

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF BATIK COMMUNITY WOMEN AGAINST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN KEREK DISTRICT, TUBAN REGENCY

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Abstrak

Salah satu komunitas sosial berbasis UMKM yang terdampak pandemi COVID-19 adalah komunitas batik Gedog di Kecamatan Kerek, Kabupaten Tuban. Namun, perempuan dalam komunitas batik Gedog tetap menghadapi tantangan dalam memahami dan memaknai pandemi COVID-19. Penelitian ini menganalisis konstruksi sosial perempuan di komunitas batik tersebut selama pandemi COVID-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori konstruksi sosial Peter L. Berger dengan pendekatan fenomenologis. Metode penelitian kualitatif digunakan dalam studi ini, dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi dan wawancara mendalam terhadap 20 informan penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penafsiran perempuan di komunitas batik terhadap pandemi COVID-19 memiliki dikotomi yang memuat aspek positif dan negatif. Hal ini dipengaruhi oleh pengalaman subjektif mereka terhadap pandemi COVID-19 dan kebijakan kesehatan lainnya. Selain itu, latar belakang sosial-ekonomi, lingkungan sosial, dan adopsi teknologi menjadi landasan penting yang berkontribusi dalam membentuk konstruksi sosial perempuan di komunitas batik. Konstruksi sosial terhadap pandemi COVID-19 juga mencerminkan proses sosial yang termanifestasi dalam tindakan praktis, baik berupa afirmasi (positif) maupun resistensi (negatif).

Kata Kunci: Pandemi COVID-19, komunitas batik, konstruksi sosial, perempuan, UMKM

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Abstract

One of the MSME-based social communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is the Gedog batik community in Kerek District, Tuban Regency. However, women in the Gedog batik community continue to face challenges in understanding and interpreting the COVID-19 pandemic. This study analyzes the social construction of women in the batik community during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study employs Peter L. Berger's social construction theory, utilising a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research methods were used in this study, utilising observation and in-depth interviews as data collection techniques with 20 research informants. This study found that the interpretation of women in the batik community towards the COVID-19 pandemic has a dichotomy that pretends to be positive and negative aspects. This is due to their subjective experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic and other health policies. In addition, socio-economic background, social environment, and technology adoption are fundamental bases that contribute to forming the social construction of women in the batik community. The social construction of the COVID-19 pandemic also reflects social processes manifested in practical actions, such as affirmation (positive) or resistance (negative).

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic, batik community, social construction, women, MSME.*

A. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is an outbreak of infectious disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, commonly known as COVID-19¹. This outbreak has become a global problem affecting human immunity and health. Sociologically, the COVID-19 pandemic has implications for changing medical clinics into epicenters for COVID-19 care, regional quarantines, and causing fear in the community². According to data from Worldometer, there are 704,753,890 people globally exposed to the COVID-19 pandemic, and more than 7,010,681 have died³. This significant data illustrates that the COVID-19 pandemic has become a global problem related to health and other aspects, such as social and economic.

Aspectual dimensions related to social and economic factors are fundamental to community resilience. The massive COVID-19 pandemic has prompted the government

¹ M. Ciotti, M. Ciccozzi, A. Terrinoni, W.-C. Jiang, C.-B. Wang, and S. Bernardini, "The COVID-19 pandemic," *Crit Rev Clin Lab Sci*, vol. 57, no. 6, pp. 365–388, Aug. 2020, doi: 10.1080/10408363.2020.1783198.

² N. Sabetkish and A. Rahmani, "The overall impact of COVID -19 on healthcare during the pandemic: A multidisciplinary point of view," *Health Sci Rep*, vol. 4, no. 4, Dec. 2021, doi: 10.1002/hsr2.386.

³ Worldmeters, "COVID-19/CORONA VIRUS," Worldmeters. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/coronavirus-cases/>.

to implement policies on social distancing to reduce the number of coronavirus transmissions⁴⁵. However, this policy also creates economic challenges for MSMEs, leading to complex problems. Another study revealed that the income of MSMEs decreased significantly due to the Social Distancing policy, which hampered the economic cycle⁶. Additionally, the crisis has increased the price of raw materials and created anxiety among MSMEs. Assistance from the government related to the economic stimulus program is a resilience strategy for MSMEs in the COVID-19 pandemic.

MSMEs are a representation of the people's economy, which encourages creative efforts to generate economic capital⁷. In the context of practice, MSMEs also contribute to social cohesion and collectivity, thereby enhancing social capital. This is what bridges the birth of community-based MSMEs that are more integrative and collective, as an effort to give birth to an empowerment process in society⁸. By definition, community-based MSMEs are part of the MSME model that focuses more on local community participation, with a focus on aspects of human resource development, economic development, and social inclusion⁹. Community-based MSMEs are collective, rational actions of the community, which also have implications for accelerating the accumulation of social capital into economic capital.

⁴ D. Aldila *et al.*, "A mathematical study on the spread of COVID-19 considering social distancing and rapid assessment: The case of Jakarta, Indonesia," *Chaos Solitons Fractals*, vol. 139, p. 110042, Oct. 2020, doi: 10.1016/j.chaos.2020.110042.

⁵ A. A. Suwantika, I. Dhamanti, Y. Suharto, F. D. Purba, and R. Abdulah, "The cost-effectiveness of social distancing measures for mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic in a highly-populated country: A case study in Indonesia," *Travel Med Infect Dis*, vol. 45, p. 102245, Jan. 2022, doi: 10.1016/j.tmaid.2021.102245.

