

The Transition of the "Sobis" Online Fraud Business into a Productive Business in Creating Positive Employment Opportunities in the Sidenreng Rappang Regency Community

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Abstract

The urgency of this research lies in the pressing need to understand and address the socio-economic impact of "Sobis" in Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The proposed solution is to redirect former perpetrators toward legal businesses in order to reduce cybercrime, improve welfare, create job opportunities, and strengthen the local economy. This study employs a qualitative-descriptive method, using phenomenology and case study techniques. The findings show that the transition of former online fraud perpetrators in Sidenreng Rappang Regency has brought positive impacts on economic, social, and psychological aspects. Economically, although legal income is smaller, their financial condition is now more stable, organized, and allows for savings. Socially, they are better able to adapt, leave behind a false luxurious lifestyle, and build a positive image through legal businesses. Psychologically, they experience greater peace and more stable happiness compared to their past, which was full of stress and paranoia. Awareness of legal consequences also strengthens their determination not to return to illegal activities. In short, this transition results in economic stability, social modesty, and psychological calmness.

Keywords: *Business; Online Fraud; Sobis; Productive Enterprises; Employment.*

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INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital media has further increased the opportunities for cybercrime. Perpetrators often use emotional and dramatic rhetoric to manipulate victims, exploiting the public's low digital literacy, and offering unrealistic instant benefits. (Oelrich & Siebold, 2024) (Sari et al., 2022) . Statistics show thousands of online fraud cases occur in various countries, including Indonesia and Malaysia, with a pattern that (State Security Council, 2024, n.d.) . In Kenya, online fraud is considered a negative impact of digital expansion (Kubilay, 2023) .

In Sidenreng Rappang Regency, the "Sobis" online fraud has become a serious problem. This syndicate operates in an organized manner, even reaching victims across countries (Fausiah, n.d.) . Cases of human trafficking that force victims to commit online fraud also occur, such as in Myanmar, where more than 500 Indonesian citizens were rescued from a cybercrime hub (Teresia & Sulaiman, n.d.) . Locally, various methods are used, such as fake lotteries, illegal online loans, and psychological manipulation by impersonating authorities. (Santoso & Afrita, 2024) (Han et al., 2025) . Recently, the Sidrap Police Criminal Investigation Unit arrested 11 perpetrators

under the guise of buying and selling fake motorbikes, causing victims to lose up to IDR 50 million. (TOP NEWS, 2025, tt) .

Unfortunately, the public still tends to be indifferent, and existing research focuses more on prevention than on rehabilitating former offenders. However, truly eliminating this type of crime requires a direct approach to former offenders to understand their reasons for engaging in crime and to provide education and business opportunities to help them transition to more positive activities.

This research aims to understand the socio-economic impact of "Sobis" and develop strategies for transitioning former offenders to legal businesses. It is hoped that this approach will reduce cybercrime, create new jobs, and improve community well-being.

Observations show that residents of Sidenreng Rappang Regency tend to be indifferent to online fraudsters, even looking down on them. Existing research focuses more on prevention, neglecting former perpetrators. However, eliminating this practice requires a direct approach to them to understand the reasons behind their involvement and provide education and more positive business opportunities.

The urgency of this research lies in the urgent need to understand and address the socio-economic impact of "Sobis" in Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The proposed solution involves redirecting perpetrators to legal avenues to curb cybercrime, improve welfare, create jobs, and strengthen the local economy.

Based on the description above, the following problem formulation can be made:

- What are the main factors that encourage individuals to engage in the practice of online fraud "Sobis", both from an economic, social, and digital literacy perspective?,
- What are the main reasons that cause some perpetrators to stop online fraud activities, and what challenges do they face in the process?,
- How are the experiences of former perpetrators in undergoing the transition from the world of online fraud to a more legal life?,
- What strategies can be implemented to help former online fraud perpetrators develop productive businesses and move away from cybercrime?,
- How does this transition impact the lives of former online fraud perpetrators, both from an economic, social, and psychological perspective.

METHODOLOGY

This research will be conducted in Sidenreng Rappang Regency for a maximum of 10 months, including outcome measures. The subjects will be former perpetrators of the online fraud "Sobis," with a focus on analyzing their transition from illegal activities to productive businesses. It is hoped that this research will produce outputs that will significantly contribute to job development and community economic empowerment .

This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach, using phenomenology and case study techniques. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach, namely a scientific study that examines and investigates an event experienced by an individual, a group of individuals, or a group of living beings. (Putri Aks, 2023, n.d.) An interesting incident occurred and became part of the research subject's life experience. Human experience is studied in phenomenological research through a comprehensive description of the individual being examined (Afgani, n.d.)

This study used a purposive sampling technique, namely a sample selection method based on certain criteria called primary subjects (Putri et al., n.d.) , namely

former perpetrators of online fraud "Sobis" in Sidenreng Rappang Regency who have been running a legal business for at least one year (Putri et al., n.d.) after retiring from online fraud activities. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, then tested with data triangulation before being presented systematically. The focus of the study includes factors driving involvement in "Sobis," reasons for quitting, transition challenges, productive business development strategies, and the impact of the transition in creating jobs for other former perpetrators.

