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Advancing Tourism Support in Emerging Destinations: Quality of Life as a Mediator in Emotional Solidarity Dynamics

Muhammad Rachmat¹, Christy Natalia Rondonuwu²

¹Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Khairun, Indonesia

²Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Sam Ratulangi, Indonesia

Email: mrachmat@unkhair.ac.id; christy.rondonuwu@unsrat.ac.id

ABSTRACT

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This study examines the influence of emotional solidarity and quality of life on residents' support for tourism development in Ternate, Indonesia, an emerging destination with tourism infrastructure constraints, utilizing Social Exchange Theory (SET) as a theoretical framework. Data from 416 residents, collected through a carefully crafted survey, were analyzed using structural equation modeling to assess the interplay among Welcoming Nature, Emotional Closeness, Sympathetic Understanding, Quality of Life, and Support for Tourism. Findings reveal that Welcoming Nature and Emotional Closeness significantly enhance Quality of Life and tourism support, with Quality of Life partially mediating these effects. Sympathetic Understanding, however, has minimal impact due to limited resident-tourist interactions. By advancing emotional solidarity and Social Exchange Theory, this study highlights the critical role of affective factors in emerging tourism contexts. The cross-sectional design limits insights into temporal trends, necessitating longitudinal research, while comparative studies are essential to test generalizability. The study suggest that improving infrastructure and promoting community-based festivals can foster sustainable tourism by enhancing resident-tourist interactions and quality of life. Policymakers and tourism planners should prioritize community engagement to ensure equitable tourism development. This research offers a novel application of emotional solidarity and SET in an underexplored emerging destination, emphasizing the mediating role of quality of life and the limited influence of Sympathetic Understanding in contexts with constrained resident-tourist interactions.

INTRODUCTION

Ternate, an island in North Maluku, Indonesia, is gaining recognition as an emerging tourism destination, distinguished by its natural beauty, such as

Sulamadaha Beach, and historical landmarks like Fort Oranje. Yet, its tourism potential is constrained by underdeveloped tourism infrastructure, which limits equitable benefit distribution among residents (Masteriarsa & Riyanto, 2023). Sustainable destination development in such contexts requires robust community support to foster positive resident-tourist dynamics and ensure tourism aligns with resident well-being.

Social Exchange Theory suggests that residents back tourism when the benefits, like economic growth or cultural interaction, surpass drawbacks such as environmental stress (Ap, 1992). Emotional solidarity characterized as mutual understanding and community pride in host-guest interactions promotes support for tourism initiatives, even in socio-economically challenged settings (Erul & Woosnam, 2024; Joo et al., 2021). Residents' quality of life (QoL), encompassing economic, social, and environmental well-being, further strengthens this support (Lai et al., 2020). However, in emerging destinations like Ternate, where tourism infrastructural and economic barriers heighten perceived costs, the interplay between emotional solidarity and QoL in shaping resident support remains underexplored. This gap demands attention: without understanding these dynamics, Ternate may miss critical opportunities to build community-backed tourism strategies, limiting sustainable growth and resident well-being.

This study investigates how emotional solidarity and QoL shape resident support for tourism in Ternate, exploring whether QoL mediates the link between emotional solidarity and endorsement of initiatives like community events or infrastructure enhancements. Grounded in SET, it seeks to advance theoretical insights into host-guest dynamics and inform sustainable tourism strategies for Ternate and similar emerging destinations, fostering community well-being and tourism's long-term success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Exchange Theory (SET) asserts that residents support tourism when they view its advantages, such as financial benefits or social ties, as greater than its downsides, like cultural disturbance (Ap, 1992). Within SET, residents' interactions with tourists lead to a cost-benefit evaluation, shaping their attitudes and behaviors

toward tourism. Emotional solidarity, defined as empathetic bonds between residents and tourists, initiates this process by fostering positive interactions, such as cultural exchanges, which residents perceive as social benefits (Woosnam & Norman, 2009). In emerging destinations, where socio-economic constraints may heighten perceived costs, emotional solidarity mitigates tensions by building mutual understanding and community pride (Joo et al., 2021).

