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A Qualitative Study on Employers' Perspectives in Implementing Inclusive Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) for Workers with Diverse Sexual Orientations, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Farid Farhan^{1*}, Galuh Saraesti Ardhianingrum¹, Sitti Nuhra¹

¹Faculty of Medicine, Public Health, and Nursing, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding author: Farid Farhan, Faculty of Medicine, Public Health, and Nursing, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Email: faridfarhan@mail.ugm.ac.id

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Abstract

Background: Workplace discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation remains a persistent problem in Indonesia. This study aimed to explore employers' perspectives on the implementation of OHS for workers with diverse sexual orientations and to identify the barriers and strategies involved.

Methods: A qualitative phenomenological design was used. Data were collected through observation and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with six employers from formal and informal sectors in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Participants were selected using criterion purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using Moustakas' five-step phenomenological approach, comprising bracketing, reduction, thematic clustering, expression validation, and verbatim-supported description.

Results: Most employers perceived diverse sexual orientation as a deviation which underlay negative workplace stigma, yet they simultaneously expressed tolerance toward such workers as long as professionalism was maintained and work processes were not disrupted. Barriers to inclusive OHS implementation included persistent social stigma, the absence of written protective policy, and employers' concern about potential conflict among coworkers. Counseling emerged as an informal coping strategy, although no structured or written procedure existed.

Conclusion: Employers in this study held an open yet conditional stance toward workers with diverse sexual orientations, prioritizing professionalism over explicit protective policy. Formalized, written inclusive-OHS policies are needed to reduce stigma and ensure equitable protection for all workers, informing both employers and policymakers seeking to build discrimination-free workplaces.

INTRODUCTION

Workplace discrimination against employees with diverse sexual orientations remains a well-documented, cross-national problem [1]. A systematic review of 52 studies found that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees experience salary inequities, denial of spousal or partner benefits, and social exclusion by coworkers [1]. Meta-analytic labor-market evidence further shows

that, even where anti-discrimination law exists, gay and bisexual men continue to face earnings penalties and reduced job-market access relative to heterosexual peers [2]. In Southeast Asia specifically, LGBT+ employees report verbal harassment, unequal treatment, and barriers to career advancement linked to their sexual orientation and gender identity, while broader societal conservatism perpetuates a culture of silence in the workplace [3,4]. Workers with diverse sexual orientations remain legally uncertain in Indonesia due to absent explicit protections [5,6].

Indonesian LGBT individuals rarely disclose their orientation at work for fear of discrimination and harassment, and physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and cultural violence against this group is frequently reported [6,7]. Two Indonesian provinces additionally criminalize same-sex sexual activity under regional bylaws, and no jurisdiction in the country currently provides discrimination protection in employment, housing, or family recognition on the basis of sexual orientation [8]. These conditions form the socio-cultural and legal backdrop against which Indonesian employers form their perspectives on inclusive OHS, and they underscore why locally grounded, employer-focused research on this topic carries direct practical urgency [9,10].

Inclusive occupational health and safety (OHS) is understood in this study not as preferential treatment for one group, but as an extension of general psychosocial-risk management within the OHS system. ISO 45003:2021 that positions discrimination, exclusion, interpersonal conflict, bullying, harassment, and inadequate social support as psychosocial hazards that organizations are obliged to identify, assess, and control in the same systematic manner as physical hazards [11]. This definition is further specified by workgroup-inclusion theory, which conceptualizes inclusion as an employee's simultaneous experience of belongingness being valued for one's distinguishing characteristics [12]. Ely and Thomas's typology of diversity perspectives is used in this study to interpret how organizations translate inclusion into practice: a discrimination-and-fairness perspective treats diversity mainly as a matter of equal treatment and legal compliance, whereas an integration-and-learning perspective actively incorporates employees' differing identities into how the organization defines and does its work [13].

