

Socio-Economic and Cultural Impacts of Dhoho Airport Development on Buffer Villages: A Case Study in Tiron and Banyakan, Kediri

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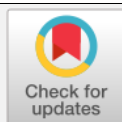
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ABSTRACT

Infrastructure development plays a pivotal role in transforming rural areas, particularly through large-scale projects such as airports. This study explores the socio-economic and cultural impacts of Dhoho Airport development in Kediri on buffer villages, focusing on Tiron and Banyakan. The primary objective is to understand how airport development influences economic opportunities, social structures, and cultural dynamics in these communities. Employing a qualitative case study design, this research collected data through in-depth interviews with community leaders, participatory observations of social interactions, and documentation from government and local institutions. The findings reveal significant economic transformations, including livelihood diversification from agriculture to trade and services, fostering the growth of MSMEs. Socially, the airport has contributed to declining cooperation, reflecting a shift toward individualistic values. Culturally, modernization has accelerated acculturation, altering traditional practices and values, particularly among younger generations. Moreover, there is a growing awareness of education and skill development as communities adapt to emerging economic opportunities. This study underscores the importance of inclusive development policies that balance economic growth with the preservation of cultural identity and social cohesion.

Keywords: Buffer Villages; Cultural Acculturation; Dhoho Airport Development; Livelihood Diversification; Socio-Economic Transformation

1. Introduction

Infrastructure development is a crucial strategy for improving overall individual welfare, particularly in rural areas that have historically been marginalized and overlooked in discussions of economic progress and development (Agbor, 2019). Among the numerous ongoing infrastructure initiatives, the development of Dhoho Airport in Kediri stands out as a transformative project with the potential to reshape the social and economic dynamics of the surrounding communities. The airport is expected to act as a catalyst for economic growth by enhancing mobility and accessibility, especially for residents of nearby buffer villages. However, the implications of such developments extend beyond economic considerations, bringing about significant social transformations, including changes in patterns of social interaction and shifts in the cultural values that underpin daily life in these communities (Campos, 2023; Doerr et al., 2020). This study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the impact of Dhoho Airport's development on the socio-economic transformations experienced by residents of the surrounding buffer villages.

In the context of social change, infrastructure projects like airports inherently increase access to services and economic opportunities, thereby prompting substantial lifestyle changes within local populations (Dimitriou & Sartzetaki, 2022). For instance, the enhanced accessibility facilitated by airports enables rural communities to market their products more effectively across wider geographical areas, resulting in higher income levels and improved quality of life (Khandker et al., 2009; Nordberg, 2015). Nonetheless, these transformative changes often lead to a reconfiguration of traditional values that have historically sustained village cohesion. It is, therefore, imperative to investigate how buffer village communities adapt to these profound changes and to assess whether the impacts are predominantly beneficial or create social tensions by disrupting deep-rooted cultural norms and values.

This study addresses a significant gap in the academic literature by focusing on buffer village communities, a demographic often disproportionately affected by large-scale infrastructure projects but seldom adequately examined. Previous research has primarily analyzed airport development from macroeconomic perspectives or within urban contexts (Freestone & Baker, 2011; Wach-Kloskowska, 2020). The distinctive contribution of this study lies in its exploration of the socio-economic and cultural dynamics within buffer village communities, including shifts in cultural values that are frequently overlooked in prior studies.

The innovative aspect of this study is its holistic approach, which integrates economic and socio-cultural analyses to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of infrastructure development on rural communities. This integrative methodology is essential because economic and social changes resulting from such projects are often interwoven with complex processes of adaptation to modernization (Halpern & Bråthen, 2011; Percoco, 2010). Furthermore, the study emphasizes local community responses as they strive to balance evolving economic needs with the preservation of cultural identity. This dimension has often been underexplored in previous research (Iurchenko & Iurchenko, 2022).

The research questions guiding this study are: How does the development of Dhoho Airport influence the social and economic transformations in buffer villages, and how do village community members navigate the delicate balance between economic imperatives and the preservation of their cultural identity? These questions form the foundation for examining the significant impacts of large-scale infrastructure developments on rural communities, particularly in creating economic opportunities and reshaping socio-cultural values.

