

Is Being Homosexual Considered Deviant? A Structural Functionalism Study (Psychoanalysis of the Gay Community in West Kalimantan)

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Abstract

Homosexuality has become a heated topic of discussion among Indonesian society. The majority of Indonesians condemn homosexuality as deviant behavior and consider it against natural law, which does not align with the moral norms of Indonesian society. Moreover, it is seen as contradicting science and religion. However, the homosexual community argues that they are simply engaging in a different sexual orientation, not deviant behavior, as they believe that sexual relations between men are perfectly normal as long as they are safe. The purpose of this article is to analyze and describe whether the gay community in West Kalimantan is considered deviant or not, based on the norms and structural functionalism of Indonesian society, particularly in West Kalimantan. The method used in this study is psychoanalytic research with a qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and literature reviews. The data collected include information, explanations, and arguments provided by selected informants. The results of the study reveal that homosexuality does not align with the norms and structural functionalism present in Indonesian society, as the majority of Indonesians adhere strictly to existing norms. Additionally, the rejection of homosexuality is linked to the rising cases of HIV/AIDS in Indonesia, and homosexuality is seen as contradicting the structural functionalism upheld by Indonesian society, which leads to homosexuality being labeled as deviant in Indonesia

Keywords: Homosexuality, deviant behavior, psychoanalysis, norms, structural functionalism

INTRODUCTION

The term homosexuality emerged in Indonesia around the 1970s, and it is now increasingly discussed among the Indonesian public (Eidhamar, 2014; Furnham & Saito, 2009). The term includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) (Han & O'Mahoney, 2014), causing LGBT groups to face condemnation and hate speech in Indonesia (Arli *et al.*, 2019), including calls for the criminalization of homosexuality (Arli *et al.*, 2019), as well as social rejection (Harbaugh & Lindsey, 2015) due to its incompatibility with Indonesia's norms (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005). This norm holds that same-sex relationships, particularly between men, are unacceptable, and the proper relationship is between a man and a woman (Baiocco *et al.*, 2014). Homosexuality is also not justified in any religion as it is considered a violation (Piumatti, 2017). Additionally, pornography laws and regional regulations reinforce the prohibition of homosexuality on the grounds of public morality (Hegarty, 2022). One of the consequences of homosexual behavior is the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV, due to same-sex relations (Hagopian *et al.*, 2017). Homosexuality is linked to the gay community (Zablotska *et al.*, 2011) and has been further reinforced by political activism around HIV/AIDS, same-sex marriage, adoption rights, and communication (Lewis *et al.*, 2015).

Various studies on homosexuality have been conducted, including in Madison, Wisconsin, focusing on homosexual rights (Seyforth & Barnes, 2016), the gay community in Ottawa, Canada (Lewis, 2012), the cultural controversy surrounding same-sex marriage in San Francisco (Teng, 2006), and the gay community in Tel Aviv (Misgav, 2016). Most studies on homosexuality have focused on homosexual identity within a heterosexual environment (Lizama, 2015), with homosexuality remaining controversial in Indonesia, a nation known for

upholding moral values due to its non-secular stance. This creates a social phenomenon in the public eye (Aryanti, 2019), and researchers in this study affirm that homosexuality is deviant because it leads to significant social consequences, including sexually transmitted diseases, moral and normative conflicts, and same-sex relationships that are not accepted by any religion. This contrasts with liberal countries where such behaviors are normalized within society. In non-secular countries like Indonesia, homosexuality, often referred to as LGBT, is widely rejected.

Research on the gay community in West Kalimantan revealed that this community asserts its existence through social media platforms such as Facebook, with a group of around 2,600 members who post vulgar photos, including one showing a naked person whose private parts are covered by a leaf (Putra, 2018). This has sparked controversy within the community, with many labeling homosexuality as deviant and incompatible with prevailing norms. However, some argue that same-sex relationships are legal and acceptable (DiGregorio, 2021), leading to societal clashes (Lewis, 2012), particularly in Indonesia, a country known for its Eastern cultural values. Some individuals even marry to conceal their homosexuality in heterosexual environments (Khanis, 2013), while pornography is used as a means of exploring same-sex erotic desires (Rothmann, 2013). Homosexuality clearly contradicts Indonesia's cultural values, which prioritize religious and moral principles (Larasati, 2018), making deviant sexual behavior something that cannot be easily accepted in the country (Putri, 2022).

