

Strengthening the Identity of the Waria and Gay Community (Wargas) through Social Activities in Singaraja City

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Submitted: 08-04-2025 Final Revised: 23-04-2025 Accepted: 25-04-2025 Published: 30-04-2025	This study aims to find out the factors behind the Wargas community strengthening their identity; forms of social activities carried out by the Wargas community; and to find out the aspects of strengthening the identity of the Wargas community that can be used as a learning resource. This study uses a type of descriptive research with a qualitative method. The data collection methods applied are interviews, observations, and document studies. Primary and secondary data are used as data sources. Triangulation of sources and methods is used to check the validity of the data. The interactive analysis technique of Miles and Huberman is used as a data analysis technique. The findings of this study are in the form of factors that are behind the community of Wargas to strengthen identity, namely the context between groups, in-group attractiveness, personal beliefs, and depersonalization. The social activities carried out by the Wargas community are HIV/AIDS prevention activities, caring activities for others, special English learning places, and environmental care activities. The source of teaching materials used is PowerPoint, a problem-based learning method related to gender deviation material. This research helps increase social understanding and increase inclusivity and tolerance.

Keywords: identity, transvestite and gay, social activities;

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Introduction

Factually, two gender categories are recognized in society: men and women. Each gender has its roles and positions that should not be exchanged. Women are identified with their femininity, and men are synonymous with their masculinity, both of which are already arranged to pair with each other. Society believes that there is no room for relationships between men and men as well as women and women, nor for men who look like women or vice versa. The lifestyle of transvestites and gays is considered unusual and considered deviant for society at large, but for a small number of individuals think that this lifestyle is unique. The existence of gay transvestites is considered a bad lifestyle and has a negative impact on generational development because the lifestyle of transvestites is identical to being victims of (Ruisah, 2018; Udzma, Hamid, and Herwati 2023; Nurohim, 2018; Stuart O'Neill, Habibie, and SquirrelSquirt 2023) (Judiasih, 2022) (A. Gafar Hidayat, Tati Haryati, and Rosdiana 2021) Hate crimes with various deviant activities such as

commercial sex workers, promiscuity, alcohol, homosexuality, and many other deviations. Strong stigma and discrimination from society make negative identities always attached to a transvestite and gay person because they are considered deviant and abnormal. (Istiqomah 2023)

Although transvestites and gays have different ways of behaving and sexual orientation than men and women, they also cannot be referred to as men or women strictly. This phenomenon is considered an abnormality outside the standard rules for the community. The normative structure of society in its community determines what is considered good and right, associated with belief. The stigma of society regarding transvestites and gays is considered to violate existing normative rules. Based on the belief firmly held by the community towards transvestites and gays, unfair treatment is often accepted by transvestites such as exclusion from society, discrimination, bullying, violence, and difficulty accessing work in the formal sector. The consequences of this treatment have an impact on the right to social, economic, political, cultural and legal life of transvestites. To close the negative stigma that appears on the surface by society, in groups transvestites and gays will usually tend to try to equate their vision and mission with society. In the end, transvestites and gays will form social groups or communities whose members have similar backgrounds and experiences, according to the wishes of the transvestites. (Cognition et al. 2021) (Jannah 2023)

The acceptance of the transvestite community in social life is reflected in the absence of expressing complaints from the community against the activities carried out by the transvestite community. Community members can welcome the activities carried out by the transvestite community. In general, the implementation of social activities is actively carried out by components of society that are male or female. However, in the current reality, those who play a more active role in social activities in society are carried out by the transvestite and gay community. The existence of the transvestite and gay community is used as a forum to gather and pour out aspirations, they are more skilled and have a higher social spirit. This can be seen in the diversity of activities carried out by the transvestite and gay community, namely actively assisting social activities carried out by community members, even not infrequently social activities are chaired by transvestites and gays. This activity is a way for transvestites and gays to adapt in the social environment so that they can be easily accepted in their social environment. (Study et al. 2022)

Previous research has highlighted the social stigma, discrimination, and violence experienced by transvestite and gay groups in Indonesia, both from the perspective of family and the general public (Ayu, 2021; Wicaksono & Marlina, 2022). A study conducted by Fatmasari (2022) shows that transvestites tend to face structural denial in accessing health and education services because they are considered to violate applicable social and religious norms. Meanwhile, Marzuki and Kusumawati (2021) emphasized that social acceptance of the transgender community is highly determined by intensive social interaction and fundamental contributions to society.

