The Sexual Identity of Individual with Same-Sex Orientation: A Qualitative Study on Indonesian Gay

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ABSTRACT

The homosexual phenomenon and those issues referring to LGBTQ community still confronting a debate amongst society especially in Indonesia. The pros and cons causing some people with homosexual orientation to hide their identity. The circumstances of someone's lifetime experience are believed to be one of the factors why someone choose the same-sex orientation. This research uses a phenomenological approach with thematic analysis technique. The aim is to provide a self-concept overview of individual with same-sex orientation and also what are the factors reinforcing it. From the two respondents, we found six main themes that might influencing the formation of their sexual orientation, there are trauma, the parent-child relationship, school experience, peer influence, technology, and self-concept. Regarding their sexual identity, respondent 1 has now accepted himself as a homosexual person while respondent 2 accepts his sexual orientation right now but he believe that one day he has to change his orientation.

Keywords: self-concept, same-sex orientation,

INTRODUCTION

Sexual orientation is a sexual and emotional attraction towards other (Novita, 2021). Supratiknya divides sexual orientation into three parts (Mastuti, Winarno and Hastuti, 2012), which is:

1. Heterosexual, which is sexual attraction towards the opposite gender.
2. Bisexual, sexual attraction to both women and men at the same
3. Homosexual, also known as same-sex attraction

The sexual orientation which legitimately accepted especially in Indonesia is heterosexuality. So far, the same- sex relationship is considered prohibited and deemed to be abnormal. Although in 1973 the American Psychologist Association (APA) removed homosexuality from the second edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)[1]. Following that policy, Indonesia also eliminated homosexuality from Pedoman Penggolongan dan Diagnosis Gangguan Jiwa (PPDGJ) III in 1993 ([2], means it is no longer considered as mental disorder anymore.

For some countries like America and the Netherland same sex relationship and marriage has been accepted legitimately. While in Indonesia it is still prohibited and illegal. It is due to two reasons, first because the vast majority of Indonesian are Muslim and according to their scripture same sex relationship, changing it own sex and gender, or considering it own selves as the opposite gender is considered *haram* (prohibited). Second, according to Indonesia's law such sexual orientation has not yet been recognized and accepted as legal identity ([3]. Although in recent years there has been a growing demand for the recognition of same-sex relationships as a human right in Indonesia, but in reality those who identify themselves as LGBT

mostly still hide their identity.

Homosexuality as a part of someone's sexual identity can't be separated from their life time experience and life span development. Sometimes the contradiction between one identity and the other can cause a dilemma. As in Indonesia, someone might find it difficult to accept himself and openly telling other people that they are gay because it contradicts the religion and societal norms. According to Vivienne Cass, a psychological theorist, there are six stages of sexual identity formation stages. These stages start from identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis (feeling comfortable)[4]. As in the case of someone choosing to be a gay person, when he has reach the final stage it might be no longer any doubt that he accepts himself someone who loves same sex person and he doesn't consider it as wrong even the norms say so.

We can't say that something might be the cause of someone's sexual attraction toward the same gender. However, the previous study argued that factors such as parenting and children's relationships with parents, traumatic experiences, technology (videos and social media), and peer influence are likely affecting someone's self-concept regarding their sexual attraction [5] [6]; [7]. In addition, previous research mentions the problems faced by individuals with homosexual orientation in Indonesia, such as feeling rejected because of expressing themselves, feeling lonely, isolated, and concern ([8]. Rejection and resistance faced by gay people could potentially causing another mental health problem for them. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis regarding why someone has a same sex sexual attraction is needed. The objective of this study is to give an overview about factors affecting the self-concept of individuals who identify themselves as gay.

METHODS

This study uses a phenomenological qualitative approach to provide an understanding of how the sexual identity of gay individual is formed. Phenomenological research focuses on how individuals experience particular phenomena, so phenomenological researchers explore how individuals give meaning to an experience and how this meaning shapes group or cultural meaning ([9]. Two people were willing to participate as respondents in this study.

