

## Phenomenological Insights on Decent Work and Its Relevance to Local Economic Development

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**ABSTRACT** The concept of decent work has few explanatory references and comparative descriptions due to limited research. So far, the concept of decent work only refers to standards and concepts issued by the International Labor Organization (ILO). Meanwhile, the Local Economic Development (LED) approach is an alternative strategy that prioritizes local aspects and resources for effective development. The research method chosen in this research is the phenomenological method. The phenomenological method explores human experiences (people's lived experiences). This is in line with the concept of decent work and local economic development, which is highly influenced by the opinions and narratives described by the community, in this case, the research participants. This research explains the concept of decent work and local economic development based on the conditions of Banjarmasin City. It generated five explanatory clusters in this research. Cluster of general perspectives and specific perspectives related to the concept of decent work. The general perspective is that decent work should meet minimum standards and protect workers' rights. While a specific perspective emphasizes subjectivity in viewing various decent work concepts. The other three clusters were formed from the exploration of the concept of local economic development, such as the challenge cluster, the opportunity cluster, and the relationship cluster between the concept of local economic development and decent work. These three clusters emphasize that the development concept requires comprehensive planning. Development faces challenges, such as insufficient government support, uncooperative communities, and disinterest among local people, but there are opportunities to boost local economies and improve work decency and conditions.

**KEYWORDS** *Decent Work; Local Economic Development; Phenomenology.*

### INTRODUCTION

According to a survey conducted by the Regional Development Planning Agency of South Kalimantan or Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah Kalimantan Selatan (Bappeda Kalsel), the most concerning issue for the people of South Kalimantan is the issue of decent employment. This issue is also part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the target of creating decent jobs for all layers of society. The survey results align with the report from the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2020, which explains that efforts to create

decent jobs are still hindered by factors such as the limited impact of employment on the quality of life, skills mismatch, and the lack of social security for most workers and vulnerable groups (Amiruddin, 2012). As of August 2022, the Unemployment Rate or Tingkat Pengangguran Terbuka (TPT) in Indonesia is 5.86 percent, a decrease of 0.63 percentage points from the previous year. Meanwhile, in South Kalimantan Province, the TPT decreased by 0.21 percentage points to 4.74 percent in August 2022 (BPS, 2022). However, this decrease in TPT does not

reflect the quality of employment held and carried out by the people, thus the issue of decent employment needs further analysis (Gammarano, 2018).

The concept of decent work has been described by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Anker et al., 2003; Ghai, 2003). There are at least four key points in the concept of decent work, which include employment, social protection, workers' rights, and social dialogue (Ghai, 2003). The employment aspect includes the level of labor force participation, the wages received, and safety and comfort in the workplace (Novianto, 2017; Suharto et al., 2016). Social protection encompasses protection against possible adverse events in the future, such as job loss, illness, and old age. Workers' rights involve the right to fair and non-discriminatory treatment and the freedom to form unions (Mihradi & Siregar, 2017). Lastly, social dialogue includes opportunities for negotiation between employers and workers and participation in decision-making at both the company and national levels. Based on these four foundational points, it can be understood that decent work is not just a concept but an objective that all stakeholders must achieve through various programs and policies (Fields, 2003; Ghai et al., 2006; Piasna et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the local or local context is essential in integrating the understanding of decent work with planned policies or interventions (Gibb & Ishaq, 2020; Hasle & Vang, 2021).

Then, Local Economic Development (LED), is considered an alternative development approach that can consider and involve the local context. LED is also a response

to the failures of traditional development approaches such as top-down development (Rodríguez-Pose & Palavicini-Corona, 2013). Without involving local actors, local resources' potential and all activities in an area cannot be completely optimized, and development approaches and coordination, both vertically and horizontally, will not work well (Pike et al., 2016). In general, LED can be understood as a comprehensive strategy that involves various aspects of the economy, physical, social, cultural, and institutional characteristics of an area (Pike et al., 2007). LED focuses on local development with the aim of promoting local economic improvement, local capacity, local opportunities (employment), and optimizing local resources (Azunu & Mensah, 2019; Pike et al., 2016).

The relationship between the concept of decent work and LED is very close and has overlapping features. As previously explained, the concept of decent work pays close attention to the conditions and opinions of workers as the primary beneficiaries of decent work. Even the report "Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) for Indonesia 2020-2025" emphasizes and prioritizes effective social dialogue with workers (ILO, 2020). This dialogue also explains that the local context and geographical location, where the work is carried out, as significant considerations. Each country and region require different dialogues and discussions because they face different challenges (ILO, 2020). LED, as one of the development approaches and strategies, can facilitate the implementation of various initiatives and activities and involve all local elements in an area (Arif et al., 2016; Canzanelli, 2001; Saputri et al., 2021). The

bottom-up approach, that forms the basis of LED, requires development to start from the bottom, in this case, the local level (Azunu & Mensah, 2019; Pike et al., 2016; Raharjana, 2012). The intersection between the concept of decent work and LED lies in the shared principles and objectives within them. It is hoped that a 'productive environment' can be realized, accelerating the achievement of the planned goal, which is decent work (Canzanelli, 2001).