Quality of life (QoL), encompassing social bonds and life satisfaction, emerges as a key benefit of these interactions. Emotional solidarity enhances QoL by strengthening community ties and fostering well-being through positive tourism experiences (Helgadóttir et al., 2019; Lai et al., 2020). Within SET, QoL mediates the relationship between emotional solidarity and residents' support, channeling positive emotional bonds into favorable attitudes. Residents' support, including attitudinal endorsement (e.g., supporting tourism policies) and behavioral actions (e.g., advocating for tourism), is the final outcome in this sequence. Residents perceiving higher QoL due to emotional solidarity are more likely to support tourism, particularly in developing destinations where community engagement is vital (Erul & Woosnam, 2024).

Emotional Solidarity and Residents' Quality of Life

Emotional solidarity, a multi-dimensional construct, shapes the interactions between residents and tourists, influencing residents' quality of life (QoL) and tourism support. This concept encompasses three core dimensions, i.e. welcoming nature, emotional closeness, and sympathetic understanding (Erul & Woosnam, 2024; Woosnam, 2010, 2012; Woosnam et al., 2024). Each contributing uniquely on QoL

Welcoming nature reflects residents' hospitality and openness toward tourists. A warm, inviting attitude fosters positive tourism experiences and enhances residents' QoL. For example, Lai et al. (2020) found that residents who perceive tourism as improving their QoL exhibit stronger welcoming behaviors, creating a cycle of mutual benefit. This hospitality boosts community pride and satisfaction, as residents feel their locality is valued (Gautam & Bhalla, 2024). Consequently, a welcoming nature

strengthens residents' support for tourism development, fostering vibrant community-tourist interactions.

Emotional closeness refers to the personal bonds formed between residents and tourists. Such connections enhance social cohesion by reducing social distance and fostering a sense of belonging (Aleshinloye et al., 2019). When residents feel emotionally connected to tourists, they are more likely to engage in tourism-related activities, enriching community life (Yun & Lai, 2023). Patwardhan et al. (2019) emphasize that emotional closeness promotes community integration, encouraging residents to view tourists as partners in shared cultural experiences rather than outsiders.

Sympathetic understanding involves residents' appraisal toward tourists' experiences and emotions. This dimension creates a supportive environment, reducing potential conflicts and fostering mutual respect (Lan et al., 2021). Hasani et al. (2016) note that empathetic residents perceive tourism impacts more positively, which enhances their QoL. Furthermore, sympathetic understanding supports equitable community engagement, as residents feel a sense of justice in tourism interactions (Gautam & Bhalla, 2024). This empathy strengthens community cohesion and tourism support.

Within SET, emotional solidarity fosters positive resident-tourist interactions, such as cultural exchanges, which enhance community cohesion and residents' quality of life (QoL) (Suess et al., 2020; Woosnam & Norman, 2009). These interactions, perceived as social benefits, improve life satisfaction and social bonds, particularly in emerging destinations (Lai et al., 2020). For example, Düşmezkalender et al. (2024) found that emotional solidarity enhances perceived benefits, with Quality of Life (QoL) as a key indicator. Wang et al. (2020) found that emotional solidarity nurtures emotional well-being. Thus, hypothesis proposed:

H1a: the higher welcoming nature, the higher residents' quality of life.

H1b: the higher emotional closeness, the higher residents' quality of life.

H1c: the higher sympathetic understanding, the residents' higher quality of life.

Emotional Solidarity and Residents' Support for Tourism

Emotional solidarity shapes residents' perceptions of tourism by fostering positive interactions that align with SET's cost-benefit framework. Studies show that residents experiencing economic benefits, such as employment, or non-economic benefits, like improved infrastructure, exhibit stronger emotional bonds and greater support for tourism (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Wang & Pfister, 2008). Similarly, Song et al. (2024) and Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2010) demonstrate that emotional solidarity enhances supportive attitudes by strengthening community attachment.

