

ECONOMIC BEHAVIOR OF THE KEDIRI PEOPLE IN THE SHADOW OF DOHO KEDIRI AIRPORT: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF LOCAL ECONOMY

Eni Susilowati¹, Eka Nur Rofik², Ana M. Maghfiroh³, Hardining Estu Murdinar⁴

¹Jurusan Ekonomi Syariah, Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung

²Jurusan Manajemen, Universitas Islam Kediri

³⁻⁴Jurusan Manajemen Bisnis Syariah Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung

E-mail: ¹enisusilowati@uinsatu.ac.id, ²ekanurrofik@uinsatu.ac.id, ³anammaghfiroh@uinsatu.ac.id,
⁴hardiningestu@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the economic behavior of the community around Dhoho Airport, Kediri, which has undergone socio-economic transformation due to strategic infrastructure development. This phenomenon is evident in Kediri Regency, East Java, especially after the start of the construction of Dhoho Airport, a national strategic project designed to be a lever for regional economic growth. The presence of the airport has changed the face of the surrounding area, which was previously agricultural land and modest settlements, into a bustling and fast-growing economic area. This change has led to a surge in new economic activities, such as the emergence of street vendors, restaurants, parking lots, local transportation businesses, and lodging. Using a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods, this study explores the meanings raised by local economic actors in responding to these changes. The findings show that communities show adaptive responses through trade, lodging, and other services, with economic meanings influenced by local values such as blessing, hard work, and kinship. This study concludes that people's economic behavior is not only rational instrumental, but also full of subjective values and meanings, so that regional economic policies need to be designed in an inclusive and contextual manner.

Keywords: *Economic Behavior, Dhoo Airport, Local Economy, Social Transformation*

1. INTRODUCTION

Changes in the economic structure of the community are a phenomenon that continues to occur along with the development and modernization in various regions. In the era of globalization and decentralization of development like today, local communities are faced with a rapid flow of social and economic transformation, both due to changes in policies, technology, and massive investment into the region. Large-scale infrastructure development such as toll roads, ports, and airports is often the main driver of these changes. These projects bring a variety of opportunities and challenges, including the emergence of new forms of community economic practice. In general, the economic behavior of Indonesian people, especially in rural areas, is still strongly influenced by local values such as togetherness, simplicity, and spirituality. In practice, economic activities do not only rely on profit-seeking motives, but also on social relations and cultural norms that have lived for a long time. The tradition of trading, farming, or entrepreneurship among local communities is often guided by the values of honesty, trust between citizens, and communal solidarity. However, along with the entry of modern development and large-scale economic interventions, this pattern began to shift. Changes in the physical and social environment have affected the way people make economic decisions, choose business types, and respond to competition.

This phenomenon is evident in Kediri Regency, East Java, especially after the start of the construction of Dhoho Airport, a national strategic project designed to be a lever for regional economic growth. The presence of the airport has changed the face of the surrounding area, which was previously agricultural land and modest settlements, into a bustling and fast-growing economic area. This change has led to a surge in new economic activities, such as the emergence of street vendors, restaurants, parking lots, local transportation businesses, and lodging. However, this dynamic is not necessarily only filled by the local community. Based on initial observations and field reports, some of the new economic actors present around the airport turned out to be from outside the region. They came from nearby cities such as Kediri City, Tulungagung, to Surabaya, bringing capital, modern trading strategies, and a wider business network. This condition creates competition for local communities who have limited capital, experience, and market access. Some locals are even just spectators in the midst of the hustle and bustle of new economic growth happening on their own land. This situation raises important questions about the economic behavior of local communities: how do they respond to these changes flow? Are they able to adapt and take part in these changes, or are they left out by external economic actors? What meaning do they feel about these changes, and how are their local values involved in shaping the way they survive?

