Should We Learn from *Srikandi Panghegar* to Break the Discrimination and Stigma Against Transwomen?

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Abstract

Heteronormativity is a view that makes transwomen a subject of discrimination and stigma. The discrimination and stigma received by transwomen in Cianjur Regency are inseparable from the construction of the Cianjur community, which is predominantly by Islamic values as the basis for society to normalize these actions. Cianjur is a city in West Java that has a strong history of Islamic movements in West Java. The life of the Cianjur people is influenced by Sundanese and Islamic cultures, which mingle in the joints of the community's social, cultural, and political life. Srikandi Panghegar exists as a community that fights against heteronormativity in Cianjur Regency. This study uses the theory of social movements from the perspective of LGBT, as proposed by Mary Bernstein (1997) with a qualitative research method using a case study approach, the results of this study explain the spread of identity as a method used in collective action as the goal of social movements in terms of gaining acceptance of stigmatized identities to change institutions. However, Srikandi Panghegar Cianjur has not yet reached the stage of changing institutions because movement mobilization is still focused on the community itself and movements only on a small scale at the district level. The spread of identity can then be examined in two forms: identity for critique (identity for criticism) and identity for education (identity for education).

Keywords: Communication and Social Change, Identity Construction, Social Movement, Transwomen

INTRODUCTION

Srikandi Panghegar is a social organization that accommodates transwomen groups in the Cianjur area. The existence of Srikandi Panghegar in Cianjur faces various stigmatization as a transwomen group that deviates from social, cultural, and religious values (Sujati, 2020; Yanggo, 2019). In heterosexual societies, homosexual relationships are seen as immoral, impermissible, and unjustified behavior (Rubin, 1993). Cianjur society, which has historically been built with Islamic ideology since the 16th century by Raden Aria Wiratanu (Ependi, 2017), has a strong resistance to the existence of LGBT groups. The politics of isolation imposed since the time of Raden Aria and the construction of Islamic boarding schools widely in Cianjur, strengthen Islamic values in people's daily lives (Ependi, 2017). Through the three pillars of ngaos, mamaos, maen po culture (meaning: reciting, artful, pencak silat), Islam and local cultural traditions are internalized and become a unity that is

inherent not only in the daily lives of the people of Santri city but also reflected in the policies of the Cianjur local government (Saputri, 2018; Selamet, 2022).

Indonesia first recognized the LGBT social movement since the social organization that accommodates *waria*/transgender groups was established in 1969 under the name HIWAD (Himpunan Wadam Djakarta). The next social organization present in Indonesia that is widely LGBT talked, Lambda Indonesia, was established in 1982 and disbanded in 1986. Furthermore, various organizations began to grow, there was IWAYO in 1982, PGY in 1985 which changed its name to IGS in 1988, and GaYa Nusantara or GN in 1986, and survived until now and the establishment of the LGBTIQ forum in 2012 as a manifestation of the ILQA International Conference throughout Asia in Chiang Mai in 2008. In September 1966, an organization called Srikandi Indonesia was established with a focus on educating members of LGBT organizations and groups in general and building a network of cooperation with health clinics for the distribution of condoms and free counseling for transgender people who work as prostitutes. The first LGBT congress in 1998 seemed to be the first beacon to broadcast about the existence of LGBT people in society at large.

The existence of LGBT in Indonesia is not as beautiful as *pelangi*. Persecution, discrimination, stigma, and various regulations made by the central and local governments have become barriers to the movement of LGBT people in fighting for their rights as citizens. Stigmatization and discrimination that are present and carried out by society is one form of how society views conventional identities where identities are static that cannot change. Rubin in his book explains sexual essentialism as an idea that states sex is a natural force (fitrah) that existed before the formation of social life which later became an institution. Sexual essentialism is also embedded in the wisdom of Western societies that assume sex cannot change forever, is asocial, and transhistorical. This concept of sexual essentialism classifies sex as belonging to a person / individual, and allows it to be in the context of one's hormones or psyche (Rubin, 1993). In LGBT, the group that often experiences discrimination is transgender and at the bottom is transwomen or also known as waria. Rainbow Current Organization that there were 1,840 LGBT victims of persecution between 2006-2018 (Tempo, 2019; Novianto, 2019). The year 2017 became a dark record with 973 victims of persecution against the LGBT community with 73% of victims being transwomen (BBC News, 2018).