⁶ M. Lutfi, P. Chintya Dewi Buntuang, Y. Kornelius, Erdiyansyah, and B. Hasanuddin, "The impact of social distancing policy on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia," *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 492–503, Oct. 2020, doi: 10.21511/ppm.18(3).2020.40.

⁷ D. Kusumawardhani, A. Rahayu, and I. Maksum, "The Role of Government in MSMEs: The Empowerment of MSMEs During the Free Trade Era in Indonesia," *Australasian Accounting, Business and Finance Journal*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 23–42, 2015, doi: 10.14453/aabfj.v9i2.3.

⁸ H. Mulyani and A. Mulyadi, "Community-based MSMEs (Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises) Financing Model to Increase Business Independence," in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Economics, Business, Entrepreneurship, and Finance (ICEBEF 2018)*, Paris, France: Atlantis Press, 2019. doi: 10.2991/icebef-18.2019.11.

⁹ E. Suhartono, H. Adianita, R. Handayati, L. Nurcholidah, and Moh. M. Sulaeman, "Enhancing Managerial Skills for MSME Practitioners Through Community-Based Education Programs," *Jurnal Terobosan Peduli Masyarakat (TIRAKAT)*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 68–77, May 2024, doi: 10.61100/j.tirakat.v1i2.171.

One of the community-based MSMEs in Kerek District, Tuban Regency, is part of the meso institutions affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This community-based MSME is engaged in the Gedog batik business, which displays beautiful motifs and cultural values from Tuban Regency. The motifs of Gedong batik reflect 18 characters related to the sub-motifs Slimun, Gapura, Lencana, and Yin-Yang¹⁰. The making of gedog batik begins with planting cotton, which is the main ingredient of batik cloth¹¹. This community-based UMKM also has efforts to preserve the cultural value aspects of Tuban Regency, which are being distorted by modernization. For example, Gedog batik is used for traditions in Tuban Regency, such as traditional ceremonies, earth alms, weddings, and funerals.

In this context, the MSME based on the Gedog batik community in Kerak District, Tuban Regency, experienced a significant impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The MSME has a strong community base and accommodates its needs by employing people to make Gedog batik. However, after the COVID-19 pandemic, these MSMEs must implement a WFH (Work from Home) work system as an integral part of implementing the Social Distancing policy. MSMEs must make this effort to maintain immunity and mitigate the massive transmission of the coronavirus. Additionally, the economic situation reveals complex problems in the market transactions (buying and selling) of Gedog batik. This certainly impacts the accumulation of income, which has decreased drastically, but the cost of living has increased.

Issues regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the existence of MSMEs within the Gedog batik community are becoming increasingly complex due to a lack of understanding about the coronavirus. Another study revealed that low public understanding is a social symptom caused by the less-than-massive dissemination of information about the COVID-19 pandemic¹². However, despite a limited understanding, most people still comply with government regulations, such as regional quarantines

¹⁰ D. W. Kartikasari, "Makna motif Batik Gedog sebagai refleksi karakter masyarakat Tuban," *Kajian Moral dan Kewarganegaraan*, vol. 5, no. 03, 2017.

¹¹ D. R. Maulida and S. A. Agustin, "Perancangan Buku Visual Batik Gedog sebagai Media Pelestarian Motif Batik Tuban," *Jurnal Sains dan Seni ITS*, vol. 9, no. 1, Sep. 2020, doi: 10.12962/j23373520.v9i1.52053.

¹² W. Van Damme *et al.*, "The COVID-19 pandemic: diverse contexts; different epidemics—how and why?," *BMJ Glob Health*, vol. 5, no. 7, p. e003098, Jul. 2020, doi: 10.1136/bmjgh-2020-003098.

(lockdowns), to break the chain of coronavirus transmission. In line with this, another study conducted in Nigeria describes the healthy behavior of the community related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The perception of the possibility of contracting the coronavirus and practices to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic have a weak correlation ($r = 0.239$). Even so, more than 95% of the community visited the hospital to check their health conditions, and 58.3% contacted the COVID-19 helpline¹³

Public understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic is fundamental to suppressing the spread of the coronavirus. However, a comprehensive understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic is also significantly influenced by locational factors, including urban and rural areas. Urban areas tend to have more modern, highly educated communities and stronger networks to access information about the COVID-19 pandemic than rural areas. On the other hand, rural areas with disparities in access to information about the COVID-19 pandemic have implications for the escalation of coronavirus exposure cases. This is a more complex problem because the government has difficulty recording the number of cases of exposure to the coronavirus and other health statuses¹⁴. By knowing the number of cases exposed to the coronavirus factually, the government can implement policy steps to effectively break the chain of the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁵

Community-based MSMEs, such as those based on batik gedog, located in rural areas, can potentially experience disparities in information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Kerek District is one of the local economic centers in Tuban Regency, with its government center located in Margomulyo Village. Demographically, there are approximately 75,000 residents living in 17 villages with a total area of 109.5 km²¹⁶. The social reality of information disparity is the primary basis of this study, which examines

¹³ O. Ilesanmi and A. Afolabi, "Perception and practices during the COVID-19 pandemic in an urban community in Nigeria: a cross-sectional study," *PeerJ*, vol. 8, p. e10038, Sep. 2020, doi: 10.7717/peerj.10038.