The urgency of this research lies in the importance of understanding this transformation from the perspective of society itself, through an approach that explores the dimensions of experience, meaning, and value. The phenomenological approach is relevant because it is able to reveal how society interprets economic change as a life experience, not just as data or statistics. In the academic context, *the research gap* to be filled is the lack of study of the economic behavior of local communities in the context of airport development, especially with a qualitative phenomenological approach. Most previous studies have focused on physical impacts, spatial planning, relocation, or macroeconomic analysis. Studies such as Suyanto & Rachmawati (2020) highlight land conflicts due to the construction of the airport in Kulon Progo, while Hartanto (2021) examines the adaptation of MSMEs around Kertajati Airport quantitatively. However, there has not been much research that has explored in depth the economic experience of local communities as subjects who directly experience this transformation. Thus, this research offers a theoretical and practical contribution in understanding the economic dynamics of the community in the midst of national strategic projects. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on locality-based economic behavior. Practically, the findings can be a reflection for policymakers so that infrastructure development not only pursues economic growth, but also is equitable and empowers local communities in a sustainable manner.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative approach with a type of phenomenology, which aims to explore and understand the meaning of the subjective experiences of local communities in responding to social and economic changes that occurred due to the construction of Dhoho Airport in Kediri Regency. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows researchers to trace how individuals or groups of people interpret the changes they experience in their daily lives, especially related to economic activities that emerge, survive,

or even be left behind in the context of rapid regional transformation. Phenomenology as a qualitative approach focuses on the essence of human experience towards a particular phenomenon. Through this approach, researchers seek to understand the world from the perspective of the informant, without adding any initial interpretations or limiting theoretical assumptions. As stated by Creswell (2017), the phenomenological approach emphasizes on collecting narrative data from subjects who directly experience the phenomenon, then describing the structure of the meaning of the experience in depth and holistically. It is important to know how the community interprets the influx of large investments, new trade patterns, changes in socio-economic relations, and adaptation strategies that they carry out as a form of response to the inevitable development flows.

Thus, the phenomenological approach in this study not only allows researchers to record factual data, but also to explore people's experiences, feelings, and inner reflections on the changes they face. This approach is considered the most relevant because it is able to represent local voices that are often overlooked in macroeconomic and formal policy-based development studies.

Research Location and Context

This research was carried out in the area around Dhoho Airport, which is located in Kediri Regency, East Java. The selection of this location was carried out *purposively* because this area has undergone significant social and economic changes since the start of airport construction as one of the national strategic projects. The area that was once dominated by agricultural activities and traditional settlements, is now developing into a bustling area with new economic activities such as informal trade, transportation services, culinary, and accommodation. The context of the research is colored by two major dynamics: first, the physical transformation of the region due to infrastructure development; Second, economic competition between local actors and immigrants from outside the region who bring capital and modern business systems. This phenomenon provides space to observe how local communities adapt or even survive socially and economically. The areas that are used as focus are the villages around the airport development zone such as Grogol, Jatirejo, and Pojok Villages, which are the main nodes for the emergence of new economic dynamics. This context is important to understand because the changes that occur not only have an impact on physical and economic aspects, but also touch on social orders, local values, and the way people interpret their economic lives. Therefore, the location of this study was chosen to represent the complex dynamics between development and the economic behavior of local communities.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was carried out through several main techniques that are typical of the qualitative phenomenological approach, namely:

1. In-Depth Interview

Interviews are the main technique in this study to explore the subjective experiences and meanings felt by the local community towards economic changes after the construction of Dhoho Airport. Interviews are conducted in a semi-structured manner, with open-ended

questioning guidelines that allow informants to tell their stories freely and reflectively. Informants are selected purposively with the following criteria:

- Local residents who live around the airport area,
- Local economic actors (traders, parking attendants, drivers, micro business owners),
- Local community leaders or religious leaders,
- Affected communities who are not directly involved in new economic activities.

The number of informants follows the principle of *data saturation*, which is until no new relevant information is found.

Sec. 2. *Participatory Observation*

Observations are carried out directly in new economic locations, such as parking areas, food stalls, terminals, and access roads to the airport. The researcher observed the interaction between economic actors, trading methods, consumption patterns, and forms of adaptation of local communities to the presence of economic actors from outside. These observations help researchers capture social realities that are not always revealed in interviews.

3. Documentation

Documents in the form of photos of economic activities, local news, media reports, and data from local governments are used as a complement to enrich understanding of the context and dynamics that occur. Documentation also helps triangulate data so that research results are more valid and comprehensive.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study uses a phenomenological approach that focuses on the in-depth meaning of the subject's life experience. The analysis process is carried out in stages with reference to the model Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2017), through the following steps:

1. *Horizontaling (Initial Data Preparation)*

All relevant statements from the interview results were transcribed verbatim, then compiled as an initial data set. At this stage, no statement is overlooked, all are seen as important as part of the subject's experience.

2. *Reduksi Fenomenologis (Phenomenological Reduction)*

The researcher identified and filtered significant statements that were directly related to the phenomenon being studied, namely the economic behavior of the local community due to the development of Doho Airport. Each statement is then encoded into *meaning units*.

