



EARLY DETECTION AND PREVENTION EFFORTS OF HIV/AIDS AMONG TRANSGENDER WOMEN IN TULUNGAGUNG: HEALTH BELIEF MODEL IN 2024

Wida Rahma Arwiyantasari¹, Widya Lusi Arisona²

¹ Universitas Muhammadiyah Madiun

² Universitas Tulungagung
widarahma541@gmail.com

ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
<p>HIV can be transmitted through sexual intercourse, and transgender women (waria), as part of the homosexual group, contribute to the increase in HIV/AIDS cases. In Tulungagung, the HIV rate among waria is relatively high, prompting them to establish the Aprikot (Apresiasi Waria Kota Tulungagung) association, which has 55 members, to raise awareness of early detection and HIV prevention. This research analyzes HIV prevention efforts using the Health Belief Model (HBM), which focuses on individuals' beliefs about the threat of HIV and the benefits of prevention in changing behavior.</p> <p>This qualitative research with a descriptive phenomenological approach was conducted at Base Came Aprikot Tulungagung from April 23 to June 17, 2024. The research informants include HIV-positive and HIV-negative waria, sex workers (PSK), waria with steady partners, Aprikot members, Cesmid NGOs, KPAD Tulungagung program managers, health workers, and the Tulungagung Health Office. The sampling technique used was Maximum Variation Sampling, with data collection through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model to understand efforts in early detection and HIV/AIDS prevention among transgender women.</p> <p>Five informants, transgender women working as sex workers and living with HIV, as well as one informant who owns a beauty salon and has a steady partner, show a positive attitude toward early detection and HIV prevention. They regularly participate in HIV tests held by the community every three months. The norms within the Aprikot community strongly influence members, encouraging them to follow the rules and commit to HIV prevention efforts.</p> <p>To encourage waria to engage in early detection and HIV/AIDS prevention efforts, the involvement of the government, through the Health Office, is necessary to raise awareness among the clients of waria sex workers about using condoms and regularly conducting STI tests to prevent complications or opportunistic infections</p>	<p>Transgender Community, Early Detection and Prevention Efforts of HIV/AIDS, HBM</p>

INTRODUCTION

Transgender women are men who dress and behave like women and often identify themselves as women. They play an important role in Indonesian culture, particularly in ritual and performance contexts (Boellstorff, 2018). According to Winter (2017), waria are men who dress and behave like women and often identify themselves as women. They are often considered a

marginalized group and experience discrimination in Indonesia. Waria have existed in Indonesia since the Dutch colonial era (Boellstorff, 2005). They play an important role in Indonesian culture, particularly in ritual and performance contexts (Boellstorff, 2005). Waria also have a strong and solid community in Indonesia (Oetomo, 2013). As a group with a unique gender identity, waria also have diverse sexual orientations. According to research conducted by Boellstorff (2005), waria in Indonesia have diverse sexual orientations, including heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, and asexual.

However, it's essential to note that the sexual orientation of transgender women doesn't always align with their gender identity. For instance, transgender women who identify as female may not necessarily identify as heterosexual (Oetomo, 2013). The difficulty in categorizing the sexual orientation of transgender women is due to several factors, including: 1) Limited understanding of transgender women's gender identity and sexual orientation; 2) Lack of accurate data on transgender women's sexual orientation; 3) Challenges in capturing the diversity and complexity of transgender women's sexual orientations (Winter, 2017).

Understanding the sexual orientation of transgender women is crucial for several reasons, including: 1) Enhancing our understanding of their complex identities; 2) Raising awareness about the challenges they face in navigating their sexual orientations; 3) Providing better support and protection for transgender women with diverse sexual orientations (Budiawan, 2018).

The sexual practices of transgender women are diverse. According to research conducted by Winter (2017), transgender women in Indonesia have various forms of sexual relationships that can be categorized into several types, including: 1. Sexual relationships with men: Transgender women may engage in vaginal or anal sex with men. 2. Sexual relationships with women: Transgender women may also engage in vaginal or tribadic sex with women. 3. Sexual relationships with other transgender women: Transgender women may engage in vaginal or anal sex with other transgender women.