The focus on sexual orientation specifically, rather than diversity in general, is warranted because it constitutes a concealable stigmatized identity with workplace dynamics distinct from those of visible diversity categories such as gender or ethnicity [14]. This concealability interacts with minority stress: sexual-minority individuals are exposed to chronic, socially based distal stressors such as prejudice, discrimination, and rejection, and proximal stressors such as anticipation of rejection, identity concealment, and internalized stigma, that accumulate over time and are largely absent for heterosexual workers [15]. Most existing scholarship on sexual orientation and work, both

internationally and in Indonesia, has centered on the accounts of LGBT employees themselves rather than on the employers who design and enforce workplace policy [1,3,16]. The present study addresses this gap by examining, from a phenomenological standpoint, how employers and labor supervisors in the Special Region of Yogyakarta understand and act on inclusive OHS for workers with diverse sexual orientations. The objective of this study was to investigate and identify employers' and labor supervisors' perceptions of workers with diverse sexual orientations and the importance of inclusive OHS implementation for this group.

METHODS

Study Design and Setting

This study used a qualitative phenomenological design. Phenomenology is a qualitative approach that focuses on individuals' lived experiences in order to uncover the meaning or essence of those experiences [17]. This design was chosen to understand employers' experiences and perspectives regarding inclusive OHS implementation for workers with diverse sexual orientations, allowing the researchers to explore in depth the views, challenges, and strategies employers use to build a workplace that complies with OHS policy. The study was conducted in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, specifically in Sleman and Bantul Regencies, reflecting the geographic distribution of participating employers. Data collection through interviews took place from 6 to 9 November 2024.

Population and Sample

Participants were selected using criterion purposive sampling, a technique in which participants are drawn from a group meeting specific criteria relevant to the research questions [18]. The researchers sought participants who shared a common core experience while differing in individual characteristics [19]. Six employers with differing roles participated: a Quality, Health, Safety and Environment (QHSE) officer, a cooperative head, an HR management staff member, a pharmacy installation officer, an HR recruiter, and a Deputy of Operations. All participants had direct experience in employee recruitment. The inclusion criteria established in this study include: (1) holding a structural or managerial position with authority over the supervision or management of human resources or occupational safety and health (such as QHSE, Cooperative Director, HRD Manager, HR Recruiter, and Deputy Director of Operations); (2) having direct experience in the employee recruitment and onboarding process; (3) being responsible for the implementation of workplace regulations or operational policies; and (4) working in either the formal or informal sector within the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

Data Procedure

Data were collected through observation and in-depth, semi-structured interviews, guided by an interview protocol that nonetheless allowed flexibility in question order and follow-up probing [19]. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted at a time and location agreed upon with the participant. Interviews were audio-recorded using a voice-memo application. Prior to participation, all informants received study information and provided informed consent voluntarily. Because the interview topic concerned a socially sensitive subject, rapport was built deliberately before substantive questioning began: researchers opened with neutral, low-stakes questions about the participant's role and organization, explained the confidentiality safeguards in concrete terms, and allowed participants to set the pace of disclosure rather than probing sensitive material immediately, consistent with recommended qualitative practice for sensitive topics [19]. Throughout the interview, researchers maintained neutrality and confidentiality and adopted an empathetic, non-judgmental stance, signaling through tone and follow-up questions that no particular moral position was expected of the participant.

Variables and Instruments

The central constructs explored were employers' perceptions of workers with diverse sexual orientations, their experiences of workplace discrimination related to sexual orientation, and their follow-up actions in response to discrimination or harassment, alongside their experience with company policy, implementation of OHS, and the challenges and strategies of inclusive OHS implementation.

