation
1	✓	Decrease in income, hitting Rp0 at some point
2	✓	Could not work because of PSBB
3	X	No change in their shop's demands
4	X	Still financially supported by parents
5	✓	Income declined
6	X	Stable income
7	✓	Jobless for >1 year, got rejected >10 times on job applications
8	X	Still financially supported by parents
9	✓	Hit rock bottom and became a sex worker to fulfill needs
10	✓	Decrease in income

Sixty percent of the informants had confirmed that they were financially affected by the pandemic, as seen in Table 2. The other 40% were not affected due to different conditions. Two informants were students and still financially supported by their parents, while another two had relatively stable jobs and thus did not experience a decrease in income.

The Indonesian Government's response to the pandemic has proven to be inadequate, especially during the first trimester. As stated by Almuttaqi (2020), the Indonesian government was terribly underprepared for the COVID-19 outbreak, as any government was. The implementation of Large-Scale Social Restriction (*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar* or *PSBB*) in early 2020 did not bring the intended result, as COVID-19 cases kept surging up (Susanna, 2020).

“The COVID-19 pandemic is a very surprising epidemic. Not only one area, but the whole world is impacted by it. The pandemic also impacts everyone, but in this regard, I want to state that minority groups in Indonesia, especially where I live [Maumere]—sexual and gender minorities, and other minority groups, such as widows,

disabled people, farmers, and fishermen, are the most impacted. I used the word ‘impact’ because we are all shocked of this pandemic, where everything changed—the implementation of social distancing, or as we call it PSBB [Large-Scale Social Restriction] back then, and now PPKM [Community Activities Restrictions Enforcement] with its many levels. We are not government officials, we are not entrepreneurs. We are people from the working class, and our lives intertwine with the general public in informal sectors. All in all, there are so many lives lost because of the coronavirus. Not only lives, but also our economic stability. We also experience even more discrimination, stigmatization, and violence.” (Interview with Informant 2, October 3, 2021, translated from Indonesian)

As mentioned by Informant 2, government policies also affected those working in the informal sector, including most of the informants. These individuals belong to the middle to lower economic classes; they do not have fixed salaries and depend on their earnings for welfare benefits. Informal sector workers also do not have adequate financial and social assistance, which is crucial to human survival when facing crises (Pitoyo et al., 2020).

A dilemma was faced by the informants who worked in informal sectors, where the government demanded them to refrain from work and stay at home. However, their daily lives and well-being were highly reliant on service work that required them to work in close physical contact with others. Many informants, such as Informant 7, blamed it on the government. She stated that the government could not guarantee their livelihoods, offering little to no solution for their daily needs. Hence, this could explain the continuous rebellion against the policy. The reality found among us at the time was a deliberate disregard for the government's lockdown policy because they, as informal workers, desperately needed to work to earn more money and survive to fulfill their daily needs (Gedela et al., 2020).

The informants were impacted financially, as seen in Table 2. Specifically, we would like to point out Informant 9's case. When PSBB was implemented, she did not receive any financial aid, nor did she receive Non-Cash Food Assistance (*Bantuan Pangan Non-Tunai* or *BPNT*) that was promised by the local government where she lived—Semarang City, Central Java Province. Although no explanations were provided regarding the lack of distribution of Non-Cash Food Assistance and its relation to gender-based discrimination, the informant still asserted that regardless of the reason, she was significantly impacted by the outcome.

At some point in her life, Informant 9 shared that she was a sex worker, but she considered herself “reformed” and was a corporate employee for a while, even though the salary was not very satisfying for her. Although it was implied, the term “reformed” might refer to her retirement as a sex worker, which is mainly perceived as deviant, defile, sinful, and shameful (Destrianti & Harnani, 2018; Riswanda et al., 2017). During the interview, Informant 2 shyly hinted that they become a sex worker again to fulfill their financial needs, even though Indonesia is a dangerous place for sex workers and being one is a crime that can be punished by the law (Januraga et al., 2014). During the pandemic, becoming a sex worker is not something ideal due to the inevitable physical contact in this line of work, which might increase

the risk of exposure to the virus (Rogers et al., 2021; Singer et al., 2020). The lack of financial income was the reason why Informant 2 chose this job, while at the same time, Informant 9 was the breadwinner of her family. Therefore, she said that she did whatever it took to fulfill her family's needs. Luckily, Informant 9 survived the pandemic and did not mention the hardships of dealing with legal matters regarding her work.