¹⁴ P. M. M. Vicerra, "Knowledge-Behavior Gap on COVID-19 among Older People in Rural Thailand," *Gerontol Geriatr Med*, vol. 7, Jan. 2021, doi: 10.1177/2333721421997207.

¹⁵ J. Friesen and P. F. Pelz, "COVID-19 and Slums: A Pandemic Highlights Gaps in Knowledge About Urban Poverty," *JMIR Public Health Surveill*, vol. 6, no. 3, p. e19578, Sep. 2020, doi: 10.2196/19578.

¹⁶ M. N. Hidayatullah, "PENGARUH MODAL DAN TENAGA KERJA USAHA PENGRAJIN BATIK TULIS KLASIK TERHADAP TINGKAT PRODUKSI (Studi Pada Industri Kecil Menengah " IKM " Batik Tulis Klasik di Desa Margorejo, Kecamatan Kerek, Kabupaten Tuban)," *Jurnal Ekonomi Pembangunan*, vol. 11, no. 2, p. 200, Dec. 2013, doi: 10.22219/jep.v11i2.3740.

the social construction of women in the batik community in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Kerek District, Tuban Regency. This study employs Peter L. Berger's social construction theory, combined with a phenomenological approach, to understand the perspective of women in the batik community regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

B. Social Community Resilience in the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Literature Review

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a variable that has disrupted the humanist, health, economic, and other fundamental dimensions. In the context of practice, social communities, as social incubators, face complex challenges in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, which is escalating daily. Social communities are an integral part of society, representing specific values, norms, and interests, and are sociologically integrated. The structure of values, identity, and solidarity pretends to be an instrument that sews together social nodes within a community. So that it can give birth to symmetrical social interactions, collective identity, and sustainability over a long period. Therefore, sociologically, there are two fundamental social typologies, namely *Gemeinschaft*—which is personal, emotional, traditional—and *Gesellschaft*, which is impersonal, contractual, and modern¹⁷.

Social communities that typically develop in society can serve as a symbol of resilience, strengthening one another, surviving, and overcoming various challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another study analyzes that the resilience of social communities as a manifestation of community collectivity develops networks with social enterprises or legal organizations¹⁸. Social communities establish social networks as a foundation for integrative ties that facilitate assistance or support, whether social or economic, from social enterprises or legal organizations. There are symmetrical negotiations that utilize resources, shared values, and goals, as well as socio-moral responsibilities, to benefit the community. For example, several social institutions or legal organizations also provide training to social communities to gain knowledge and skills to survive during the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁷ F. Tonnies and C. P. Loomis, *Community and Society*. Routledge, 2017. doi: 10.4324/9781315080871.

¹⁸ V. Alakeson and W. Brett, "Local heroes: How to sustain community spirit beyond Covid-19," 2020.

The proactive and responsive attitude of the social community in handling the COVID-19 pandemic is considered a positive attitude. Another study reveals that this attitude is a strategy for social communities to maintain hope during the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁹. Social communities near poor settlements play a crucial role in mobilizing actions towards a more rational and positive direction to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The government also uses social communities as agents of socialization regarding health information to the community effectively. Because of this, the government can redistribute the budget to social communities to carry out technical work on socializing the COVID-19 pandemic in the community. This transformative capacity provides acceleration to the resilience process of social communities (specific) and society (general) to face the complex COVID-19 pandemic.

Social communities have an existence that cannot be ignored in the discourse on society and the COVID-19 pandemic. Another study highlights the role of social communities in addressing the various needs of poor or vulnerable communities that were unmet during the COVID-19 pandemic²⁰. Social communities can support and become facilitators of non-state actor representatives as agents in crisis governance practices that synchronize the state approach (macro) and the group approach (meso). However, the process of community resilience cannot be carried out solely through the role of social communities, but also requires the involvement of the government as a state actor. This is because the resilience process can be carried out both bottom-up and top-down, from the state (government) through its strategic programs and policies.

The resilience process against the COVID-19 pandemic in society has two strategies that are considered adequate, namely intervention-based and design-based²¹. Resilience-based intervention involves external resources that must be provided to

¹⁹ S. Rippon *et al.*, "Towards transformative resilience: community, neighbourhood and system responses during the COVID-19 pandemic," *Cities Health*, vol. 5, no. sup1, pp. S41–S44, Jul. 2021, doi: 10.1080/23748834.2020.1788321.

²⁰ A. G. McClelland, R. Jordan, S. Parzniewski, D. Shaw, N. O'Grady, and D. Powell, "Post-COVID recovery and renewal through whole-of-society resilience in cities," *Journal of Safety Science and Resilience*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 222–228, Sep. 2022, doi: 10.1016/j.jnlssr.2022.03.003.