However, most studies have focused more on the marginalization side, and few have addressed how the transvestite and gay communities play an active role in social activities as a form of social acceptance strategy. This research offers novelty by raising the active role of the transgender and gay community in social activities as a form of positive identity construction and media to achieve social acceptance in their living environment. With this approach, the dominant

narrative about transgender groups as objects of discrimination shifts to a narrative of empowerment and active participation in society.

The purpose of this study was to analyze how social acceptance of the transvestite and gay communities is shaped through their involvement in the social activities of the community. This research also aims to understand the strategies used by this community in building harmonious social relationships with the surrounding community.

This research benefits from its theoretical contribution to gender sociology and the study of marginalized communities, as well as its practical reference for policymakers, community empowerment institutions, and local communities to promote social inclusion, reduce stigma, and strengthen the role of transgender and gay communities in social development at the local level.

Materials and Methods

The location of this research will be carried out in one of the areas in Bali, namely the Tegal Mawar Neighborhood as the residence of the head of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) and Penimbangan Beach as the secretariat of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas). This research uses a qualitative approach and a descriptive type of research. This research aims to analyze the efforts and strategies used by the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) to strengthen their identity in society by carrying out various social activities. This study uses observation, interview, and document study techniques to collect research data. Determining informants during the interview uses purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques. Next, source triangulation and triangulation methods were used to check the validity of the data in this study.

Results and Discussions

1. The factors behind the Waria and Gay Community (Wargas) in Singaraja City strengthen their identity

The strengthening of the identity of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City is influenced by four dimensions, namely the context between groups, the context of in-group attraction, the context of personal beliefs and depersonalization.

a. The Context of In-Group Appeal

In the context of in-group attraction, it prioritizes a sense of belonging to one's group or community and sharing a common identity. The sense of belonging to each other arises because of the social support, trust, solidarity, respect, and security that each individual who joins a specific community gets. The transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City provides strong social support to each of its members by giving mutual motivation for life, providing a trust built through similar experiences while living life as a transvestite and gay, building strong solidarity in the face of negative stigmas from society, and community members have a sense of mutual respect which aims and encourages complete self-acceptance. Through the transvestite and gay community (Wargas), transvestites and gays will feel valued and accepted because they receive support from a community that provides a sense of security, identity validation, and solidarity. The feelings will have towards the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) by showing feelings of love, solidarity

and more profound and greater loyalty to their community (Purnomo & Demartoto, 2022) (*in-group*).

After giving rise to feelings of belonging to the community, there will automatically be a tendency to show feelings of liking, solidarity, and loyalty that are deeper and greater to their community (in-group) than to other communities, which is commonly called *in-group bias*. *In-group bias* (Squirt 2016) can be reflected in the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City by showing strong social support for each member to get the same rights as the community and to face negative stigma from the community. A high sense of pride is always shown by every member of the transgender and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City, with a sense of pride to declare to the general public that they are part of the community. Stigma and negative associations no longer affect the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City because this community always prioritizes solidarity between members which is a mechanism for protecting and strengthening identity.

b. Context Between Groups

The context between groups begins with identifying in the form of self-categorization in a certain group or community. Categorizing oneself with a group is when individuals feel part of a group; individuals tend to view themselves according to the traits, values, and attributes associated with that group. (Ardi and Nofriyaldi 2021) Similarly, someone who feels that they are different in terms of gender and sexual orientation will tend to look for similarities in other individuals or communities about what they are experiencing. Transvestites and gays join the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) based on the same experience and identity. Transvestites and gays in Singaraja City have categorized themselves as members of a transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City because other members have recognized them, follow the principles of community, open community nature and have a high sense of care and follow the applicable rules. The perception of transvestites and gays as part of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City gives a very positive assessment considering that this community has a constructive goal to be able to have a positive impact on society. Meanwhile, the response of transvestites and gays to communities outside of them (society), transvestites and gays in the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City hope that their presence can be supported and accepted through a collaborative action.