Residents' hospitality toward tourists fosters a supportive attitude by creating positive interactions that enhance community pride and economic prospects. When residents warmly engage visitors, they view tourism as a valuable opportunity rather than a disruption. Asimah et al. (2023) found that such openness significantly predicts residents' support for tourism infrastructure, like visitor centers, as it aligns with their sense of goodwill.

Personal bonds between residents and tourists strengthen social cohesion, encouraging residents to endorse tourism as a shared benefit. These connections, formed through interactions like festivals, create a sense of shared identity that motivates residents to support tourism policies. Erul and Woosnam (2022) show that emotional closeness fosters mutual respect, driving residents' advocacy for tourism development.

Residents' empathy for tourists' experiences promotes a collaborative environment, enhancing support for sustainable tourism. By understanding tourists' challenges, residents are more likely to back recovery-focused initiatives that balance community and visitor needs. Joo et al. (2021) demonstrate that this empathy mitigates conflicts and supports policies like environmental preservation, though cultural barriers may hinder its development. Thus, hypotheses proposed:

H2a: the higher welcoming nature, the greater residents' support for tourism.

H2b: the higher emotional closeness, the greater residents' support for tourism.

H2c: the higher sympathetic understanding, the greater residents' support for tourism.

Quality of Life and Residents' Support for Tourism

Within SET, quality of life (QoL) mediates residents' support for tourism by reflecting perceived benefits, such as economic opportunities or social cohesion, against costs, like environmental disruption. Residents perceiving tourism as enhancing their QoL report stronger support for tourism initiatives (Cerro et al., 2017; Woo et al., 2015). For instance, Khan et al. (2021) found that QoL, improved through social and economic benefits, partially mediates the relationship between tourism impacts and residents' support. Thus, hypothesis proposed:

H3: the higher quality of life, the greater residents' support for tourism.

Mediation Role of Quality of Life

Residents' hospitality toward tourists fosters positive interactions, enhancing community pride and economic benefits, which improve quality of life. This heightened wellbeing drives support for tourism initiatives, as residents view them as valuable. Asimah et al. (2023) show that welcoming attitudes boost goodwill, likely elevating life satisfaction and thus increasing tourism advocacy.

Bonds formed through shared experiences with tourists strengthen social cohesion, enhancing residents' sense of belonging and quality of life. This improved wellbeing encourages endorsement of tourism policies. Erul and Woosnam (2022) find that emotional closeness fosters mutual respect, likely improving social wellbeing and mediating support for tourism.

Empathy for tourists' experiences promotes community resilience and harmony, improving quality of life. This enhanced wellbeing motivates residents to back sustainable tourism initiatives. Joo et al. (2021) demonstrate that empathy during crises strengthens community support, likely through improved life satisfaction, driving tourism advocacy.

Emotional solidarity enhances residents' quality of life (QoL) by fostering community attachment and positive social interactions, as shown by Suess et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2020) and Düşmezkalender et al. (2024). In turn, higher QoL drives residents' support for tourism by amplifying perceived benefits, such as economic gains or social cohesion (Khan et al., 2021; Woo et al., 2015). Within SET, QoL mediates