Secondary data collection is obtained through internet media such as journals, books, newspapers, etc. related to research problems

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis

a. The main factors that encourage individuals to engage in the online fraud practice "Sobis" are related to economic, social aspects, and digital literacy levels.

Question: What are the main factors that encourage individuals to engage in the online fraud practice "Sobis", both from an economic, social, and digital literacy perspective?

From the results of data reduction in the form of interviews with all respondents, several important points can be provided regarding how respondents, hereinafter referred to as former online fraud perpetrators "sobis", were involved in the fraudulent practices, both from an economic, social, and digital literacy perspective?

Findings :

Respondent 1:

- ✓ The work as a "Sobis" is done only to meet the needs of life.
- ✓ In addition, another motivation is for lifestyle, such as shopping for luxury and branded goods.

Respondent 2:

The reason for doing "Sobis" work is to get money instantly without having to work hard, even though it is realized that this activity has big risks.

b. The main reasons that cause some perpetrators to stop online fraud activities are accompanied by various challenges they face in the process.

Question: What are the main reasons that cause some perpetrators to stop online fraud activities, and what challenges do they face in the process?

From the results of data reduction in the form of interviews with all respondents, several important points can be provided regarding the main reasons that cause some perpetrators to stop online fraud activities and what challenges they face in the process, some of these points include:

Findings :

Respondent 1:

- ✓ Reasons for quitting: feeling bored with the "Sobis" job, feeling guilty, and factors of age and maturity of thinking.
- ✓ Activities after quitting: starting a rental business.
- ✓ Challenges: there was a feeling of lack of confidence in blending in with society, although it was slowly showing positive changes.

Respondent 2:

- ✓ Reason for stopping: family factors, especially because he was married and did not want to support his wife and children with illicit money.

- ✓ Activities after quitting: utilizing personal potential such as hobbies and skills to earn money in a halal way.
- ✓ Challenges: initially there was a lack of self-confidence, but over time it was overcome and I got used to living a new life.

c. The experiences of former perpetrators describe how they made the transition from the world of online fraud to a more legal life.

Question: How did former perpetrators experience the transition from the world of online fraud to a more legal life?

From the results of data reduction in the form of interviews with all respondents, several important points can be provided regarding the experiences of former perpetrators who underwent the transition from the world of online fraud to a more legal life, some of which are:

Findings :

Respondent 1:

- ✓ After leaving the "Sobis" job, the feeling of worry and anxiety slowly disappeared.
- ✓ Now I have more freedom to travel and socialize without fear, even though I felt a lack of confidence when mixing with society.
- ✓ Gradually, self-confidence increases by demonstrating real changes.
- ✓ Life is more peaceful, no longer haunted by tension or fear of being targeted by law enforcement, so you are freer to carry out activities in public places such as coffee shops.

Respondent 2:

- ✓ Currently running a welding workshop business after leaving his "Sobis" job for a long time.
- ✓ Initially there was a feeling of lack of self-confidence, but over time this was overcome.
- ✓ During the transition period, significant changes were felt: life was calmer, free from the anxiety of being a fugitive from law enforcement.
- ✓ Even though the income from the new business is less than when I was a "Sobis", life feels more comfortable, peaceful, and free.

d. There are various strategies that can be implemented to help former online fraudsters develop productive businesses and stay away from cybercrime.

Question: What strategies can be implemented to help former online fraudsters develop productive businesses and move away from cybercrime?

From the results of data reduction in the form of interviews with all respondents, several important points can be provided regarding strategies that can be implemented to help former online fraud perpetrators develop productive businesses and stay away from cybercrime, some of which are:

Interview Findings

Respondent 1:

- ✓ Invite friends who are still "Sobis" actors to stop and switch to legal businesses if they have sufficient capital.
- ✓ The rental business that is being run is introduced through social media and paid advertising (sponsorship).
- ✓ Finances are more controlled with a simple lifestyle, no longer following a luxurious lifestyle.

- ✓ Be more realistic and logical in managing needs, including decisions about purchasing goods or clothing.

Respondent 2:

- ✓ Often invite friends who are still involved in "Sobis" practices to switch to more positive work.
- ✓ Admit that some friends are still stubborn and reluctant to leave the activity.
- ✓ Maintain the intention and consistency not to return to the "Sobis" job, even though the temptation remains.

e. The transition experienced by former online fraudsters has an impact on their lives, both economically, socially, and psychologically.

Question: How does this transition impact the lives of former online fraudsters, both economically, socially and psychologically?