To worsen things, Informant 9's neighbors refused to assist her family after they were exposed to the virus and forced to perform self-isolation, which contributed to their decision to engage in sex work. At that time, the local government had been organizing a social movement named *Jogo Tonggo*, which means protect your neighbors, which aims to raise awareness and solidarity with each other, particularly concerning neighborly relationships. Taking care of each other by putting food on their fences while they are in self-isolation is noted as a positive phenomenon that could be seen almost everywhere, although it cannot be said the same for Informant 9 (Arditama & Lestari, 2020). Instead of helping Informant 9 as they had done with other cisgender neighbors, they remained silent. Informant 9 then further elaborated that misconceptions and prejudices against the transgender community might cause such a phenomenon. This illustrates the bitter reality faced by transgender individuals, particularly transgender sex workers. Based on Informant 9's experience, it is safe to say that the transgender community is more susceptible to poverty due to relentless discrimination and stigmatization, forcing them to adapt in many ways to earn more income (Banerjee & Rao, 2021; Januraga et al., 2014; Perez-Brumer & Silva-Santisteban, 2020; Surtees, 2004).

Because their gender identity does not fit neatly into the binary, transgender people also experience severe transphobia. Regarding their gender identity, Informant 7 recounted her experience seeking employment in more than ten companies. Furthermore, she stated that her identity was the reason behind the rejection. The difficulties faced by Informant 7 indirectly explain the reason behind Informant 9's choice in turning to work as a sex worker, where she

felt pressured and frustrated amidst the chaos of the pandemic. This narrative can be interpreted as a sad reality that Indonesia still upholds discriminatory employment standards, making it difficult for competent transgender individuals to find employment. Another dilemmatic reality faced by the transgender community in Indonesia is that despite not being criminalized, their rights are not protected by the law in Indonesia, deepening the nightmare experienced by transgender individuals as they have no grounds to demand equal treatment from employers and job providers (CNN Indonesia, 2019; Gollmer, 2011; Topsfield, 2017).

Adaptation Strategies and Coping Mechanisms

This research found that the informants' stress levels ranged from moderate to high, but none reported having an official diagnosis related to the pandemic. This indicates that their diagnosis was made prior to the pandemic, and they continued their treatment and counseling during the pandemic. These stress levels that they described, such as moderate and high, were also self-described. It is highlighted because different people have different tolerance for anything, including stress.

When the informants were asked about their coping strategies, several expressed that they have multiple mechanisms. These strategies include seeking help from their friends, spending some time alone, maintaining a positive attitude, consulting with a psychologist, and exploring alternative employment to meet their livelihood needs, as seen in Table 3. The reasons behind their choice of coping mechanisms rely on their personality and needs, such as Informant 3, who spent quality time alone due to fear and trauma of being misgendered.

As mentioned above, the pandemic has impacted not only people's financial circumstances but also their mental health. Transgender individuals, in particular, are even more vulnerable to mental health crises, as discrimination against them is still prevalent (Suhomlinova et al., 2022). The informants utilized coping strategies to help them survive by implementing a new set of rules they chose to follow and learn to live through the pandemic (Harry-Hernandez et al., 2020).

Forty percent of the informants chose to overcome their stress by doing activities with their friends. Peer support is crucial in the lives of transgender individuals, as elaborated by the informants. Since familial support is not

Table 3. Mental conditions caused by the pandemic.

Informant	Affected	Sought professional help	Coping strategies	Explanation
1	✓	X	Sought job alternatives, quality time with friends	Job stress
2	✓	X	Sought job alternatives, created a support group	Post COVID-19 stress
3	✓	X	Spent quality time alone	Stressed out
4	✓	X	Quality time with friends	Experiencing gender dysphoria, stressed out
5	✓	X	Spent quality time alone	Job shifts were cut, job stress
6	✓	X	Kept a positive mindset	Stressed out by the stay-at-home policy
7	✓	X	Spent quality time alone, talking to friends	Experienced gender dysphoria, stressed out
8	✓	✓	Went to a psychologist	Experienced gender dysphoria, school stress
9	✓	X	Sought job alternatives	Lost family members, financial struggles
10	✓	X	Kept a positive mindset	Job stress