The findings of this study are anticipated to offer valuable insights for policymakers designing and implementing inclusive and sustainable infrastructure development programs.

Moreover, these findings can serve as a critical reference for future research exploring the socio-cultural impacts of infrastructure development, especially in an increasingly digital and interconnected world (Odehale, 2020; Zhou & Hou, 2023). By adopting a comprehensive approach, this study seeks to bridge the gap between modernity and the preservation of cultural identity in buffer village communities.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the socio-economic and cultural impacts of Dhoho Airport development on buffer villages in Kediri. The qualitative approach was chosen for its ability to explore in-depth insights into the perceptions, experiences, and adaptations of local communities to significant changes brought about by large-scale infrastructure development. The case study design was particularly appropriate for this research, as it allows a comprehensive understanding of the unique social and cultural contexts of buffer villages that are directly impacted by the airport's construction. According to Yin, case study research is especially useful when examining contemporary events within their real-life context, making it an ideal approach for understanding the dynamic transformations occurring in these communities (Yin, 2014).

The buffer villages surrounding Dhoho Airport were selected as the research location due to their strategic position and their direct exposure to the impacts of airport development. These villages have undergone substantial transformations in terms of mobility, economic activities, and social structures. The selection criteria included geographic proximity, socio-economic diversity, and the availability of supporting data. Villages closer to the airport site were prioritized for their higher likelihood of experiencing immediate and significant effects. Additionally, locations with diverse professional and economic backgrounds were chosen to ensure a variety of perspectives were captured. Finally, villages with prior documentation of their socio-economic conditions before the airport development were preferred to enable a more robust comparative analysis.

2.2. Subjects and Sampling Technique

The subjects of this study were drawn from various age groups, professions, and socio-economic backgrounds within the buffer villages. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify informants whose insights were directly relevant to the study's focus. These included community leaders, village heads, farmers, local traders, and residents whose economic activities were significantly influenced by the airport's development. This sampling approach ensured the inclusion of individuals with substantial experience or knowledge of the socio-economic and cultural transformations occurring within their communities.

2.3. Research Instruments

This study utilized three primary research instruments: in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the informants' perceptions and experiences concerning the social and economic impacts of Dhoho Airport development. The semi-structured format provided the flexibility to adapt questions and probe further based on the responses received. Participatory observations were conducted to directly observe social dynamics within the communities, including changes in interaction patterns, economic activities, and the physical transformation of the villages. Documentation served as a complementary data source, encompassing official records such as

development reports, government policies, and economic statistics from before and after the airport's construction.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process began with building rapport and trust within the local communities to encourage their active participation. Interviews were then conducted with key informants, with durations tailored to their availability and consent obtained for recording. Observation activities were carried out over several days to ensure that the data collected reflected the daily realities of the community. Documentation data were gathered from local government archives, company records, and other credible sources. This multi-faceted approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

2.5. Data Reliability and Validity

Multiple measures were employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. Data triangulation was used to verify information by cross-referencing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation. For instance, statements from community leaders were compared against field observations and official records. Member checking was conducted by sharing transcripts and interpretations with informants to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's understanding. Reflexivity was maintained by regularly reflecting on and documenting potential biases that might influence the interpretation of findings. An audit trail was also established to systematically document raw data, field notes, and analytical processes, allowing for verification by external parties.