From the results of data reduction in the form of interviews with all respondents, several important points can be provided regarding the impact of the transition on the lives of former online fraud perpetrators, both from an economic, social and psychological perspective, some of which are:

Interview Findings

Respondent 1:

- ✓ From an economic perspective, running a rental business provides a more organized financial condition and even allows for savings.
- ✓ When I was still a "Sobis", my income was indeed large but it was always spent on unimportant things, so my financial condition was very messy.
- ✓ Nowadays, finances are more controlled, no longer following a luxurious lifestyle, more realistic and logical in spending.
- ✓ Psychologically and socially, life is now simpler, more grateful, and much more peaceful than before.

Respondent 2:

- ✓ Economically, the current income is more stable and regular, in contrast to the income when he was a "Sobis" which was uncertain.
- ✓ Life now provides comfort and tranquility, even though in the past, a luxurious lifestyle was considered a source of pride.
- ✓ Psychologically, when you are still a "Sobis" you often feel paranoid, afraid of the authorities, and feel like life is full of pressure.
- ✓ After quitting, life feels more peaceful and happy with family, although sometimes the temptation to go back still arises, but it can be pushed aside by being aware of the consequences.

Discussion

a. The main factors that encourage individuals to engage in the online fraud practice "Sobis" are related to economic, social, and digital literacy aspects.

Interviews revealed that economic factors were the primary reason, both to meet basic living needs and to generate instant income. Furthermore, social factors also played a role, particularly the desire to enhance their lifestyle with luxury goods. This suggests that perpetrators' motivations were driven not only by economic constraints but also by social orientations toward prestige and lifestyle.

b. The main reasons that cause some perpetrators to stop online fraud activities are accompanied by various challenges they face in the process.

Interviews revealed that the primary reasons some perpetrators quit online fraud were influenced by internal factors, such as boredom, guilt, maturity, and family responsibilities. Furthermore, external factors, such as the drive to live a more positive and halal life, also played a significant role. Challenges generally stemmed from a lack of confidence in integrating with society, but these challenges were gradually overcome through demonstrated self-improvement and more productive endeavors.

c . The experiences of former perpetrators describe how they made the transition from the world of online fraud to a more legal life.

The transition experiences of former offenders demonstrate a marked shift from a life of stress, anxiety, and uncertainty to a more peaceful, legal, and productive existence. Challenges that arose early in the transition, such as a lack of confidence in integrating into society or adjusting to a lower income, were gradually overcome. Ultimately, former offenders experienced a sense of comfort, freedom, and peace of mind that they lacked while engaging in online fraud.

d . There are various strategies that can be implemented to help former online fraudsters develop productive businesses and stay away from cybercrime.

The strategies employed by former perpetrators to distance themselves from cybercrime encompass personal, social, and economic efforts. Personally, they strive to simplify and realistically manage their lifestyles to avoid becoming trapped in a consumerist lifestyle. Socially, they actively encourage fellow former perpetrators to abandon "Sobis" and pursue more legitimate businesses. Economically, they promote the productive businesses they have established through social media and paid advertising to expand their market reach. These strategies demonstrate a combination of lifestyle changes, personal commitment, and adaptation to legitimate business opportunities as a means of moving away from cybercrime.

e . The transition experienced by former online fraudsters has an impact on their lives, both economically, socially, and psychologically.

The impact of the transition experienced by former online fraudsters shows positive changes in various aspects of life. Economically, although their current income is lower than when they were "Sobis," it is much more stable and regular, allowing them to save and manage their finances effectively. Socially, they now live a simpler and more realistic life, and are freer to socialize without fear. Psychologically, life after leaving "Sobis" feels calmer, free from paranoia, and brings happiness to their families. These overall impacts confirm that the transition to legal life brings greater comfort, serenity, and gratitude than before.

CONCLUSION

The transition experienced by former online fraudsters has been shown to have a significant impact on their lives, both economically, socially, and psychologically. Interviews revealed that although their income from legal employment is currently relatively lower than when they were working as Sobis, their financial situation is more stable, organized, and even allows for savings. This contrasts sharply with the past, when substantial incomes tended to be quickly depleted by a consumptive lifestyle, leading to uncontrolled finances. A more realistic, simple, and logical approach to managing needs is one of the key characteristics of economic change.

Socially, former offenders are now better able to adapt to their surroundings. A life once filled with a false sense of luxury, considered a source of pride, has been replaced by a more valued simplicity. They are also more open about introducing their legitimate businesses to the public, such as rental businesses promoted through social media and paid advertising. This social life has also positively impacted their image and interactions with others, which previously tended to be overshadowed by stigma and distance due to illegal activities.

Meanwhile, from a psychological perspective, the changes experienced were quite profound. While still a Sobis perpetrator, life was full of stress, feelings of unease, and even paranoia about law enforcement. However, after transitioning to productive endeavors, they experienced a more stable sense of calm, comfort, and happiness, especially in their family life. Although the temptation to return sometimes arose, awareness of the legal consequences and past painful experiences served as a buffer against such desires. Thus, it can be concluded that this transition had an overall positive impact: economic stability, social simplicity, and greater psychological well-being.

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