By categorizing themselves in the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City, the prestige and prestige possessed by the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) will automatically affect the views or perceptions of each member. This perception then asks each member to give an assessment of both their community and other communities. As members of the community, the members realize that even though they are different from other people, they can still benefit others through their membership in the community because in the community, they do not move personally but together. Meanwhile, some societies and other communities that are still taboo with the existence of transvestites and gays and are not part of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) occasionally look only at the negative side of the existence of transvestites and gays. Although some people still view equally that transvestites and gays have a bad influence

on the community. So, it is as if society and other communities do not want to accept the truth that the existence of transvestites and gays does not always harm society but can make themselves useful and can bring a good change to others. The transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City is an example of a community that prioritizes positive things and public interests so that this makes their community different from other communities.

c. The Context of Personal Beliefs

In the context of personal beliefs, in the community sphere, emotional attachment is often the most critical part of an individual's journey to understand and accept their identity. (Ikhsan and Riswanto 2022) In the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City, it is very important to maintain a close emotional relationship with the community as an important effort in the process of receiving identity. With every member of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) being accepted, understood, and appreciated through this relationship, it will automatically attach themselves emotionally to each other which can later be used as self-defense in the face of stigma or discrimination that may be experienced. Every member of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City often expresses their pride and self-esteem through their social identity. By daring to look according to the gender that is believed to reflect their identity, they issued words of solidarity, namely "shemale and gay proud, happy because of choice". Jorgon described that transvestites and gays proudly and boldly declare their true identities to society in choosing an authentic way of life. From these statements, these communities can show that they accept who they are and are proud to be part of the group. This proves that every individual in the community has the courage and high pride to tell about their identity to the wider community.

His pride is shown through every positive activity, one of which is during the pride parade, which is a fashion parade event by the wara and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City as well as ringed with spectacular actions aimed at raising funds and witnessed by most of the people of Singaraja City, Buleleng Regency. This proves that every individual in the community has the courage and high pride to tell about their identity to the wider community. That way, the public statement of the existence of transvestites and gays is valuable and worthy of respect conveyed by taking part in events such as pride parades held by the community by displaying spectacular actions as well as aiming to raise funds to help people in need. A social identity that the individual fully believes in will help improve themselves by becoming more confident, and believing that diversity is a strength, not a weakness.

d. Depersonalization Context

Depersonalization, in the process of self-identification of a community, is important to do when individuals join a certain community. The adoption of norms, values, and characteristics of a community will tend to be carried out by individuals to show that they are part of that community. In the transgender and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City, the process of social conformity can be seen from how new members can adjust themselves to the characteristics and norms of the community to gain social acceptance and recognition will adopt a style of appearance, speech or

body language that is considered to reflect transvestite and gay identities in this community. (Priyatno 2021)

A transvestite and gay who has just joined the community begins to adjust his appearance style according to the standards of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) which is famous for clothes that are always flashy referring to clothing styles that tend to attract attention by using bright colors and the use of firm facial makeup in every day. The members of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City speak with a higher intonation that reflects their daily characteristics, but does not indicate an emotion of anger. Community members use body language by showing feminine gestures, like a woman in general, to reinforce their image according to community norms. In addition, adoption related to social patterns must also be considered when being part of the community. Where most of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja likes to interact with other people, both with fellow members and with the surrounding community.

2. Forms of Social Activities of the Transvestite and Gay Community (Wargas) in Singaraja City

a. HIV/AIDS Virus Prevention Health Activities

The HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that attacks the immune system, especially CD4 cells (T cells), which is very functional to fight infections in the body and HIV infection that is not treated can develop into AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is the final stage of this disease, where the disease that attacks the immune system reaches a very weak point so that it is susceptible to cancer and opportunistic infections. The HIV is often spread through contact with bodily fluids such as blood, vaginal and penile fluids, semen and breast milk, transmission of this virus is often through unprotected sexual intercourse, unsafe blood transfusions, joint use of syringes, or from mother to baby during pregnancy, childbirth, or unsterile breastfeeding. The transvestite and gay community (Wargas) is aware of a fact that heterosexual people are higher in the increase in HIV/AIDS rates in Buleleng Regency. Heterosexual describes the sexual orientation of a person being sexually attracted to the opposite sex, between a man and a woman. Because the population of heterosexual people is larger globally and has more common patterns of risky behavior, heterosexual people are more susceptible to HIV/AIDS. In addition, heterosexual people tend to have higher sexuality needs, and in Bali, there is an assumption or statement "Sing Beling Sing Nganten," which means not to get pregnant or not to get married. With this assumption, heterosexual people will continue to have sexual relations freely until a pregnancy occurs. This is one of the reasons why cases of HIV/AIDS transmission are very easy to occur in the community. The transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City took several actions to overcome the spread or handling of the HIV/AIDS virus, namely providing socialization to the community, distributing condoms for free and assisting People with HIV/AIDS (ODHA). (Sutrasno et al. 2022) (Qashqari et al. 2022) (Shirley Z 2020)

