

AN OVERVIEW OF SEXUAL IDENTITY FORMATION IN EARLY ADULT GAYS

Risma Jayanti¹, Mery Cristina Simamora² & Tika Amelia Rahmadani³

email : rismajayantipsi@gmail.com¹, merycristina88@gmail.com² & tikaameliarahmadani@gmail.com³

Faculty of Psychology

Program Study Masters of Psychology

Persada Indonesia University Y.A.I. Jakarta INDONESIA

ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe a sexual identity formation in early adulthood gay. The theoretical oriented on this research is homosexual identity formation from Vivienne Cass. This theory have six stages is identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride and synthesis identity. This research is using qualitative approach with interviews and observation methods for collect the data. There are three subjects in the research. The characteristics of the subjects is a man who has a homosexual sexual orientation who are aged 18-40 years. The results of the research show that the first subject through identity comparison, identity tolerance and identity acceptance. The second subject through identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance and identity synthesis. The third subject through identity tolerance, identity acceptance and identity pride. The all subjects had a different sexual identity formation.

Keywords: Gay, Homosexual, Sexual Identity.

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, the phenomenon of homosexuality has actually been around for quite a long time, but is now becoming increasingly widespread. Currently there are no exact figures stating how many homosexuals there are. In 2003 alone, data from BPS recorded the total population of Indonesia as 215,276 million people, this means the number of homosexuals has reached more than 2 million people, so this condition is very vulnerable for the younger generation (Mulyani in the Indonesian journal 2009). This shows that the existence of homosexuals today is not small.

Homosexuals are individuals who have a sexual orientation towards the same gender (Rosenthal, 2013). According to De Cecco (Heath, 2004), sexual orientation itself is an individual's interest in physical sexual activity, interpersonal affection, and erotic fantasies towards individuals of the same biological sex and/or the opposite sex.

Homosexuality was officially removed from the DSM (where it had previously been classified as a sexual deviation) in 1973 and is no longer considered a mental disorder (Butcher, Mineka and Hooley, 2010). In Indonesia itself, the classification and diagnosis guidelines for mental disorders, issued by the Ministry of Health in 1983 and again in 1993, state that sexual orientation (homosexual, heterosexual and bisexual) is not seen as a disorder (Hartoyo, 2010). Even though homosexuality is no longer considered a sexual deviation, until now Indonesian society still tends to give negative judgments towards them. Rita Subagio explained that according to PEW research, 93% of the Indonesian population does not agree with LGBT (Eza, 2014). According to a survey (based on income) conducted by the Indonesian Survey Circle

(LSI) in 2012, it showed that 80.6 percent of the sample population objected to having gays or lesbians as neighbors, where this figure jumped significantly from 64.7 percent in 2005 (<http://insistnet.com/survei-lsi-homophobia-meningkat/>).

Knox explained that negative attitudes by society are stronger towards gay people than lesbians (Anggraini, 2013). This is due to society's assumptions and expectations that men must marry and give children to their wives and family (Oetomo, 2001). Apart from that, the existence of gay people is more observed and visible in everyday life so that people have an increasingly negative attitude in the hope that they will disappear from social life (Bonan, 2003 & Pace, 2002 in Anggraini, 2013).

Such negative societal attitudes result in a variety of painful treatments for gay people (D'Augelli, 1990; King & McKeown, 2003; Sanua, 1999; Silenzio 2000; Terence, Bruce, & George, 2003 in Anggraini, 2013). Gay people in Indonesia face various ridicule, discrimination, and even torture by both society and the government and state officials.

Not only does society, state officials and the government tend to still reject homosexuals, but their families also tend to find it difficult to accept if one of their family members is a homosexual.

A cornering situation like this, where homosexuals always receive bad judgment and treatment from society and their families, will have a bad impact on their psychology. As minorities who are considered 'abnormal', they are unable to personally and openly express their identity to the environment and society.

Sexual identity, which is part of self-identity, is very important, especially for homosexuals. Sexual identity is how someone consciously labels their sexuality, describing their feelings about gender and sexual attraction (Telingator & Woyewodzic, 2011).

According to Santrock (1996), during the toddler years from 1.5 to 3 years, children form various kinds of ideas about what gender is. According to Kohlberg, children first identify themselves as male or female, then they behave according to their gender because appropriate behavior itself is a reward for themselves, moreover, they get approval from the environment because of their behavior (Djuaher, 2003). But things seem different for homosexuals. Because homosexuals are raised in a society that tends to have a negative view of homosexuals, they cannot learn about their identity from their environment. Their environment and family are also unable to support and mature the development of their sexual identity.