²¹ I. Linkov, B. D. Trump, M. Golan, and J. M. Keisler, "Enhancing Resilience in Post-COVID Societies: By Design or By Intervention?," *Environ Sci Technol*, vol. 55, no. 8, pp. 4202–4204, Apr. 2021, doi: 10.1021/acs.est.1c00444.

implement a tiered system; otherwise, the system will fail. This allows stakeholders and the government to take preventive measures against potential disruptions. For example, the community's needs during the COVID-19 pandemic are addressed through government intervention via populist programs. On the other hand, resilience based on design sees that the system must be formulated through its essential functions from disruptions by itself (independently). This shows the contextual differentiation between intervention and design resilience strategies that emphasize technical work. Different resilience strategies will lead to different resilience outcomes. However, the values contained in the strategic narrative are to maintain the community's social existence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community resilience to the COVID-19 pandemic is influenced by five fundamental sectors, namely institutional, social, economic, infrastructure, and demographic. The five fundamental sectors will produce several variables that significantly enhance community resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. *First*, the institutional sector is closely related to efficient leadership and management, as well as risk management and mitigation, and comprehensive risk monitoring and assessment. *Second*, the social sector is related to social trust, social solidarity, collective identity, and social infrastructure. *Third*, the economic sector is closely related to economic sustainability, including financial and natural resources, as well as insurance and financial readiness for treatment. *Fourth*, the infrastructure sector is related to service availability, housing, ownership, and accessibility of public spaces. *Fifth*, the demographic industry is closely related to quality of life and health, requiring a comprehensive understanding of health risks, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as diverse human and work-related vulnerabilities.

The practice of resilience as a representation of community collectivity not only occurs in rural areas but also modern urban communities²². Urban communities characterized by individualism and impersonality do not hinder the formation of more bureaucratized and professional social communities. This is reflected in the CRIs

²² J. Fransen, D. O. Peralta, F. Vanelli, J. Edelenbos, and B. C. Olvera, "The emergence of Urban Community Resilience Initiatives During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An International Exploratory Study," *Eur J Dev Res*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 432–454, Feb. 2022, doi: 10.1057/s41287-020-00348-y.

(Community Resilience Initiatives), which play a functional and positive role in maintaining the resilience of urban communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This role is reflected in four integrative pathways, namely (1) informal bottom-up community initiatives, (2) formal community initiatives that emerge based on the community, (3) external actor initiatives—such as NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), universities, and governments—which are optimal, and (4) networks of organizations that collectively initiate actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, minimal government support often hampers CRIs' constructive strategies for increasing communities' capacity and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

C. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach to analyze the social construction of women in the batik community in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Kerek District, Tuban Regency. The phenomenological approach is a research paradigm in qualitative studies that emphasizes the subjective experience of individuals as the basis for interpreting a social reality²³. Observation and in-depth interviews are employed as data collection techniques, supplemented by secondary data from the media and the internet. Data analysis techniques in this study use data collection, reduction (data categorization), data visualization, and conclusion²⁴.

The informant determination technique in this study uses the snowball technique. The snowball technique is a method of determining informants that begins with individuals who meet the criteria and asks them to recommend other individuals to become research informants (25). The criteria for research informants that have been determined are (1) women aged 17 years and over, (2) residents of Kerek District, Tuban Regency, and (3) members of the batik community in Kerek District, Tuban Regency. This

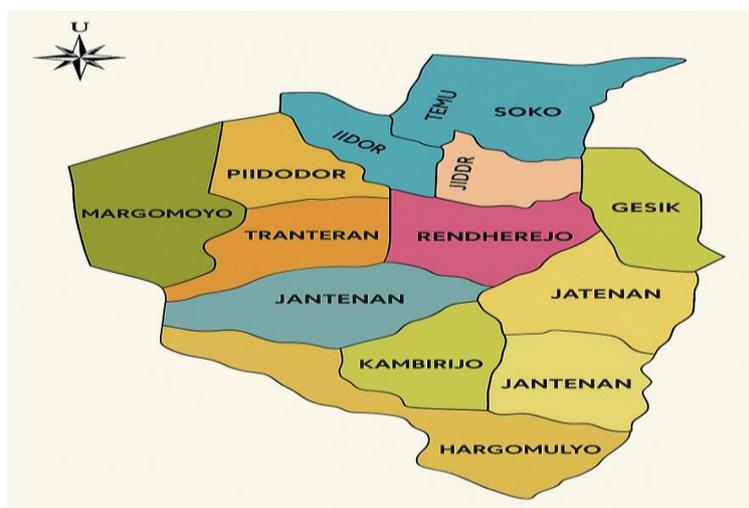
²³ S. N. Khan, "Qualitative Research Method - Phenomenology," *Asian Soc Sci*, vol. 10, no. 21, Oct. 2014, doi: 10.5539/ass.v10n21p298.

²⁴ A. Huberman and M. Miles, *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States of America : SAGE Publications, Inc., 2002. doi: 10.4135/9781412986274.

study comprises 20 research informants, all of whom are women, from the Gedog batik community in Kerek District, Tuban Regency.

Figure 1.

Map of Kerek District, Tuban Regency, East Java, Indonesia



Source: Central Statistics Agency (2017)

Tuban Regency was chosen as the research location, and Kerek District was selected as the social setting for this study. Kerek District is about 22 km southwest of the center of government and economy of Tuban Regency. Margomulyo Village is the center of government and is adjacent to 16 other villages. In this context, Kerek District has one of the community-based MSMEs engaged in gedog batik. Women (specifically) and the community (generally) are integrated to carry out empowerment through the Gedog Batik business. Gedog batik is also a famous local culture from Tuban Regency and East Java. Even so, the massive spread of the coronavirus in Tuban Regency has hampered the community-based MSMEs of Gedog Batik. This is the substance of the problem analyzed in this study, namely, to dismantle the social construction of women in the batik community in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Kerek District, Tuban Regency.