3. *Classification of Essential Themes*

From the collected units of meaning, the researcher forms core themes that reflect the patterns of behavior, response, values, and economic meaning built by society. These themes include, for example: economic adaptation, local resilience, the entry of outsiders, marginalization, the role of spiritual values, and community solidarity.

4. *Textural and Structural Description*

- Textural descriptions describe *what* the subject is experiencing (concrete experience).

- Structural descriptions explain *how* the experience occurred and in what context it was interpreted.
- The combination of the two results in a complete understanding of the phenomenon experienced by society.

5. *Synthesis of Meaning and Essence*

The final step is to compile a synthesis of the overall theme and experience into **the essence** of the phenomenon being studied. This essence is the main finding that answers the purpose of the research and contributes to the scientific understanding of the economic behavior of local communities in the face of major infrastructure development.

Data Validity Test

To ensure the validity and credibility of data in qualitative research, especially those using phenomenological approaches, validity tests are carried out through several techniques as stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely:

a. *Kredibilitas (Credibility)*

The credibility of the data is maintained through:

1. Source triangulation, which is comparing data from various sources who have different experiences but are related to the same phenomenon (for example: local traders, community leaders, economic actors outside the region).
2. Member check, which is to clarify and validate the results of interviews with informants to ensure that the meaning captured by the researcher is in accordance with the intention of the source.
3. *Prolonged engagement*, which is the involvement of researchers for a long time in the field to build trust and a deep understanding of the social context of the community.

b. *Transferabilitas (Transferability)*

Transferability is maintained by describing in detail the social, cultural, and economic context of the community in which the research is conducted. This *thick description* allows the reader to assess the extent to which the research findings can be applied or compared in other similar contexts.

c. *Dependability*

Dependability indicates the consistency of data in the research process. To achieve this, the researcher compiles a trail audit or record of the research process systematically starting from data collection, processing, analysis, to drawing conclusions. In addition, peer debriefing was conducted with colleagues or supervisors to ensure the consistency of findings.

d. *Confirmability*

Confirmability is achieved by maintaining the objectivity of the researcher through critical reflection on biases and personal assumptions. The researchers also included direct quotes from the informant as evidence that the findings were not engineered or manipulated to the researchers' liking.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The construction of Doho Kediri Airport not only presents transportation infrastructure, but also creates significant socio-economic changes for the surrounding community. This study involved 16 respondents consisting of local residents, small business actors, lodging managers, and immigrant economic actors. With a phenomenological approach, researchers seek to capture the subjective meaning of the economic changes they experience.

a. Transformation of Local Economic Patterns: From Farming to Services and Trade

Before the airport was built, the majority of residents depended on the agricultural sector and small-scale trading businesses. However, since the construction process began, economic activity began to shift. They began to respond to new economic opportunities by adjusting the resources they had.

"In the past, I only planted corn, but since there was an airport project, I opened a small coffee shop, not bad there are many people who stop by, sometimes truck drivers, sometimes project workers," said Mrs. Rini (R1), a native of the surrounding village.

Pak Darto (R4), who was previously only a seasonal farmer, is now also a motorcycle taxi: *"In the afternoon, I take project workers to me, sometimes I send food too. Thank God we can get more kids into school."*

This shows a shift in economic behavior from a subsistence economy to a service-based market economy. The community shows adaptability in dealing with changes in the social and economic environment.

b. Entry of Immigrant Economic Actors and New Competition

On the other hand, immigrant economic actors with more modern business models have emerged. They opened clothing stalls, fast food, and urban-style cafes that targeted the market of workers and airport visitors.

"I'm from Nganjuk, see this location is strategic. That's why I started a small distro business. Many project children and visitors buy it," explained Pak Wahyu (R10), one of the immigrant economic actors.



The presence of outside actors triggers competition dynamics that are not always comfortable for the local community. There is a hidden anxiety about the competitiveness of traditional businesses.

Mrs. Lina (R7) complained: *"Now sales can't come from it, it has to be clean, fast, and it looks good. If not, it's lonely, it's the same as the one from the city."*

This phenomenon shows that people's economic behavior is not only undergoing practical changes, but is also involved in social and symbolic tensions towards the presence of outside economic actors.

c. Innovation and Utilization of Local Assets: The Growth of Homestays and Cafes

Interestingly, some local residents have also succeeded in developing new businesses based on personal assets.