Social pressures caused by homophobia, excessive fear and hatred of homosexuals (Pharr, 1988), and heterosexism, the belief that heterosexuality is superior (Lorde, 1983), are the main sources of fear, anxiety, and rejection experienced by individuals when first realized that he had homosexual thoughts and desires. As a result of these cultural norms, the process of letting go of a heterosexual identity and accepting a gay, lesbian or bisexual identity is slow (<http://id.scribd.com/doc/41403055/an-Identitas-Gay-Lesbian-And-Bisexual>).

According to Rosario, Schrimshaw, Hunter, Braun (2006), the development of lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) sexual identity is a complex and often difficult process. According to Nevid, et al, (1993), most homosexuals have difficulty recognizing and accepting their sexual orientation (Devitasari, 2003). When they begin to understand their sexual orientation, they become anxious. On the one hand, they want to channel their desires and emotions by establishing a normal relationship with the individual they like. But on the other hand, they do

not want to violate applicable social norms. This is what can cause prolonged conflict in homosexual sexual identity. The existence of a prolonged sexual identity conflict in homosexuals (Erikson in Rice, 1999) if not treated can last a lifetime or identity confusion. According to Erikson, in early adulthood, individuals will experience a crisis or conflict between intimacy and isolation (Aiken, 1998). Researchers assume that the formation of a homosexual's sexual identity will influence his developmental tasks in going through the intimacy vs isolation phase. If an individual is still unsure about their sexual identity, it makes it difficult for the individual to gain intimacy from a partner. So the researchers chose homosexuals who were in the early adulthood age range as research subjects.

So seeing the growing phenomenon of the existence of homosexuals in Indonesia while society still tends to reject their existence can trigger ridicule, harassment, discrimination, and even violence against homosexuals. This situation makes it difficult for homosexuals to form their sexual identity. Then considering how large the negative impact will be if individuals are unable to resolve their prolonged sexual identity conflict, this is the reason for researchers that the formation of sexual identity in homosexuals is very important and interesting to study. Then, seeing that the population of gays is larger than that of lesbians and that gays are also more susceptible to receiving negative assessments from society, the researchers chose gays as the subjects of this research. So the title of this research is "An Overview of Sexual Identity Formation in Early Adult Gays". This research was conducted to obtain an overview of sexual identity formation in early gay adults.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach, in an effort to understand the formation of the subject's sexual identity in depth. The data collection method used was semi-structured interviews as the main method and observation as a complementary method.

The subjects used in this research were three people with the criteria, namely men who had a homosexual sexual orientation, were at the early adult development stage, namely aged between 18 and 40 years (Hurlock, 1980) and had a minimum educational background of high school or equivalent. Subjects were obtained through a sampling procedure based on theory, or based on operational constructs (theory based/operational construct sampling). Because subjects are selected with certain criteria based on theory or operational constructs according to previous studies, or according to research objectives (Poerwandari, 2011).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Cass (1979), there are six stages of sexual identity formation that individuals must go through to obtain an integrated 'homosexual' identity, namely identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance. (identity acceptance), pride in identity (identity pride) and unification of identity (identity synthesis). All subjects, namely M, R and S, who are in early adulthood, are experiencing different stages of sexual identity formation. M went through the stages of identity comparison, identity tolerance and is currently at the stage of identity acceptance. R went through the stages of identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance and is currently in the final stage, namely identity unification. Meanwhile, S went through the stages of identity tolerance, identity acceptance and is currently at the stage of pride in identity.

First Stage (Identity Confusion)

The subject who began forming his sexual identity at this stage was R. R began to enter this stage when he was in junior high school (SMP). The initial process of sexual identity formation

is characterized by the emergence of self-awareness and individual behavior (overt, such as kissing, or internal, such as thoughts, emotions, or physiological responses) relevant to homosexuality (Cass, 1979). R began to be able to give meaning to his behavior and feelings so that he became aware that he had same-sex attraction even though at that time he had no knowledge or information about homosexuality. According to Cass (1979), at this stage the individual experiences confusion and chaos, and raises the question "if my behavior might be called homosexual, does this mean I am a homosexual?" They see his identity as potentially homosexual. They become doubtful about it, "who am I?" This question always arises. R was wondering and wondering why he was attracted to men and felt aroused when he saw pictures of men. However, these feelings only appeared briefly in his mind so they did not make him stressed.