Indonesia uses the term Transwomen to refer to the identity of men who change themselves to resemble women both biologically and psychologically. The term Transwomen in general can be interpreted as an individual who has a male body with a soul that tends to be female (Blackwood, 2005). Transwomen do not belong to the third gender category (femininity, masculinity, and androgyny (Kelly, 2016), but become a term that describes male femininity (Boellstorff, 2004). In Indonesia, there is a more commonly used term, namely *waria* (an acronym for the word woman-man) which was initiated by the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in 1978-1983, Alamsyah Ratu Pewiranegara (Gelarina, 2017). The use of the word *waria* at that time to replace the word *wadam* which was considered to cause controversy because of the origin of the word from the acronym *perempuan-adam* (Amalia, 2019). Another lay mention for transwomen is

banci which comes from the Javanese acronym, *bandule cilik* (small penis). The word *banci* in Indonesia has a negative stigma that is traditionally constructed in society, and is used for something offensive (Boellstorff, 2004). In addition to the words *waria* and *banci*, Indonesia also has other words born from ethno-locality, in Bali or Sulawesi transwomen is referred to as *kedi*; in Makassar it is called *kawe-kawe*; in Sulawesi it is called *wandu*; in Kalimantan or the Bugis people call it *calabai* (Boellstorff, 2004). This naming has traditionally given a special perception that is only used for certain sexual expressions and gives birth to a discursive framework that oppressively confines people with the sexual identity referred to by these names (Adur & Purkayastha, 2017).

Research on transwomen or LGBT is generally related to sexuality with a specific focus on non-heterosexual and/or non-gender community groups (Peel & Riggs, 2016). Epistemological frameworks and research methods on LGBT are generally focused on describing identities and topics related to lesbian or gay, or transgender and/or all in societies of different cultural, historical, political, or economic backgrounds. As can be seen in LGBT research in Europe and Australasia that focuses on post-positivistic approaches and critical traditions such as social construction (Barker, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2006) whereas in America, LGBT studies specifically emphasize positivistic approaches as a framework for liberal humanism (DE SOUSA, 2008; Operario et al., 2008).

New social movement theory suggest that movement choose political strategies in order to facilitate the creation of organizational forms that encourage participation and empowerment (Bernstein, 1997). Social movements aim to change government policies and open access to the political sphere by building collective and strategic behavior. Identity expression can be used at the collective level as a strategy to achieve acceptance of stigmatized identities. On the other hand, identity can also be the ultimate goal of collective action (identity as a goal) carried out by activists on the phenomenon of stigmatized identity. Activists can seek recognition of the new identity they are constructing or deconstruct boundaries on social categories of society. Social movements are generally carried out by minority groups to gain recognition of group identity or rights that are the goals of the movement. Social movement is also one of the common strategies carried out by LGBT groups (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) with a focus on political recognition and achieving political access for LGBT members.

LGBT is a term commonly used to describe the broad study of sexuality with a specific focus on non-heterosexual and/or non-gendered groups of people (Peel & Riggs, 2016). Further developments provided a new discourse with the addition of Intersex and Queer sexual identities to LGBT (being LGBTIQ). The term transgender is used to describe the psychological condition of a person who feels his physical body is not the same as his or her recognized gender identity. Transgender men (changing themselves to resemble women) will be referred to as transwomen (Indonesian to transwomen) and in various cultures in Indonesia have various names. A more common word in the mention of transwomen is *waria* (woman-man). Boellstorff stated that the use of the word sissy was considered offensive, while the word transvestite was more accepted because it was not

traditionally constructed in society, but was educated by the government in the 1978s (Boellstorff, 2004).

By looking at the variety of research on LGBT, we can see various definitions that show the difference between lesbian women and gay men, or between transgender and cisgender (a term used to refer to people with the same gender identity as their biological condition from birth) (Peel & Riggs, 2016) and encourage the birth of recognition of LGBT sexual identity and orientation as part of a social group. Furthermore, research on LGBT not only produces definitions of differences in identity and sexual orientation between transgender and cisgender, but also differences in identity and orientation between members/parts of LGBT itself by expanding the field of study not only gender identity but also intersections between gender identity, class, race, sexual orientation, ability, and religion (Clarke, 2010; Oerton, 1998).