Tabel 1 SUBJECT SELF-CONCEPT DATA

Subject Code	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Education	Sexual Oriantation
1	21	Male	Unmarried	Bachelor Degree	Gay
2	19	Male	Unmarried	Graduating High School	Gay

Tabel 2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS STAGE

No	Phase	Description of The Process
1	Familiarizing with thedata	Transcribing data (if needed), reading and rereading data, recording initialideas
2	Generating initial code	Coding interesting features across the entire data set, and collating datarelevant to each code
3	Searching for themes	Organizing codes into potential themes, collecting all relevant data intopotential theme
4	Reviewing themes	Checking whether the themes are related to the code and overall creating a'map' thematic analysis

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5	Defining and naming each theme	Continous analysis to refine each specific theme, and the overall story mentioned in the analysis, making clear definitions and naming them on each theme
6	Making a report	Final stage of analysis, selecting quotes of interest, then conducting a final analysis of the selected quotes, relating the analysis back to the research questions and literature. Producing a scholarly report of the analysis

RESULT

Permissive, authoritative, neglecting parents, the poor quality of parent-child relationship, as well as group and social environments are factors possibly shape and reinforce

The data were collected by interviewing two respondents who are identified as gay. The two respondents gay's sexual orientation ([11]. Any kind of traumatic experience like bullying and sexual harassment are linked to sexual identity of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people ([12]. These factors form the basis of how the identity of LGBT people is formed.

1. Traumatic experience

Sexual harassment and relationship experience in any form is linked to the sexual orientation amongst the LGBT have no relationship. We were established six themes regarding the factors the might affecting their sexual identity development. The factors are parent-child relationship, peer influence, school experience, self-concept, and technology. As for the data analysis method, we use thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method used for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) in data [10] According to Braun *et al* (2008), there are six stages in the thematic analysis technique which are described as follows individuals ([13]. Both our respondents said so

"I was harassed by someone older than we when I was in 4th or 6th grade. He touched my private parts and I felt some kind of enjoyment" (S1.W1)

"When I was in elementary school, one of the boy in my class touch my private part then rubbed it with his hand. It happened while I was sleeping. I was just stay quiet because I was also curious." (S1.W1)

"…when I was in junior high school I was insinuated by female friends, seniors, she said that I'm ugly, it felt really hurt at that time. That is why I tried to avoid girls as possibly I could" (S2.W1).

"I became afraid of approaching girls, my girlfriend also hurt my heart" (S2.W2)

"He and I were both hurt by girls, maybe we were traumatized by girls" (S2.W2).

2. Technology

From the two respondents we found that accessing any information, videos and images related to homosexuality also affecting their perception about sexual orientation and sex relationship.

"…the first time (that I remember) when I was browsing some pictures,." (S1.W1)

"…I watched it on my own cellphone and I searched it myself. When I was in elementary school, there were a lot of porn videos spread all over the internet and it was easily shared." (S1.W1)

"…my friends were often watched porn" (S1.W2)

"there was a picture of a guy doing oral sex, like licking each other, I saw it and I was curious, I immediately searched with the same keywords" (S1.W2)

3. Parent-child relationship

The poor relationship quality between parent and child can also can affect their sexual identity formation.

"I do still have my mom and dad alive, but we've been through so many problems. My mother often ran away and left us, my father sometimes bring another woman to the house, he gambled. And it happened since I was a kid up until now. That is why I hate my dad" (S1.W1)

"… my father is ignorant, he never gives me affection as much as I needed, and maybe this is (having same-sex relationship) an expression of me desperately needing the love of the father" (S1.W1)

"…my siblings are not to close to our father, and so do I" (S1.W2)

"I'm closer to my mother than my father, my father is ignorant, my mother is more understanding". (S2.W1)

4. Peer influence

Our respondents said that their friend give a significant effect on their sexual identity formation.