The transvestite and gay community (Wargas) provides education and socialization through public spaces, this community moves independently to provide education and socialization to the community both comprehensively and is open to receiving socialization about HIV/AIDS or the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) conducts education directly by visiting each home or individual one by one to ensure that information is conveyed in depth to the difficult community

Reach. Socialization and education carried out by the community are routinely carried out once a month. The next preventive measure is the distribution of contraceptives such as condoms for free. The target of this effort is young people and young adults as an effort to prevent the spread or transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus. This activity aims to raise awareness of the importance of safe sexual intercourse, especially for adolescents and young adults who are particularly vulnerable to the spread of disease. The transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City also plays an active role in supporting People With HIV/AIDS (ODHA) through mentoring programs. Regarding ODHA, the community will conduct consultations related to the treatment, referral, and management of medicines for people who have been affected by HIV/AIDS.

b. English Special Study Classes

Everyone has the right to get a decent education, both in the formal and non-formal education sectors, regardless of the person's social status and economic status. Not infrequently, people with lower middle economic status receive less attention for additional education outside the context of school due to economic hardship. Education outside the formal education sector, of course, is a critical part to support or develop the learning previously obtained while in the formal education sector. Therefore, providing additional learning places or tutoring outside school hours is necessary to improve their potential. The transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City created a free learning place that was open for children. This learning class activity was raised because during the Covid-19 pandemic, children in the Tegal Mawar Neighborhood had difficulty finding wifi to follow the online learning process and to do schoolwork. This condition is caused by a lack of families with stable economic conditions, causing difficulties in meeting all needs, including internet package providers. So, the children took advantage of the wifi around the residence of the head of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas), namely Mami Sisca, to complete school assignments without parental assistance. Children often complain that it is difficult to complete the English assignments given by the school. However, some children do not take advantage of the facilities appropriately provided by doing less valuable things, such as playing online games all day.

With the reality found, the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) together with the Head of the Tegal Mawar Environment (Kaling) after going through the discussion process, the free learning class for English was officially opened on October 30, 2020 to be able to accompany and teach children who have difficulty in understanding the material or completing school assignments, especially learning English. As many as 90 children from elementary to junior high school joined. Classes are held twice a week from 15.00-19.00 WITA. The learning system applied to the learning class is that the teacher will teach 5-15 English vocabulary words and three simple sentences in English every time. Through this special English learning class, children can be trained and prepared early to recognize English because English is an international language used almost worldwide, and most jobs require English skills.

c. Caring for Others

In terms of social values, individuals and communities are always taught to have a sense of care for others. With care and trying to help others, a harmonious and prosperous life can be established. Concern in the realm of helping others can be done individually or in a group.

Likewise, the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City moves in groups to be able to help people in need. In society, there are vulnerable groups that are often neglected in the social environment, consisting of people who are abandoned on the streets, in nursing homes, and orphanages. (April 2023) People who are abandoned can be assured that they live in difficult conditions because, with all the limitations that exist, they have to fight as hard as they can to live, and people who live in orphanages and nursing homes are often people who are abandoned or do not have a family that can take care of them. Orphans, nursing homes, and orphanages are among the groups that need help from other parties to meet basic needs, such as financial assistance and necessities. With a high sense of empathy for caring for others, making the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) feel encouraged to help abandoned people around the streets of Singaraja City, the Destawan Orphanage Foundation is located at Jl. Raya Desa, Sawan, Sawan District, Buleleng Regency and Jamarapati Nursing Home is located in Kaliasem Banjar Enjung Sanghyang Village, Banjar District, Buleleng Regency.