Data Analysis

Interviews with the six participants were analyzed following Moustakas' five-step phenomenological analysis [17], consisting of: (1) bracketing of researcher preconceptions; (2) reduction of repetitive or overlapping statements; (3) thematic clustering into a matrix; (4) validation of expressions; and (5) description supported by verbatim quotations. Based on the verbatim transcripts, the three researchers discussed and jointly agreed upon codes, which were grouped into categories and subsequently organized into three overarching themes: (1) Perception of Diverse Sexual Orientation, (2) Experience of Discrimination Related to Sexual Orientation, and (3) Follow-up to Discrimination and/or Sexual Harassment; and a second cluster concerning policy implementation, comprising Company Policy, OHS Policy Implementation, Challenges of Inclusive OHS Policy, Efforts toward Inclusive OHS, and Achievement of Inclusive OHS. In interpreting the resulting themes, the analysis additionally drew on Ely and Thomas's diversity-perspective typology

[13] and on Shore et al.'s belongingness–uniqueness framework [12] to distinguish employers' normative statements from their actual practices and to characterize the form of inclusion enacted

Reflexivity was incorporated throughout the analysis because the researchers' professional, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds could shape their understanding of sexual orientation, workplace discrimination, and inclusive OHS. The researchers therefore recognized that their interpretations were not entirely independent of their prior knowledge, values, and assumptions regarding the topic. To minimize the influence of individual positionality, the researchers explicitly discussed their initial interpretations and potential assumptions during the coding and thematic development process. Codes and categories were not assigned solely by individual judgment but were discussed and jointly agreed upon by all three researchers. Differences in interpretation were examined against the verbatim transcripts and resolved through discussion and reference to participants' original statements. The differing backgrounds of the three researchers were consequently used not only as an analytic asset but also as a means of critically examining potential interpretive bias and strengthening the credibility of the findings.

RESULTS

Participant Characteristics

Six employers from formal and informal sectors in Yogyakarta participated in this study. Most informants held an open-minded orientation toward workers with diverse sexual orientations. Participant characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Participants

Code	Age (years)	Education	Position	Length of Employment
I1	29	Bachelor's	QHSE Officer	7 years
I2	36	Bachelor's	Cooperative Head	8 years
I3	28	Bachelor's	Deputy of Operations	3 years
I4	26	Bachelor's	HR Recruiter	2 years
I5	27	Master's	HRD Manager	6 years
I6	29	Bachelor's	Pharmacy Installation Officer in Charge	1 year

Perceptions of Diverse Sexual Orientation

This perspective highlights the conflict between employers' personal values and their professional responsibilities. The tolerance shown is situational, depending on the impact of LGBT individuals' behavior in the workplace. Most responses view people with different sexual orientations as having a “disease” that can be harmful to themselves and others, particularly to other workers in the workplace.

"In my opinion, being LGBT is a psychological deviation, but if they still behave professionally in the workplace, it's not a problem," and "morally and legally speaking, they are wrong, but our company hires employees based on their individual intellect, not their sexual orientation" (I5, 26 years).

Although sexual deviance is a moral and legal issue, there are other reasons for not viewing employees with different orientations as suffering from a “disease.” Some research informants also highlighted different sexual orientations from a religious perspective, viewing them as inconsistent with the religious values and beliefs in God that are held.

"In religion (Islam), it is clearly forbidden — men must not resemble women, and vice versa. But then again, I don't want to judge them, because that would itself be a form of discrimination. So we just have to stay professional" (I2, 36 years).

The findings show that most informants hold a range of views regarding sexual orientation diversity, ranging from tolerance to recognition that it deviates from social and cultural norms. Nevertheless, most informants expressed respect for individual rights, while still adhering to the traditional values embraced by society.

"In my personal view, it's not a problem, because it's their choice, so I still respect them as human beings. But as an Indonesian citizen, this does deviate quite a bit from the foundation of the state" (I5, 26 years).

Challenges to Inclusive OHS Implementation

Social stigma toward both employees and companies emerged as a persistent challenge. Informants noted that employing workers with diverse sexual orientations could be perceived as damaging to corporate image, although professionalism was ultimately prioritized over public perception. Negative labeling toward this group was also reported as an ongoing occurrence, which some informants explicitly recognized as a form of discrimination and framed instead as a matter of basic humanity and individual rights.