D. The Existence of Community-Based MSMEs Batik Gedog in Kerek District, Tuban Regency

Kerek District is one of the centers of economic growth for the people through the MSME sector in Tuban Regency. MSMEs are one type of productive business that makes

a positive contribution to Indonesia's economic development. In fact, according to the Kementerian Keuangan RI in 2023, MSMEs account for more than 60% of the national GDP (Gross Domestic Product). As an informal institution, MSMEs have a dynamic role in alleviating poverty by opening up employment opportunities for the poor and maintaining the production cycle in the market²⁵. On the other hand, the growth of MSMEs can significantly reduce the unemployment rate through persistent creative economic efforts with policy stimulation related to economic recovery²⁶.

Figure 1.

Women of the Gedog Batik Community in Kerek District, Tuban Regency



Sumber: Data Primer (2020)

In this context, the Kerek District, located in Tuban Regency, is part of the Gedog Batik Craft Center. Approximately 25 micro-scale industries are spread across several villages in Kerek District, with 10 to 25 permanent craftsmen. Also, 50 to 60 non-permanent batik craftsmen produce Gedog batik crafts. Historically, Gedog batik is a local cultural tradition in the interior of Tuban Regency. The manufacturing process begins with spinning cotton into yarn, followed by the method of weaving cloth using

²⁵ N. Nursini, "Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and poverty reduction: empirical evidence from Indonesia," *Development Studies Research*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 153–166, Jan. 2020, doi: 10.1080/21665095.2020.1823238.

²⁶ M. Naderifar, H. Goli, and F. Ghaljaie, "Snowball Sampling: A Purposeful Method of Sampling in Qualitative Research," *Strides in Development of Medical Education*, vol. 14, no. 3, Sep. 2017, doi: 10.5812/sdme.67670.

traditional instruments²⁷. Therefore, the conventional manufacturing process gives Gedog batik cloth a high original work value.

Although the production of Gedog batik has a high original value, it still faces various economic problems. This is related to the fact that MSMEs based on the Gedog batik community have difficulty in accelerating the marketing process in the domestic market²⁸. The domestic market climate for Gedog batik is very low and worsening due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, MSMEs based on the Gedog batik community tended to market in foreign (international) markets through external variables. For example, through synergy with batik artisan groups in Bali to sell to tourists or export through special channels²⁹. This strategy effectively increases revenue amid low demand from the domestic market.

Figure 2.

Women of the Gedog Batik Community in Kerek District, Tuban Regency



Source: Primary Data (2020)

The perspective of postcolonialism and westernization often leads people to believe that local products lack the same quality as global products³⁰. Sociologically, this is the

²⁷ S. Sunaryono, T. Apriani, and F. Ekobelawati, "Analyzing the Impact: The Role of MSME Growth in Reducing Unemployment Amidst High Levels of Poverty," *AJARCDE (Asian Journal of Applied Research for Community Development and Empowerment)*, pp. 166–175, Jun. 2024, doi: 10.29165/ajarcde.v8i2.417.

²⁸ D. Daniswari, "Mengenal Batik Gedog Tuban: Asal usul, Motif, dan Fungsi," *Kompas.com*. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2023/12/13/191732478/mengenal-batik-gedog-tuban-asal-usul-motif-dan-fungsi?page=all>.

²⁹ I. Ramadhana, "Pengembangan Usaha Sentra Industri Kecil Batik Tulis Gedog Sebagai Potensi Ekonomi Lokal Kabupaten Tuban," *Jurnal Pendidikan Ekonomi (JUPE)*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2015.

³⁰ R. Luthra, "Postcolonial Approaches to Communication and Culture," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*, Oxford University Press, 2020. doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.499.

cause of the low domestic market demand for Gedog batik. The price of Gedog batik ranges from Rp 1.5 million to Rp 3 million per piece, depending on the quality and complexity of the motif. To increase the commercial value and protect the authenticity of Gedog batik, craftsmen work with the local government to register it under Geographical Indications (GI). This structural mechanism is expected to strengthen the identity of Gedog batik as a local product from Tuban Regency and open up wider market opportunities.

From the perspective of government bureaucracy, encouraging the development of Gedog batik as a local cultural expression that encompasses social and economic aspects must be a substantial focus. This was done by the East Java Provincial Government, which encouraged an increase in the export capacity of superior products from Margorejo Village and Kedungrejo Village in Kerek District, Tuban Regency³¹. In addition, LPEI (Indonesian Export Financing Institution) also runs a design and marketing training program for MSMEs based on the Gedog batik community³². LPEI undertakes this activity to enhance the marketability of dog batik and foster community creativity in developing more appealing products. LPEI, a formal bureaucratic institution, possesses the social sensitivity to develop the dog batik industry through a socialization-education model for craftsmen in community-based Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Tuban Regency.

The recognition of Gedog batik as an icon of National Batik Day in 2024 represents the symbolic legitimacy of local cultural heritage in the national realm. For the artisans in Gaji and Kedungrejo Villages, this recognition is a source of collective pride and a mechanism for strengthening previously marginalized cultural identities. In this context, the Gedog batik producer community in Kerek District can be viewed as a strategic actor in preserving culture and promoting a community-based economy. Through state intervention—especially in the form of policy support, facilitation of design innovation, and marketing strategies, as well as the provision of legal protection—Gedog Batik can

³¹ Heri, "Gubernur Jatim Dorong Batik Gedog Jadi Potensi Desa Devisa," Tubankab.go.id. <https://www.tubankab.go.id/entry/gubernur-jatim-dorong-batik-gedog-jadi-potensi-desa-devisa>.

