

Pros and Cons Perspectives of Indonesian and Japanese Non-Weeaboo Towards Cross-dressing Cosplayers

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ABSTRACT

In the last decade, the cosplay community has grown rapidly and has become increasingly inclusive of various forms as well as costume styles. In the cosplay community, some cosplayers cross-dress, which is the practice of wearing costumes and acting as characters with different gender identities from their biological sex. This cross-dress phenomenon is common in many countries, including Indonesia and Japan as the topic of this study. Researchers use qualitative descriptive research methods with comparative analysis, data obtained from several respondents from Indonesia and Japan. Based on the results of the analysis, researchers concluded the perspective of pros and cons between Indonesian and Japanese respondents on the phenomenon of cosplayers performing cross-dresses. Japanese respondents supported cross-dressing among cosplayers, indicating that this practice was common in Japan. On the other hand, Indonesian respondents tend to reject cross-dressing, considering it taboo due to religious and cultural norms, although it can be accepted within reasonable limits at certain events. Meanwhile, Japanese respondents believed that crossdressing could affect cultural values and traditions.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, the cosplay community has rapidly grown and become increasingly inclusive of various forms and styles of costumes. The term "cosplay" was introduced by Japanese journalist Nobuyuki Takahashi in 1983 (Takahashi, Yoshikoka, 1983) after attending the Worldcon Science Fiction Festival in Los Angeles. The phenomenon of cosplay spread through online communities and was reinterpreted within local communities. In Japan, cosplay culture first emerged at a fashion show in Ashinoko, Kanagawa Prefecture, in 1978, during the 17th Nihon SF Taikai science fiction convention. At that event, Mari Kotani, a science fiction critic, attended wearing a costume of a character from Edgar Rice Burroughs' story, "A Fighting Man of Mars." In the early 2000s, cosplay began to gain international recognition alongside the development of the internet and digital imagery, while in Indonesia, cosplay appeared in early 2004. It initially started in Jakarta and then spread to various major cities across Indonesia.

Costume players in Japan originally drew inspiration from comic characters that seemed impossible to replicate. However, young people in Japan took the initiative to try out styles from these comics. From there, Japanese youth culture evolved, becoming diverse according to individual preferences (Rastati, 2017; Venus, 2017).

Cosplay, a term derived from the combination of the English words "costume" and "play," refers to the activity of young people dressing up as characters from manga or Japanese comics and anime or Japanese cartoons. In Japanese, cosplay is called "kosupure," which combines the words for costume (コス) and play

(プレ). Cosplay is a term used to describe fans who wear costumes of characters from manga or anime. Ahn (2008:55) explains that cosplay can transform or create a different identity from one's everyday life. However, some engage in cosplay out of love and interest in various anime, manga, or game characters. By cosplaying, they can present themselves as their favorite characters. In cosplay performances, there are showcases similar to fashion shows. This also provides an opportunity for cosplayers to engage in cosplay, showcasing their unique styles and posing for photographs on stage. Within cosplay activities, there is a term known as cross-dress cosplay. A person who engages in cross-dress cosplay is referred to as a cross-dresser. The term crossdresser comes from the English words "cross" and "dresser," meaning someone who dresses in clothing associated with the opposite gender. In cross-dress cosplay, an individual cosplays a character of the opposite gender; for example, a male might cosplay a female character and vice versa.

METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative research. The qualitative method is an in-depth and comprehensive research approach to understand and explain the phenomenon in its natural context (Sugiyono, 2018). The subjects of this research come from the perspective of Indonesian non-weeaboo and Japanese non-weeaboo, based on data collection techniques obtained by researchers through Google Forms, several related articles, and books. While the object of this research is cosplayers who cross-dress, researchers classify people's perspectives, divided into two, namely pro perspectives and counter perspectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The increasing prevalence of cross-dressing among cosplayers has sparked various perspectives within society. Researchers provide a counter perspective, arguing that cross-dressing is considered inappropriate, especially in Indonesia, a country with diverse norms and a predominantly Muslim population, where such practices are seen as taboo.