Research on homosexuality is necessary as it can provide information on how homosexuality is deemed deviant, allowing society to address such issues before they become major social problems. Moreover, the findings will serve as a foundation for further studies on homosexuality within the gay community. The results will be used as a reference to help society understand that homosexuality is inherently deviant. This research focuses on homosexuality as a deviant behavior. Homosexuality disrupts social order and is often regarded as a mental disorder (Ardhiyanti & Syukaisih, 2017). However, homosexuality is increasing each year in Indonesia (Aryanti, 2019), as seen in the rise of homosexual group advertisements, which have spread to schools, campuses, and public spaces (Harahap, 2016). This trend is influenced by liberal countries that provide space and recognition for homosexual groups within society (Putri, 2022). This discrepancy between societal expectations and reality creates tension in everyday life. Durkheim's structural functional theory aligns with this, stating that social structures play a crucial role in societal continuity, and deviations from these structures disturb social equilibrium (Marzali, 2006). Therefore, homosexuality is fundamentally deviant, especially in non-secular countries like Indonesia, where it contradicts religion, morals, and daily life. If left unchecked, homosexuality can lead to unwanted consequences, such as the spread of diseases and mental health issues. The purpose of this research is to analyze the gay community in West Kalimantan to determine whether homosexuality is considered deviant, particularly in Indonesia and specifically in West Kalimantan, and whether the gay community there should be permitted or not.

METHOD

This research is a phenomenological study conducted from January to August 2022. It focuses on individuals' experiences related to homosexuality. The study involved 21 informants: 9 individuals identified as gay, 7 individuals with a heterosexual orientation, 3 religious figures, and 2 psychologists. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, with criteria that each chosen informant had undergone observation by the researcher and was

relevant to the field they are involved in. The age range of the selected informants was between 18 and 50 years.

The study involved three types of informants: 9 key informants identified as gay, 7 primary informants with heterosexual orientation, and 5 additional informants, including 3 religious figures and 2 psychologists. The research procedure included gathering information through literature reviews related to homosexuality and finding literature or information on the development of homosexual groups, particularly in West Kalimantan. The researcher then identified phenomena related to homosexuality, formulating questions on whether homosexuality could be considered deviant or not.

Following this, the researcher observed areas in West Kalimantan, particularly urban regions, and monitored developments on social media, identifying 9 individuals who self-identified as gay. To support the research, the researcher also recruited 7 individuals with heterosexual orientation, 3 religious figures, and 2 psychologists. The most suitable research method identified was psychoanalysis using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In everyday life, the term homosexuality is no longer foreign to society. It is frequently heard, especially in urban areas, where issues related to gender and sexuality are openly discussed. Despite this, society still holds a strong stigma against homosexuality, viewing it as a form of deviance that contradicts cultural, religious, and moral values (Bourchier, 2019). This stigma persists due to a deep-rooted belief that the concept of homosexuality does not align with traditional norms, where the binary gender system clearly distinguishes men as men and women as women, each having specific roles tied to their gender and biological sex (Blackwood, 2007). In other words, society, through its cultural and religious teachings, expects that men and women adhere to their conventional gender roles, which are seen as natural and non-negotiable.

Those who identify as homosexual or are identified as such by others, however, tend to have a different perspective. From their point of view, the norms surrounding gender roles are flexible, and they believe that there is nothing inherently wrong with same-sex relationships. For them, love, affection, and sexual relationships between people of the same sex are as valid and natural as those between people of different sexes. This belief is reinforced by their lived experiences and personal feelings. However, many researchers argue that this perspective overlooks the clear biological differences between men and women, and they emphasize that these differences play a significant role in shaping human behavior, including sexual orientation (Aivelo *et al.*, 2022).

From a biological standpoint, humans are influenced by two types of hormones: masculine and feminine. Masculinity is characterized by attributes, behaviors, and roles typically associated with boys and adult men, while femininity is linked to qualities such as nurturing and sensitivity, often attributed to girls and women. These hormonal differences are part of the broader biological distinction between men and women. The question then arises: how does this biological framework relate to homosexuality? It is often assumed that homosexuality must be linked to some sort of hormonal or biological imbalance. However, research has shown that while hormonal differences may influence gender expression, they do not play a significant role in determining sexual orientation. Undergoing hormone therapy or

even sex reassignment surgery does not necessarily change an individual's sexual orientation or cause homosexuality (Kuper *et al.*, 2012; van den Aardweg, 2011).

Instead, homosexuality is often influenced by a range of psychological, environmental, and social factors. Studies have shown that homosexuality can be linked to unresolved emotional issues, particularly those related to child-parent relationships. For example, a lack of a strong, healthy relationship with a parent of the same sex can contribute to the development of homosexual tendencies. Additionally, personal immaturity or emotional trauma can create anxieties and insecurities that lead individuals to seek out same-sex relationships as a form of comfort or validation (Allen & Robson, 2020; van den Aardweg, 2011). Moreover, the environment plays a critical role. A positive environment can foster healthy development, while a negative or hostile environment can push individuals towards behaviors that may not align with societal norms, including homosexuality. Research has found that LGBT individuals often lack access to supportive environments compared to their heterosexual counterparts, which further exacerbates their struggles (Peel *et al.*, 2022).

