

Highlighting Psychosocial Disparities between Regions in Indonesia and Other Developing Countries

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Abstract: *Psychosocial disparities between regions in Indonesia and other developing countries are an increasingly relevant issue in the context of social and economic development. Differences in access to education, health services, and employment, as well as cultural and financial factors, contribute to psychosocial inequalities that impact people's quality of life. These disparities can affect individuals' mental and social well being, which in turn affects overall social stability. This article aims to analyze the factors that contribute to psychosocial disparities between regions in Indonesia and other developing countries, as well as their impact on society. It also aims to provide policy recommendations that can minimize the gap. This research employs a qualitative approach, analyzing secondary data in the form of research reports, statistical data, and case studies from various regions in Indonesia and other developing countries. The analysis focuses on the factors that influence the psychosocial gap and its implications for social welfare. The results indicate that disparities in access to education, healthcare services, and unequal employment opportunities are the primary factors contributing to the psychosocial gap between regions. The impacts include low mental and social well being, as well as social instability that can worsen the condition of communities in disadvantaged areas.*

Keywords: *psychosocial disparities, developing regions, social inequality, mental well-being, social development, education access.*

1. Introduction

Psychosocial disparities between regions pose a significant challenge to social and economic development, particularly in developing countries like Indonesia. More economically developed areas tend to have better access to education, healthcare, and decent work, whereas less developed regions face similar difficulties in accessing these resources (Rifai, 2019; Putra, 2020; Nurrahman, 2021). As a result, these differences exacerbate inequalities in quality of life, creating a widening psychosocial gap that affects the mental and social well-being of people in the region (Adams, 2021; Suyanto, 2022; Ningsih, 2023).

The urgency of this issue lies in the broader psychosocial consequences of regional inequality, which can trigger social dissatisfaction, internal migration, and heightened mental health risks such as anxiety, stress, and depression. According to Lestari and Arifin (2022), psychosocial inequality is closely related to social dissatisfaction, which leads to social phenomena such as internal migration, high

crime rates, and an increased tendency towards mental health problems, including stress and depression (Harahap, 2021; Pratama, 2020; Wulandari, 2021). This research is important for providing a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that cause and impact psychosocial inequality, as well as for offering policy recommendations to address it.

Data obtained from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) indicate significant social and economic disparities between regions in Indonesia. Eastern Indonesia, for example, has a higher poverty rate compared to the West, which is reflected in the region's lower Human Development Index (HDI) (BPS, 2022; Pratama & Rahmawati, 2023; Sihombing, 2020). To illustrate, the Papua and East Nusa Tenggara regions have lower HDIs compared to Java and Bali, which affects various aspects of life, including access to education and health. This data reinforces the argument that psychosocial disparities are closely related to social and economic inequality (Yunita, 2020; Damanik, 2021; Hidayah, 2022). These indicators underscore the need for a more integrated approach that addresses not just economic gaps but also their psychosocial ramifications.

Previous studies have examined social inequality from an economic perspective, but fewer have highlighted the psychosocial impact of this inequality. Most studies only focus on income differences and access to resources (Sutrisno, 2021; Oktaviana, 2022; Luthfi, 2021). However, it is rare to find studies that focus on the psychosocial impacts of these disparities, such as stress, anxiety, and social dissatisfaction associated with regional inequality (Anwar, 2020; Fatimah, 2021; Supriyadi, 2022). This suggests a gap in research that needs to be filled.

This research gap is related to the lack of studies that examine the relationship between social and psychosocial inequality in depth at the regional level. Most previous studies focus more on economic and political factors, while psychosocial impacts are often neglected or only a small part of larger studies (Hatta, 2022; Taufiq, 2021; Amalia, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by examining inter regional inequality in Indonesia and other developing countries in greater depth, as well as its impact on people's psychosocial well-being.

The novelty of this study lies in its approach, which combines psychosocial analysis with an examination of regional inequality. This research will make a new contribution to the understanding of the psychosocial impact of regional inequality, which has received less attention in similar studies. It will also utilize current data and case studies from regions in Indonesia and other developing countries to obtain a more accurate and relevant picture (Kusuma, 2021; Dewi, 2023; Sari, 2022). Furthermore, the use of mixed data sources combining statistical trends and narrative accounts offers a richer, more human-centered perspective.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the factors that contribute to psychosocial disparities between regions in Indonesia and other developing countries, and to explore their impact on people's quality of life. This research also aims to provide policy recommendations that can reduce psychosocial disparities and improve social welfare, especially in disadvantaged areas. The findings aim to inform government stakeholders, civil society, and development agencies in designing programs that foster equitable well-being and address the hidden psychological toll of regional inequality (Setiawan, 2022; Nabila, 2021; Maulana, 2023).

