



Demographic Factors and the Social Welfare of Stranded Individuals in South Sumatra

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the demographic factors influencing the social welfare of stranded individuals handled by the Social Services Agency of South Sumatra Province. Data was collected through a triangulation of observation, interview, and documentation methods. The research findings indicate that the primary causes of being stranded are economic, manifesting in three main ways: running out of travel funds, being victims of pickpocketing, and employment fraud. It was found that the majority of stranded individuals originate from provinces with high unemployment and poverty rates, such as Central Java, East Java, West Java, and North Sumatra. Age, gender, education level, and informal employment status were identified as significant demographic variables that increase an individual's vulnerability. Their social welfare condition is generally low, characterized by a deficit in meeting basic needs, physical health problems, psychological distress in the form of stigma and anxiety, and minimal social integration. The Social Services Agency plays a crucial role in providing emergency assistance and facilitating repatriation, but these curative measures have not fully addressed the root problems. This phenomenon confirms that being stranded is a multidimensional issue requiring a preventive and collaborative approach.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social welfare is a condition where the material, spiritual, and social needs of individuals are met, enabling them to live decently and function optimally in society [1]. One of the social issues hindering the achievement of welfare is the phenomenon of stranded individuals. Economic factors often serve as the primary driver for individuals to migrate to other regions in search of better livelihoods [2], but this process frequently results in a state of being stranded. A stranded person is defined as an individual, family, or community group who, for a certain reason, experiences social, economic, or psychological difficulties and is unable to overcome them [3], [4].

South Sumatra Province, particularly the city of Palembang, is a major destination for job seekers. However, this wave of urbanization also creates various problems for migrants, local communities, and the government. Many individuals fail to adapt due to a lack of stable employment, the absence of family support, and the depletion of financial resources, which ultimately leaves them stranded [5]- [13]. Being stranded is a complex and multidimensional problem influenced by various factors [14], including demographics such as age, gender, education level, and economic status.

The group of "Persons with Social Welfare Problems" (PMKS), including stranded individuals, faces numerous barriers in meeting their basic needs. The stranded elderly, for example, require special protection due to physical and social limitations [15]. Furthermore, poverty and limited access to decent work are primary causes, exacerbated by changes in family structures [16]-[19]. Previous research has shown a strong correlation between demographic characteristics and an individual's level of vulnerability [19]-[22].

Although there are many studies on stranded individuals, an in-depth analysis connecting demographic factors to their social welfare level in the context of South Sumatra Province is still limited [23]-[25]. This study differs from previous works by specifically analyzing qualitative data from direct interactions at the Social Services Agency to identify causal patterns and formulate more contextual policy recommendations. Therefore, this research aims to

analyze the extent to which demographic factors affect the social welfare of stranded individuals registered at the Social Services Agency of South Sumatra Province. The results are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the understanding of social psychology related to individual responses to environmental pressures and practical contributions in the form of policy recommendations for more effective and equitable empowerment programs.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative methodology to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of being stranded. Data collection was conducted using a triangulation approach that combined three main techniques, as described by Azwar Ma Saifuddin (2011):

2.1. Observation

Direct observation was conducted at the South Sumatra Provincial Social Services Agency to obtain a realistic picture of the conditions of stranded individuals and the handling process carried out by officers.

2.2. Interview

In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, consisting of Social Services employees who handle cases of stranded individuals and the individuals themselves (aid recipients). This technique aimed to obtain direct information from primary sources regarding their experiences, causes, and needs.

2.3. Documentation

Secondary data was collected from official documents such as case reports, archives, Social Services statistics, and relevant media reports. This documentation served to supplement and validate the findings from observations and interviews.

The triangulation process was carried out by cross-comparing and validating the data obtained from these three techniques to ensure the accuracy and validity of the information. Data analysis was performed descriptively and analytically to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between demographic variables and the social welfare conditions of stranded individuals.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative research results present findings on demographic characteristics, social welfare conditions, and the relationships between these factors.

3.1. Most Dominant Demographic Factors in Cases of Being Stranded

Based on interviews with employees of the South Sumatra Provincial Social Services Agency, three main factors were identified as causing individuals to become stranded: running out of funds, pickpocketing, and employment fraud. Running out of travel funds was the most dominant cause. This often happens to economic migrants who fail to find work in their destination city and lack proper financial planning [26]. The second cause is incidents of pickpocketing in public places, which leaves victims without any financial resources to continue their journey [27].

The third significant cause is employment fraud, where individuals are promised high-paying jobs but are left stranded in the destination area after the promise proves false. Cases like this frequently happen to people from other regions who are lured by job offers without verifying the credibility of the information source. These findings are consistent with various media reports and other studies that highlight economic vulnerability and low information literacy as root problems. Further analysis shows that these three causes reflect broader structural issues, such as weak labor information and supervision systems, low socio-economic literacy among vulnerable communities, and a lack of social safety nets during mobility.

3.2. Overview of the Social Welfare Level of Stranded Individuals

The social welfare level of stranded individuals in South Sumatra is generally low. This is reflected in several aspects:

a. Physical and Economic Conditions

The majority of them cannot adequately meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. They often live in public places and are highly dependent on assistance for survival. Physically, they are vulnerable to health problems due to a lack of access to healthcare and nutrition. Economically, they have no stable income, assets, or access to decent work, making them highly vulnerable to poverty and exploitation [28].

b. Psychological and Social Conditions

From a psychological perspective, stranded individuals generally experience mental distress, social stigma, anxiety, and feelings of alienation. Socially, their integration into the community is very low, and their participation in social activities is extremely limited [29].

3.3. Government Efforts and the Urgent Needs of Stranded Individuals

The Social Services Agency of South Sumatra Province plays a strategic role in handling stranded individuals through various programs, such as providing temporary shelter, emergency social assistance, rehabilitation, and facilitating repatriation to their places of origin [30]. These efforts include providing shelters, funding for food and transportation, and establishing security posts [18].

However, based on interviews with aid recipients, it was found that the most urgent and needed assistance is direct and practical: transportation fares to continue their journey and funds for daily consumption. This indicates that in the emergency response phase, fulfilling basic survival needs and returning to their home region are the top priorities for stranded individuals [31], [32].

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that demographic factors related to economic vulnerability are the main drivers of stranded cases in South Sumatra Province, with the primary manifestations being running out of funds, pickpocketing, and employment fraud. The majority of stranded individuals come from provinces with high rates of poverty and unemployment. Their social welfare is at a low level, marked by an inability to meet basic needs and significant psychological and social distress. Although the Social Services Agency provides crucial emergency assistance, the issue of being stranded remains a multidimensional phenomenon that requires a more preventive, structured, and cross-sectoral approach to address its root causes, rather than merely curative responses.

Suggestions for future research include using a quantitative approach to identify stronger causal relationships between variables and expanding the study to specific demographic groups such as stranded children or persons with disabilities. Furthermore, an evaluation of the effectiveness of existing rehabilitation and social reintegration programs is essential for future program improvement.

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