guaranteed due to sociocultural and religious reasons, they mostly rely on the community that they have built (Cassidy, 2020; Jackson Levin et al., 2020). This “chosen family” that they identified as a part of made them feel a sense of belonging and loved, and within this community, they could express their true selves (Khoury, 2013; Kryzan & Walsh, 1998; Logie et al., 2016; Pew Research Center, 2013; Roberts & Christens, 2021; Rotheram-Borus et al., 1991; Wardecker & Matsick, 2020). The chosen family could be their supportive cisgender friends or other LGBTQ individuals they have befriended because they share similar life experiences (Gutierrez, 2020; Logie et al., 2016).

With various lockdown policies during the most critical period of the pandemic, the informants were forced to seek alternative ways to connect with their friends. Online communications, such as Line chat, WhatsApp messages, and Zoom meetings, were highly popular among the informants. This technological advancement greatly helped them to connect with their friends, recollect their mindfulness, and maintain healthy social interaction, as every human needs (Haryono, 2012; Murdiyatomoko et al., 2016).

The significance of chosen family is shown by Informants 1, 2, and 7. Informant 1 mentioned that they went out with their small group of friends to alleviate stress after the PSBB. Informant 2 stated that they had established a support group for trans women in their area, in which they could make each other’s lives easier. In Informant 7’s case, the inability to catch up with their chosen family made their condition worse. To improve it, they opted to reach out online, utilizing virtual meeting software.

In addition to communication issues, Informant 7 discussed the gender dysphoria they experienced due to the stay-at-home policies, which restricted them from dressing as they desired. Informant 8 also experienced this issue and sought help from a psychotherapist for their gender dysphoria. Because they had not updated their academic records to reflect their gender identity, Informant 8 experienced numerous instances of mispronunciation and misgendering by their lecturers. While it is feasible to change their legal gender on official documents, it is a complicated procedure, and not all transgender individuals are willing to undergo it (Nurita, 2021; Widhana, 2018; Yulius, 2016).

The informants’ experience indicated that misgendering and mispronunciation often resulted in discomfort, or worse, increased levels of gender dysphoria and mental stress due to societal rejection and invalidation. To address these situations, previous research has demonstrated that using one’s correct pronouns massively reduces depression and other mental health issues for transgender people (Brown et al., 2020; Meyer, 2021; The Trevor Projects, 2020; Vance, 2018). In light of this, the informants recommended that when referring to a stranger, it is better not to assume their gender and to use gender-neutral language.

COVID-19 Vaccination among Transgender Individuals

All of the informants have been vaccinated, but 50% of them felt like they faced difficulties accessing it, which can be seen in Table 4. As mentioned in the previous subsection, the difficulties they faced included misgendering,

Table 4. Vaccination experiences.

Informant	Vaccinated	Discriminated	Explanation
1	✓	✓	Misgendered, mispronounced
2	✓	X	They did not consider being stared at as discrimination
3	✓	X	Deadnamed, misgendered, but was not offended yet
4	✓	X	Deadnamed, but was not offended yet
5	✓	✓	Deadnamed
6	✓	X	-
7	✓	✓	Misgendered, mispronounced
8	✓	✓	Mispronounced
9	✓	✓	Mispronounced
10	✓	X	-

mispronouncing, and deadnaming. Some of the informants, however, did not consider deadnaming and mispronouncing as difficulties because they considered these microaggressions as “tolerable.”

During the pandemic, a lot of people, including the transgender community, needed to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity and reduce COVID-19 death and positive rates (Garg et al., 2021). However, inequality is still found in vaccination programs and healthcare systems in general. Transgender individuals often face discrimination and discomfort due to the treatment, or mistreatment to be exact from some healthcare workers (da Silva et al., 2021; Gil et al., 2021; Malina et al., 2020).

As previously mentioned, some of the informants perceived the deadnaming and mispronouncing they encountered as tolerable and non-discriminatory. In a generally heteronormative and transphobic society like Indonesia, such perspectives unfortunately become institutionalized and hence, normalized (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2021; Paechter et al., 2021). Therefore, it is understandable that such values are internalized in some informants' mindsets. However, some individuals perceive them as a deliberate effort to be offensive toward their gender identity, and that point of view is also valid since being misgendered might negatively impact one's mental state and body image (Clements, 2018; Goldberg et al., 2019; Tabaac et al., 2018).