The transvestite and gay community (Wargas) assists in the form of donations of funds and necessities to people who are abandoned on the streets, orphanages and nursing homes. The transvestite and gay community (Wargas) routinely carry out this activity every three months, the community visits the place by bringing 20-30 packages of necessities and sometimes the community distributes 100 packages of rice every time they visit. The funds obtained by the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) come from voluntary donations from the community when this community conducts certain events with the primary purpose of raising funds, besides that funds are also obtained from donors. The community does this as tangible proof that they contribute to a needy community. The transvestite and gay community (Wargas) is present not only to assist in the form of materials, but the community also interacts with both abandoned people and with the residents of the orphanage by exchanging stories, listening to the residents of the orphanage tell stories about the complaints they feel, playing together and having fun together with jokes. Moments like this can reduce the loneliness of the orphanage residents because they get attention from the community by building an atmosphere of happiness and familiarity, so there is no distance between them. This activity is not only to strengthen the relationship between the transgender and gay community (Wargas) and the community, but also to provide a good example that everyone can help ease the burden of others without having to look at the background or identity of someone while doing it positively and having a good impact on the surrounding community.

d. Environmental Care Activities

Environmental care activities focus on maintaining, protecting, and restoring the balance of the surrounding environment so that it remains sustainable for life carried out individually or in groups. Protecting and preserving the surrounding environment should be an obligation of the entire community because people live side by side with the environment, especially the surrounding nature. If the surrounding environment is well-maintained, then the community will feel comfortable in that environment. And vice versa, if the environment is not paid attention to, then both the people who live in the place and the immigrant community will feel uncomfortable and disturbed in the environment. Taking action to care for the environment is necessary first to foster

a sense of concern and a sense of belonging to the environment, because this is the primary basis for the success of real action. When individuals or groups are emotionally attracted to the environment around them, they tend to avoid destructive behavior and try to take care of everything. (Zahro et al. 2023) The transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City has two basic components to carry out environmental care activities, namely concern and a sense of belonging to the environment. Concern for the environment because the community realizes that everyone's quality of life is influenced by environmental sustainability. Understanding that ecological sustainability can affect everyone's quality of life means realizing that environmental conditions directly impact people's health, welfare, and survival. The transvestite and gay community (Wargas) believes that the environment in which humans are located is a shared property and is a shared responsibility to protect and care for them.

On this basis, the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City made environmental care activities by targeting the Ex. Buleleng Port area, the Kampung Baru beach area, Singaraja City Park and the Tegal Mawar Environmental area which became the CBC (Community Based Center) of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas). The area was chosen because it is a tourist area that is prone to waste disposal by visitors. The area also has strategic value as the face of the region, because its cleanliness and sustainability affect tourist attraction and community comfort. Environmental care activities are carried out every 2 months in February, April, June, August, October, and December, with the target of activities to be carried out on Sundays because on that day, most people have more free time, so that they do not interfere with work hours like usual productive days. The regulations of this activity start from the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) inviting and urging the surrounding community and the visiting community to help clean the area around the area by picking up garbage in a predetermined area, then the garbage that has been taken will be collected in containers that have been provided by the community which will later be taken to the Temporary Shelter (TPS). This activity received a positive response from the community, where many people appreciated the initiative of the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) to clean up the environment, the community also participated by helping in environmental cleaning activities. By carrying out this activity, the community not only shows concern for ecological issues but also reduces the negative stigma that may be attached to transvestites and gays. This activity shows that the community is committed and contributes to the common good.

Conclusion

This study shows that the transvestite and gay community (Wargas) in Singaraja City has succeeded in building the strengthening of social identity through four main dimensions, namely intergroup context, in-group attractiveness, personal beliefs, and the process of depersonalization. These four dimensions complement each other in creating a strong sense of community, acceptance, and solidarity among community members. The social categories formed through membership in the Wargas community provide a safe and supportive space for its members to express their gender identity and sexual orientation openly. On the other hand, the social activities carried out by this community, such as HIV/AIDS prevention education, social assistance to orphanages and nursing homes, English language learning for children, and environmental care

actions, show the real contribution of the Warga community in building positive relationships with the wider community. This active participation is a form of adaptive strategy to gain social acceptance and erode negative stigma from the general public.

Future research is suggested to examine the internal dynamics of the Warga community, including the long-term psychological and social challenges its members face. In addition, a participatory approach involving more parties, such as community leaders, local governments, and religious institutions, can be done to see the extent to which the existence of these communities is structurally accepted. Comparative studies between regions are also important to explore how local cultural contexts affect acceptance of the LGBT+ community more broadly in Indonesia.

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