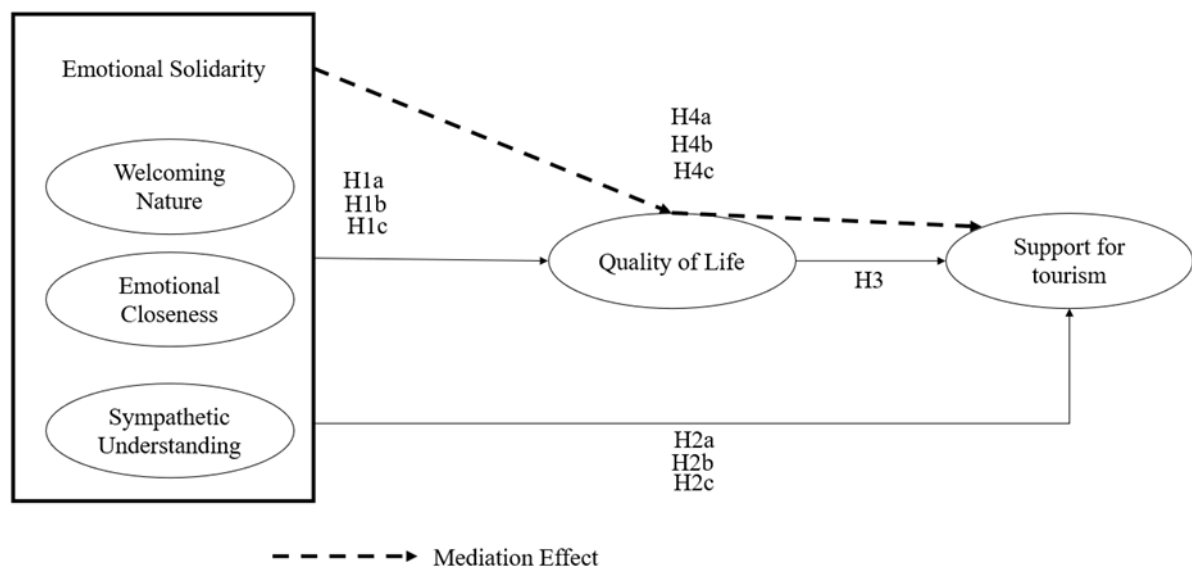
the relationship between emotional solidarity and residents' support, channeling the positive effects of emotional bonds into favorable behavior toward tourism. Thus, hypothesis proposed:

H4a: Quality of life mediates the effect of welcoming nature on residents' support for tourism.

H4b: Quality of life mediates the effect of emotional closeness on residents' support for tourism.

H4c: Quality of life mediates the effect of sympathetic understanding on residents' support for tourism.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



METHODS

Study Design

This study adopts an explanatory framework to investigate the determinants of residents' support for tourism development across six destinations in Ternate, North Maluku, Indonesia. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey design, data were analyzed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 3.3.9 (Ringle et al., 2015) to elucidate intricate relationships among constructs, notably emotional solidarity and quality of life.

Data Collection and Respondents Profile

The study population comprised residents living near five Ternate tourism destinations: Kastela (fort and beach), Jikomalamo-Sulamadaha Beach, Tobololo Beach, Taman Love, and Tolire Lagoon. Purposive sampling was used to ensure the selection of residents who can provide rich, relevant data to explore the relationships between tourism-related constructs, aligning with the study's theoretical and contextual goals. A sample of 416 residents was selected, ensuring adequate statistical power for PLS-SEM analysis, consistent with Hair et al. (2011) recommendations. Surveys were administered face-to-face to enhance response rates and ensure data quality.

The demographic profile (Table 1) of the 416 respondents is as follows: 50.2% of the sample is female. In terms of age distribution, 23.3% were aged between 25 and 35 years. Regarding educational attainment, 65.4% had completed senior high school education. A significant proportion, 67.8%, reported residing in their current location for more than 10 years. Additionally, 61.3% of respondents derived their primary income from sources unrelated to tourism. Lastly, 22.5% were employed in the private sector. These demographic characteristics provide a robust foundation for understanding the sample composition and its relevance to the study's objectives.

Table 1. Respondents Profile

		n	%
Gender	Male	207	49.8
	Female	209	50.2
Age	< 25	94	22.6
	25 - 35	97	23.3
	36 - 46	92	22.1
	47 - 57	79	19
	58 - 69	44	10.6
	70 >	10	2.4
Education	Elementary/Middle School Graduate	87	20.9
	High School Graduate	272	65.4
	College Graduate	57	13.7
Length of Residence	3 - 5 Years	39	9.4
	5 - 10 years	95	22.8
	above 10 years	282	67.8
Income	tourism-related	161	38.7

	not tourism related	255	61.3
Occupancy	Private Workers	106	22.5
	Self-Employed	91	21.9
	Students	75	18
	Retirees	21	5
	Unemployed	41	9.9
	Housewives	59	14.2
	Civil Servants	23	5.5

Source: processed data.