Even though the informants still consider the government partially accountable, they remain strongly supportive of several of the government's programs that are correlated to all of the informants' already-vaccinated status. During the pandemic, the government, through the Ministry of Home Affairs, launched a socially polarizing transgender-friendly program aiming to simplify the process of renewal and creation of transgender individuals' public records, namely the Family Card and ID Card. This policy was initiated because most transgender people's ID cards in Indonesia were not renewed due to various reasons, such as the complicated bureaucracy. This policy has assisted the

transgender community in many ways. In the context of the COVID-19 vaccination program, possession of a valid identity card is required to qualify for participation in the program. Since many transgender people already have valid ID cards, more vaccines were properly distributed to them, thus increasing the national vaccination rate (Nugraheny, 2021; Nurita, 2021; Tim Detikcom, 2021).

As supporting evidence for the result of this research, a prior study found that the acceptance rate of COVID-19 vaccine among sexual and gender minorities is relatively high (da Silva et al., 2021). Transgender individuals also demonstrated more interest in getting vaccinated compared to cisgenders (Phillips et al., 2021). Another study found that almost every transgender adult (98.9%) is willing to accept the COVID-19 vaccines if they become available (Harner et al., 2021). However, the vaccination rates of transgender and nonbinary individuals are still lower (73.9%) compared to their cisgender counterparts (79.0%) (McNaghten et al., 2022). The reason behind the relatively high rates of COVID-19 vaccination might be related to the reality that is mirrored in the informants' occupations. Once again, several of the informants work in informal sectors, and they deemed that vaccination is required in order to increase their health and safety in terms of virus transmission (Darmawan et al., 2022).

A higher number of vaccine hesitancy was found among gender minorities in Bangladesh, including transgender people. Similar unpleasant experiences, such as being misgendered, mispronounced, and deadnamed that the informants faced were the same reasons why transgender people in Bangladesh were hesitant to be vaccinated. Additionally, other factors like healthcare exclusivity, medical mistrust, conspiracy theories, financial issues, lack of awareness, misinformation, and historical trauma of transphobia and discrimination are also said to be the cause of such conditions (Ali & Hossain, 2021; Garg et al., 2021; Jaiswal et al., 2020; Malina et al., 2020; Owen-Smith et al., 2016).

Furthermore, many transgender individuals prefer to conduct COVID-19 tests at home, presumably to avoid interactions with medical

institutions and healthcare workers that might potentially offend them (Low et al., 2022; Phillips et al., 2021). One of the informants mentioned that they prefer to acquire their hormones online and administer the injections themselves because of the reasons above. The lack of safe space in healthcare services proved that medical discrimination is still an existent yet harmful issue, especially for sexual and gender minorities like transgender individuals (Clark et al., 2018; El Keshky et al., 2020; James et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

Transgender people have faced unique hardships throughout the pandemic in Indonesia. Some would say that they even encountered more difficulties compared to cisgender people. The immense level of transphobia in society caused them to struggle financially, economically, and mentally. However, it is also noted that they have the resilience to navigate through this pandemic by adapting to the current situations and implementing coping mechanisms that were deemed suitable for them. In their experiences getting vaccinated, some of them still encountered misgendering, mispronouncing, and deadnaming by healthcare professionals.

In order to improve transgender individuals' well-being, the first things that should be done are educating the public to use gender-neutral pronouns, politely asking for people's preferred pronouns, and learning to understand trans issues from their perspective. Integrating inclusive values into a gender-friendly curriculum is a sufficient initial step to educate the public, especially young people, about SOGIESC. It is also suggested to "pass the mic" to our trans friends by acknowledging our privilege and providing them a platform to communicate their issues while we listen attentively and further spread their message. Collaborative efforts involving the government, non-governmental organizations, and gender equality activists, such as campaigns to amplify trans voices on trans issues should be introduced to the public as soon as possible. The informants also suggested that the government should ensure access to more inclusive public services, further acknowledge

the existence of transgender individuals and their civil rights as human beings, and increase social assistance to marginalized communities impacted by the pandemic.

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