2.6. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data. The initial step involved organizing raw data and categorizing it into key themes, such as economic impact, social impact, and cultural change. Coding was applied to identify patterns and relationships within the data, which were then interpreted through the lens of relevant theories and literature. The thematic analysis method was chosen for its flexibility and suitability in uncovering complex interconnections between various aspects of socio-economic and cultural transformations. Through this approach, the study provides a holistic understanding of the impacts of Dhoho Airport development on buffer village communities, offering valuable insights for more inclusive and sustainable development policies.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Economic Impact: Livelihood Transformation and Economic Diversification

The development of Dhoho Airport has substantially transformed the economic landscape of buffer village communities, aligning with prior research that emphasizes the catalytic role of infrastructure in fostering regional economic growth (Campos, 2023; Dimitriou & Sartzetaki, 2022). In the Grogol Subdistrict, many residents have shifted from traditional agricultural livelihoods to engaging in trade and service-oriented activities. This shift is particularly evident in the emergence of food stalls and small-scale businesses catering to airport workers. A resident in Banyakan Village, for example, reported that their income from operating a food stall had doubled compared to their previous earnings as a farmer. This transformation highlights the structural economic changes induced by infrastructure projects, consistent with findings by Khandker et al., who noted that rural infrastructure investments often lead to livelihood diversification and enhanced economic resilience (Khandker et al., 2009).

The airport has also catalyzed the growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Parang and Jatirejo Villages. These businesses, including retail kiosks and food vendors, have created new opportunities for women and youth, diversifying household incomes and reducing unemployment rates. This finding supports the theory proposed by Krakowiak-Bal et al., which emphasizes the importance of MSMEs in promoting economic resilience (Krakowiak-Bal et al., 2017). Furthermore, the increased participation of women in economic activities reflects broader trends observed in infrastructure development contexts, where new economic opportunities challenge traditional gender roles and enable greater inclusivity in the labor market (Halpern & Bråthen, 2011). However, while MSMEs contribute to economic diversification, their sustainability depends on addressing challenges such as limited access to capital and market volatility.

Infrastructural improvements, particularly enhanced road networks, have further amplified the economic potential of these communities. Improved connectivity in Semen and Grogol Subdistricts has elevated the Village Development Index (IDM), advancing several villages from “developing” to “advanced” status. This aligns with Nordberg’s findings, which highlight the role of transportation infrastructure in facilitating regional economic mobility and access to markets (Nordberg, 2015). Better road access has enabled communities to market local products more efficiently, thereby boosting income generation and fostering economic growth. Nevertheless, questions remain about the equitable distribution of these benefits, particularly for communities and individuals who lack the resources to capitalize on these opportunities fully.

Despite the significant shift toward trade and services, some communities have demonstrated remarkable adaptability by retaining traditional agricultural practices while embracing innovative approaches to improve income. In Bulusari Village, residents have diversified their livelihoods by cultivating high-value horticultural crops such as turmeric and mango, while others have established home-based industries like cracker production. These practices not only sustain traditional livelihoods but also illustrate the ability of communities to integrate modern economic opportunities with existing practices. This adaptability corroborates Dimitriou & Sartzetaki’s argument that successful rural transformation requires balancing emerging opportunities with the preservation of traditional practices (Dimitriou & Sartzetaki, 2022). Moreover, the coexistence of traditional and modern economic activities supports Percoco’s assertion that infrastructure projects can simultaneously foster economic diversification and support traditional sectors (Percoco, 2010).

The economic transformation observed in the buffer villages underscores the importance of strategic policies to ensure the equitable distribution of benefits and to address systemic barriers. While the shift from agriculture to trade and services has created new opportunities, traditional farmers face challenges in adapting to the changing economic ecosystem. Policymakers must implement inclusive strategies that provide these groups with the skills and resources needed to participate in the new economic environment. Programs that offer entrepreneurship training, microfinance access, and market integration for agricultural products can help bridge this gap and ensure broader participation in economic growth. Additionally, fiscal incentives such as tax reductions for MSMEs and subsidies for high-value crop cultivation can enhance the sustainability of both emerging and traditional sectors.

The development of Dhoho Airport has catalyzed profound economic changes in buffer village communities, demonstrating the transformative potential of infrastructure investments. The transition from agriculture to trade and services, the growth of MSMEs, and the preservation of traditional practices through innovation highlight the resilience and

adaptability of these communities. However, the long-term sustainability of these changes requires targeted interventions to ensure that all segments of society can benefit equitably.