Bernstein (Bernstein, 1997) offers an analytic dimension of identity as strategy as an effort to spread identity. Identity deployment carried out by individuals in this strategy is by expressing identity as values, categories, and personal practices by individuals. However, identity as strategy has two analytical dimensions, namely individual and collective levels in two forms, namely identity for critique and identity for education. These two dimensions are the main factors in the spread of identity in social movements that aim to deconstruct boundaries in social categories of society or form new identities.

Identity for critique, is a form of identity born as a resistance to the social values, categories, and practices of the dominant culture embraced by society. Identity for education, is an identity that is born as an attempt to deal with dominant cultural perceptions related to minorities that generally limit the scope of conflict by not questioning morality or dominant cultural norms (Bernstein, 1997). Generally, identity for education is used by organizations' access to weak or even non-existent political forces. Identity for education strategies generally use unconventional methods to generate social awareness.

Identity dissemination strategies will differ in each organization/community/group depending on each other's perception of the meaning of 'identity' itself. And with these characteristics, the strategy of spreading identity can be understood dramatically as a collective picture of members of the organization / group / community towards their identity socially, culturally or politically.

In this study, we see transwomen as an effort to build a cultural identity that adapts to the main cultural setting community. instead of being in opposition, Srikandi Panghegar positioned itself as a cultural group in Sundanese mythology and tradition. This research simply illustrates how Srikandi Panghegar applies theatrical tactics that give birth to the identity of critique and identity of education in a unique social movement with local cultural characteristics and public activities that actually lack publications with the aim of no longer political recognition but personal and cultural.

METHODOLOGY

Instrumental Case Study is used as a surgical method of LGBT discourse in Indonesia. What happened in Cianjur is not the main focus but rather a supporting situation for further LGBT discussion discourse in the social and political spheres of Indonesian society in general and in Cianjur specifically as a social movement. This research was carried out for 5 months (January – June 2024). The data was obtained through in-depth interviews containing various experiences and subjective opinions from a total of 8 informants with the founder (NA) as the key informant, and two members of the Srikandi Panghegar Cianjur community (AG and SA), who have been with the community for more than 17 years since its inception. Another informant, the author presented from the Social Service and the AIDS Control Commission (KPA) of Cianjur Regency as a state institution that often comes into direct contact with trans groups; community leaders, members of Islamic organizations, and cultural experts to see socio-cultural perspectives on the issue of transwomen in Cianjur Regency. In addition, the data is complemented by literature studies relevant to LGBT discourse in Indonesia taken from various media and reliable sources. Furthermore, the data will be processed using ideal data processing techniques (Neuman, 2013) to obtain a holistic picture of the position and role of transwomen socially in the subjective perspective of Srikandi Panghegar Cianjur.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Srikandi Panghegar's Social Movement in Cianjur

The stigma regarding transwomen in public areas is still strong and, in some cases, takes away the rights of citizens (Kartinaningdryani, 2019; Ningsih, 2014). By holding this opinion, transwomen Cianjur is committed to building an equal position in society by carrying out various public activities to disseminate its existence as part of a normal social group in the surrounding community. The Cianjur regional government in recent years has actively disseminated Regional Regulation Number 1 of 2020 concerning the prevention and prevention of deviant sexual behavior. In Regional Regulation Number 1 of 2020, LGBT groups are considered deviant sexuality, so handling that is able to eradicate the group is needed. The content of the Regional Regulation defines deviant sexual behavior as abnormal behavior, impropriety and sexual crimes, meaning that sexual activities that are considered abnormal, unnatural, and sexual crimes are categorized as sexually deviant behavior. LGBT groups, including transwomen in this Regional Regulation, are then classified as deviant sexuality because they are considered abnormal and unnatural behavior. This bylaw directly attacks the existence of LGBT people in Cianjur and specifically transwomen groups who can be clearly distinguished through their dress and behavior.

The construction of a religious society with Islamic values adopted by the majority of Cianjur people, then normalizes their views and treatment of transwomen. Therefore, transwomen in Cianjur Regency are easy targets for stigmatization based on Islamic reasons. The religious context with the presence of transwomen groups in Cianjur Regency is considered contrasting. This is because in the lens of religion, especially Islam, seeing LGBT in this case transwomen is always correlated with the story of the Prophet Luth (Yanggo, 2019). Ironically, the government, which is supposed to provide protection and

fulfillment of rights to its citizens (Mohammad Maulana & Nur Akifah Janur, 2020), has become an actor that perpetuates stigma against minority groups, which in this context are transwomen.