"Well, it could damage the company's image, but then again, we judge our employees on their professionalism, so we just disregard it" (I4, 26 years).

Furthermore, negative labeling of groups with non-conforming orientations is still commonly encountered. Occupational safety and health (OSH) policies are largely implemented based on general regulations, such as the Labor Law, without specific adjustments for people with diverse sexual orientations.

"Actually, it's not acceptable — that already amounts to discrimination. It's their right as individuals; they shouldn't be condemned either, it's more a matter of humanity" (I2, 36 years).

Company Policy

No participating company had an explicit written policy protecting workers with diverse sexual orientations from discrimination. Informants described protections, where they existed, as implicit or embedded in general company regulations rather than codified in writing. Several informants further stated that a dedicated written policy was unnecessary, partly out of concern that such a policy might be interpreted as the company “endorsing” this group. Management's fear of public backlash has led the company to deliberately refrain from issuing specific written policies regarding inclusive occupational safety and health (OSH). This policy has a direct impact on the management of psychosocial risks, which is not being handled optimally. Daily taunts or ridicule in the workplace are often considered normal and are allowed to continue without any preventive measures being taken from the outset. Management generally only takes action or activates formal procedures once the problem has escalated into a crisis or a legal case. Although companies provide facilities such as medical checkups, HIV screening, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), and opportunities to participate in office event committees, these measures are still limited to mitigating the impact at the individual level; they have not yet comprehensively improved the safety and security culture in the workplace.

"There is no written policy, but implicitly it is the company's expectation. A person with a different orientation will work as excellently and as well as possible. This is done for their own protection and image, so that they're not put at a disadvantage" (I2, 36 years).

Barriers

A recurring barrier was employers' apprehension about discomfort among coworkers, including concern that an employee with a diverse sexual orientation might develop romantic interest toward a same-sex colleague, which some informants cited as a reason for hesitating to hire such candidates. Nonetheless, informants reaffirmed that as long as no conflict arose and professionalism was maintained, workers with diverse sexual orientations retained their right to a discrimination-free workplace.

"We're worried they might develop feelings for another employee of the same sex, so we don't want to (recruit) them" (I1, 29 years).

Field findings indicate a fundamental discrepancy between employers' normative statements and actual workplace practices. Normatively, employers state that staff recruitment and evaluation processes are based solely on competence and job performance. In practice, however, the form of acceptance that exists is conditional inclusion: employees are required to suppress expressions of their personal identity and “leave their personal attributes at the door” in order to feel safe and accepted in the workplace and to avoid creating a negative perception of the company. Furthermore,

concerns about the risk of conflict among staff members remain a reason for employers to reject candidates outright (cut ties) during the recruitment process. Acceptance of people with different sexual orientations is tolerated in the workplace, provided that it does not cause problems or create discomfort among coworkers. In Ely and Thomas's terms, this pattern reflects a discrimination-and-fairness rather than an integration-and-learning orientation to diversity [13]: employees are formally judged on competence alone, yet the organization does not incorporate their distinguishing identity into how it defines acceptable workplace conduct, so the burden of adaptation falls entirely on the employee rather than being shared with the organization.

Employer Strategies

Three informal strategies emerged from the interviews. First, internal mentoring and mediation: when conflicts were reported, both parties were called in for individual discussion to identify a resolution, typically coordinated directly through the HR function, though without a formalized written procedure. Second, an emphasis on professionalism: employers described evaluating staff based on intellectual competence and performance rather than sexual orientation, while requiring that personal identity expression be confined outside company attire and working hours. Third, informal behavioral norms: in the absence of an explicit written policy, several companies relied on unwritten personal-conduct expectations intended to facilitate coworker acceptance. Collectively, these strategies point to the need for standardized policy to reduce ambiguity and ensure protection against discrimination without compromising professionalism.

"Again, we hire people based on their intellect, not their sexuality. If they are diligent and achieve their targets, we will still consider keeping them on. If they want to express their identity, they have to do so once out of their work attire; after that they are free to do as they wish. But inside the office, they must be professional and follow office rules" (I5, 27 years).

