

# Tim Tuli versus Tim Dengar and Drag Queens in Bali-Yogyakarta Tourism Cabaret Shows Milieu

Nazrina Zuryani<sup>1</sup>, Victoria Sundari Handoko<sup>2</sup>, Ni Putu Eka Mahadewi<sup>3</sup>, Bambang K. Prihandono<sup>4</sup>

{[nazrinazuryani@unud.ac.id](mailto:nazrinazuryani@unud.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>, [sundari.handoko@uajy.ac.id](mailto:sundari.handoko@uajy.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>,  
[eka.mahadewi23@gmail.com](mailto:eka.mahadewi23@gmail.com)<sup>3</sup>, [bambang.prihandono@uajy.ac.id](mailto:bambang.prihandono@uajy.ac.id)<sup>4</sup>}

Universitas Udayana, Indonesia<sup>1</sup>, Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia<sup>2,3,4</sup>.

**Abstract.** In 2022, Udayana University researchers launched [www.dragqueenscoalitionbali.com](http://www.dragqueenscoalitionbali.com) to support Bali's drag queen network. In 2023, the network expanded to include the deaf community, and transgender drag queens participated in Raminten Cabaret Shows. Ethnographic methodology was used to conduct interviews, and YouTube content was created with translations. Restaurants employing Team Tuli require sign language proficiency, and Inklusive Warung offers introductory sessions to guests. Visitors to these establishments are typically tourists who understand cultural diplomacy within networked societies. Gender ambiguities are addressed through post-vertigo literacy, achieved through the inclusivity of newly marginalized groups. Before cabaret shows at Inklusive Warung, videos are shown to the audience to help them understand the challenges faced by Team Tuli. It is recommended that the Ministry of Tourism become more aware of the difficulties faced by Team Tuli and transgender individuals.

**Keywords:** Tim Tuli; Tim Dengar; Drag Queens, Bali-Yogyakarta, Cabaret Shows.

## 1 Introduction

The disabled community in Indonesia receives protection, especially from their immediate families. They are born and raised within a family framework that supports one another with a practice known as "ke-Timur-an," which involves sharing the social burdens of non-normativity within the family. The term of Tuli commonly found for those who are deaf and therefore they cannot speak (Tuli-Bisu). Here in this research, the Tim Tuli connotes to a team of people who are deaf but work in tourism industry in Bali. They work in Inklusiv Warung and in Burger King at Sunset Road Bali. Non-normativity is often hidden in disabled or physically challenged children, and social rejection also frequently occurs among transgender individuals, known as transpuan (transformation into women). These are individuals born in male bodies who feel trapped as women and begin taking social steps like "coming out" or expressing their chosen gender identity (gender bending). They are sometimes referred to

derogatorily as "bencong" or "waria," or using more delicate terms in South Sulawesi, they are known as "kawe-kawe" or "calabai" from among the five recognized genders [1].

Zuryani, Erviantono, and Pramestisari (2022) delve into the profession of drag queens in Bali and find cases where men who cross-dress as women are commonly seen working to entertain on stage [2]. They perform as drag queens, either as solo acts or as part of a team with dancers, and in cabaret medley shows. However, offstage, they lead normal lives, with families (wives and children), and seek a sense of security far from persecution and bullying. This phenomenon is also observed in Bali, where traditional dances accommodate men who dress as female dancers, such as "Arja Muani," and it is evident in the Raminten Cabaret Shows in Yogyakarta, where two transwomen dancers perform classical Javanese dances in the style of the Yogyakarta Palace [3].

The Raminten Cabaret Shows, as explored in this research, play at weekend entertainment in a building located at the southern end of Malioboro Street, Yogyakarta, known as Hamzah Batik building. Singers who impersonate the styles of famous divas and translate them into Bahasa Indonesia are referred to as "ratu penyeret" or drag queens. They perform every Friday and Saturday night. In other words, they are impersonators who emulate the styles of renowned singers, both local and international, and perform as drag queens. In 2022, in line with the publication of the book chapter by Zuryani & Erviantono (2021), a pocketbook was also provided to the drag queens. This pocketbook was created as a new platform in October 2022, known as [www.dragqueenscoalitionbali.com](http://www.dragqueenscoalitionbali.com). This platform served as a common interest for networking and communication [4].

## 2 Methodology

This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive approach and has obtained consent from five individuals from the Deaf team who were interviewed, two of whom were drag queen dancers. All participants signed up informed consent as provided by the researcher. The interviews were conducted at Inkulsiv Warung Canggu and were carried out in-depth but briefly, with the assistance of a leader. After establishing a personal connection with the researcher, four of the Deaf team members declined to have video recordings made. One individual acted as a leader, Mr.C was willing to explain with the help of a translator. A small portion of video recordings is available for download on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/ADi9zwK51Ds?si=f9qXKyyAZhkykAFn>).