The transwomen social movement through the Srikandi Panghegar organization is an inclusive movement that does not have access to the political power of the Cianjur local government. Members of this organization only consist of transwomen who have concerns about the low awareness of transwomen on HIV AIDS information and the low welfare of transwomen who work as prostitutes or buskers. Weak organizations and the absence of political or economic support make transwomen the LGBT group with the highest number of persecution and discrimination. Not only that, the striking way of dressing transwomen, often outside the local social and cultural norms adopted by the Cianjur community, makes transwomen the most vulnerable group to persecution and discrimination compared to other LGBT members.

Srikandi Panghegar as an inclusive social movement brings identity for education and identity for critique through the distinctive way owned by this organization, starting from the name used and how members present themselves in the Cianjur community. As an organization and group, Srikandi Panghegar is a name that has become an icon as well as a strong motivation in its movement. The word Srikandi itself is a name in puppet characters whose gender identity is always questioned. Historically, Srikandi's name is known as a puppet character who represents strong and resilient women. In various mythologies and stories for generations, Srikandi is the name mentioned to tell the story of women who struggle to achieve their life goals. The story of Srikandi in puppetry is told to be born as the daughter of King Drupada who came from the Kingdom of Pachala in the Mahabharata puppet story. Srikandi grew up as a formidable, strong and proficient figure in war and weapons, who in one story later changed her gender to male in her attempt to take revenge against Bishma (Hanif et al., 2022).

The naming of Srikandi which refers to the puppet character was done with the aim of getting closer to local culture and local traditions, as well as building the motivation of struggle and Tangguh attitude which became the idiom of the word srikandi. But more than that, the use of the word srikandi seems to remind people that Srikandi told in the wayang legend was born as a woman who was educated like a man and eventually changed her gender to a man has the characteristics of a transwoman.

From this puppet story, Srikandi Panghegar built his own myth as a tough and strong group against stigma and terror as in this context represented by what the local government did through Regional Regulation no.1 of 2020. This myth became the collective identity of Srikandi Panghegar members who strengthened the Cianjur transwomen community to change public perception. In contrast to identity for education carried out by lesbian and gay activists and communities in Vermont which focus on recognition efforts by the government as a lesbian and gay community based on human rights (Bernstein, 1997), Srikandi Panghegar seeks to work with local governments to help collect data on transwomen and provide social assistance, especially health for transwomen.

The gender bias of the Srikandi puppet story not only builds new myths but also provides a motivational boost that moves the Srikandi Panghegar group as a group that historically culturally has roots in Cianjur society. The appearance of Trans characters in puppetry has also become characteristics of group movements that establish themselves as a natural part of the socio-cultural life of society. Thus, social conflicts arise due to the view that trans characters are anomaly in socio-culture society can be minimized.

Srikandi Panghegar's New Ways to Deploy Identity as Strategy
The use of a name that is full of local culture gives a new identity for Srikandi Panghegar as a social organization that perpetuates local culture and thus becomes an organization that is culturally closely tied to the Cianjur community itself. The strong Sundanese and Islamic traditions adopted by the people of Cianjur are strong factors that underlie the rejection of the existence of Transwomen and result in a transwomen identity that is prone to criticism and discrimination. Srikandi panghegar understands this and adds conventional behavior to its members by banning fun clothing and inappropriate makeup, as well as tolerant, introspective behavior when dealing with the general public as unique theatrical tactics.

It has been explained above that the name of the heroine itself is a tool of identity construction instilled by the founder of the organization into the shared motivations and ideologies in the group. The use of the name Srikandi in this context can be seen as a language strategy. Language plays a role in image politics, ownership, and reinforcement of social or political boundaries and serves as a bridge between power structures and society (Adur & Purkayastha, 2017). And the language that frames gender and sexual identity is constantly undergoing negotiation and deconstruction caused by changing definitions, similarities and differences in discourse and the breadth of gender and sexual identity diversity that exists today.