Measure

A meticulously crafted questionnaire, incorporating validated scales from tourism literature, was designed to measure constructs including Welcoming Nature, Emotional Closeness, and Sympathetic Understanding adapted from Wang et al. (2023), Quality of Life adapted from Woo et al. (2015), and Residents' Support for Tourism adapted from Schlesinger et al. (2024). All items were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Data were collected over three months in 2025, ensuring informed consent and confidentiality.

Common method bias

The cross-sectional study addressed potential common method bias, which could undermine the model's predictive validity (Mehmood et al., 2018). Harman's Single-Factor Test (Podsakoff et al., 2003) was applied, with all variables entered into an exploratory factor analysis. The first factor explained 39.17% of the variance, below the 50% threshold (Al-Wugayan, 2019), indicating no significant common method bias (Table 2). Thus, the study is free from notable response or methodological bias.

Table 2. Harman's Single-Factor Test

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.443	39.172	39.172	7.443	39.172	39.172
..

Source: processed data.

Data Analysis

PLS-SEM was employed to analyze the relationships among emotional solidarity (welcoming nature [WN], emotional closeness [EC], sympathetic

understanding [SU]), quality of life (QoL), and support for tourism (SFT) in Ternate, Indonesia, following established protocols (Hair et al., 2019). The measurement model confirmed robust psychometric properties, with indicator loadings ranging from 0.777 to 0.933 ($p < 0.001$), composite reliability (0.847–0.960), and average variance extracted (AVE: 0.648–0.856) exceeding thresholds, ensuring convergent validity (Table 3). Discriminant validity was verified via the HTMT criterion, ranging from 0.121 to 0.683, are all below the stringent 0.85 threshold, confirming robust discriminant validity. This indicates that each construct distinctly captures unique aspects of the model, enhancing the credibility of the structural equation modeling results (Table 4). The structural model, assessed with 5,000 bootstrap subsamples, showed good fit (SRMR = 0.054) with predictive relevance (QoL: $Q^2 = 0.106$; SFT: $Q^2 = 0.470$) (Table 5).

Table 3. Measurement Model Summary

Construct	Item	Mean	Loadings	t Statistics	Composite Reliability	AVE
Emotional Closeness	ESEC1	4.28	0.896	59.177	0.936	0.785
	ESEC2	4.29	0.896	42.822		
	ESEC3	4.29	0.900	55.171		
	ESEC4	4.24	0.851	32.424		
Welcoming Nature	ESWN1	3.83	0.779	27.899	0.893	0.676
	ESWN2	4.03	0.845	33.259		
	ESWN3	4.39	0.815	28.027		
	ESWN4	4.38	0.846	40.137		
Quality of Life	QoL1	4.10	0.791	24.038	0.847	0.648
	QoL2	4.24	0.847	42.539		
	QoL3	4.08	0.777	22.327		
Sympathetic Understanding	SU1	4.10	0.827	33.438	0.885	0.720
	SU2	3.83	0.874	44.973		
	SU3	4.00	0.844	32.985		
Support for Tourism	SfT1	4.35	0.915	69.943	0.960	0.856
	SfT2	4.33	0.933	91.308		
	SfT3	4.33	0.931	88.268		
	SfT4	4.31	0.922	84.316		

Table 4. HTMT

	EC	QoL	SFT	SU	WN
Emotional Closeness					
Quality of Life	0.244				

Support For Tourism	0.683	0.365		
Sympathetic Understanding	0.474	0.121	0.563	
Welcoming Nature	0.457	0.481	0.636	0.361

Note: WN=Welcoming Nature; EC= Emotional Closeness; SU=Sympathetic Understanding; QoL= Quality of Life; SFT= Support for Tourism

Source: processed data.

Tabel 5. Goodness of Fit

	R Square	Q ²	SRMR
QoL	0.171	0.106	
SFT	0.557	0.470	
Estimated Model			0.054

Source: processed data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study tested ten hypotheses, comprising seven direct effect hypotheses and three mediation hypotheses. Results indicate that three hypotheses were unsupported, with a detailed provided in Table 6.