"…. when I was in elementary school, my friends sometimes asking me to masturbate in classroom during the break time" (S1.W1)

"…then I was told to touch his private part. He pulled my hand and I touched it" (S1.W1)

"…when I was in elementary school sometimes we like to see each other's private parts, we were competing our size and touch each other's" (S1.W2)

"Back than I was quite popular in high school. Some guy approached me, then I realized I was not alone. Those guys are just like me "(S2.W1)

"My best friend and me, when we were hanging out, mostly we talked about another guys" (S2.W1)

"In my community, it is absolutely fine as long as it doesn't harm other people. And about sins, it's none of somebody else's business, is it?" (S2.W2)

5. School life

School life has a significant impact on students. It should be a place where children not only developing their academic skill but also they learn to behave appropriately. Teachers are responsible for not only to make sure the students learn about the subject but also to be a role model for their students to behave accordingly.

"my friend was sexualy abused by his teacher. He is more look like a woman. One day when he woke up, he found a sperm in his bed. I thought it was normal, and I said I would be glad if it was me" (S1.W1)

'he felt someone were shaking his private part while sleeping. He told me in the early morning. He said it was the senior. He was so mad and decided to tell the teacher, but unfortunately the teacher just laughed at

him. Fyi the teacher is also a little bit transvestite" (S1.W1)

"So I thought going to the university, and taking psychology help me growing some sort if self-awareness, self- acceptance, and self-esteem. This subject gives me some insight regarding my condition. Before I learn psychology I didn't know that my condition is absolutely norma according to DSM" (S1.W1)

"I'm pretty sure that I am not having some mental disorder. Referring to DSM V, I know that my condition is normal. So it convince me more" (S1.W2)

6. Self-concept

Self-concept is referring to how a person sees themselves. Sometimes the ideal self is not in tune with the real self.

"…I've never actually denying myself about this, so it's like okay fine. I think I can accept who I am" (S1.W1)

"…but I'm okay with this, I'm used to it. Like I don't have to describe myself with just one thing like this, but I'm like okay, I'm who I am" (S1.W1)

"…I know it's wrong in my religion,. But sometimes I deny it. Actually, there is no prohibition about having same-sex love. So I thinks it's okay to feel that way." (S1.W2).

"…he visit me at my house. He was my senior. I felt very comfortable, then I had a crush on him, and finally he ask me to date him" (S2.W1)

"At first I felt strange dating a man. But I think we have an intense feeling towards each other, so yeah we dated and it only last for 3 months" (S2.W1)

"I feel like I'm a man that one day gonna be a father. I want to have my own offspring one day. Though I haven't think about getting married right now, just enjoy the moment" (S2.W2)

"I want to repent, I don't want to be like this forever, I want to have my own offspring from, my own flesh and blood, even though it is not very good looking, at least they are offspring." (S2.W2)

DISCUSSION

Traumatic experiences can cause some negative impact on human affective, cognitive and behavioral development. In this study, we found that both respondents are experiencing traumatic sexual experience. Noviana argued that children who experienced sexual abuse will develop a poor interpersonal and social relationships, sexual dissatisfaction, excessive sexual dysfunction and incompatibility including high-risk sexual behavior [5]. S1 mentioned the first traumatic experience was done by an older man and since then he has been manifesting his sexual desire toward men. S2 had another trauma but it wasn't directly referring to sexual abuse. He had been mocked by his female friend, and since then he was afraid to have a relationship with woman.

The second factor relates to the use of technology. Technology has led to massive changes in the way people think and behave. The rapid development of information through gadgets and the internet is one of the factors that influence how an individual forms an identity as a homosexual. Pornographic content such as videos showing same-sex relationships can be easily accessed and disseminated through social media and websites. Zimmermann identifies social media as a set of online services that facilitate two-way communication and content sharing [5]. Social mediaapplication such as Grindr is one of the applications

that can accommodate or meet the needs for social interactions of gay community ([14]. In this study, social media becomes a tool for S1 and S2 to access any kind of information related to same-sex relationship. Videos and social networks related to same-sex relationships are supporting gay's identity formation.

