

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDY ABOUT SEX AND GENDER IN HIGHER EDUCATION – ADDRESSING DISCRIMINATION TOWARDS LGBTQ YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia known as a democratic country, but there are still many cases of intolerance, one of which is a large-scale intolerance towards minorities such as LGBTQ people. Indonesia still considered as one of the homophobic countries due to religious norms and rules that limit the movement of LGBTQ people. Indonesian society still lives in a social life that upholds the value of heteronormativity in which heterosexuals are normal people and others considered as abnormal. LGBTQ discrimination also occurs to many adolescents, they do not have free space in society and are even unable to be who they really are even between family and closest friends. Education regarding gender and sexuality is necessary in Indonesian higher education institutions to be able to provide broader education to the community, especially adolescents, which in the end expected to increase public tolerance towards LGBTQ people. This study uses descriptive qualitative method by also distributing questionnaires anonymously at random to several informants. In addition, supporting data from various literatures used to support this research. The results showed that many LGBTQ adolescents felt marginalized by their family and friends. They have not been able to show their sexual orientation without being afraid to get judgement from the public.

Keywords: LGBTQ, Teenager, Study about Gender

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia known as a democratic country, but there are still many cases of intolerance, one of which is a large-scale intolerance towards minorities such as LGBTQ people. Indonesia still considered as one of the homophobic countries due to religious norms and rules that limit the movement of LGBTQ people. Indonesia's population is largely Muslim, Catholic and Christian. In general, the teachings of these religions interpreted conservatively so disagree with homosexuality and influence society's views as a whole in a negative way, even though there are a number of more religious individuals progressive and accepting. Indonesian society still lives in a social life that upholds the value of heteronormativity in which heterosexuals are normal people and others considered as abnormal.

LGBTQ discrimination also occurs to many adolescents, they do not have free space in society and are even unable to be who they really are even among their family and friends. LGBTQ group especially young people find it hard to adapt with the society especially since they are still in their age transition where they still tend to questioning everything. Their lack of knowledge about LGBTQ issues makes them tend to follow what the mainstream society thinks about this. Lack of education about sex and sexuality in the school environment generally and matters related to LGBTQ sexuality, can have a negative impact on LGBTQ youth confidence, not to mention due to lack of information and guidance from parents. There are several LGBTQ organizations and NGOs that provide resources and organizing various events to overcome this gap. Bullying (bullying accompanied by very degrading treatment) towards LGBTQ students as well be a cause for concern. Therefore, education regarding gender and sexuality is necessary in Indonesian higher education institutions to be able to provide broader education to the community, especially adolescents. providing sexuality education comprehensive, including about the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity, is needed at all

institutions of higher education. LGBTQ teenagers also underline the fact that most parents are at Indonesia does not talk or teach about sexuality to their children. Thus, LGBTQ youth try to get information through self-exploration to find out how to deal with families and communities in connection with sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBTQ organizations have tried to fill this need by providing information through publications in both print media and online, but do not know how many LGBTQ young people are they can reach. I hope that in the end with the study in gender and sexuality in higher education expected to increase public tolerance towards LGBTQ people in general.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a type of qualitative research because the results of the findings are not obtained through statistical procedures or other calculations and more require a series of words, not numbers (Bogdan & Taylor, 1992: 67). Qualitative research essentially uses natural settings, with the intention of interpreting phenomena that occur and are carried out by involving various existing methods (Williams in Moleong, 2004). Qualitative researchers also try to understand symptoms from respondents (Poerwandari, 2005), and tend to build relationships with research subjects, so they can see the world from the subject's point of view (Strauss & Corbin, 2015).

The approach used in this research is a multi-perspective approach namely phenomenology, psychological and sociological to reveal the real issue face by LGBTQ youth. The subjects in this study were four LGBTQ youth (aged 17- 30 years old) who were selected by purposive sampling, whose voting technique was not taken randomly but was chosen using predetermined criteria or characteristics, namely LGBTQ youth, Indonesian and are willing to be informants. The reason for choosing the subject with these characteristics, because it is assumed that the subjects have very complex problems, where as young people in Indonesia they often become an object of bullying, hard to come out to their family or friends because of religion views and social norm.

Data was collected by in-depth interview techniques (semi-interview) semi-structured and assisted with recording equipment, non-participation observation and document study. These three techniques are commonly used in qualitative research (Sukmadinata, 2013: 34). In this study the researcher himself was a key instrument. In order to obtain credible data, it is recorded as carefully and in detail as possible, documenting in full and neat collected data, and checking data again with researcher triangulation and method triangulation. Data analysis was carried out through data organization steps, coding and analysis, testing of expectations, and stages of interpretation. Reporting is written in descriptive narrative.