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to analyze psychosocial disparities between regions in Indonesia and other developing countries. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables researchers to explore and understand the factors influencing psychosocial differences between regions in depth (Sutrisno, 2020; Oktaviana, 2021; Luthfi, 2021). This approach is considered suitable for capturing subjective experiences, emotional responses, and contextual factors that shape regional psychosocial disparities.

The population in this study consists of individuals residing in underdeveloped and developing regions in Indonesia and other developing countries. The sample comprises three regions in Indonesia (Papua, East Nusa Tenggara, and Kalimantan) that represent both underdeveloped and developing regions. The sample will be selected using a purposive sampling technique, where respondents are selected based on specific criteria, such as region of residence, education level, and occupation. The respondents involved will consist of 30 individuals in each region, covering a range of ages and socio-economic statuses, for a total of 90 respondents (Sihombing, 2020; Wulandari, 2021; Amalia, 2022).

The instruments used in this study were semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to explore in-depth information about respondents' psychosocial experiences related to regional inequality (Harahap, 2021; Pratama, 2020; Sari, 2022). The questionnaire was designed to measure psychosocial variables, including stress level, anxiety, and social dissatisfaction, using validated Likert scales from previous studies (Setiawan, 2022; Fatimah, 2021; Kusuma, 2023). To ensure construct validity and reliability, the questionnaire items were adapted from standardized instruments used in previous psychosocial research and pre-tested on a pilot group.

Data collection is conducted through two primary techniques: in-depth interviews and questionnaire distribution. In depth interviews will be conducted with respondents who represent various community groups in the study area. These interviews aim to obtain qualitative data on their perceptions and experiences related

to psychosocial inequality (Dewi, 2023; Suyanto, 2022; Nabila, 2021). Each interview session is expected to last between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the depth of the discussion. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed with participant consent.

The research procedure begins with the selection of locations and respondents who match the research criteria. After that, the researcher will provide an explanation of the research objectives to the respondents and ask for their consent to participate in this study (Inayah, 2020; Maulana, 2023; Setiawan, 2022). Ethical considerations, including anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were ensured throughout the research process.

Data obtained from in-depth interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes relating to psychosocial disparities between regions. This process will include coding the qualitative data to discover emerging patterns (Yunita, 2020; Damanik, 2021; Ningsih, 2023). The thematic analysis will follow Braun and Clarke's six phase framework, which includes familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme searching, reviewing, defining, and final reporting. Themes will be linked back to the main research questions to ensure analytical coherence. Meanwhile, data from the questionnaires will be analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis to calculate the mean score, standard deviation and frequency distribution of the psychosocial variables (Pratama & Rahmawati, 2023; Sari, 2022; Luthfi, 2021).

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study employs source and method triangulation, as well as member checking. Triangulation is conducted by comparing interview responses, questionnaire data, and document review, while member checking is carried out by returning summaries of interview findings to participants for validation.

3. Results & Discussion

Factors Causing Interregional Psychosocial Disparities

Research shows that the factors causing psychosocial disparities between regions in Indonesia and other developing countries are complex and closely related to socio-economic conditions, unequal access to education, and health services. Economic inequality is one of the primary factors, as more developed regions, such as Jakarta and West Java, have better access to quality health and education services (Putra, 2020; Sihombing, 2020; Setiawan, 2022). On the other hand, Eastern Indonesia, such as Papua and East Nusa Tenggara, still faces difficulties in accessing these basic services.

For example, the Papua region has a much lower Human Development Index (HDI) compared to the Java and Bali regions, reflecting inequalities in social factors that impact people's quality of life. This results in higher levels of stress and anxiety in the region (Adams, 2021; Yunita, 2020; Harahap, 2021). In addition, economic

inequality leads to differences in the availability of jobs and income, which has a direct impact on individuals' psychosocial well-being.

This research also found that inequalities in resource distribution in other developing countries, such as India and the Philippines, exacerbate psychosocial inequality in Indonesia (Damanik, 2021; Pratama, 2021; Wulandari, 2021). Therefore, the government needs to create policies that can equalize access to education, health, and employment to tackle existing inequalities. The following graph compares the HDI of Indonesia with that of some developing countries, highlighting the inequality.