OHS Policy Implementation

OHS policy was generally implemented according to general labor regulation, most notably Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, which guarantees equal rights for all workers, without specific adjustment for workers with diverse sexual orientations. Where conflicts arose, the HR or Human Capital division played a central role, monitoring performance through assignment trackers, coordinating remedial training when performance declined, and managing overall workforce quality.

"If we refer to Law Number 13 of 2003 on Manpower, one of its articles stipulates that every worker has the same rights as a human being" (I4, 26 years).

"Monitoring is carried out through an assignment tracker by the user and managed by Human Resources, under what is termed Human Capital, to manage employee

performance and provide the training needed when a worker's performance declines, as well as to improve the quality and quantity of the workforce" (I6, 29 years).

Experience of Discrimination

Reported discrimination most commonly took the form of mockery or negative comments rather than overt sexual harassment; no informant reported an incident specifically classifiable as sexual harassment linked to sexual orientation. Even so, informants acknowledged that such comments could still produce a hostile or devaluing work environment for the affected employee.

"Discrimination has only taken the form of ordinary teasing or mockery; nothing specifically identifiable as LGBT harassment has been found" (I1, 29 years).

Follow-up to Discrimination and/or Harassment

Follow-up actions were generally handled through informal, relationship-based resolution. When a report was received, the Human Capital function typically convened a one-on-one meeting with the individual concerned; cases escalating to criminal sexual violence were referred to the company's sexual-violence task force. Depending on severity, companies applied graduated sanctions ranging from verbal warnings to formal disciplinary action, consistent with existing company regulation.

"But usually, when Human Capital receives a report from a user, they immediately take action with the person concerned to hold a one-on-one meeting. If the matter has already entered the realm of a criminal act of sexual violence, our company will deploy its Sexual Violence Task Force (Satgas TPKS)" (I5, 27 years).

Efforts toward Inclusive OHS

Several companies had implemented general wellbeing programs applicable to all employees, including counseling, medical check-ups, HIV screening, professional mental-health consultation, team-building and general skills training, and company-wide events. These efforts reflected a philosophy of equal treatment for all staff rather than measures specifically targeted at workers with diverse sexual orientations.

"The implementation of Inclusive OHS is delivered through various programs such as training, counseling, medical check-ups (MCU), HIV screening, consultations with professional health workers, and other company events" (I6, 29 years).

Achievement of Inclusive OHS

Informants described equal rights and protections as extending to all employees by default, without a distinct protective definition for workers with diverse sexual orientations. Practical efforts toward inclusion included deliberately involving employees from this group in organizing company events and activities, intended to foster a sense of belonging and equal participation.

"Every employee has the same rights, and will accordingly find the same protection as well. There is no specific provision [in place] to protect that employee" (14, 26 years).

"It's really about involving and placing the right person in the right role. In the end, we created a forum [for this]" (15, 27 years).

DISCUSSION

This study found that employers in Yogyakarta held predominantly open, though conditional, attitudes toward workers with diverse sexual orientations. Acceptance was consistently contingent on professionalism and non-disruption of workplace processes, rather than reflecting unqualified inclusion. At the same time, deviation framing — psychological, social, moral, or religious — persisted as an underlying interpretive lens even among informants who expressed tolerance, indicating that openness and stigma can coexist within the same individual's perspective, consistent with minority stress theory's premise that stigma operates at the level of ambient social attitude and not only through overt hostile acts [15].