The differences between males and females in terms of roles, functions, rights, responsibilities, and behaviors are shaped by social, cultural, and customary values of a community, which can change over time and according to local conditions. Researchers also believe that cross-dressing, particularly men dressing as female characters, can influence men's behavior to become more feminine, which may not align with societal norms or expectations regarding masculinity in Indonesia. Therefore, it is important to note that crossdressing should not be normalized.

The researchers conducted a study based on responses from non-weeaboo in Indonesia and non-weeaboo in Japan, aged 17 to 21. The choice of respondents in this age range is because during this phase, identity achievement is prominent, thinking becomes more logical, abstract, and idealistic, and individuals spend more time outside of their families (John W. Santrock).

It can be concluded that there are various perspectives among the respondents, classified into two categories: pro and contra perspectives. From the viewpoint of non-weeaboo in Indonesia, the phenomenon of cross-dressing, especially men wearing female character costumes, is still considered unusual and controversial. Many people see it as deviating from religious and cultural norms, and it is often viewed negatively within society. This indicates a resistance to gender identity expression that is deemed inconsistent with prevailing norms in Indonesia.

In contrast, from the perspective of non-weeaboo in Japan, who are more open to the world of cosplay, cross-dressing among cosplayers is considered commonplace. Japanese non-weeaboo respondents believe that crossdressing in the context of cosplay, especially during specific events, is not a significant issue. They

feel that cosplayers should be free to choose and embody any character without being constrained by gender boundaries. In this perspective, cosplay is regarded more as a form of creative expression and individual freedom, free from gender norms. Society's perspective on crossdressing cosplayers

Data 1: 「社会のジェンダー的固定観念にとらわれず、素直に自己表現する姿勢が良いと思う。」
(Japanese respondent)

"I think it's better to express yourself honestly without getting caught up in society's gender stereotypes." (Japanese respondent)

Data 2: 「コスプレイヤーはコスドレスをするのがコスプレイベントでやっているの、コスドレスしても普通なこと、性別に関係なくなんのコスプレをしても自由だと思います。」
(Japanese respondent)

"Cosplayers cross-dress as a matter of course because they do it during cosplay events and I feel that cosplayers are free to cosplay anyone regardless of gender." (Japanese respondent)

Data 3: *"Saya pribadi tidak begitu suka dengan crossdress dan agak aneh melihatnya, terutama pria berkostum karakter wanita. Walau terkadang cosplay mereka keren dan nyaris sempurna, saya tetap merasa agak aneh melihatnya. Bukan sesuatu yang saya benci, tetapi juga bukan sesuatu yang menurut saya harus dinormalisasikan."* (Indonesian respondent)

"I personally don't like cross-dresses so much and it's kind of weird to see them, especially men in women's character costumes. Although sometimes their cosplay is cool and almost perfect, I still feel a little strange seeing it. It's not something that I hate, but it's not something that I think should be normalized." (Indonesian respondent)

From the three data or answers of respondents, there were pro answers (data 1 and 2) and counter answers (data 3). non-weeaboo Japanese respondents tended to answer agreeing that cosplayers could cross-dress. Meanwhile, Indonesian respondents tend to disagree if cosplayers cross-dress. This indicates that cross-dressing is already commonly practiced in Japan, as there are numerous diverse cosplay events, and society has normalized the idea that cosplayers are free to dress in costumes of the opposite gender. In contrast, in Indonesia, crossdressing remains highly taboo due to the country's religious diversity, particularly the predominant religion, Islam, which prohibits men from dressing as women and vice versa. There are also many Indonesians who have not been able to normalize this.



(source: Instagram @himemika_)

Male cosplayers who cross-dress female characters.