Religion adds another layer of complexity to the discussion of homosexuality. Many religious teachings, particularly in Indonesia, condemn homosexuality, viewing it as a violation of divine laws and natural order. Religious leaders often argue that homosexuality is illogical and goes against the teachings of holy texts, which emphasize the clear distinction between men and women and the roles they are supposed to play. Those who are deeply religious and identify as homosexual often face an internal struggle, torn between their faith and their sexual orientation. Even though they may strongly adhere to their religion, this does not necessarily protect them from the feelings and experiences associated with homosexuality. This is due to several factors: 1) the lower quality of care available to LGBT individuals, 2) the lack of affirmative, anti-oppressive support, 3) the presence of religious prejudice and discrimination, and 4) the efforts of religious communities to "convert" homosexuals back to heterosexuality (Westwood, 2022). As a result, many homosexual individuals live in fear, feeling unsafe and ostracized because of their sexual orientation.

An anecdote can illustrate the confusion and misunderstanding surrounding homosexuality. One evening, a young man was engrossed in his phone, playing a virtual game. His mother, noticing his focus, asked, "What are you playing? It seems fun." He replied, "I'm playing in the virtual world, Mom." To his surprise, his mother, misunderstanding the term "virtual," exclaimed, "What? You're playing with Maya? When did this happen? Repent! You're not even married!" The young man tried to explain, "Mom, Maya isn't a person; it's a game." But his mother, caught up in her misunderstanding, persisted, "Astaghfirullah, how sinful! Especially if it's someone you're not married to. Repent!" The young man was left even more confused, realizing how difficult it was to explain. He tried again, "Mom, Maya is not a girl." His mother, still misinterpreting the situation, replied, "Then Maya must be a boy or, God forbid, a transgender person! Repent, you're lost!" This anecdote highlights the lack of understanding and the misconceptions surrounding issues of gender and sexuality in many households, especially when intertwined with religious and cultural beliefs.

From this story, the phrase "repent" becomes a key theme, symbolizing the pressure society places on individuals to conform to traditional norms. The call for repentance is often seen as a way to "solve" the problem of homosexuality, as it reflects the belief that homosexuality is something that can be corrected through religious or moral intervention. Without this dialogue of repentance or without someone to initiate it, individuals who identify

as homosexual or who support homosexuality may remain stuck in their rationalization of it, unable to recognize the biological and moral distinctions between men and women. This rationalization can lead to further confusion, making it difficult for individuals to see a way out of their homosexual behavior. Without this dialogue, homosexuality remains a theoretical issue, where individuals say they will change but find it difficult due to the comfort they experience in their current lifestyle and the influence of their surroundings.

In this context, the struggle of the homosexual community, particularly in Indonesia, requires careful consideration by government policymakers. There is an urgent need to reject ideologies and beliefs that contradict moral and cultural values that have been upheld for generations. Indonesian society, with its strong emphasis on politeness, customs, and religious teachings, expects its members to adhere to these values. The government should take steps to ensure that these cultural and moral values are protected, while also addressing the complex issues surrounding homosexuality with sensitivity and fairness. Ultimately, the goal should be to uphold the values of respect, dignity, and compassion, while maintaining the integrity of the cultural and religious principles that have shaped Indonesian society for centuries.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that homosexuality remains a controversial and highly stigmatized issue in Indonesian society. The widespread belief that homosexuality contradicts traditional gender norms, religious teachings, and cultural values contributes to its classification as a form of deviance. While some individuals who identify as homosexual view their orientation as natural and acceptable, society's dominant perception, supported by religious and cultural beliefs, rejects this notion. The biological distinctions between men and women, including hormonal differences and their respective roles, are central to the societal argument against homosexuality. However, homosexuality cannot be fully explained by biological factors alone. Psychological, social, and environmental influences, such as unresolved childhood issues and a lack of positive role models, also play a significant role in shaping sexual orientation. Furthermore, the hostile environment faced by LGBT individuals, particularly in terms of inadequate support and religious condemnation, exacerbates their struggles. The call for repentance frequently arises as a proposed solution to the issue of homosexuality, reflecting society's belief that it can be corrected through moral or religious intervention. Without addressing the broader complexities surrounding sexual orientation, however, such approaches may fail to offer meaningful resolution. Therefore, the discussion underscores the importance of a balanced and compassionate response from both society and policymakers. It is crucial to address the challenges faced by the homosexual community while upholding the moral and cultural values that define Indonesian society, ensuring respect for both individual dignity and collective traditions.

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