There is still room to further explore the concept of decent work beyond the agreed-upon definitions and standards to date (Sehnbruch et al., 2015). Question like 'promote decent work for whom?' is simple yet fundamental question that can be used as a starting point for this exploration (Fields, 2003). The Indonesia DWCP report cannot stand alone as it would not be sufficient to represent the aspirations of all stakeholders subjectively or objectively (Massoudi et al., 2018). The creation of decent work should also be directed towards those who genuinely need it, so resources are not allocated to those who 'can still help themselves' (Fields, 2003). In this way, decent work is created and distributed fairly among the entire population. Furthermore, it is challenging to reach a universal agreement on the concept of decent work because people (workers) have diverse objectives (Sehnbruch et al., 2015).

Moreover, there are few connections made between the concept of decent work and the LED approach. Although these two have implicit similarities in features and principles, the development approach is minimally influenced by the concept of decent work. Sehnbruch et al. (2015) illustrate

that the concept of decent work is merely rhetoric with a weak theoretical foundation and is centered around concepts produced by the ILO. Various independent research and studies are needed to serve as a comparison to the concepts and references produced by the ILO. This way, the concept of decent work can be considered in public debates and development agendas (Sehnbruch et al., 2015).

This research aims to generate phenomenological insights regarding decent work and local economic development, including raising awareness about the issues and challenges within. These additional insights provide a useful comparative discourse and knowledge base for effective policy formulation. Both decent work and local economic development are important phenomena for people. A comprehensive understanding of both complex phenomena can create equal and decent opportunities, improve people's quality of life, and ensure that development agendas or policies are implemented efficiently and effectively (Canzanelli, 2001; Fields, 2003; Finlay, 2014; Leal Filho et al., 2021).

### **Decent Work**

As is known, the concept of decent work was first introduced by the International Labour Organization (ILO), aiming to create fair opportunities for both men and women while considering freedom, justice, security, and workers' rights (Ghai et al., 2006). Building on this concept and idea, various responses and criticisms emerged regarding the concept of decent work. According to Ghai et al. (2006), the concept of decent work is seen as a concept that can immediately

spark discussions about various issues, from workplace conditions and worker's aspirations to the nature of the work itself. Furthermore, this concept can serve as a framework to optimize policy choices by considering different factors. For example, it can analyze whether there is a conflict between the quality and quantity of jobs or whether remuneration and productivity will increase after engaging in a dialogue with workers.

Further, the concept of decent work has faced criticism regarding its universality for application in different places and conditions. This has led to the classification of countries into three models: 1) Classical model; 2) Transition model; 3) Development model. The classical model is used when the majority of a country or region's population (about 75-90 percent) receives fixed wages and works in the formal sector. In the transition model, a lower percentage of the population works in the formal sector, approximately 70-90 percent. In the development model, the majority of the population in that country or region works in the informal sector or as self-employed individuals. The percentage of the population engaged in agriculture is also quite significant in this development model, ranging from 20-70 percent (Ghai et al., 2006). This classification aims to demonstrate that each country or region has different socio-economic features, requiring different interventions to achieve the universal aspiration of creating decent work for its people (Ghai et al., 2006).

As the concept and development agenda has evolved, the concept of decent work has gained more attention. Piasna et al. (2020)

explain that the concept of decent work does not have a single easily definable measure, unlike, for example, the Human Development Index (HDI), which provides a clear and easily understood measure of human development (Sehnbruch et al., 2015). In other words, decent work does not have a clear definition and is often interchangeable with phrases like 'decent job' or 'good work' (Piasna et al., 2020). This has led to the perception that the concept of decent work is a 'roofless' idea, lacking a clear definition or measure, with factors and social and economic contexts in specific regions shaping and influencing the concept of decent work (Piasna et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the concept of decent work is now being reconsidered and is one of the targets and objectives within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Decent work is defined with development policies that should promote more productive activities, create fair job opportunities with adequate wages, foster creativity and innovation, and provide protection and rights that workers should be guaranteed (Kreinin & Aigner, 2022).

In policy formulation, the concept of decent work can be utilized and implemented through three narratives: (1) The need for employment as a primary condition for obtaining decent work; (2) Respecting labor standards as a way to honor workers' rights and eliminate discrimination in the workplace. Without respect for these standards, a job cannot be considered decent; (3) Improving the quality of work, which is related to the quality of wages received. Decent work will enhance an individual's quality of life and standard of

living through fair wage payments (Fields, 2003). The concept of decent work can also be interpreted differently according to the needs of each individual (Nizami & Prasad, 2017). For children, decent work is going to school, not working. For adults, decent work is a job that provides good wage. For the unemployed, decent work can be interpreted as finding a job. For the elderly, decent work is a job that provides retirement security in old age. In the end, the concept of decent work is an agenda and objective aimed at providing broad and fair job opportunities that fulfill all workers' rights and applicable standards (Nizami & Prasad, 2017).

### **Local Economic Development (LED)**

The adoption of the Local Economic Development (LED) approach emerged amid the ongoing globalization felt by all countries today (Leigh & Blakely, 2016; Pike et al., 2016). Local potential can be optimized and turned into a strength to compete in the current global economy's tough environment (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2010). In other words, local needs and aspirations can be fulfilled by the resources available within the region, without having to seek resources from the global world (Pike et al., 2016). Various features and definitions have attempted to explain this LED approach. The LED approach is closely related to local aspects and local stakeholders (government, non-governmental organizations, communities), emphasizing the importance of participation and cooperation, bounded by a specific region, and certainly as one of the tools and strategies in the development agenda (Dewi, 2013). In general, LED can be understood as a comprehensive strategy involving

various aspects, from economic, physical, social, cultural, to institutional character aspects in a particular area (Pike et al., 2007). LED focuses on local development, aiming to promote local economic growth, local capacity, local job opportunities, and optimize local resources (Azunu & Mensah, 2019; Pike et al., 2016).