³² Media Indonesia, "LPEI Mengawal Kerajinan Tenun Gedog sebagai Penghasil Devisa," Mediaindonesia.com. <https://epaper.mediaindonesia.com/detail/lpei-mengawal-kerajinan-tenun-gedog-sebagai-penghasil-devisa>.

undergo socio-economic transformation and expand its symbolic reach into the global realm. This phenomenon illustrates how local culture can be transformed into a commodity with both economic and symbolic value within the modern social order.

E. The Meaning of Batik Community Women on the COVID-19 Pandemic and Health Policy

The COVID-19 pandemic is a coronavirus outbreak that has negative implications for public health. In a short time interval, there has been a significant escalation in the number of victims of the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. This is related to people exposed to the coronavirus and people who died due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even so, minimal socialization from the government, sometimes miscommunication, and misinformation can lead people to not fully understand the COVID-19 pandemic. This is likely to occur in areas with less educated, irrational communities and limited access to information.

The negative implications of the COVID-19 pandemic occur not only in the health dimension but also in the economy (macro and micro). The MSMEs based on the Gedog batik community in Kerek District represent the socio-economic dynamics due to the massive COVID-19 pandemic. However, the socio-economic dynamics of the Gedog batik community are greatly influenced by their perspective and interpretation of the COVID-19 pandemic. This interpretation is based on the public's understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic as a massive disease outbreak. The knowledge of the COVID-19 pandemic among women in the batik community can be seen in the following interview:

"Yes, the pandemic is like a coughing disease, sir. However, it is quite scary now, sir. Because if I look at the news every day, someone dies. Yesterday, it was said that someone from the neighboring village also died from coronavirus. Nevertheless, I no longer know, sir. Because in this village, the residents have not been infected with corona," (Informant RI, 41, Gedog batik craftsman).

The above data legitimizes the interpretation of the COVID-19 pandemic as a disease characterized by coughing. This was felt by informants who also saw that there were social facts about residents in one of the villages in Kerek District being exposed to the coronavirus, with increasing fatalities every day. The dissemination of information through news media or television increases awareness that the COVID-19 pandemic is a

disease that can be fatal. In this context, other informants also conveyed something in line with the RI informant:

"I saw the socialization about the coronavirus in the newspaper, sir. So, when the coronavirus first entered Indonesia, I already knew that this was a dangerous virus. This is from Wuhan, sir, and it has the potential to enter Indonesia. The coronavirus typically presents with symptoms such as a sore throat, fever, and difficulty tasting or smelling anything. Eating does not feel like it, sir. Yes, if there is something like that, according to the government, you have to self-isolate at home; otherwise, you have to go to the hospital. Luckily, here it is still a little, sir," (Informant WN, 33, Gedog batik craftsman).

Their literacy significantly influences the informant's interpretation of the COVID-19 pandemic in light of subsequent media and television news developments. The COVID-19 pandemic that attacks the joints of life is understood as a disease with a high level of spread. In addition, the coronavirus also attacks the community's immune system and can result in severe illness and even death. Even so, the community's response and reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic are very diverse. Meanwhile, informant ST said he was not worried about the COVID-19 pandemic. This was expressed in the following interview:

"I do not feel anything about this coronavirus. However, perhaps this is a test for those above. I am sure there must be a reason for Allah to give this extraordinary disease. However, because it came from above, I am sure there must be a cure. The government stated that they are developing a vaccine, if I am not mistaken. Yes, that might be the cure, sir," (Informant ST, 38, Gedog batik craftsman).

The theological aspect is an instrument that shapes the meaning of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the view that the COVID-19 pandemic is a test from God, there is a feeling of steadfastness, fatalism, and acceptance regarding this phenomenon. This is also related to the response of informants who are not too reckless, afraid, or reactive to the COVID-19 pandemic. Informants feel more optimistic about the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Informants think that God gives disease for a reason and has a cure for it. The government's efforts in conducting research and formulating a vaccine for the coronavirus also illustrate a more optimistic response.

In contrast to the informant above, another informant gave a different interpretation of the COVID-19 pandemic. The RT informant considered the COVID-19

pandemic to be a lie systematically put together by the media or government. According to him, the COVID-19 pandemic is similar to other diseases characterized by fever, cough, and other symptoms. Moreover, the RT informant explained that he had experienced a disease that had symptoms similar to those of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, after experiencing the disease, many of his neighbors avoided him. However, within a few days, he began to feel better and was able to return to his normal activities. This was conveyed in the following interview:

“It is like this, sir. In the past, I was torn about COVID-19. Why? Because a few months ago, I had an illness that was similar to COVID-19. At that time, my body was hot, and I was also coughing. Yes, I was weak, sir. It was similar to COVID-19. My neighbors also told me that it was COVID-19, and of course, they avoided me. When I ate it then, it did not taste good, sir. However, that was only for a short time. Because I think it was only for a few days, I was healthy again, sir. I was able to work here again, right?” (RT informant, 27, Gedog batik craftsman).

Distrust of the COVID-19 pandemic is an integral part of the *verstehen* process that involves subjective experience in interpreting it. Because they have experienced it and it does not have extreme implications, RT informants interpret the COVID-19 pandemic as a common disease that the government and the media overly report. Moreover, in the area where RT informants live, there are not many victims of the COVID-19 pandemic. This reinforces the understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic as a common disease, unrelated to mortality. RT informants also socialize their distrust of the COVID-19 pandemic to their families, such as their husbands and children.