Transgender women are at a higher risk of HIV infection due to several factors, including: 1. Unprotected sex: Transgender women who engage in sexual relationships with men or women without using condoms are at a higher risk of HIV infection (Winter, 2017). 2. Needle sharing: Transgender women who inject drugs and share needles with others are at a higher risk of HIV infection (Budiawan, 2018). 3. Unsafe blood transfusions: Transgender women who receive unsafe blood transfusions are at a higher risk of HIV infection (Oetomo, 2013).

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that can cause AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). One of the most common ways HIV is transmitted is through sexual contact. While heterosexuals are the largest group affected by HIV, it cannot be denied that homosexuals, especially transgender individuals, also contribute to the increasing number of HIV/AIDS cases. Unprotected sex, such as not using condoms or having partners with unknown HIV status, can increase the risk of HIV transmission. Transgender individuals, as a group with unique gender identity and sexual orientation, are at a higher risk of HIV infection due to several factors, including discrimination, stigma, and limited access to adequate healthcare services.

Therefore, it is essential for us to raise awareness about HIV transmission and prevention methods, especially among transgender women and the LGBTQ+ community. By doing so, we can reduce the risk of HIV transmission and improve the quality of life for everyone, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. In Tulungagung, the number of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) as of August 2015 was 1,328 individuals detected through VCT testing. The distribution of HIV/AIDS cases in Tulungagung, across 19 sub-districts, showed that the top 4 sub-districts with the highest number of cases were Kedungwaru with 86 PLWHA, Ngunut with 74 PLWHA, Tulungagung with 73 PLWHA, and Ngantru with 62 PLWHA. This is likely due to the presence of large sex work centers in these sub-districts (Tulungagung Regency AIDS Commission, 2024).

One example of the concern shown by transgender individuals in Tulungagung regarding the high incidence of HIV/AIDS in the area is the establishment of an organization called Apresiasi

Transgender Kota Tulungagung, which has 55 members comprising transgender individuals from across Tulungagung. In addition to holding regular gatherings, the organization also conducts monthly Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) and screening for other sexually transmitted infections, with health workers from local health centers invited to facilitate these services. If the test results are positive, members are referred to Dr. Iskak Tulungagung General Hospital for further treatment. Since the VCT clinic was established in 2006, a total of 1,480 new cases have been detected in Tulungagung, with 56.42% of cases referred by medical professionals, 24.59% self-referred, 12.16% detected through mobile VCT services, and 6.82% referred from other sources (Tulungagung Regency AIDS Commission, 2024).

METHOD

1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive phenomenological approach. The informants for this research were transgender individuals, the Chair of the Aprikot Organization, the Chair of the Tulungagung Regency AIDS Commission, a member of the Cesmid Community Empowerment Organization, and a healthcare worker from the Tulungagung Community Health Center.

Descriptive phenomenological design is a qualitative research strategy where the researcher identifies the essence of participants' subjective experiences of a phenomenon through their perspective (according to their thoughts and feelings) (Riyanto, 2009). In this process, the researcher first sets aside their own assumptions about the phenomenon being studied (bracketing) in order to understand the information provided by the participants. The researcher then focuses on the main phenomenon and ends with thematic data analysis and descriptive presentation, which reveals the meaning and core essence of the phenomenon (Husserl, 1938 in Daymon, 2008, and Creswell, 2010).

2. Subjects and Research Techniques

The selection of informants was done using Maximum Variation Sampling, which involves selecting individuals or groups that represent the lowest and highest levels of a particular variable or characteristic (Murti, 2013: 67). The data sources used in this study included 1 key informant, 6 main informants, and 4 supporting informants.

The key informant was the Chair of the Aprikot Organization, the main informants were 5 transgender individuals who were HIV-positive and worked as sex workers, and 1 who had a steady partner and was HIV-negative. The supporting informants included 1 manager from the Cesmid community organization, 1 healthcare worker from the Tulungagung City Community Health Center who implemented mobile VCT services, 1 program implementer from the KPAD, and 1 from the Tulungagung District Health Office.