2. Cross-dressing affects cultural values and traditions

Data 4: *“crossdressing tidak sesuai dengan budaya serta tradisi negara kita, serta bisa menjadi bumerang karena menormalisasi adanya perilaku sosial yang menyimpang.”* (Indonesian respondent)

"Cross-dressing is incompatible with our country's culture and traditions, and can backfire because it normalizes the existence of deviant social behavior." (Indonesian respondent)

Data 5: *“Menurut saya untuk nilai-nilai budaya atau tradisi yang ada di masyarakat Indonesia sepertinya tidak akan begitu menyatu dengan budaya crossdressing ini.”* (Indonesian respondent)

"I think that the cultural values or traditions that exist in Indonesian society don't seem to be very integrated with this cross-dressing culture." (Indonesian respondent)

Data 6: *コスプレイベントでクロスドレスしても問題ないのですが、日常生活でやれば結構大変なことになってしまいます。」* (Japanese respondent)

"It is okay to cross-dress when there is an event, but if you do it in everyday life, it will cause quite a problem." (Japanese respondent)

From the three data obtained, there are differences in views between Indonesian and Japanese respondents regarding crossdressing. In data 4 and 5 the Indonesian respondents expressed concern that cross-dressing did not fit their culture and traditions, and could potentially normalize perceived deviant social behavior. They believe that Indonesian cultural values cannot integrate with crossdressing culture, indicating a mismatch between these practices and the norms that apply to society.

On the other hand, in data 6, Japanese respondents showed a more flexible view. They acknowledged that crossdressing was acceptable in the context of certain events, but warned that doing so in everyday life could cause significant problems.



(source: Instagram @coser.karina)

Female cosplayers who cross-dress male characters.

3. Cross-dressing affects Norms and Ethics

Data 1: *"Ya. Sebab, Indonesia masih kental dengan norma yang berlaku. Manusia memiliki gender yang mutlak, seharusnya manusia sebisa mungkin berperilaku dan berpakaian sesuai gender masing-masing."* (Indonesian respondent)

"Yes. Because Indonesia is still deeply rooted in prevailing norms. Humans have an absolute gender; therefore, they should behave and dress according to their respective genders." (Indonesian respondent)

Data 2: *"crossdresser terutama pria berkostum karakter wanita masih sangat tabu di Indonesia karena bisa menyimpang dari agama."* (Indonesian respondent)

"Crossdressers, especially men dressed as female characters, are still very taboo in Indonesia because they can deviate from religion." (Indonesian respondent)

Data 3: *"Pakaian harus sesuai dengan gendernya."* (Indonesian respondent)

"Clothes must match their gender." (Indonesian respondent)

In norms and ethics, there is a question, "According to respondents, does crossdressing in cosplay violate norms or ethics in society?". From the responses of respondents regarding whether crossdressing in cosplay violates norms or ethics in society, there are differing views.

Some respondents argued that crossdressing in cosplay did not violate society's norms or ethics, especially when it was done only at certain times of the event or event, as long as it was kept with polite behavior, and not widely applied in everyday life. Some argue that crossdressing does not violate norms or ethics, as long as it preserves certain restrictions and does not impose normalization of the practice.

Refusing opinion, some respondents saw that crossdressing violates norms or ethics in society, especially because Indonesia still firmly holds norms related to gender and behaves according to the gender it has. Various views, there are also views that state that crossdressing in cosplay violates norms or ethics on various levels, from obvious violations to only minor violations.

CONCLUSION

The activity of cross-dressing among cosplayers has generated a variety of perspectives within society, particularly between non-weeaboo in Indonesia and non-weeaboo in Japan. In Indonesia, crossdressing, especially by men wearing female character costumes, is still considered unusual and is often viewed negatively. This is due to strong social and cultural norms, as well as the influence of the predominant religion in the country. Many Indonesian respondents believe that cross-dressing is not in line with their cultural values and traditions, and it can be seen as deviating from established gender norms.

In contrast, non-weeaboo in Japan exhibit a more open attitude toward cross-dressing in the context of cosplay. They view cross-dressing as a normal practice and a form of creative expression that is not constrained by gender boundaries. In their view, cosplay is seen as an individual freedom to express oneself without being bound by gender norms.

From the data collected, it is evident that there are two categories, pro perspectives and con perspectives. Non-weeaboos in Japan tend to support crossdressing, while non-weeaboos in Indonesia generally reject it. This indicates that in Japan, crossdressing in cosplay has been normalized, whereas in Indonesia, such activities are still considered unusual and inconsistent with existing norms. Overall, these differing viewpoints reflect how culture, religion, and social norms can influence the acceptance of crossdressing practices, as well as highlight the importance of cultural context in understanding this phenomenon.

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