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a destructive variable for state institutions (macro), social groups (meso), and individuals (micro). In response, the Indonesian government has implemented various strategic measures to break the chain of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, implementing PSBB (Large-Scale Social Restrictions) and PPKM (Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions), providing social assistance, and carrying out mass vaccinations. In this context, PSBB and PPKM have logical implications for implementing a social distancing system to maintain distance between people in public spaces. The negative-destructive logical consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly damaged the social, economic, political,

educational, health, and other systems³³³⁴³⁵. However, the interpretation of COVID-19 pandemic policies also exhibits substantial variations.

The COVID-19 pandemic policies most directly felt by the public were PSBB and PPKM. Regarding the timeline, the PSBB policy was implemented earlier to encourage people to stay at home and self-isolate. This policy was also related to the many public facilities that were temporarily closed, as they adjusted to the external situation (the pandemic). Meanwhile, PPKM was implemented after relaxing community activities, but it still required compliance with health protocols, such as wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. The public's response to this policy was very diverse and is reflected in the following interview:

"Yes, I think it would be good to have a PSBB. Well, what else? I am also concerned about contracting the coronavirus. Yesterday I went to the market, and some people were not wearing masks. I was afraid of getting corona, bro. So, if there is something like PSBB, it would be good, bro. It can be what it is called, so it does not get infected. My children are still small, bro. So, if I am working like this, I am afraid of infecting my children," (Informant TA, 24, Gedong batik craftsman).

The interview excerpt above illustrates a positive interpretation of the PSBB policy implemented by the government. TA informants responded positively to the PSBB policy because the policy's implications provide benefits aimed at suppressing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. TA informants' contextualization of the interpretation of the PSBB policy was greatly influenced by their experience when they saw other residents infected with the coronavirus. On the other hand, TA informants felt they were vulnerable to transmitting the coronavirus to their young children. Therefore, the positive interpretation of the COVID-19 pandemic was rationalized through their subjective experience of the coronavirus phenomenon.

In contrast to the data above, informant KH revealed that the PSBB policy was a massive disaster for him. Informant KH is a widow with two children who has to work

³³ A. Haleem, M. Javaid, and R. Vaishya, "Effects of COVID-19 pandemic in daily life," *Curr Med Res Pract*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 78–79, Mar. 2020, doi: 10.1016/j.cmrp.2020.03.011.

³⁴ T. Rume and S. M. D.-U. Islam, "Environmental effects of COVID-19 pandemic and potential strategies of sustainability," *Heliyon*, vol. 6, no. 9, p. e04965, Sep. 2020, doi: 10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e04965.

³⁵ A. D. Kaye *et al.*, "Economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic on healthcare facilities and systems: International perspectives," *Best Pract Res Clin Anaesthesiol*, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 293–306, Oct. 2021, doi: 10.1016/j.bpa.2020.11.009.

alone to get economic capital. With the government ratifying the PSBB policy, informant KH is having difficulty generating enough income. Because of this, informant KH earns an income of less than Rp.100,000 per week. This was conveyed explicitly in the interview below:

“What else can I do if there is a PSBB, sir. I work at this batik shop. However, due to the coronavirus and the PSBB, it is now difficult for me to earn money. Sir, I have two children who are still small. Then, what will my children eat if I am unable to work as usual? Yes, it should not be like this. Working should be okay, but still wear a mask, sir. If I am told to stay home, I am confused about where to get money, sir,” (Informant KH, 31, Gedog batik craftsman).

In line with the data above, informant IK also negatively interprets the PSBB policy. Informant IK argued that the PSBB policy is detrimental to the lower class, which works physically on a daily basis. He saw extreme sanctions for people who violated the PSBB policy. Informant IK emphasized that violations of the PSBB policy are common because people need to work to earn a sufficient income during a complex situation. This was conveyed in the following interview:

“Besides working at the batik craft place, I also work at the market, sir. I sell at the market to meet my family’s needs, sir. My husband is a farmer, sir. Yesterday, when I was selling at the market, it was quiet, sir. Then, if we still open our stalls at the market, there will be a fine from the government. Well, what should I do? I still need income for me and my family. Then, what is the government’s solution if it is like this?” (Informant IK, 41, Gedog batik craftsman).

Interpreting the COVID-19 pandemic and health policies reveals a stark differentiation. There is an inherent interpretation of positive and affirmative dimensions. However, there is a meaning that tends to be negative towards the COVID-19 pandemic and health policies. Differentiation in this context is an integral part of the subjective verstehen process, facilitated through a deep personal experience. This interpretation becomes the basis (fundamental) that forms social construction in the COVID-19 pandemic.

F. Social Construction of Batik Community Women towards the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Theoretical Implication

Social construction is a micro theory developed sociologically by Peter L. Berger. Peter Ludwig Berger, often referred to as Peter L Berger, is an Austrian-born sociologist

who has made significant contributions to the sociology of knowledge. From the results of his academic struggles, a theory of social reality construction was born as an academic foundation to explain that every social reality is the result of a social construction process³⁶. Before examining the roots of Peter L. Berger's theory and concept, it becomes apparent that Alfred Schutz inspired many of Berger's ideas about how the world, phenomena, and social reality are formed.