3.2. Social Impact: Changes in Social Values and Community Dynamics

The economic transformations brought about by the development of Dhoho Airport have profoundly influenced the social fabric of buffer village communities, reshaping traditional practices and collective norms. In Jatirejo Village, for example, long-standing practices such as cooperation (*gotong royong*) have seen a noticeable decline. As economic opportunities have expanded, residents have increasingly prioritized individual economic pursuits over communal activities. This shift signifies a departure from collective social norms, posing challenges to community cohesion and solidarity. These findings align with Atkočiuniene et al., who observed that economic modernization often leads to reduced participation in collective activities, especially in rural contexts undergoing rapid change (Atkočiūnienė et al., 2021). The erosion of cooperation highlights the need for mechanisms to maintain social bonds in the face of increasing individualism.

The influx of workers from outside the region has further impacted local social dynamics, introducing new cultural elements and accelerating acculturation. In Jatirejo Village, younger residents have begun to adopt modern lifestyles influenced by these external workers, as seen in changes to clothing styles and social behaviors. While this acculturation reflects a degree of flexibility and openness to change, it has also raised concerns among older generations regarding the potential erosion of local cultural values. This is consistent with Freestone & Baker, who noted that infrastructure developments often bring external cultural influences that challenge traditional norms in rural communities (Freestone & Baker, 2011). The generational divide between youth embracing modernity and elders prioritizing cultural preservation underscores the complexity of navigating cultural transitions.

At the same time, the development of the airport has fostered a greater awareness of the importance of education and skills, particularly among younger residents. In Grogol Subdistrict, English language training programs, initiated in collaboration with Kampung Inggris Pare, have sparked interest in opportunities within the tourism sector. These programs not only reflect the community's proactive alignment with the demands of a changing economic landscape but also underscore the increasing role of education in equipping residents for emerging opportunities. Çalışkan similarly highlighted the role of education in building social capital in rural areas, suggesting that such initiatives can significantly enhance community adaptability during periods of transformation (Çalışkan, 2024).

Improved infrastructure, particularly road networks, has also facilitated greater mobility in Semen Subdistrict, reshaping daily social interactions. Enhanced accessibility has enabled residents to connect more easily with neighboring areas, access services, and participate in broader economic activities. This improved connectivity has brought efficiency to daily routines but has also subtly altered traditional social interaction patterns, such as community gatherings and shared activities. Dimitriou & Sartzetaki noted similar shifts in rural communities, where infrastructure development increased mobility but also reduced localized social engagement (Dimitriou & Sartzetaki, 2022).

The observed social changes, while opening new opportunities, also highlight challenges in maintaining the integrity of traditional social structures. The decline of cooperation and the generational divide in cultural adoption reflect the tension between modernization and cultural preservation. Policymakers must address these challenges by fostering initiatives that bridge the gap between traditional values and modern demands. For instance, revitalizing *gotong*

royong through community-based incentive programs could help sustain social cohesion while accommodating individual economic pursuits. Additionally, intergenerational dialogue programs could encourage mutual understanding and collaboration between youth and elders, balancing the integration of modern lifestyles with the preservation of cultural heritage.

The social impacts of Dhoho Airport's development illustrate the dual-edged nature of infrastructure-induced transformation. While new opportunities in education and mobility empower communities to adapt to economic shifts, they also bring challenges to traditional values and social cohesion. Local governments can ensure that social transitions remain balanced, preserving the essence of communal life while embracing the benefits of modernization by implementing inclusive and culturally sensitive policies.

3.3. Cultural Impact: Preservation and Adaptation of Traditional Values

The development of Dhoho Airport has introduced significant challenges to the preservation of traditional cultural practices in buffer village communities. In the Grogol Subdistrict, younger residents exhibit a declining interest in traditional arts, such as dance, which once served as a cornerstone of local cultural identity. This generational shift highlights the urgency of adopting innovative strategies to sustain and revitalize cultural programs. For instance, integrating traditional dance practices into school curricula or leveraging digital platforms to promote cultural heritage could attract youth participation while preserving these traditions. These findings align with Freestone & Baker, who observed that modernization often suppresses local cultural expressions in rural areas undergoing infrastructure development (Freestone & Baker, 2011). The diminishing interest among the younger generation reflects broader patterns of cultural adaptation, where modernization tends to prioritize contemporary forms of entertainment and engagement over traditional practices.