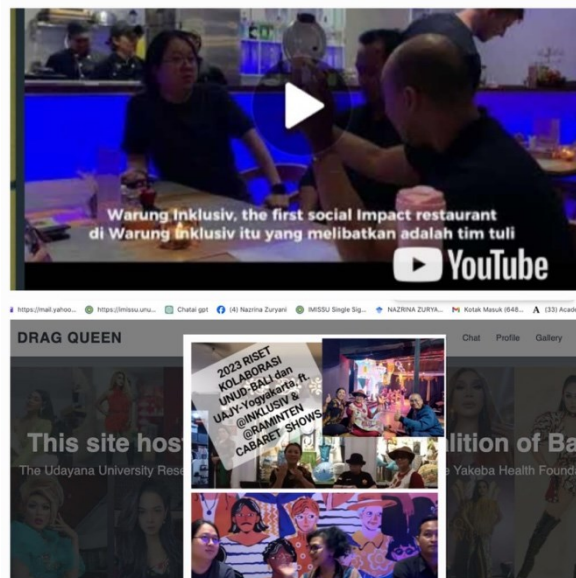


Fig. 1. Both Youtube and web site [www.dragqueenscoalitionbali.com](http://www.dragqueenscoalitionbali.com)

Research at a Burger King restaurant on Sunset Road, Kuta, Badung, was more observational and involved interacting with the servers and cashiers. There were five Deaf team members working each day, divided into two shifts. Typically, two of them worked in the kitchen, but there was still a rotation of tasks. They had to make an effort to interact with Burger King customers. In procedural terms, the Deaf team members who served as informants were those who interacted directly with customers at Burger King, as well as those who did not.

In the research conducted in Yogyakarta, researchers from Atma Jaya University initiated a research method that was more ethnographic in nature [5]. This research approach aimed to reveal more characteristics of ethnicity present in both research locations, both in Bali and Yogyakarta. There are differences in the research subjects discussed here, with a focus on examining the interests and struggles faced by impersonators who work as drag queens at the Raminten Cabaret Shows. In contrast, in the case of the Deaf and Hearing Teams in Bali, the researchers were more focused on gathering data related to the empowerment activities carried out by the tourism industry in Canggu and the Tabanan regency.

Thematic ethnographic analysis, as described by Hanurawan (2016), aims to comprehensively describe the cultural characteristics in the everyday social lives of research subjects or informants [6]. The goal is to find and comprehensively describe cultural phenomena within a group, in this case, the cabaret performance community that interacts with its audience.

In Yogyakarta, there were four impersonators (individuals who imitate international divas by performing as drag queens) who were willing to be interviewed, and one of them was a close friend of the lead researcher.

Three drag queens were interviewed by the field researcher, who was a student at Atma Jaya University Yogyakarta and also a classical Javanese dancer who occasionally performed at the

Raminten Cabaret Shows. These three performing artists, who served as research informants, were graduates of the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (Institut Seni Indonesia/ISI) Yogyakarta and had taken the course "Body Performance and Impersonation Techniques" at the Faculty of Performing Arts, ISI Yogyakarta. The research with the drag queens was conducted at the Raminten Cabaret Shows stage before the performances took place. The owner of the Raminten Cabaret Shows, who had received an honorary title from the Yogyakarta Palace (Kraton Yogyakarta), was also interviewed (as mentioned in the provided YouTube link). As a result, the research on drag queens was deemed valid and procedurally sound in both Yogyakarta and Bali.

### **3 Results and Discussion**

Conducting research with individuals with disabilities and groups facing stigma is not easy. They are more sensitive and quicker to be suspicious of people approaching them outside the context of their work. Their sensitivity is not without reason; often, "normal" individuals tend to objectify them, presenting their shortcomings unethically, and sometimes they feel exploited by certain individuals. Castells and Cordoso (2005) argue that social networks in communities lead to a key transition in the presence of various empowered or disempowered communities [7].

The presence of Inklusiv Warung in Canggu and the management of Burger King on Sunset Road, Bali, that empower the Deaf community deserves support from all parties. Inklusiv Warung is a family-friendly restaurant with a child-friendly menu and in Burger King playground area is available. This means there are no negative connotations, as seen in some nightclubs in the Gaza Strip area in Seminyak, famous for the presence of "Waria" (transgender individuals) [8] [9]. In Tabanan's Belalang village, a village head has also expressed approval for hospitality business owners who empower the Deaf community, believing that they can communicate when trained and work properly.