In the planning and practice of LED, a variety of disciplines such as economics, geography, sociology, and even politics are required. This indicates that the LED approach continues to evolve and develop (Leigh & Blakely, 2016). Then, these researchers explain the reformulation of the components of the LED approach itself. These component names are not unfamiliar in LED, but they are explained with different interpretations and concepts. First, regarding locality. Locality no longer interprets physical location where it must be close to markets or natural resources, and similar factors. Technology facilitates companies or individuals and frees them to move from one location to another. For example, moving to an area with a lower cost of living. Therefore, factors like a comfortable environment and a good social network become the main attraction of a location.

Second, regarding business and the economic base. In the era of the new economy, local governments must be able to facilitate various companies to collaborate, creating a competitive industrial cluster. Third, regarding the workforce. Mindsets like low wages creating more jobs must be eliminated. Local development must increase the value added to its area and the workers within. Therefore, the high quality companies

come to the area because the workforce they need can be met. Fourth, regarding community resources. The government, along with various organizations and groups in an area, has different interests and goals. Collaboration is essential to optimize the community resources in that area. These four LED components with new meanings must be implemented so that local potential (all resources) can be optimized, a solid foundation is built, and a sustainable local economic development is created (Leigh & Blakely, 2016).

### **Decent Work and Local Economic Development**

The LED approach is a vehicle that can engage and connect various stakeholders in a region to create decent jobs (Canzanelli, 2001). The principles and values presented in the LED approach also overlap with those explained by the concept of decent work. In LED, local stakeholders determine the direction of the strategy to be used, and their opinions are highly considered (Haryanto, 2013; Pike et al., 2016; Widyastuty & Dwiarta, 2021). While the concept of decent work emphasizes the importance of social dialogue because, fundamentally, there are at least three parties involved in labor issues (government, companies, and workers) (ILO, 2020). In line with this, the allocation of local resources, the creation of local job opportunities, and poverty alleviation are objectives of the LED approach (Mensah et al., 2019; Pike et al., 2016).

The LED approach is also an alternative bottom-up approach that addresses the failure of unsustainable top-down approaches (Nel & Rogerson, 2016). Pike et

al. (2016) illustrate that all LED initiatives and resources must originate from the bottom (local), creating good vertical cooperation at the government level and good horizontal cooperation between the public and private sectors. Each area has different features, potentials, and problems, thus strategies agreed upon and initiated from the bottom (local) tend to be more successfully implemented (Leigh & Blakely, 2016). Local stakeholders or actors have better abilities and experiences to assess and observe the conditions in their respective areas. Building on this understanding, the LED approach can be more effectively implemented with the understanding of the concept of decent work as described by local actors. The biggest challenge for LED practitioners is to involve local actors and utilize local potential and resources to the fullest or as effectively as possible. This aims to optimize the 'benefits and advantages' that may be obtained by all local stakeholders (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2010).

### **Methodology**

This research is a qualitative study using the phenomenological research method. Phenomenology starts with people's lived experience of a concept or phenomenon and takes these experiences as the starting point for investigation, exploration, and interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Griffin & May, 2012). The results of this phenomenological study will be integrated with prior knowledge or assumptions as new findings (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Furthermore it continues with the identification of the concept or idea to be explored, in this case, the concepts of decent

work and the LED approach. Then, this concept is questioned and explored together with relevant parties and stakeholders, such as government, employers, and workers. Subsequently, discussions are held with these parties to align their perceptions regarding the concepts to be discussed (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

This research is conducted in Banjarmasin City, the economic center of the South Kalimantan Province. It has the highest gross regional domestic product among all cities and regencies in the province (BPS, 2024). Moreover, Banjarmasin City's workforce is distributed proportionally across the agricultural, industrial, and service sectors (BPS, 2022). These diverse sectors provide various insights and references for locals or respondents in observing the concepts of decent work and local economic development. In contrast, workforce in rural areas is mainly dominated by the agricultural sector. The development in rural areas focuses narrowly on improving agricultural productivity and increasing the value of agricultural products. Additionally, Banjarmasin City has a distinct geographical condition, being intersected by many rivers. This distinctive feature can also shape the discourse about decent work and local economic development.

Using a phenomenological approach, this research develops a framework and process of analysis consisting of four phases: (1) Initiating; (2) Collecting; (3) Interpreting; and (4) Integrating. These phases are rooted in and drawn from relevant studies that utilize a phenomenological approach (Finlay, 2014; Larsen & Adu, 2021; Priest, 2002; Starks

& Brown Trinidad, 2007; Tuffour, 2017). The terminology used for each phase is selected to clarify the framework and process within the context of this study.

In the initiating phase, the scope of this research is defined. This research aims to explore and develop the concept and discourse regarding decent work and local economic development from the lived experiences of relevant stakeholders. These lived experiences provide additional perspectives on the concept of decent work and local economic development, broadening its meaning, revealing its various dimensions, and generating further understanding of the experiences and impacts related to the concept. While referencing existing and related studies, a phenomenological approach requires that researchers begin by 'bracketing' or suspending their preconceived notions and biases about the phenomenon under exploration. Both decent work and local economic development can be considered phenomena as they are related to people's livelihoods, are important matters in people's lives, and have multiple interpretations (Finlay, 2014; Priest, 2002; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). The research questions and questionnaire are also developed in this initiating phase.