Technology can also change people's perceptions of homosexual behavior. Public perception is the response and knowledge of the community regarding values, norms, methods and procedures, as well as a system of customs that are continuous and bound by a common identity. According to Robbins, there are three factors that influence public perception, namely the perception actor, target or object, situation [15]. In this case, technology can encourage the formation of public perceptions of homosexual orientation. The increase of community supporting the LGBT movement amongst society might change the social perception about homosexuality. In some part of the society same-sex relationship is now consider normal relationship.

In addition, the poor relationship quality between parent and children is related to someone'e sexual identity formation. The lack of interaction between children and parents, especially with the father, is one of the cause of participants becoming homosexuals [5]. Parenting not only encourages children to form their sexual orientation but parenting can also encourage their social behavior and this also determines the direction of children's behavior ([16]. Broken homes children are more likely to develop maladaptive sexual orientation ([17]. In accordance with these findings, our findings also show something similar. Participants who identified as gay explained that they experienced family disharmony, poor relationship with their father t and the physical abuse they witnessed toward their mother. Participants also realized that they needed a man, which encouraged them to fulfill their need for affection. We might say that the poor relationship and the loss of a male role model in the house can cause someone to develop a maladaptive sexual orientation [18].

Another important factors that possibly influencing someone's sexual identity is peer relation. A study found that peer influence is strongly related to the formation of homosexual behavior [19]. Another study highlighting adolescent sexual behavior also said the same thing, that peer influnece determined their sexual orientation development [20]. Peer relation can become a source of someone's behavior through imitation, even it was considered as an abnormal behavior. Our study found that peer's behavior and support are encouraging the development of gay's sexual identity. Thus, the development of someone's sexual orientation are related to the parent- child relation and also peer influence [21].

Another important factors that possibly influencing someone's sexual orientation is the school's environment. Since children are spending most of their time in school, their school experience like bullying and the way their teacher treat them become another factor relating their sexual behavior. Form the data we found, those individual that identified themselves as LGBT often faced some kind of abusive behavior from their friends and teacher in school [22]. In our study, both respondents showed that they experienced an abusive act from their teacher and friends.

Learning theory argued that human are naturally born with bisexual tendency and as they're growing up they can choose to be a heterosexual or homosexual depend on their lifetime experience ([23]. When they receive a pleasurable or positive respond over their behavior, they will likely to do that again. In the context of the formation of homosexual orientation itself, when a man gets a reward from his behavior that leads to more homosexual behavior, it tends to cause individuals to further develop this behavior [24]. In accordance with the findings in this study, participants who are men when treated comfortably with their close male friends will further strengthen their self- concept.

Learning theory also explains that pleasant experiences can cause individuals to develop a homosexual sexual orientation in the form of same-sex sexual experiences [23]. Similarly, the participants in this study had experienced same-sex sexual experiences during elementary school. The self-concept of a homosexual is strongly influenced by the environment they are in, the more society accepts them, the more positive their

self-concept is formed [25]. In these two participants, they feel comfortable with their environment and community, feeling fine with each other's feelings, these conditions support the formation of the self-concept of homosexuals.

CONCLUSION

Association (APA) removed homosexuality from the second edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). Homosexuality has become part of the identity for some people. The problem of identity formation is a complex mechanism that is not easy to understand. Sometimes the conflict between one aspect of identity and another creates a dilemma. Just like in the case of gay people, they faced a hard time to choose their sexual identity which contradict their religious identity and the societal norms.. Some of them think that being homosexual is normal and acceptable, but some others think that this must be changed. The findings of this study reveal some of the main factors that can drive a person in shaping their sexual identity, especially in gays. These factors include trauma, technology, parent-child relation, peer influence, school experience, and self-concept.

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