Ely and Thomas's typology of diversity perspectives, the dominant employer stance identified here corresponds to a discrimination-and-fairness perspective: workers with diverse sexual orientations are formally treated the same as any other employee and evaluated on competence, but their distinguishing identity is not incorporated into how the organization defines legitimate self-presentation at work [13]. This differs from an integration-and-learning perspective, in which employees' differing identities are treated as a resource the organization actively draws on [13]. The requirement, voiced by several informants, that employees “leave their personal attributes at the door” is the clearest expression of this asymmetry: professionalism was defined by employers as the suppression of a personal-identity marker, and the burden of adaptation was placed entirely on the employee rather than being shared with the organization. In Shore et al.'s terms, this arrangement offers workers with diverse sexual orientations a conditional form of belongingness while withholding uniqueness — they may remain part of the workgroup only insofar as the characteristic that marks them as a sexual minority remains invisible [12]. A power asymmetry becomes visible here in employers' own narratives: it is employers, not workers, who define what counts as an acceptable public identity, while workers bear the psychological cost of managing that boundary, consistent with the concealable-stigma literature's account of the disclosure dilemma faced disproportionately by sexual-minority employees [14]. The finding that concern about coworker romantic interest was cited as a reason to reject candidates outright during recruitment further indicates that this power imbalance can operate before employment even begins, at the point of

access to the labor market itself, echoing broader evidence that hiring-stage discrimination remains one of the most persistent mechanisms of sexual-orientation-based labor market exclusion [1,2].

A key finding was the near-universal absence of written company policy explicitly protecting workers with diverse sexual orientations. This institutional vacancy is deeply rooted in Indonesia's specific socio-cultural and legal landscape. Legally, while overarching frameworks like Law No. 13 of 2003 mandate broad non-discrimination, Indonesian labor law lacks explicit statutory protections regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, and this general clause is rarely tested or enforced in practice [5]. Culturally, prevailing heteronormative social values, religious sensitivities, and the fear of public backlash lead organizations to avoid formal policy formulation a pattern consistent with the broader finding that Indonesian public attitudes toward LGBT people remain markedly conservative relative to many other middle-income countries [6]. Consequently, employers adopt a stance of intentional policy ambiguity, driving workers to rely on informal mechanisms. Informants generally regarded high individual performance as a sufficient informal safeguard, with one informant noting that employees with diverse sexual orientations tended to work especially conscientiously to protect their own image and standing a pattern that mirrors the broader finding that concealable-stigma holders often over-invest in visible performance markers as a defensive strategy against anticipated discrimination [14].

This finding stands in contrast to more rights-based approaches observed elsewhere: prior work comparing Indonesia with the United States has noted that stronger anti-discrimination and decriminalization frameworks abroad are associated with greater parity between LGBT and heterosexual individuals in daily and working life [20], suggesting that reliance on informal performance-based protection, as observed in this study, is comparatively fragile. Systematic reviews of the international literature reinforce this contrast: Ozeren's review of 52 studies found that, even in jurisdictions with formal anti-discrimination law, GLBT employees continued to experience salary inequities and exclusion by coworkers absent proactive organizational measures [1], while a ten-year systematic review found that organizational silence and heterosexist climate, rather than the absence of law alone, were among the strongest predictors of poor well-being among lesbian and gay employees [3]. Conversely, research on LGBT-supportive workplace policies in Switzerland found that formally adopted, written policies were associated with reduced discrimination and improved psychological health among LGB employees relative to organizations relying on informal tolerance [21], which is consistent with this study's recommendation that Indonesian employers move from implicit to explicit protection. Regional comparison further

situates the Yogyakarta findings: a scoping review of LGBT+ inclusion in Thailand, a country often perceived as comparatively liberal within Southeast Asia, found that formal legal or social openness did not reliably translate into inclusive organizational practice, indicating that the gap between normative acceptance and workplace practice identified in this study is not unique to Indonesia but reflects a broader regional pattern [4]. Regarding OHS implementation specifically, employers primarily relied on general labor law (Law No. 13 of 2003) and standard health provisions (e.g., Kepmenaker No. 88/2023) rather than orientation-specific provisions, consistent with the broader observation that Indonesian workplace anti-discrimination protections remain largely generic rather than tailored to marginalized groups [5]. The challenges identified mirror patterns reported in other Indonesian workplace-discrimination research, where discrimination is frequently normalized or informally managed rather than structurally addressed [9]. The predominance of informal, relationship-based conflict resolution (e.g., one-on-one meetings) observed here similarly reflects a broader tendency in Indonesian workplaces to resolve sensitive interpersonal matters through personal mediation rather than codified grievance procedures, and parallels findings from a systematic review of LGBTQ+ workplace research showing that informal identity-management strategies remain the dominant coping mechanism across national contexts where formal protection is weak or contested [16].