Srikandi Panghegar took the name Srikandi as an organizational identity as well as a social identity that became the basis for transwomen's gender roles in society. This encourages the birth of the collective identity of the organization as a transwomen organization that is culturally not anomaly and not something strange in the puppet tradition. With this collective identity, Srikandi Panghegar blurs the social cultural boundaries of society. Furthermore, this movement when viewed in the dimension of identity of critique, gave birth to a new way of looking at the identity deployment of social movement activists. In the identity for critique described by Bernstein, activists consistently go against mainstream culture and reject the gender roles of society which ultimately give rise to conflict with society (Bernstein, 1997). Srikandi Panghegar did the opposite. By accepting mainstream culture (Sundanese culture) and performing theatrical tactics that are appropriate to that culture, Srikandi Panghegar generates sympathy rather than conflict, minimizing misunderstanding and expanding publications in accordance with the normality of society even though Srikandi Panghegar's actions may not change regional political policies.

As an organization without political access and a strong structure, Srikandi Panghegar focuses on building the organization from within. Building a community by maintaining the ideology of localization that unites transwomen with the general public is the main goal of the Srikandi Panghegar movement. In contrast to social movements that focus on building publications and social campaigns to reinforce similarities and changes in political policies with the aim of building leadership identity and opposition to mainstream culture. Srikandi panghegar builds a different identity from the general public. Not as normality, but as something different from normal, but still part of the same localization as Srikandi in wayang stories that have different gender roles but are not considered abnormalities.

The identity deployment conducted by Srikandi Panghegar presents an identity of critique that is different from that previously carried out by the social movement in New York, Oregon (Bernstein, 1997), which focused on building political access and identity in opposition to mainstream culture. In this context, social movements strive to build cultural dominance, while Srikandi Panghegar focuses on efforts to build collective identity through cultural equality with the surrounding community.

Along with building collective identity and organization from within, Srikandi Panghegar shows commitment to be part of the social community of Cianjur through simple activities that lead to equality and not opposition / social conflict. one of them is by organizing Volleyball Sports for the community and members of the organization. As a local social movement, this sports activity is a safe place for negotiative interaction between transwomen and the community by exchanging various experiences and shared values. As an identity for education, sport plays an ideological role involving individual experiences and surrounding social structures into interpretive negotiation processes (Washington & Karen, 2001). Through volleyball, Srikandi Panghegar tries to introduce herself as well as spread her identity as a transwoman who is also part of the Cianjur community order. This is highlighted by transwomen who show themselves with makeup as well as wigs worn. Makeup, wigs, and other accessories used are a form of transwomen's rejection of mainstream culture in Cianjur, where transwomen are required to look like men. The use of makeup and wigs in activities carried out by transwomen in Cianjur society is a form of transwomen criticizing gender identity and heterosexual norms adopted by the majority of Cianjur society. This action can also be seen as a theatrical tactic that shows transwomen as part of society.

Through sports activities and health education, Srikandi Panghegar achieved its initial goal to open access to health for transwomen. Cooperation with local governments to reduce the number of HIV AIDS sufferers through socialization and counseling activities or transwomen shows results with the decline in cases of transwomen as HIV sufferers in Cianjur. The decline in the position of transwomen as a group infected with HIV/AIDS is a form of criticism of the stigmatized identity carried out by Srikandi Panghegar by carrying out countermeasures and prevention in the community realm. Srikandi Panghegar opposes the stigma attached to transwomen as the group with the highest HIV AIDS sufferers in Cianjur Regency. This collaboration includes not only information related to HIV AIDS and

prevention efforts but also offer other expertise to get transwomen out of the scope of sexual labor.

From the experience shown by the founder and members of Srikandi Panghegar, change is no longer something that must be forced. Society accepts the existence of transwomen not because of massive and coercive changes, but because of personal and negoasiative interactions between transwomen and society. starting from how to dress, speak, attitudes and behaviors that build new perceptions about Cianjur transwomen. The strong cultural values held by the people of Cianjur actually become the door for Srikandi Panghegar to include their values as part of the culture.

CONCLUSION

The social movement carried out by Srikandi Panghegar is not great, nor is it politically strong, does not use strong mass media or become viral in society. on the contrary, Srikandi Panghegar tries to avoid conflicts with the community as little as possible. There are no public hearings, campaigns, festivals, or annual rallies that are crowded and very talkative, instead what happens is simple activities such as; Volleyball together, health education, provision of free contraceptives, free health checks, self-data, soft skills training and just sharing stories with neighbors. what Srikandi Panghegar did was far from a large and luxurious social movement. This activity is simple and very localized. Compared to activities aimed at cultural dominance, what Srikandi Panghegar does by embracing local culture through a name that is full of cultural history and following mainstream normality makes the transwomen community actually seen as part of society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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