Next is the collecting phase. This phase begins by purposeful sampling, meaning to carefully select relevant respondents or stakeholders that understand this topic or scope of research and directly experience it. There are several stakeholders involved, including government, employer, employee or worker, and academic or scholar. The data collection process is carried out

through interviews with the permission of relevant institutions and parties. The evidence sources obtained include interview recordings and transcripts. The primary data source in this research is individuals commonly referred to as research participants. To increase the number of research participants, the snowball sampling technique is used to add informants based on recommendations from participants or informants interviewed previously (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Groenewald, 2004).

From the government perspective, interview is conducted with the Department of Labor and Transmigration or Dinas Tenaga Kerja dan Transmigrasi (Disnakertrans) and the Regional Development Planning Agency or Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah (Bappeda). From the employers' perspective, interviews are conducted with traders or entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, from the workers' perspective, interview is conducted with the Workers Union or Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia (SPSI) in Banjarmasin. The snowball sampling technique eventually led to interview with the Wage Council of Banjarmasin City or Dewan Pengupahan Kota Banjarmasin (Depeko), member of the Regional People's Representative Council of Banjarmasin City or Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (DPRD) Kota Banjarmasin, and scholar or academic. These parties and individuals have aspirations and the capability to plan and evaluate the concepts of decent work and local economic development. Thus, from the various interview results, perspectives and conclusions regarding the concepts of decent work and local economic development can be explored and

understood (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

It is followed by the interpreting phase. In this phase, the data is analyzed through varied methods, such as analyzing the main (significant) statements from the interviews, analyzing the overall interpretation of the results and narratives obtained, or classifying the interview results into several key concepts and themes (Creswell & Poth, 2016). According to Yin (2014), the analysis involves categorization, tabulation, and combining evidence to test initial study propositions. This phase also starts validating the data using triangulation (Creswell, 2009). Triangulation is conducted by presenting corroborating evidence and comparing the substance of interview transcripts, to strengthen the validity of the collected data. Corroborating evidence includes research and references related to the research topic. Triangulation acts as a filter for disconfirming evidence or evidence that deviates. The discussion of this research also indirectly validates the analyzed data because it provides relevant explanations related to the research topic. This data validation is further employed in the last phase, while all findings are synthesized into a comprehensive picture.

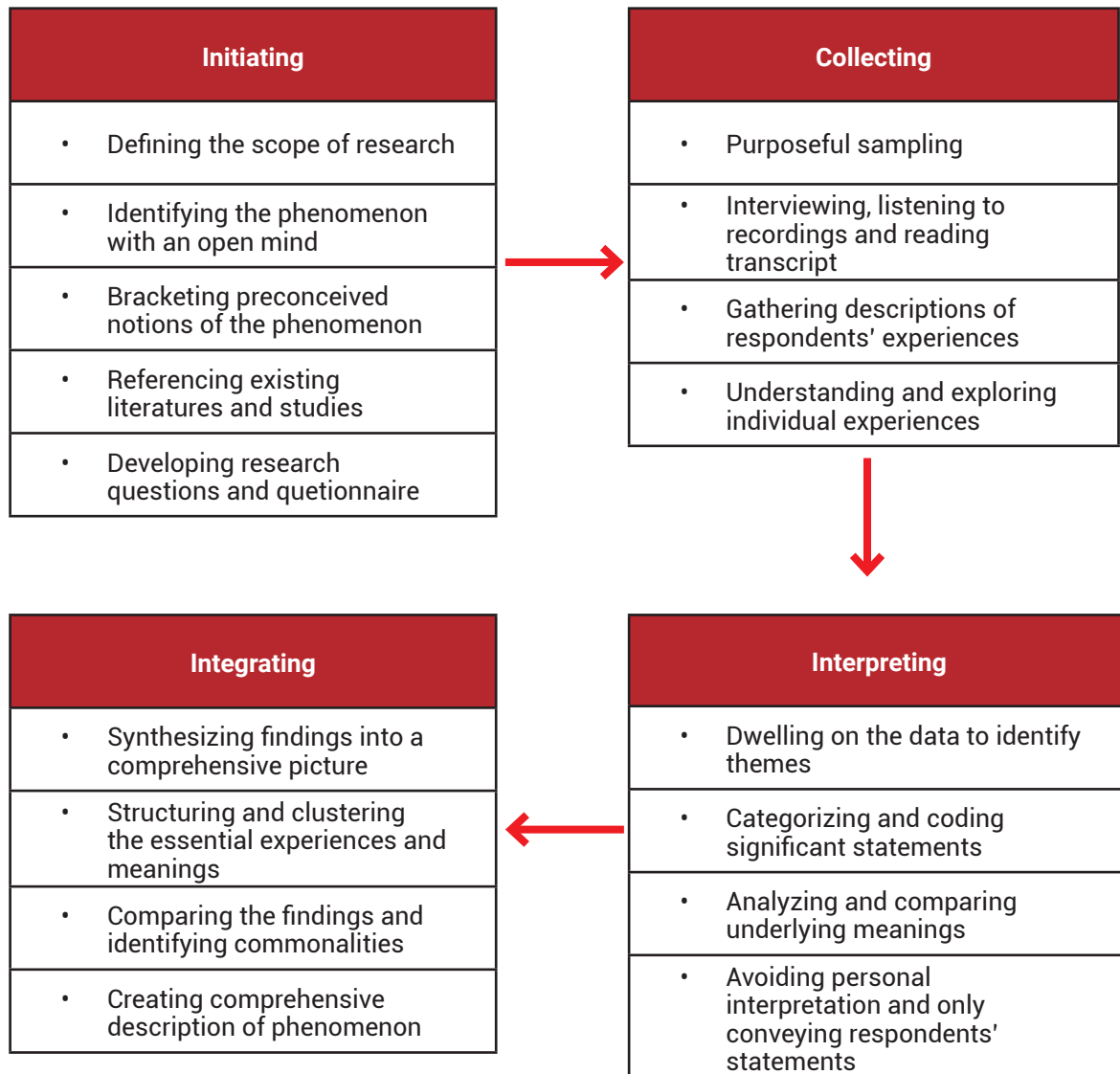
The last is the integrating phase. Through various interviews conducted, the phenomenological analysis identifies commonalities and similarities in various perspectives and opinions. The results of these interviews are transcribed and then read repeatedly to identify themes and key points related to the concepts of decent work and local economic development. The overall processing and interpretation of each interview transcript consists of several steps:



listing the main points, reducing unchanged points, creating comprehensive descriptions, and grouping these points (Moustakas, 1994).

process of analysis using a phenomenological approach in this research. Each phase consists of primary activities to be implemented.

Figure 1 illustrates the framework and



**Figure 1. Phases and Primary Activities in a Phenomenological Study**

Source: Adapted and developed from multiple sources, including Creswell & Poth (2016), Finlay (2014), Larsen & Adu (2021), Priest (2002), Starks & Brown Trinidad (2007), Tuffour (2017)

## DISCUSSION

The questions asked in the interviews aimed to explore the perspectives of the respondents regarding the concept of decent work and local economic development, as well as the relationship between these two

concepts. The answers to these questions resulted in significant statements from the respondents. These significant statements are formulated into various descriptions, as shown in the tables below.

**Table 1**

Significant statements describing the concept of decent work.	
Minimum wage standards	Wage matching the position
Matching with skills and expertise, and educational background	Meeting basic living needs and daily needs
Having work experience	Influenced by individual mindsets
Not dependent on the sector, whether formal or informal	Elderly individuals are provided with meaningful work
Adolescents need guidance	Adults need to meet family needs
Children do not need to work	Good mental health

Source: Processed by author

Table 1 and 2 present main or significant statements that reflect the initial responses and general perceptions of respondents when they are asked about the concept of decent work and local economic development. These statements highlight their personal perspectives and knowledge, while also suggesting their aspirations related to these concepts.

**Table 2**

Significant statements describing the concept of local economic development.	
Development of regional characteristics	Cooperation between the government and the community
Industrial development	Behavior of the community
Utilization of natural resources	Branding, innovation, and creativity
In line with regional development plans	New entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial activities
Supporting both formal and informal sectors	Optimizing respective roles in development

Source: Processed by author

Table 3 and 4 outline the formulated meanings of significant statements, merging interrelated significant statements to improve their meaning. These generated sentences provide the basis for the next step of the analysis.

**Table 3**

Formulated meanings of significant statements describing the concept of decent work.
1. Decency or decent work can be seen from its sustainability; if it continues, it means it has succeeded.
2. It must be able to meet the basic living needs.
3. Decent work can be categorized according to different age groups.
4. Decent work should meet minimum wage standards, consider job risks and the mental health of workers, and provide health or social security.
5. Educational background, skills, expertise, and experience influence the decency of a work.
6. The decency of a work cannot be determined solely by the distinction between formal and informal employment.
7. Wage determination in the formal and informal sectors differs. In the formal sector, wages are matched to the position, while in the informal sector, wages are determined by factors such as the type of work, skills, and agreements.
8. An individual's mindset influences the perceived decency of a work.

Source: Processed by author

**Table 4**

Formulated meanings of significant statements describing the concept of local economic development.
1. Building industries in urban areas.
2. Considering the characteristics and identity of a region, such as local crafts, distinctive buildings or houses, and local-based tourism.
3. Challenges in continuing development due to legal aspects and land acquisition issues.
4. The local economic ecosystem has not fully formed.
5. The need for understanding and educating the community to foster good cooperation among all stakeholders.
6. The community's behavior is less supportive and cooperative than expected toward the local economic development.
7. Optimizing the potential of natural resources.
8. Having the freedom to be creative and innovative and fostering new entrepreneurs.
9. All stakeholders must be dedicated and committed to their respective roles and be drivers of development.
10. Supporting Indonesia in becoming a developed nation.
11. Nurturing the informal sector and ensuring that the formal sector complies with applicable standards.
12. Successfully implementing regional development plans.

Source: Processed by author

Next, the statements were classified into several clusters that unite the meanings and intentions of the respondents' statements. From the varied statements related to the concept of decent work, two clusters were identified: the general perspective cluster and the specific perspective cluster. Meanwhile, from the statements related to the concept of local economic development,

three clusters were identified: the challenge cluster, the opportunity cluster, and the cluster related to the relationship between the concept of local economic development and decent work. These clusters were formed due to the common meanings and intentions of the respondents' statements. These clusters are explained in the following tables.

**Table 5**

Cluster of general and specific perspectives on the concept of decent work.
<b>General perspectives</b>
1. Decent work is a job that meets basic living needs, complies with minimum wage and security standards, considers job risks and workers' mental health.
2. Decent work is a job that matches individual's educational background, skills, expertise, and experience.
3. Decent work is not determined by the sector, whether it is formal or informal.