This study has several limitations. Most informants shared a broadly similar open-minded orientation, and the sample was drawn largely from HR and operations roles, which may not capture more conservative or more progressive perspectives present elsewhere in the labor market. The six-participant sample, while appropriate for a phenomenological design, limits the diversity of experience captured, and the absence of documented company-size and cross-sector variation in the present dataset further constrains generalizability. Nonetheless, the study's strength lies in its in-depth exploration of employer perspectives, barriers, and coping strategies, offering practical insight into how inclusive OHS is currently negotiated in real workplace settings. Future research should include a more diverse employer sample, spanning a wider range of company sizes, sectors, and personal orientations, to build a more comprehensive picture of inclusive-OHS policy development.

Beyond organizational recommendations, the findings point to specific improvements government could make to shift employer perspectives from conditional tolerance toward structural inclusion. First, amending the implementing regulations of Law No. 13 of 2003 or Ministry of Manpower Decree No. 88 of 2023 to name sexual orientation explicitly as a protected ground, rather than leaving it implicit within general non-discrimination language, would close the interpretive gap

that currently allows employers to treat inclusive OHS as discretionary [5]. Second, given that Indonesia has not enacted dedicated anti-discrimination legislation covering sexual orientation and gender identity [6,8], government could draw on the non-discrimination principle already embedded in the International Labour Organization's Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, to which Indonesia is a party, by issuing sector-specific technical guidance that operationalizes psychosocial-risk management under ISO 45003 for this population [11]. Third, incentive-based instruments, such as linking eligibility for certain occupational-safety certifications or public-procurement participation to documented, written inclusive-OHS policy, could shift the cost-benefit calculation employers described, in which avoiding a written policy was seen as safer than adopting one. Fourth, mandatory tripartite (government–employer–worker) diversity and psychosocial-risk training, delivered through existing OHS committee structures, could address the specific fear of coworker conflict that employers in this study repeatedly cited as a barrier to hiring.

These recommendations, however, face genuine structural constraints that should temper expectations of rapid change. Indonesia's revised Criminal Code and continuing restrictions on LGBT expression and association [7], together with regional criminalization of same-sex conduct in some provinces [8] and a national political climate in which senior officials have at times characterized LGBT identity as a threat to public morality [6], mean that any visible government move to name sexual orientation explicitly in labor regulation carries real political risk and may itself trigger the kind of public backlash employers in this study said they were trying to avoid. A feasible sequencing therefore likely begins with technical, OHS-framed instruments before more visible legal reform becomes politically viable, consistent with the incremental, informal-to-formal trajectory that employers in this study were already, cautiously, beginning to describe.

CONCLUSION

This phenomenological study found that employers in Yogyakarta generally held an open-minded stance toward workers with diverse sexual orientations, but this openness did not translate into special accommodation; instead, employers emphasized uniform professionalism and adherence to existing company rules for all staff. Companies maintained general OHS-related codes of conduct and wellbeing programs without a distinct, written policy addressing workers with diverse sexual orientations specifically. Persistent social stigma and employer concern over potential interpersonal conflict and reduced productivity remained key barriers, which employers addressed through informal conflict-management strategies rather than formal protective policy. Ensuring a genuinely inclusive, discrimination-free, and safe working environment for this group will require moving

from implicit, informal protection toward explicit, written, and formally implemented inclusive-OHS policy, supported by government regulation that is sequenced to be both meaningful and politically feasible within Indonesia's current socio-legal context.

DECLARATION

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