The village head of Belalang in the Tabanan regency, who also oversees The Moksha Villa, has also given his approval. The Moksha Villa is a company that manages Inklusiv Warung in Canggu. In this villa, not only the Deaf team is employed but also a transwoman who is a fitness instructor. If any guests wish to have a drag queen performance in the villa's arena, the management does not object as long as it doesn't disturb other guests. In several villas in Tabanan, Nusa Dua, and the Badung regency, private parties have featured drag queens as entertainers, and impersonation has become a distinctive profession for transwomen in Bali. In Yogyakarta, drag queen performances are also accommodated by specific restaurants, aside from the Raminten Cabaret Shows, which were the focus of this research.

#### **3.1 The Deaf Team vs. the Hearing Team and Drag Queens in Bali**

It is undeniable that entertainment is a fundamental need for modern society. However, those who participate in the entertainment industry are often marginalized or receive little support from the government or the general public. The Deaf Team at Inklusiv Warung is proud of the company's management for fully embracing them as the Deaf Team and actively involving the Hearing Team to work together. They express this pride openly. On one hand, these efforts are still a work in progress because not everyone in the general population readily accepts the idea

of inclusive services, embracing all individuals, especially those with disabilities or other vulnerable groups.

The Deaf Team and the Hearing Team at Inklusiv Warung have demonstrated a synergistic approach to their work. This cooperation has been systematically built by the company's management, which also schedules the Deaf Team to work in the restaurant and the Moksha villa in Tabanan. This wholehearted management approach has fostered a sense of empowerment, ownership, and synergy in the restaurant and accommodation business in Bali's tourism sector. Workers on the Deaf Team, who already possess certain skills, continue to receive training to enhance their understanding of the service industry they are involved in.

At Inklusiv Warung, the Deaf Team receives regular training in various aspects, including financial services as cashiers, food service as waiters/waitresses, and bartending for both mixed and alcoholic beverages. The Hearing Team working at The Moksha Villa complements the needs of guests and encourages them to interact with the Deaf Team. This synergy has been fostered because the company mandates continuous educational programs for the community. This education can be seen on Inklusiv Warung's Instagram page, which is filled with messages promoting the empowerment of sign language skills, in addition to the empowerment of Deaf dancers at special events.

Inklusiv Warung attracts a larger number of foreign tourist guests who come with their children. The patrons of Inklusiv Warung not only enjoy the food and drinks from the early morning when the restaurant opens but are also invited to experience the warmth and inclusivity that the restaurant truly represents as the first social impact restaurant in Bali. Through various programs, they educate everyone to take part in their social responsibility towards individuals with disabilities and vulnerable populations. Many female and child visitors feel comfortable, as revealed in the study by Pratama and Nugraha (2019) [10]. The motivation for female visitors at restaurants with cabaret shows is to enjoy food and feel at ease with the evening entertainment.

Interviews with drag queen performers at Inklusiv Warung reveal that initially, the Non Deaf drag queen team was surprised. They as the Hearing Team had to collaborate with the Deaf drag queen team (consisting of one male and one female dancer and two Master of Ceremonies) to ensure that the cabaret theme could be presented. Inklusiv Warung has a different cabaret theme every day. Of course, special performance programs are also conducted to accommodate Deaf drag queen dancers or contemporary dancers to have their own special performance days. The management team organizes a series of contemporary dance performances based on the roots of Indonesian dance, which are performed by the Deaf team.

The educational performance programs do not stop at the front stage of Inklusiv Warung. The leader of the Deaf Team, who serves as the liaison to the researcher, frequently invites guests and high-quality trainers to enhance the skills of the Hearing Team and help them understand the potential of the Deaf Team. One of the scheduled programs involves inviting children to participate in sign language training with drawing competitions and other contests. This program involves children from the Canggu area, inviting both public and private schools in that affluent region to give them insight into the challenges faced by the Deaf community. Behind the scenes at Inklusiv Warung, new competencies are continuously imparted to the Deaf Team by the company's management to improve their performance as cashiers,

waiters/waitresses, bartenders, and as entertainers and restaurant service providers. Clearly, the process of entertaining and educating the community requires sustained efforts. These efforts are closely related to the experiences of people with disabilities who often face bullying, negative stigmatization due to their physical differences, and more frequent harassment face by cabaret performers who have the characteristics of Waria or transwomen.

The research in 2022 involved an audience with Cok Ace, who was the chairman of PHRI (the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association) for the Bali Province at the time, and who also served as the Deputy Governor of Bali. It seems that stakeholders in Bali were aware of the stigma prevalent in society but were not actively addressing it. During this audience, Cok Ace expressed his empathy, but the presence of Social Services staff who dealt with vulnerable populations (ODGJ/People with Mental Disorders, beggars, the homeless, and marginalized groups like Waria) was also noted. The outcome of the audience with the Deputy Governor, who also chaired PHRI in the Bali Province, confirmed that state institutions were only maintaining a "business as usual" approach. They were unable to effectively manage the concept of inclusivity for marginalized communities, which needs continuous attention. Consequently, there is a growing awareness across society about managing differences and preserving the dignity of certain professions, such as the drag queen profession, which is predominantly composed of Waria or transwomen. Hospitality in tourist destinations is often filled with masks of insincerity and an air of injustice.