Traditional rituals and celebrations in the buffer villages have also undergone noticeable transformations. In Banyakan Village, the customary *kenduri* (feast), a deeply rooted communal practice, has gradually been replaced by modern forms of entertainment, particularly during events such as Independence Day celebrations. While these changes represent an effort to cater to the preferences of younger generations, they also dilute the symbolic and cultural essence of these traditions. This reflects a broader challenge of cultural adaptation, where the integration of modern practices often comes at the cost of eroding communal values and shared identities. Similar trends were noted by Dimitriou & Sartzetaki, who emphasized that the cultural impacts of infrastructure projects often manifest as a tension between preserving heritage and accommodating modern influences (Dimitriou & Sartzetaki, 2022).

The widespread adoption of communication technologies has further altered social and cultural dynamics within these communities. In Mojo Village, for example, digital communication tools such as smartphones and social media have largely replaced face-to-face interactions in communal spaces like village halls. While these technologies enhance access to information and connectivity, they also risk weakening the traditional social bonds that have historically defined community life. This shift reflects Nordberg's observation that the proliferation of digital tools often leads to the fragmentation of traditional social networks, especially in rural areas integrating modern infrastructure (Nordberg, 2015). The transition to digital communication, while beneficial in many respects, underscores the need to balance technological advancement with efforts to maintain community cohesion.

The observed cultural changes illustrate the complex interplay between modernization and the preservation of traditional values. While modernization introduces opportunities for cultural adaptation and innovation, it also raises concerns about the sustainability of local

heritage. Policymakers and community leaders must address these challenges through targeted initiatives that bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. For instance, cultural preservation programs could leverage digital media to archive and promote traditional practices, ensuring their relevance in contemporary contexts. Additionally, events such as cultural festivals could be reimagined to combine traditional rituals with modern entertainment, attracting younger generations while preserving the essence of these practices.

The findings also suggest the importance of fostering intergenerational collaboration to sustain cultural identity. Programs that encourage dialogue between older and younger generations could help bridge the cultural divide, fostering mutual understanding and shared responsibility for preserving local traditions. Incorporating traditional arts and values into formal education systems is another avenue for ensuring cultural continuity. Çalışkan emphasized the role of education in preserving cultural identity, particularly in rural communities experiencing rapid modernization (Çalışkan, 2024). By embedding cultural practices into the education system, policymakers can ensure that traditional values are transmitted across generations.

The cultural impacts of Dhoho Airport's development reflect the dual challenge of preserving local heritage while embracing modernization. While traditional practices such as kenduri and arts like dance face the risk of decline, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and adaptation. Communities can preserve their cultural identity while integrating modern influences, ensuring that cultural heritage remains a vital part of community life in the face of ongoing development by adopting inclusive and creative approaches.

3.4. Increasing Access to Education and Skills

The economic transformations driven by the development of Dhoho Airport have significantly enhanced access to education and skills training in buffer village communities, demonstrating the indirect benefits of infrastructure development. In Jatirejo Village, English language training programs have played a pivotal role in preparing youth for employment opportunities in the growing tourism and service sectors. These initiatives align with broader trends identified by Çalışkan, who emphasized the importance of targeted skill development in fostering social mobility and adaptability in rural areas experiencing modernization (Çalışkan, 2024). By equipping young residents with practical skills, these programs not only address immediate labor market demands but also position the community for long-term economic resilience.

Vocational training programs have further contributed to the empowerment of community members, particularly homemakers and youth. In Grogol Subdistrict, workshops focusing on culinary arts and graphic design have provided participants with marketable skills that enable them to diversify household incomes and engage more actively in local economic activities. These findings echo Halpern & Bråthen's assertion that infrastructure projects often stimulate the creation of complementary training initiatives, which are crucial for maximizing the benefits of economic transformation (Halpern & Bråthen, 2011). The active involvement of women in these programs highlights a shift toward greater inclusivity as traditionally underrepresented groups gain access to opportunities that enhance their economic and social contributions.