Mrs. Rika (R15) uses her house as a simple lodging: *"I turned the back two rooms into a lodging. Many drivers or project employees are looking for cheap places."*

Meanwhile, Mas Aldi (R16) — a newcomer — opened a small café with a modern concept. *"My target is young workers and guests from outside the city. So the design of the place must also be contemporary."*



The café has a digital menu and a cashless payment system — reflecting the shift in consumption styles and digital-based economic behavior that is starting to make its way into the suburbs.

d. Social Value as an Economic Guideline

In the midst of these changes, there is still a strong social value in economic decision-making. Local communities, despite competition, still maintain social relations as a moral guideline in doing business.

Mrs. Tari (R3) said: *"I don't have the heart to raise the price, my buyer is my own neighbor. We are living together."*

Values such as *mutual cooperation*, *empathy*, and *simplicity* are part of the economic ethical system that lives in society. This confirms that the economic actions of society are not solely calculative, but also loaded with social and cultural meaning.

Table 1: Respondent Profiles with a total of 16 respondents

Code Responders	Age	Gender	Type of Business/Role	Origin	Length of Stay at the Location
R1-RN	42	Women	Coffee & Fried Foods Shop	Local	From birth
R2-MT	51	Male	Itinerant snack vendor	Local	From birth
R3-TR	45	Women	Simple food stalls	Local	From birth
R4-DR	50	Male	Farmer and Motorcycle taxi driver	Local	From birth
R5-SR	38	Women	Bottled drink merchant	Immigrants	5 years
R6-HD	60	Male	Community Leaders (RT)	Local	From birth
R7-LN	36	Women	Small grocery stalls	Local	Since marriage (15 years)
R8-TN	47	Male	Self-help parking attendant	Local	From birth
R9-MI	55	Women	Breakfast vendor in Emperan	Local	From birth
R10-WY	40	Male	Street clothes merchant	Immigrants	2 years
R11-DN	34	Women	Pulse and coffee sachet seller	Local	Since marriage (10 years)
R12-HR	30	Male	Online Motorcycle Taxi	Immigrants	3 years
R13-EV	28	Women	Snack vendor on the sidewalk	Local	From birth

Code Responders	Age	Gender	Type of Business/Role	Origin	Length of Stay at the Location
R14-KY	53	Male	Ice sellers and children's toys	Local	From birth
R15-RK	44	Women	Homestay owners	Local	From birth
R16-AL	32	Male	Modern mini café owner	Immigrants	1.5 years

Source: Data Processed, 2026

THE RELEVANCE OF FINDINGS AND THEORIES

These findings are in line with the view of social phenomenology (Schutz, 1970; Creswell & Poth, 2018) that economic action does not stand alone as a rational-instrumental activity, but is born from lived experience filled with values, perceptions, and social relations. The presence of cafes and inns is a representation of an adaptive strategy based on local assets, while the attitude of maintaining affordable prices shows the importance of the meaning of social relations in the local economy. According to Berger & Luckmann (1991), society shapes social reality through continuous interaction and meaning. So the change in economic behavior around Dhoho Airport is also a process of social construction — not just because of changes in infrastructure, but because of how people interpret and respond to those changes collectively.



Source: Data processed, 2026

4. CONCLUSION

This research reveals the dynamics of the economic behavior of the community around Doho Airport, Kediri, in the context of socio-economic changes triggered by major infrastructure development. Local communities are showing a diverse response to new economic opportunities that are present, from direct involvement in trade activities, the establishment of lodging and café businesses, to adjusting their economic strategies amid the increasing flow of visitors and migrants. Through a phenomenological approach, it was found that the way people interpret these changes is greatly influenced by local values, such as family, blessings in trade, and an independent work ethic. Most of the business actors are local residents, although there are also immigrants from outside the area who have started to invest in the area around the airport. Tensions between local and outside economic actors emerge, but also present collaborative dynamics in the form of healthy competition.

These findings are in line with *Max Weber's* theory of social action, which explains that economic action is not solely driven by instrumental rationality, but also by the values and meanings that the perpetrator embraces. In addition, *Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach* reinforces that understanding people's economic behavior must explore their subjective meanings, perceptions, and emotions in undergoing social change. This research makes a theoretical contribution in expanding the study of value-based economics and local culture. Practically, the results of the research can be an input for local governments and airport managers to design policies for economic empowerment of the surrounding community that are more inclusive, fair, and sustainable.

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