Cluster of general and specific perspectives on the concept of decent work.
<b>Specific perspectives</b>
1. Decent work is defined flexibly according to different age categories, resulting in different concepts.
2. Decent work is influenced by individual mindsets and is a subjective concept.
3. Decent work can be created; what is not decent for an individual may not necessarily be entirely indecent.

Source: Processed by author

**Table 6**

Cluster of challenges and opportunities from the concept of local economic development, and its relationship with the concept of decent work.
<b>Challenges</b>
1. Local economic development is hindered by the impatience and desire for quick results in the behavior of the community.
2. Economic development faces challenges such as difficult and costly land acquisition.
3. Local economic development is hindered by insufficient government dedication and commitment, as well as a lack of effective communication, education, and compensation.
4. Local people have less interest in local products and local wisdom.
<b>Opportunities</b>
1. Local economic development is still being developed through various strategies, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Building industries and ecosystems.</li> <li>b. Supporting the innovation and creativity of the community.</li> <li>c. Implementing better branding for local products and local wisdom.</li> <li>d. Increasing the interest of local people in locally made products.</li> <li>e. Empowering the potential of natural resources.</li> <li>f. Optimizing the identity and characteristics of the region.</li> <li>g. River-based development in supporting regional characteristics.</li> <li>h. Developing a city to become a comfortable transit point.</li> </ul>
<b>Relationship of two concepts</b>
1. The government ensures that all jobs comply with applicable standards.
2. Nurturing both formal and informal sectors toward improvement.
3. Facilitating the creation of new entrepreneurs and providing guidance.
4. Implementing regional development plans effectively.

Source: Processed by author

Through this phenomenological analysis, the concept of decent work and local economic development can be discussed and explored with respondents or relevant stakeholders. The responses and statements obtained from these respondents are not only based on their knowledge but also on their everyday experiences. Stakeholders serve various roles in evaluating and planning on this topic, some highlight complaints, some offer an academic perspective, and others advocate for better attention to this topic in the future.

This phenomenological analysis results in several clusters of responses and statements provided by the respondents. Direct interviews conducted in this analysis maintain the purity of responses and questions, based on the knowledge and personal experiences of the respondents. Simultaneously, this phenomenological method expands the research design on this theme (Blustein et al., 2023).

At least five clusters have formed, namely the cluster of general perspectives and specific perspectives on the concept of decent work, the cluster of challenges and opportunities related to local economic development, and the cluster of the relationship between the concept of local economic development and decent work.

These clusters and their descriptions can be considered to provide an explanation that corresponds to the majority of references or articles on the concept of decent work and local economic development, and validate its relevance in the field. This also elaborates and provides examples of the understanding and explanation of these two concepts.

Besides, it also adds distinctive perspectives on these two concepts.

These perspectives provide a more comprehensive approach to understanding decent work, integrating the current state (status quo) of research and existing definition, enriching the research agenda and advancing the discourse (Garcia Lozano et al., 2022; Haiming & Yan, 2020). While local economic development strategies are expected to cover broader issues and should be generated or written more with the involvement of the community's members and their aspirations (McLean et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2017). This research also considers the significance of community presence in providing diverse suggestions and insights for creating effective strategies.

The five clusters and their descriptions will be discussed sequentially below, and also explained by quoting some direct statements from the respondents.

The cluster of general perspectives and specific perspectives explains and illustrates the respondents' understanding of decent work concept. The concept's description is indeed quite broad and open to interpretation, but it can be said that the responses and statements from the respondents validate the explanations from relevant references and literature. As Ghai et al. (2006) explain, decent work should meet the standards aspired to by all stakeholders, including fair wages, consideration of work risks, and job security.

It can be understood that the basic or general concept and principles of decent work have been defined mainly through the policies or work agenda of the International

Labour Organization (ILO) (Rantanen et al., 2020). While this definition is useful, it has not yet had a full impact. This low or limited impact is revealed by the emergence of various research that examine the diverse and interrelated variables within the concept. For instance, Pereira et al. (2019) focus on the psychological aspects and diverse dimensions of decent work in relation to achieving common good values that create a fair, sustainable, and human-centered society.

As the discourse and research on decent work evolve and become more dynamic, a meaningful consolidation of the concept will occur. This consolidation may lead to outcomes, in terms of definitions, standards, priorities, and policy decisions, that are collectively agreed upon and fully adhered to. Thus, there will be fewer issues or constraints in implementing policies and strategies (Gibb & Ishaq, 2020; Mačernytė Panomariovienė, 2012).

Moreover, by embracing this meaningful consolidation as well as understanding perspectives or dialogue within, interventions aimed at improving decency and creating decent work are more likely to succeed than by relying solely on government's prescriptions (Ghai et al., 2006; Nizami & Prasad, 2017). All of the perspectives here are highlighted and aligned with some of the respondents' statements:

*“Decent work is measured by how much income one earns. Decent means they can meet a decent living above the minimum. So, the minimum living needs are already met. I see all forms of work as decent, even informal work can be*

*considered decent as long as it generates income. Garbage can be processed, water hyacinth (eceng gondok) can be woven into products, so it adds value.”* (Supriatna, personal communication, September 18, 2023)

*“There are components of a decent living standard that must be affordable and met. The minimum wage increases in line with inflation. In the formal sector, wages are adjusted according to position, while in the informal sector, they are adjusted according to the type of work.”* (Yono, personal communication, September 25, 2023)

*“A business is considered decent if it can continue and be self-sustaining. If it cannot continue, it means something needs to stop or to be improved.”* (Amalia, personal communication, September 18, 2023)

*“People who have a hard time finding work do not even think about the indicators of decent work; what matters is having income and work.”* (Amalia, personal communication, September 18, 2023)

*“Decency is very relative, depending on how an individual looks at it. When we are knowledgeable and experts in our field, wages (decency) will follow.”* (Husaini, personal communication, September 29, 2023)

The statements above affirm that the general perspective on the concept of decent work is still consistent with relevant literature. This also means that the description and indicators of the concept of

decent work remain valid for use and further development. Furthermore, it provides a comparison between the literature's explanation and the real-life understanding of the concept.