Table 6. Hypotheses Test

	Hypotheses	path	t Statistic	sig	result
1a	WN → QoL	0.168	2.966	0.003	significant
1b	EC → QoL	0.326	5.488	0.000	Significant
1c	SU → QoL	-0.032	0.706	0.480	Not-significant
2a	WN → SFT	0.334	6.231	0.000	Significant
2b	EC → SFT	0.392	7.004	0.000	Significant
2c	SU → SFT	0.077	1.797	0.072	Not-significant
3	QoL → SFT	0.208	5.015	0.000	Significant
4a	WN → QoL → SFT	0.035	2.337	0.019	Significant
4b	EC → QoL → SFT	0.068	3.778	0.000	Significant
4c	SU → QoL → SFT	-0.007	0.692	0.489	Not-significant

Note: WN=Welcoming Nature; EC= Emotional Closeness; SU=Sympathetic Understanding; QoL= Quality of Life; SFT= Support for Tourism

Source: processed data.

Direct Effects on Quality of Life

Hypothesis H1a, which posited a positive effect of Welcoming Nature on Quality of Life, was supported ($\beta = 0.168$, $T = 2.966$, $p = 0.003$). This indicates that a community's welcoming attitude significantly enhances residents perceived quality of life. Hypothesis H1b, examining the effect of Emotional Closeness on Quality of Life,

was also supported, showing a stronger relationship ($\beta = 0.326$, $T = 5.488$, $p < 0.001$). This finding highlights the critical role of emotional bonds in fostering residents' well-being. In contrast, Hypothesis H1c, which tested the effect of Sympathetic Understanding on Quality of Life, was not supported ($\beta = -0.032$, $T = 0.706$, $p = 0.480$), suggesting that empathetic understanding of tourists does not significantly influence residents' quality of life.

Direct Effects on Support for Tourism

Hypothesis H2a, predicting a positive relationship between Welcoming Nature and Support for Tourism, was strongly supported ($\beta = 0.334$, $T = 6.231$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that communities with hospitable attitudes are more likely to endorse tourism initiatives. Hypothesis H2b, proposing a positive effect of Emotional Closeness on Support for Tourism, exhibited the strongest direct effect ($\beta = 0.392$, $T = 7.004$, $p < 0.001$), underscoring the pivotal role of social cohesion in driving tourism support. Hypothesis H2c, testing the effect of Sympathetic Understanding on Support for Tourism, was not significant at the conventional threshold ($\beta = 0.077$, $T = 1.797$, $p = 0.072$), indicating a weak and statistically insignificant relationship. Hypothesis H3, which posited a positive effect of Quality of Life on Support for Tourism, was supported ($\beta = 0.208$, $T = 5.015$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that higher quality of life significantly enhances residents' support for tourism.

Indirect Effects via Quality of Life

The mediating role of Quality of Life was tested in Hypotheses H4a, H4b, and H4c. Hypothesis H4a, which proposed that Quality of Life mediates the relationship between Welcoming Nature and Support for Tourism, was supported ($\beta = 0.035$, $T = 2.337$, $p = 0.019$). This suggests that a welcoming nature enhances residents' quality of life, which in turn fosters greater support for tourism. Hypothesis H4b, examining the mediating effect of Quality of Life in the relationship between Emotional Closeness and Support for Tourism, was also supported, showing a stronger indirect effect ($\beta = 0.068$, $T = 3.778$, $p < 0.001$). This reinforces the role of emotional bonds in improving well-being, which subsequently drives tourism support. However, Hypothesis H4c, testing the indirect effect of Sympathetic Understanding on Support for Tourism via

Quality of Life, was not supported ($\beta = -0.007$, $T = 0.692$, $p = 0.489$), consistent with the insignificant direct effect of Sympathetic Understanding on Quality of Life.