Despite these positive developments, economic barriers persist, limiting the extent to which all community members can access education and training programs. In Bulusari Village, for instance, many families face difficulties in prioritizing education over immediate financial needs. This aligns with findings from Dimitriou & Sartzetaki, who noted that economic

constraints often exacerbate disparities in access to education and skills training in rural areas undergoing rapid development (Dimitriou & Sartzetaki, 2022). To address this challenge, the village government has introduced scholarship programs aimed at supporting underprivileged students. These scholarships are designed to reduce the financial burden on families, ensuring that children and youth have the opportunity to pursue education and skill development. Such initiatives are consistent with the recommendations of Campos, who argued that targeted financial support is essential for ensuring equitable participation in the benefits of economic growth (Campos, 2023).

The observed increase in access to education and skills training reflects a broader trend of community adaptation to the opportunities presented by large-scale infrastructure development. However, to fully realize the potential of these initiatives, policymakers must address systemic challenges such as economic inequality and limited program accessibility. Expanding the scope of vocational training programs to include additional skills, such as digital literacy and entrepreneurship, could further enhance community capacity to adapt to evolving economic landscapes. Furthermore, integrating education and training programs into broader community development plans can ensure their sustainability and long-term impact.

The findings also highlight the importance of fostering partnerships between local governments, private sector actors, and educational institutions. For example, collaborations with regional tourism bodies or local businesses could create internship opportunities for youth, allowing them to apply their skills in real-world settings while building professional networks. Similarly, increasing the availability of digital tools and resources in schools and training centers could address the growing demand for technological skills, enabling residents to compete more effectively in a digitized economy.

The airport's development has catalyzed significant progress in education and skills training within buffer villages, equipping communities to navigate the opportunities and challenges of economic transformation. However, the persistence of economic barriers underscores the need for targeted interventions to ensure that these benefits are accessible to all.

4. Conclusion

This study highlights the profound economic, social, and cultural transformations experienced by buffer village communities as a result of the development of Dhoho Airport in Kediri. Economically, the airport has opened new opportunities, enabling the diversification of livelihoods from agriculture to trade and services. The growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), along with increased local purchasing power, underscores the airport's role in enhancing community income and economic resilience. These changes have been particularly beneficial for women and youth who previously faced limited employment opportunities.

Socially, the airport's development has altered traditional social structures and collective values. Economic activities have contributed to a decline in cooperation (*gotong royong*), a practice that has historically been a cornerstone of community life. This shift reflects a broader transition toward individualistic orientations as communities prioritize personal economic endeavors. At the same time, there is a notable rise in the awareness of education and skills among younger generations, demonstrating the community's readiness to adapt to emerging economic opportunities.

Culturally, the airport has accelerated acculturation and modernization, reshaping lifestyles and traditional values, particularly among the younger generation. While this adaptation reflects the community's ability to adjust to a changing environment, it also poses challenges to

preserving local cultural identity. The tension between modernization and cultural preservation highlights the need for proactive efforts to maintain the distinct cultural heritage of buffer villages amidst the dynamics of infrastructural development.

These findings underscore the dual-edged nature of infrastructure development, which creates economic and social opportunities but also presents challenges in maintaining cultural and social cohesion. Policymakers must adopt inclusive and sustainable development approaches that prioritize not only economic growth but also the social and cultural well-being of local communities.

Future studies should explore the impacts of similar infrastructure developments in rural areas with varying socio-economic characteristics to broaden understanding of these dynamics. Research employing longitudinal methods is particularly encouraged to examine how socio-economic changes unfold over time and assess their long-term sustainability in improving community welfare. Additionally, further investigation into mechanisms for preserving local culture amidst modern infrastructure development is crucial. Such studies could provide actionable insights for supporting cultural identity in buffer villages across Indonesia.

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The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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