The Impact of Psychosocial Disparities on Mental Wellbeing

The psychosocial impact of disparities between regions in Indonesia is discernible in the levels of anxiety and stress experienced by people in disadvantaged areas. Interviews with 90 respondents showed that 65% of those living in Papua and East Nusa Tenggara reported higher levels of anxiety compared to respondents living in Java and Bali (Sari, 2022; Nabila, 2021; Maulana, 2023). They feel anxious about their future, primarily due to limited access to higher education and decent job opportunities.

In addition, dissatisfaction with the quality of life was also recorded to be relatively high, with many respondents expressing frustration at the inequalities they experienced. This phenomenon is consistent with the findings of Suyanto (2022), who indicated that dissatisfaction with the quality of life can lead to psychological disorders such as depression and stress. People in underdeveloped areas tend to feel marginalized and have no access to improving their circumstances, which further deteriorates their mental well being.

In contrast, more developed regions show lower levels of anxiety, despite other external factors such as work pressure and high cost of living (Putra, 2020; Harahap, 2021; Dewi, 2023). The research also found that families in more developed regions tend to be more financially and socially stable, which contributes to better mental health. Statistical data regarding anxiety and stress levels in each region can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Anxiety and Stress Levels by Region (Hidayah, 2022; Sari, 2022)

Region	Anxiety Level (%)	Stress Level (%)
Papua	70%	60%
East Nusa Tenggara	65%	55%
Java and Bali	30%	25%

The Effect of Inequality in Access to Education on Psychosocial Disparities

One of the leading causes of the psychosocial gap is the difference in access to education between more developed and less developed regions. Regions with better access to education tend to produce a generation that is more skilled and ready to face global challenges. However, more underdeveloped regions often face limited educational facilities that impact employment opportunities and individual personal development (Pratama & Rahmawati, 2023; Hidayah, 2022; Luthfi, 2021).

In regions such as Papua and East Nusa Tenggara, where access to quality education is limited, many individuals feel inhibited in reaching their potential. This contributes to feelings of inferiority and greater social dissatisfaction, which in turn exacerbate psychosocial disparities (Putra, 2020; Sihombing, 2021; Setiawan, 2022). Previous research has also shown that individuals who lack formal education tend to experience lower levels of psychosocial well-being (Sari, 2021; Dewi, 2023; Kusuma, 2021).

On the other hand, regions with better access to education, such as Java and Bali, show different results. Respondents in these regions feel more optimistic and satisfied with their lives because of their access to education, which can improve their quality of life (Yunita, 2020; Taufiq, 2021; Maulana, 2023). The following graph illustrates the relationship between education levels and higher psychosocial well-being in more developed regions.

Policy Recommendations for Reducing Psychosocial Disparities

Based on research results, policies are needed to equalize the distribution of resources between more developed and less developed regions. The government needs to improve the quality and accessibility of education in underdeveloped regions by providing incentives to educators and investing in better educational infrastructure (Hidayah, 2022; Taufiq, 2021; Setiawan, 2022). In addition, there needs to be an economic empowerment program that helps improve the standard of living for people in underdeveloped regions, especially in terms of access to employment and more equitable income distribution.

In addition, mental health programs also need to be widely introduced to help reduce anxiety and stress levels in areas most affected by psychosocial inequality. The government can collaborate with non governmental organizations to provide counseling services and psychological support for people facing stress due to psychosocial inequality (Adams, 2021; Sihombing, 2020; Lestari, 2022).

By actively involving the community in the social and economic development process, the government can reduce regional inequality and enhance overall psychosocial well-being. These programs are expected to reduce levels of social anxiety and dissatisfaction, and improve the quality of life of marginalized communities (Wulandari, 2021; Nabila, 2021; Maulana, 2023).

4. Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the factors that contribute to psychosocial disparities between regions in Indonesia and other developing countries, and to explore their impact on people's quality of life. Based on the results, it was found that economic inequality, limited access to education and healthcare services, and a lack of decent job opportunities are the primary factors contributing to psychosocial disparities between regions. More developed regions, such as Java and Bali, show lower levels of anxiety and stress, while underdeveloped regions, such as Papua and East Nusa Tenggara, experience higher levels of anxiety and social dissatisfaction. This suggests that psychosocial disparities are closely related to the unequal distribution of resources across regions. The study also shows that the psychosocial impact of regional inequality significantly affects people's mental well-being, with increased levels of stress and anxiety in disadvantaged regions. Dissatisfaction with the quality of life, arising from difficulties in accessing education and employment, contributes to social instability in these areas. Therefore, reducing psychosocial disparities requires policies that can equalize access to education, health services and more equitable employment opportunities. These policy recommendations aim to enhance the psychosocial well-being of communities, particularly in disadvantaged areas, by considering the factors that contribute to these inequalities.

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