Second Stage (Identity Comparison)

Subject M began forming his sexual identity at this stage. This stage begins with the statement "I may be homosexual" (Cass, 1979). M began to be able to give meaning to his feelings and behavior so that he became aware that he had same-sex attraction. However, at that time M didn't dare to explore himself further so he tried not to think about it. M began to enter this stage when he was in junior high school. Meanwhile, R started to enter this stage around grade 2 of high school. At that time, R began to actively open up and look for information on homosexuality from a gay site, which made R increasingly believe that he had a same-sex sexual orientation. At this stage the individual must deal with the social exclusion that will arise (Cass, 1979). M and R experienced social isolation where M and R had to hide their sexual orientation because they were afraid that their friends would not accept them. This happened because M had a narrow view and negative values towards homosexuality so he felt he had to restrain himself. At that time M felt that what was happening inside him was strange. Meanwhile, R felt that there was inner turmoil within him because he had to hide his sexual orientation. "I am different" and "I am the only person in the world who is like this," are expressions that arise as a result of social isolation and a feeling of belonging (belonging) that does not exist from the environment (Cass, 1979). R saw his older brother paired with a girl and his older sister paired with a boy while he would later have to pair with a boy. This makes R realize that he is "different" from other people. At this stage M and R have a female girlfriend. At that time, M's feelings of attraction to women were limited to physical liking but no feelings of affection. Meanwhile, R has a female girlfriend because he follows along with his male friends to appear cool.

Third Stage (Identity Tolerance)

All subjects passed this stage. At this stage the individual will further increase his commitment to homosexuals (Cass, 1979). M began to enter this stage when he was in high school. M felt that her feelings of attraction to men were increasing so much that she began to wonder whether the man she liked also had the same sexual orientation. Then his behavior related to homosexuality also increased - fantasizing, watching gay porn films, wet dreams and masturbating. Meanwhile, R began to enter this stage when he was around 19 years old. R increasingly clearly perceives himself as a homosexual because he gets a lot of information and knowledge from gay forums. Meanwhile, S started to enter this stage around the 6th grade of elementary school. In contrast to M and R, S only started to form his sexual identity at this identity tolerance stage. At this stage, S began to be able to give meaning to his feelings and behavior because he read psychology magazines which contained a lot of information about homosexuality so that S could immediately accept what was happening to him. At that time, S began to be attracted to men sexually where there was an urge in him to touch, hold and hug

the man he liked. Behavior related to homosexuality carried out by S was fantasizing, wet dreams and masturbating.

At this stage, having a homosexual relationship is seen as “something that must be done” to combat feelings of isolation and alienation from others (Cass, 1979). M, R and S still experienced feelings of alienation because they had to hide their sexual orientation for fear of not being accepted by the environment, so M, R and S started trying to make contact with other gay people. M tried to contact other gays via social media Facebook where he added and then chatted via message. Then after graduating from high school, M started to have several gay friends. Meanwhile, R tries to contact other gays by joining as a member of a gay forum. R attended ground coffee several times held by the gay forum. Meanwhile, S, when he was in junior high school, started looking for gay friends at school and then made them his close friends. Then when he was in high school, because he felt he had no friends to chat with, S sometimes confided in his sexual orientation through newspaper columns. According to Cass (1979), the 'emotional quality' factor of relationships with other homosexuals becomes more important. This factor can have a positive or negative effect on him. Positive contact has the effect of making other homosexuals more important and profitable in his eyes. Can make him feel more 'congruent' and feelings of alienation are reduced so he feels more positive. The relationship that exists between R and S with other gay people can be said to have positive contact. While joining the gay forum, R felt that he received a lot of information that was very positive and educational for him. By joining gay forums, R feels like he has like-minded friends because he doesn't feel the need to pretend and cover himself up when he's with them. Meanwhile, S and his gay friends became close and often talked about handsome artists or talked about male friends at school who were considered to have a homosexual sexual orientation (became chatting friends).

According to Cass (1979), individuals will feel that other homosexuals can accept their behavior and image as homosexuals. Finally he realized that there were other people who could positively accept him as a homosexual. Because he wanted to explore himself and have gay friends, when he wanted to study, M chose a campus that he thought had a majority of gay students. M then got to know many gay friends who made him feel that not only he had a same-sex sexual orientation but many other people were also the same as him.