Discussion

This study investigates how emotional solidarity and quality of life (QoL) shape residents' support for tourism (SFT) in Ternate, an emerging tourism destination in North Maluku, Indonesia, characterized by underdeveloped tourism infrastructure and limited economic benefits. Using Social Exchange Theory (SET), we analyzed Welcoming Nature (WN), Emotional Closeness (EC), and Sympathetic Understanding (SU) to understand their influence on QoL and SFT. The findings validate key tenets of SET and emotional solidarity, reveal context-specific dynamics, and challenge conventional assumptions about resident-tourist interactions.

The significant direct effects of Welcoming Nature and Emotional Closeness on Quality of Life underscore the profound impact of affective community attributes on residents' well-being. These findings resonate with Lai et al. (2020), who demonstrated that emotional solidarity in Macau fostered residents' sense of well-being through positive social interactions. The robust effect of EC, in particular, aligns with Wang et al. (2020), who emphasized emotional well-being as a cornerstone of community cohesion in tourism contexts. In Ternate, where tourism infrastructure is underdeveloped, a welcoming community environment, as evidenced by WN, fosters cultural openness and amplifies community pride, as noted by Andriotis and Vaughan (2003) in their study of Crete. This openness encourages residents to share Ternate's natural and cultural assets, enhancing their sense of belonging despite limited economic returns from tourism. EC strengthens emotional well-being by fostering trust and solidarity among residents, which is particularly vital in Ternate, where most residents rely on non-tourism livelihoods, such as fishing or agriculture, due to the island's emerging tourism status.

In contrast, the insignificant effect of Sympathetic Understanding on QoL is a striking revelation, diverging from Woosnam and Aleshinloye (2015), who suggested that empathetic understanding fosters positive resident-tourist relationships. In Ternate, this lack of significance likely stems from limited resident-tourist interactions, constrained by underdeveloped tourism infrastructure. For instance, poor

transportation networks limit opportunities for meaningful engagement at tourism sites. Another plausible reason is that most residents' primary income sources are unrelated to tourism (see table 1), reducing the personal relevance of cognitive empathy (Yun & Lai, 2023). This finding suggests that cognitive attributes require specific conditions, such as frequent host-guest interactions, to influence well-being in emerging destinations like Ternate, highlighting the context-specific nature of emotional solidarity.

The strong direct effects of Welcoming Nature and Emotional Closeness on Support for Tourism highlight their critical roles in fostering community endorsement of tourism initiatives, such as cultural festivals or infrastructure improvements. These results align seamlessly with Social Exchange Theory, which posits that residents support tourism when they perceive tangible or intangible benefits (McGehee & Andereck, 2004). The particularly strong effect of EC corroborates Hasani et al. (2016), who found that emotional solidarity significantly predicts positive support toward tourism development. In Ternate, communities with strong interpersonal bonds, as reflected by EC, are more likely to view tourism as a collective opportunity, fostering a sense of shared purpose. For example, residents may support events like cultural festivals, which showcase Ternate's heritage and strengthen community identity. Similarly, WN encourages positive host-guest dynamics, enabling residents to take pride in sharing tourism destination with visitors.

Sympathetic Understanding, a cognitive dimension of emotional solidarity, has a statistically marginal effect on Support for Tourism. This suggests that affective dimensions, such as emotional connection, play a more significant role than cognitive ones in fostering residents' support for tourism. These results challenge Woosnam (2010) assertion that all dimensions of emotional solidarity contribute equally to resident attitudes. Instead, the limited influence of SU may stem from its cognitive nature, which likely requires specific conditions, such as frequent interactions between residents and tourists, to impact tourism support (Aleshinloye et al., 2019). Additionally, the weak effect of SU may reflect a lack of tangible benefits for residents, consistent with Social Exchange Theory (SET), which posits that support for tourism depends on perceived reciprocal advantages. In Ternate, where tourism's economic

impact is minimal due to its emerging status, residents may prioritize affective bonds over cognitive empathy. The significant direct effect of Quality of Life on Support for Tourism provides compelling evidence that residents' well-being is a linchpin for tourism advocacy. This aligns with Woo et al. (2015), who found that life satisfaction strongly predicts support for tourism development, and Liang and Hui (2016), who highlighted QoL as a driver of positive tourism attitudes in China.