In addition, specific perspectives on the concept of decent work are reflected in statements that describe the subjectivity and relativity of this concept. Even the definition of decent work and how it is viewed can vary depending on age and individual circumstances. For example, learning and receiving education are the primary work for children, while for adults, the minimum work standard needs to be met. Unemployed individuals consider having any job as the minimum standard of decent work that they can achieve (Nizami & Prasad, 2017).

Next, the cluster related to the concept of local economic development consists of clusters of challenges, opportunities, and the relationship between the concept of local economic development and decent work. In general, the concept of local economic development faces different challenges, presents opportunities for new employment or job opportunities, and is closely related to improving the decency of work (Leigh & Blakely, 2016; Mahadevia et al., 2012). For example, local governments can provide support and create new entrepreneurs, advocate for job decency, and evaluate job standards. However, they also face challenges when it comes to development in limited and expensive land areas (Mahadevia et al., 2012; Mulyana, 2012).

The narratives and statements from these clusters are useful in ensuring that local economic development meets its

intended goals and fulfills society's needs. Local economic development is a useless tool unless it incorporates efficient and inclusive planning, along with a comprehensive understanding of an area and its conditions (Abrahams, 2003). In other words, the framework conditions will be developed and refined based on the actual dynamics and activities within the area (Rogerson, 2014).

The cluster of challenges explains that local economic development faces several challenges such as the lack of good cooperation and collaboration between the community and the government, the lack of commitment from both the community and the government, and issues related to land acquisition that can be challenging and costly. Among the challenges, the uncooperative and unsupportive behaviour of the community is a major concern. As some respondents explained:

*"The community needs to be educated; for example, when selling watermelons, probably not many people buy in a day or two. But if they have been selling in a specific place for a long time, people will remember them and know where to buy the fruit." (Yono, personal communication, September 25, 2023)*

*"It is difficult to educate the community. For example, water hyacinth (eceng gondok) can be processed into value-added products, but the community is impatient and sells water hyacinth (eceng gondok) without processing it. Whereas the opportunities are significant." (Supriatna, personal communication, September 18, 2023)*

*“Most of the community lacks enthusiasm in participating in training and empowerment.”* (Kumalawati, personal communication, October 9, 2023)

*“Even the locals are not very interested in local products and local wisdom, so they are less involved in promoting them.”* (Husaini, personal communication, September 29, 2023)

*“Government communication and education towards the community are still lacking; sometimes compensation is needed to participate in certain activities because people have to sacrifice other activities, such as sacrificing time for trading and earning money.”* (Saputra, personal communication, November 5, 2023)

The statements above are consistent with the observations made by Thomas & Amadei (2010), who found that people in developing countries tend to expect quick profits. Therefore, community support needs to be more intensive, and significant compensation may be required. Understanding such behavior is only possible through direct observation (Azunu & Mensah, 2019). Additionally, building good cooperation based on trust is a critical factor in the success of local economic development (Birkhölzer, 2005). With trust, collective action can be formed to address various issues. Furthermore, the lack of government commitment highlighted by respondents is obvious in statements such as:

*“The development of tourism has not paid attention to the necessary*

*improvements and the resulting impact. For example, the lack of road access to tourist places and the impact of waste have not been considered. Additionally, when a place suddenly becomes crowded, many take advantage, such as becoming parking attendants, which can reduce people’s (tourists) desire to visit again. Better government planning, education, and communication are needed.”* (Yono, personal communication, September 25, 2023)

*“For another example, the government cannot force people to stop throwing garbage into the river if it does not provide a place for them to dispose of their waste. If it is provided, people can be directed not to throw garbage into the river anymore.”* (Yono, personal communication, September 25, 2023)

In line with the statement above, local economic development requires comprehensive planning involving all stakeholders to ensure its sustainability (Canzanelli, 2001; Leigh & Blakely, 2016). With better planning, issues like waste and parking can be prevented and controlled. Further, the opportunity cluster provides very practical explanations. It emphasizes the importance of building an economic ecosystem, provision of training, sufficient capital to start a business, and considering the regional characteristics. As some respondents stated:

*“The government continues to provide training, such as sewing and cooking training. The important thing is to utilize existing resources; bananas can be cooked into various products,*



*and their value will increase.” (Yono, personal communication, September 25, 2023)*

*“The identity and characteristics of an area should be supported, such as the numerous rivers in Banjarmasin. There must be economic activities in that area. There is also an old town attraction because the city is hundreds of years old. The ecosystem needs to be developed first.” (Yono, personal communication, September 25, 2023)*

*“In the past, Banjarmasin was iconic for its floating markets. Now, we cannot see floating markets like we used to. People visited here out of curiosity about the floating markets. There are still floating markets now, but they have changed form. Development is too land-oriented, and houses are built with their backs to the river. This has made the river merely a disposal site.” (Supriatna, personal communication, September 18, 2023)*