At this stage, M and R began to have a special relationship with a man, with this first girlfriend, M and R had their first experience of sexual relations. Apart from that, at this stage M and S still presented themselves as heterosexual. M dated girls but with less intensity than in middle school. Meanwhile, S has to pretend to like girls. If S's male friends are talking about girls, he will also pretend to like talking about them. Then S also had to pretend to be close to a woman (a friend of her boyfriend's boyfriend). So all of S's friends thought that he was dating his female friend. However, S is actually not dating and has no feelings of attraction to this woman. But on the other hand, this dating status actually makes S feel safe because his sexual identity will not be revealed.

At this stage, M started coming out to some of his close female friends. M felt very relieved, relaxed and more comfortable after coming out. However, at that time M reminded his friends to keep his sexual orientation a secret because he didn't want other people to know about his sexual orientation.

Fourth Stage (Identity Acceptance)

All subjects passed this stage. At this time he was more 'accepting' than 'simply tolerating' the image of himself as a homosexual (Cass, 1979). M, R and S began to accept themselves more positively. M began to enter this stage when he was studying until now. M began to accept his sexual orientation as gay after he had a broader view and more positive values towards homosexuality. This change in M's views and values towards homosexuality was obtained through personal experience and the experiences of his gay friends. M's feelings of sexual attraction to women no longer exist. Meanwhile, R began to enter this stage when he was around 20 years old. R began to accept his sexual orientation positively after he came out to his family and had gay friends. Meanwhile, S began to accept his sexual orientation more positively when he went to college. According to Cass (1979), at this stage, slowly, individuals become frequently and regularly in contact and build friendships with other homosexuals. This makes him more positive in assessing other homosexuals and considering them important in his life. M, R and S form friendships with other gays. Until now, in his daily life, M mostly makes friends with gays and women because he feels more comfortable with them. M considers his friends to be his second family because they are a place to share and tell stories. Meanwhile, R, when he wanted to go to college and had to move to Bandung, he started to increase his friendship with his gay friends in Bandung. R feels more comfortable when making friends with gay people or people who are gay friendly. Meanwhile, before S formed the LGBT organization, he already had gay friends. Individuals also selectively reveal their homosexual identity to other heterosexuals who are considered important and can be trusted to keep their secret (Cass, 1979). R only wants to reveal his sexual identity to people he thinks can understand his sexual orientation, not those who are antipathetic. Meanwhile, S also started to dare to come out to his faculty friends and tried many times to come out to his parents even though he failed. But on the other hand, M is starting to open up to society regarding his sexual identity. At this stage, S began to have special relationships with men and even had sexual contact.

Stage Five (Pride of Identity)

Currently subject S is at this stage. Individuals enter this stage with an awareness of the difference (incongruity) that exists between their self-concept as homosexual and society's rejection of this concept (Cass, 1979). The combination of anger and pride gives the individual energy into opposing actions and creates an "activist" (Cass, 1979). S began to enter this stage when he was almost 30 years old. In 2000, S received bad treatment from society when S and his friends His LGBT friend was holding an HIV/AIDS education event for LGBT people and was attacked anarchistically by an Islamic youth organization. So since then S felt that society still rejected the existence of homosexuals, so this incident made S aware of creating an organization to fight for the rights of homosexuals. Currently, S still feels that his sexual orientation is still being thwarted by society, especially groups that are considered fundamental, so S feels that he is still actively organizing to fight for his rights as a homosexual.

Stage Six (Unification of Identity)

Currently subject R is at this stage. At this stage, homosexual identity is seen as only one aspect of the self (identity), no longer as the entire identity of the individual (Cass, 1979). R views himself as the same as other people, but the only difference is his sexual orientation. R feels that even though he is gay, that doesn't mean he has to always be proud of showing his sexual identity in front of the general public. R also always tries to blend in and adapt to society. Even though R feels that society still does not accept the existence of homosexuals, he responds wisely.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, a picture was obtained that all subjects who were in the early adulthood age range experienced different stages of sexual identity formation. The first subject goes through the stages of identity comparison, identity tolerance and identity acceptance. The second subject goes through the stages of identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance and identity integration. Meanwhile, the third subject goes through the stages of identity tolerance, identity acceptance and pride in identity.

DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

There are several things that need to be discussed. Firstly, according to Cass (1979), there are six stages that an individual must go through to obtain an integrated 'homosexual' identity, namely identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, pride in identity and identity unification. However, the results of the analysis show that each subject began forming sexual identity at different stages. The second subject began forming his sexual identity at the first stage, namely identity confusion. The first and third subjects did not begin the stage of forming their sexual identity at the first stage. The first subject began forming his sexual identity at the identity comparison stage, while the third subject began forming his sexual identity at the identity tolerance stage. Then the results of the analysis also show that in the second subject, he went through the stages of sexual identity formation where after going through the identity acceptance stage, he immediately jumped to the identity integration stage. Second, researchers found that individuals can accept themselves more positively with their sexual orientation as homosexuals after they dare to come out to those closest to them and have friends who are gay and/or who can accept them. This can be seen from the results of the analysis that all subjects have gone through the identity acceptance stage. The first subject began to accept himself more positively after having a broader view and more positive values towards gays obtained from personal experiences and the experiences of his gay friends. The second subject began to accept himself more positively after coming out with his family and having gay friends. Meanwhile, the third subject felt more comfortable after coming out to his friends. This is also supported by research results from Troiden (1989), Kahn (1991) and Rhoads (1994) who reported that supportive family and friends really help the formation of a positive GLB identity and the disclosure of that identity (<http://id.scribd.com/doc/41403055/an-Gay-Lesbian-and-Bisexual-Identity>).

Thirdly, researchers found that receiving unpleasant treatment from the environment or society can be one of the factors that triggers individuals to enter the fifth stage of Cass's stages of sexual identity formation, namely the stage of pride in identity. This can be seen from the results of the analysis of the third subject, after receiving unpleasant treatment from the community when he and his LGBT friends were holding a large HIV/AIDS education event for LGBT people, they were attacked anarchistically by Islamic youth organizations, so this made the subject feel very resentful. This incident triggered the subject to create an LGBT organization to fight for the rights of homosexuals, thereby triggering him to enter a stage of pride in his identity. Until now, the formation of the third subject's sexual identity is still at that stage. Meanwhile, the first and second subjects never experienced bad treatment from society. The first subject is currently still at the stage of accepting identity. Meanwhile, after the second subject went through the identity acceptance stage, he immediately jumped to the identity unification stage without going through the pride of identity stage.

Fourth, the results of the analysis show that the formation of sexual identity is not influenced by age factors. The first subject, 21 years old, is currently at the identity acceptance stage. The

second subject, 27 years old, is currently in the final stage, namely identity integration. Meanwhile, the third subject, 40 years old, is currently at the stage of pride in identity. Fifth, at the stage of identity acceptance, individuals selectively reveal their homosexual identity to other heterosexuals who are considered important and can be trusted to keep their secret (Cass, 1979). However, the first subject began to reveal his sexual identity at the previous stage, namely the identity tolerance stage. He first revealed his sexual identity to his closest female friends.

Sixth, according to Erikson, in early adulthood, individuals will experience a crisis or conflict between intimacy and isolation (Aiken, 1998). It turns out that all subjects were able to achieve intimacy and did not indicate symptoms of isolation. The first subject gets intimacy with his friends and has a special relationship with a man even though he currently doesn't have a partner. The second subject received intimacy from his partner who currently lives with him. Meanwhile, the third subject, although he does not have a partner, is very active as an LGBT activist and he also has many friends.

For further research, researchers should prepare good interview skills and establish rapport with subjects in sufficient time and with appropriate approaches in order to obtain in-depth and realistic data. Then it is also recommended to discuss factors in the formation of sexual identity. All subjects in the formation of their sexual identity go through a phase where they have to hide their sexual identity for fear of rejection from their environment. This creates feelings of discomfort within them. Therefore, it is recommended for people who have gay family or friends not to ostracize them so that they can accept their identity more positively and complete the formation of their sexual identity. Then, since they began to realize they had homosexual tendencies, the first and second subjects had minimal or even wrong knowledge about homosexuals. In the end, all subjects in this research must try to find the correct information themselves, such as through the internet, magazines and other gay experiences. It is important to provide knowledge, especially to parents and educators who have children with homosexual sexual orientation, that there is diversity in sexual orientation, so that children with homosexual sexual orientation are not mistaken in how they view themselves.

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