The mediating role of Quality of Life in the relationships between Welcoming Nature and Emotional Closeness on Support for Tourism is a pivotal finding, illuminating a critical pathway through which community attributes translate into tourism support. These results extend Gautam and Bhalla (2024), who identified QoL as a mediator between emotional solidarity and tourism support, and Lan et al. (2021), who emphasized resident-tourist value co-creation through emotional bonds. In Ternate, WN and EC enhance residents' well-being by fostering social cohesion and community pride, which in turn encourages support for tourism initiatives, such as local markets or cultural events. For instance, residents with higher QoL are more likely to endorse projects that enhance their social or economic well-being. The insignificant indirect effect of Sympathetic Understanding through QoL aligns with its lack of direct impact, reinforcing that cognitive empathy may not be a universal driver of tourism support, particularly in contexts with limited resident-tourist engagement (Joo et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study elucidates the critical role of emotional solidarity and Quality of Life (QoL) in fostering residents' support for tourism (SFT) in Ternate, an emerging destination in North Maluku, Indonesia. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), the findings demonstrate that affective dimensions—Welcoming Nature (WN) and Emotional Closeness (EC)—significantly enhance QoL and SFT, fostering community pride and tourism advocacy. Conversely, Sympathetic Understanding (SU) has minimal impact, likely due to limited resident-tourist interactions stemming from infrastructural constraints (Yun & Lai, 2023). QoL's mediating role highlights well-being as a pivotal pathway linking emotional bonds to tourism support, offering a clear mechanism for community-driven tourism development.

Theoretical Contributions

This study advances tourism scholarship by refining the emotional solidarity framework and SET in emerging destinations. First, it reveals that affective dimensions (WN and EC) outweigh cognitive ones (SU) in driving SFT, challenging prior assumptions of equal contributions across emotional solidarity dimensions (Woosnam, 2010; Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2015). This underscores the context-specific nature of resident-tourist dynamics in settings with limited host-guest interactions. Second, it extends SET by establishing QoL as a critical mediator between emotional solidarity and SFT, enriching its application in tourism contexts (Ap, 1992; Gautam & Bhalla, 2024). Third, it provides a nuanced lens for understanding how infrastructural and economic barriers shape resident attitudes, particularly in emerging destinations where affective bonds dominate over cognitive empathy (Erul & Woosnam, 2024; Joo et al., 2021). These insights deepen theoretical understanding of host-guest dynamics, offering a robust framework for studying resident attitudes in developing tourism contexts globally.

Practical Implications

The findings offer actionable strategies for sustainable tourism in Ternate, where infrastructural and economic barriers hinder equitable benefits (Masteriarsa & Riyanto, 2023). Policymakers should prioritize infrastructure upgrades, such as improved roads and facilities, to enhance resident-tourist interactions and potentially amplify SU's impact (Aleshinloye et al., 2019). Community-based initiatives, like cultural festivals or local markets, can strengthen WN and EC, fostering social cohesion and modest economic gains (Swain & Sthapak, 2023). These strategies align with SET's emphasis on reciprocal benefits, promoting a tourism model that balances cultural preservation with equitable growth (McGehee & Andereck, 2004). Ternate's approach can serve as a blueprint for other emerging destinations, harmonizing community well-being with sustainable tourism development.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study's cross-sectional design limits causal inferences about emotional solidarity, QoL, and SFT relationships. Longitudinal research could examine how evolving infrastructure influences these dynamics over time. The sample, primarily

non-tourism-based residents, may underrepresent tourism workers' perspectives. Future studies should include diverse groups to assess whether tourism-related income enhances SU's role. Exploring additional mediators, such as perceived economic or cultural impacts, could further refine SET's application (Lai et al., 2020). Comparative studies across similar emerging destinations, such as remote regions in Indonesia or the Pacific, would enhance generalizability, informing global sustainable tourism strategies.

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