In Yogyakarta, the roadside becomes a stage for group music performances aimed at earning a meagre income while providing entertainment. They are versatile in their interactions, whether on the roadside or in bustling areas like Malioboro Street or other city centres. The people of Yogyakarta, known for their simplicity, are generally accepting of figures like Raminten, who are men cross-dressed in a casual manner. Furthermore, the Yogyakarta Kraton (palace) recognizes the presence of Raminten as Hamzah Sulaiman and has bestowed him with the honorary title "Kanjeng Mas Tumenggung Tanoyo Hamijinindyo." Originally, Hamzah Sulaiman was known as the character Raminten, playing the role of mbokBan (a kind-hearted, helpful assistant to the kingdom) in the Ketoprak series Pengkolan from Jogja TV in the 1990s. This character is closely associated with the core business that was formerly known as Mirota Batik. Today, the Mirota Batik building has been renamed the Hamzah Batik Building, located at the southern end of Malioboro Street.

Certainly, comparing the ethnographic attitudes of different communities in accepting the presence of men dressed as women can be explored within the context of each region's traditions. In Bali, performances featuring men dressed as women can be found in Arja Muani, and this is also the case in Java. Many male dancers are skilled at performing in a feminine style, from Didi Nini Towok, then in Lengger dance to the wong edan-edanan show at the Kraton Yogyakarta, which features cross-dressed individuals in a common and entertaining manner. This means that the presence of Raminten Cabaret Shows as evening entertainment is no longer a problem for the people of Yogyakarta.

Three cabaret performers, who are graduates of the Yogyakarta Art Institute, explain that from their experience in performing, the body is a creative and applicative canvas for the owner's creativity [11]. Therefore, if someone rejects the idea of gender multiculturalism, it can result in moments of gender vertigo. Gender vertigo should be a learning process rather than a way to discriminate against someone. According to Risman (1998), these moments are often

experienced by the baby boomer generation of men who find it difficult to let go of their hegemonic masculinity and, as a result, exhibit harsh attitudes towards men who are more feminine [12] [13]. Sometimes, this doesn't just manifest as discriminatory behaviour during moments of gender vertigo but can lead to bullying and harassment. Therefore, it is important to documenting the experiences of people with disabilities and the challenges faced by drag queens in their professional lives, which are full of struggles and rejections. They have the same hopes: to work well, be respected, and have their dignity uplifted, just like any other "normal" individual.

#### **4 Conclusion**

It can be concluded that the condition of disability affecting someone is not their choice. No one chooses to be born with physical or mental disabilities or to have variations in their sexual preferences. Gender identity is not limited to the binary categorization of male and female in terms of biological sex; social gender roles are not restricted by boundaries. The struggles faced by people with disabilities, as experienced by the Deaf Team, can serve as a success story for the Hearing Team working together in Inklusiv Warung. Similarly, the transgender community and the profession of Drag Queens at Raminten Cabaret Shows are an undeniable part of society.

The general public should learn to understand the situational role of gender according to the theme and context being portrayed. Sometimes, the interests and expectations of the Deaf Team are not conveyed accurately due to limited interaction. However, as the Hearing Team becomes a good partner for the Deaf Team, common goals can be achieved. Just like the Waria or Transwomen who choose a profession as impersonators at private parties or in cabaret performances, it should be understood that entertaining through impersonation or as a drag queen requires unique performing skills and techniques. In addition to stage costumes, cosmetics, wigs, and accessories are not cheap and not easy to obtain. At Raminten Cabaret Shows, fully supported by Kanjeng Hamzah Zulaiman, there are two transwomen who, in addition to their roles as drag queens, are highly skilled in performing classical Javanese dance in the style of Yogyakarta (Widayanti, 2015). Therefore, the general public needs to be educated that the professions chosen by the Deaf Team, both at Inklusiv Warung and at Burger King on Sunset Road in Bali, are aimed at earning a legitimate and formal livelihood and achieving outstanding accomplishments.

All diffable and marginalized people such as transwomen, they need to be supported to receive fair treatment in accordance with the country's laws. Therefore, it is recommended that the PHRI (Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association) and the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy actively participate in supporting businesses in the restaurant, accommodation, and entertainment sectors to employ people with disabilities and marginalized individuals legally. Legal protection should be prepared to ensure their safety.

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