3. Research Location and Time

The research was conducted at the Apresiasi Transgender Community in Tulungagung Regency. The location was chosen due to the drastic increase in HIV/AIDS cases over the past 5 years, which was higher compared to surrounding regencies/cities, and the fact that 80% of transgender individuals in Tulungagung Regency were HIV-positive. The research was conducted from April 23, 2024, to June 17, 2024. The interviews were scheduled according to agreements with the informants, which took place during the monthly gathering from 4:00 PM to 9:00 PM.

4. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies. The data validity checking technique used was triangulation, which included source triangulation, method triangulation, and theoretical triangulation. The data analysis technique used in this research was the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consisted of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and verification or conclusion drawing. This research applied the Health Belief Model (HBM).

RESULT

Based on the research findings, it was found that out of 6 transgender respondents, 5 worked as sex workers and 1 worked as a salon owner. The Aprikot Organization has 55 members, and almost all of its members are HIV-positive due to their work as sex workers, which makes them vulnerable to HIV infection.

According to the educational background of the transgender members of Aprikot, the lowest level of education was elementary school, while the highest was high school, with the organization's chair holding a bachelor's degree. Based on the interview results regarding educational status, the low level of education also affects the communication process for condom use negotiation before sexual intercourse, making transgender individuals vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other STIs.

According to their place of origin, the transgender members of Aprikot come from Tulungagung and surrounding areas, such as Kediri Regency, Trenggalek Regency, Blitar Regency, and Ponorogo Regency. The majority of transgender individuals come from Tulungagung Regency (67%), followed by Blitar Regency/City and Trenggalek Regency, each accounting for 12% of the total transgender population. Transgender migrants are often driven by rejection from their families and communities or lack of job opportunities in their hometowns, making Tulungagung Regency a promising and relatively safe place for them to work. The limited job opportunities for transgender individuals lead them to work as commercial sex workers (CSWs).

The research findings indicate that all informants agree that early detection and prevention of HIV are highly beneficial, as early detection enables prompt treatment by identifying the virus or microbe before it further compromises the informant's immune system. HIV prevention using condoms is also considered highly beneficial, as it prevents HIV transmission and helps maintain the informant's immune system and overall health. All transgender members of Aprikot intend to prevent HIV transmission from clients to themselves and vice versa by consistently offering condom use before engaging in sexual activities. However, clients often refuse to use condoms, citing various reasons such as discomfort.

CONCLUSION

This study applies the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to understand the behavior of transgender individuals in early detection and prevention of HIV/AIDS. The results show that transgender individuals exhibit a positive attitude towards HIV/AIDS prevention by consistently offering condoms to clients. They also demonstrate a strong intention to maintain a healthy life by using condoms during sexual activities. The support from the chairperson and members of Aprikot further strengthens this intention, indicating that the behavior of transgender members of Aprikot in Tulungagung Regency is commendable in terms of early detection and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

The results of this study can be concluded that the attitude of transgender individuals in early detection and prevention of HIV/AIDS is good, as seen from their attitude of always offering condoms to clients before engaging in sexual activities. The intention or willingness of transgender individuals to participate in early detection and prevention of HIV/AIDS can be considered strong, driven by their desire to maintain a healthy life by using condoms during every sexual encounter.

SUGGESTION

Transgender individuals: further increase condom use during sexual activities. Healthcare providers: strengthen awareness and education on the importance of condom use and government institutions: ensure easy access to condoms for transgender individuals.

REFERENCES

- Boellstorff, T. (2018). *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia*. Journal of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Winter, S. (2017). *Health and well-being of transgender people in Indonesia*. Culture, Health & Sexuality.
- Boellstorff, T. (2005). *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia*. Princeton University Press.
- Budiawan. (2018). *Waria dan Diskriminasi di Indonesia*. Jurnal Sosiologi Indonesia
- Oetomo, D. (2013). *Waria dan Identitas Gender di Indonesia*. Jurnal Antropologi Indonesia.
- Winter, S. (2017). *Health and Well-being of Transgender People in Indonesia*. Culture, Health & Sexuality
- <https://indonesia.go.id/> diakses tgl 14 Februari 2025