*“The concept is not to expand the area, but to develop the city into a comfortable transit point, so that many people will be interested in stopping by and engaging in economic activities.” (Amalia, personal communication, September 18, 2023)*

*“Investment should involve the local community. The community should benefit and earn from that investment. Money circulation in the region should flow.” (Abdullah, personal communication, September 21, 2023)*

*“Through Vocational Training Center or Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja (LPK), the community and young people can gain skilling, upskilling, and reskilling in areas such as computer skills, welding, and automotive repair or maintenance. The majority get jobs after completing the training.” (Salam, personal communication, October 19, 2023)*

Synergy among all stakeholders, especially the government and the community, is essential to achieve sustainable local economic development (Leigh & Blakely, 2016). Furthermore, the economic ecosystem, identity, and characteristics of an area need to be developed and linked to entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship can be seen as an agent of change and transformation that connects markets, introduces innovation, and responds to market needs (Haryanto, 2014; Malizia et al., 2020). Moreover, as mentioned earlier, in the context of Banjarmasin City, further development is suggested to be more river-based, as the river has been one of the city's most prominent factors and attractions, with its floating markets and various activities around the river. In other words, this river-based development is fitting since the river has been a livelihood area and an important part of the city's history (Hidayat et al., 2022). Additionally, Malizia et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of understanding the dynamics and skill trends required by the market, which calls for relevant skill retraining.

The last cluster found is the cluster of the relationship between the concept of local

economic development and decent work. This cluster is formed by the aspirations of the respondents for local economic development to bring about positive changes in the community. These aspirations can be understood through several statements from the respondents, such as:

*“Work orientation is not limited to formal sectors; entrepreneurship should also be encouraged. The workforce should be directed towards industries.”* (Supriatna, personal communication, September 18, 2023)

*“The government can get involved, such as providing continuous support to communities and managing waste to create added value. Also, to ensure the implementation of regional development plans.”* (Husaini, personal communication, September 29, 2023)

*“The local people here still lack creativity. We need to prevent non-locals from filling too many jobs, so it is important to improve skills and competencies.”* (Salam, personal communication, October 19, 2023)

*“A committed local leader will continually motivate the community, ensuring that activities and jobs (that improve the community’s standard of living) are sustainable.”* (Kumalawati, personal communication, October 9, 2023)

A key objective of local economic development, and development initiatives in general, is to create new jobs and ensure that both formal and informal sectors receive

adequate attention by meeting applicable standards (Canzaneli, 2001; Sachs, 2004; Suharto et al., 2014). Commitment at all levels of government, from bottom to top, is required to ensure the sustainability of activities and decent work that can ultimately improve the standard of living and quality of life of the people and community.

### **Potential Discourses and Issues in Decent Work and Local Economic Development**

This research explains a comprehensive overview of both decent work and local economic development. The comparative insights within it provide direction to further explore potential discourse and research on several issues.

A potential discourse on decent work involves exploring its relationship with diverse economic activities. Expanding economic opportunities across various sectors can increase access to decent work and improve living standards for a larger portion of the population. While technological innovation has the potential to facilitate a more equitable distribution of decent work (Coyle, 2017; Stojkovic-Zlatanovic & Jovanovic, 2023). Furthermore, the issue of high unemployment or mass layoffs presents a significant challenge to achieving the objective of creating decent work (Hughes et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, the discourse regarding local economic development still needs to further explore strategies and policies for the optimal utilization of local knowledge and characteristics. This includes actively involving local people as key actors and supporters in local economic development

initiatives (Malizia et al., 2020). The challenges and opportunities identified in this research can serve as a foundation for future studies. It is revealed that local economic development has been primarily hindered by a lack of government commitment, lack of comprehensive planning, insufficient participation from local communities, and misaligned development orientations that often neglect local or regional characteristics (Vázquez-Barquero & Rodríguez-Cohard, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

Based on this research and analysis, the comparative explanation and additional insights into the concept of decent work and local economic development are generated. The clusters and statements from this research provide an interesting perspective on understanding and narrowing these two concepts. Although these two concepts will continue to be broadly explored, this research and analysis contribute practical considerations to public policy formulation and the conceptualization of future research.

Varied insights and aspirations regarding decent work and local economic development lead to different approaches and policy-making outcomes. For instance, it is ineffective to provide and improve decent work by training unenthusiastic youth and unemployed individuals who are unwilling to be helped or who want quick profit or result. They need the right mindset and patience before participating the training or being trained, thus needing varied strategies.

While local economic development needs comprehensive and inclusive planning aimed at long-term and sustainable development for everyone, rather than short-term benefits for some stakeholders.

In terms of future research, the analysis presented here can guide the focus and context when researching decent work and local economic development, recognizing the relativity and complexity of both concepts. Decent work is not merely defined by material measures; local economic development requires full commitment and comprehensive understanding, not merely well-intentioned approaches. However, this research may contain biases because of subjectivity or personal view of various respondents, which can impact the findings and may not fully reflect the aspirations of the broader population and diverse professions within society.

It is also worth emphasizing that the insights and data generated will improve the policy implementation's success rate, as governments and policymakers have involved local aspirations and utilized their resources. Understanding the actual aspirations and conditions of locals can be challenging, potentially leading to mismatches or failures in implementation.

The concept of local economic development needs to be continuously developed and refined, while the concept of decent work needs to be consistently observed, as what is considered indecent for one individual may not necessarily be entirely indecent for another.

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