Peter L. Berger explains that reality is formed socially, and the sociology of science must be considered as an analytical variable that comprehensively and systematically reveals how this occurs³⁷. At the pivotal point of his thinking, Berger summarizes two key terms in the context of the theory of social reality construction: "reality" and "knowledge". Reality is a quality inherent in every phenomenon, and it exists independently of individuals. Meanwhile, knowledge is related to the validity of real phenomena and has implications for the context of specific characteristics³⁸.

In this case, Berger views reality and knowledge as being socially constructed, a view rooted in the social world. Where this is very dependent on habituation or habits, and the stock of knowledge³⁹. In addition, Berger describes social reality as resulting from individuals' externalization, objectification, and internalization of knowledge. In a related matter, Berger also discusses legitimacy as a theoretical development of the phenomenological concept of Alfred Schutz, making it a fundamental concept in the sociology of knowledge. Legitimacy is knowledge that is socially objectified and functions in translating a social order. In this context, three social construction processes have emerged for women in the batik community in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, externalization. Externalization is the earliest process in which individuals create a social world around a particular object. In this context, informants responded to the COVID-19 pandemic from different subjective experiences. As a result, the

³⁶ P. L. Berger, *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*. Open Road Media, 2011.

³⁷ P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*. In *Social theory re-wired* (pp. 110-122). Routledge, 2016.

³⁸ P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*. In *Social theory re-wired* (pp. 110-122). Routledge, 2016.

³⁹ *Ibid*

meaning of the COVID-19 pandemic, as described in this study, exhibits diametrical variations. For example, the meaning of the COVID-19 pandemic is influenced by the individual's stock of knowledge and produces different perspectives. Some informants believe the COVID-19 pandemic is a common type of disease and will heal on its own. On the other hand, some informants think that the COVID-19 pandemic is a category of hazardous and contagious diseases. This is influenced by their personal experience of having family or colleagues who died from being infected with the coronavirus.

Second, objectivation. Objectivation is accumulating completed results from the externalization process and giving birth to objective reality through social interaction in the intersubjective world. Objectivation becomes a process in which the results of individual externalization (thinking) appear objective and institutionalized. In this context, the response of individuals or society regarding the COVID-19 pandemic is translated by state institutions (social structures) into an objective public policy. For example, implementing PSBB and PPKM policies, creating health protocols, and general vaccinations. On the other hand, the media plays a strategic role in strengthening the objectification process through discursive discourse, disseminating information related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other topics.

Third, internalization. Internalization is the process by which individuals accept and incorporate social objectification and structures into their social consciousness. Where social consciousness transforms into society's social world, in this context, individuals and society as a social system follow government policies related to the COVID-19 pandemic as a social truth. For example, individuals or society follow PSBB and PPKM policies, get vaccinated, and wear masks. However, it should be underlined that individuals or societies who internalize government programs are not afraid of regulations, but because "it is the right thing to do". On the other hand, if some individuals or societies do not comply, this is rudeness and a social threat.

Institutionalization is a process of social structure that functions to legitimize a policy, leading to a process of internalization within society⁴⁰. In this context, the

⁴⁰ K. J. Gergen, *The Social Construction of Reality: Traces and Transformation*. In *Social Constructivism as Paradigm?* (pp. 259-272). Routledge, 2018.

government, as a state institution, carries out a legitimation process in shaping specific social actions. The government ratifies and legitimizes policies related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as PSBB, PPKM, vaccinations, and others, to be followed (internalized) by the community⁴¹. Additionally, the media plays a crucial role in shaping society's perspective, perception, and understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic. High technology adoption and public literacy regarding health information are social variables that increase the public's perspective regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The dissemination of information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic will have implications for social actions, ranging from individuals affirming (positive) to resisting (negative).

G. Conclusion

The MSME based on the Gedog batik community in Kerek District, Tuban Regency, is one of the socio-economic communities that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has created unstable market conditions, resulting in a significant decline in income figures. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has also hindered Gedog batik artisans from working optimally due to government health policies, such as PSBB and PPKM, as well as social distancing measures. In this regard, the Gedog batik community has a social construction that tends to be dichotomous in its approach to the COVID-19 pandemic. This dichotomy implies a process of meaning that is divided into two distinct categories: positive and negative. This occurs due to the influence of subjective experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic and other health policies.

The COVID-19 pandemic is often considered a scary disease that can cause death. This is influenced by the media disseminating information about the COVID-19 pandemic in a factually sensitive manner. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic is often interpreted as a common disease that can be cured quickly. This can occur due to the subjective experience of individuals who recover independently without leaving any residue. In another context, health policies—such as PSBB and PPKM—are also interpreted in a dichotomous manner. These policies are interpreted positively as an

⁴¹ H. Ingram, A. L. Schneider, and P. DeLeon, *Social Construction and Policy Design*. In *Theories of the Policy Process*, Second Edition (pp. 93-126). Routledge, 2019.

effort to suppress the spread of the coronavirus. However, the PSBB and PPKM policies are also interpreted as instruments that hinder individuals or communities from carrying out socio-economic activities.

Socio-economic background, social environment, and technology adoption are the fundamental bases that contribute to forming the social construction of women in the batik community. The social construction of the COVID-19 pandemic also reflects the social process, as manifested in practical actions, such as affirmation (positive) or resistance (negative). The media also helps legitimize information and discourse born from the formal bureaucratic process in government programs. With massive media hegemony, the process of carrying out the social construction of women in the batik community is formed simultaneously. For this reason, this study recommends holding a community service program that focuses on increasing literacy of the community (general) and women in the batik community (specifically) regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

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