DISCUSSION

LGBTQ's issue in Indonesia

Homosexuality in Indonesia has a complex history unlike homosexuality in the west where religious attitude prevailed. Nonetheless disdain and discrimination have often been the rule understanding and compassion the exception largely undercover for decades but now the LGBTQ community is now emerging. In Indonesia, the biggest challenge for us is to come out of the closet, mainly to our families and parents. Everyone in Indonesia wants a family. When we realise we are gay, we think we have to choose between our parents and our families. You cannot have both. Either you leave your parents for your partner, or you choose your parents but have a secret love and never let your parents find out. It really hurts.

The issue faced by gay community in Indonesia especially comes first from their family. Based on my interview with one of gay Tony and Steven (not their real name); "I told my mum that Tony was great and what we really wanted was our happiness. Why we care about his or her gender? So long as he treats me well, we are happy together. I took Tony to my relatives during these ten years and everyone could see he was a good person". Tony and Steven both are business man in Jakarta (age 27 and 29) and they are already living together for several years, they cannot get married in Indonesia because of the law in Indonesia prohibited them to get one, therefore they plan to travel to America in the future to be able to get married. Even though their family starting to accept the fact that their son is gay, but the social judgement is still become their obstacles in their everyday life.

Away from the centres of urban elites, Indonesia is still deeply conservative society where conformity is valued. It takes courage to step outside the norm. LGBTQ youth who is living in rural area face more obstacles than LGBTQ youth who is living in urban city. People who living in rural area usually more strict and old fashion when it comes to LGBTQ issues. Tina and Rani (not their real name) both work in factory in Banjarmasin. Banjarmasin is a city in Borneo where majority of the people is Moslem. The women are already living openly as a couple, despite the disapproval of their families. "It's not easy for lesbian to live in this city. Banjarmasin is not a big city, and most people here still think in a very old fashioned way." "I just do what I want to do. Why should I care what other people think?" "I ignore them. They do not understand us. I don't need them to understand, because they're not loved ones". They do not know what the future will be for them, all they can think about is for both of them to married with gay man so then they can keep their relationships in secret.

In many parts of Indonesia there is a persistent belief that homosexuality is a disease that it can be cured. In Bali for example alternative healing run by Balinese priest is considerate as one of the solution where parent usually take their child for healing treatment, and one of them is to treat their homosexual children. They will perform some ritual and asking the parent to do some ceremony as symbol for cleansing their child's soul. Rama is a 20 years old student. He study in one of University in Denpasar. He never really come out to his parent but his parent suspect him to be gay since he never have any relationship with the opposite sex. "I never dare to tell my parent about my sexual orientation, I know they are full of judgemental and if they know I am gay I will be become a shame for the family. Only few of my friend know about my sexual orientation." The burden Rama feel also faced by the majority of the LGBTQ youth in Indonesia. Most of Indonesian parent won't allow their kids to be LGBTQ, but some parent already start to aware with this issue and accept the fact that their children is part of LGBTQ.

Dita is a student in University in Denpasar. She is currently 21 years old. She is just a normal kid that comes from a family with Moslem background. She was born a male but always find herself different from any other kids. She found herself more comfortable as a female and decided to come out to her parent about it. "I was aware that I am not comfortable in current state as a male when I was in Junior High School. At first I thought it just a phase that I am more comfortable wearing girl clothes and act like a girl. The more I look into it I realize that inside I am a girl. I talked and have discussion with many people before I decide to come out to my parent. They cried when I told them I want to be a girl, but by time they accept it and even help me to get through my hormone therapy and surgery." Dita is one case where their family supported with their child decision when it come to their gender and sexual orientation, but most of Indonesian family tends to reject and even kick their children out from their family.

These LGBTQ issue is only some of example that happened across Indonesia. Some are quite lucky to have some support system from their family and friends, but majority face discrimination in their life. The discrimination happened not only from their closest family and friend but also from the social pressuring the way of norms and religion value to them. A lot of LGBTQ community and activist tried to address these issue so public will be more aware and handle this issue differently and more humanly.

There are differences in community development and LGBTQ activities at the regional level, with greater challenges faced in conservative provinces due to the dominance of Islamic and Christian teachings. Organizing activities are also easier in big cities and face greater challenges in areas where the population is sparse, resulting in difficulties in terms of communication and transportation. Specifically in the province of Aceh, LGBTQ organizing activities faced great challenges because of the province's special right to establish laws based on Sharia, causing general difficulties in raising LGBTQ issues and the possibility of enacting local anti-LGBTQ laws.

Discrimination against LGBTQ individuals at work has not received significant attention. There are no anti-discrimination laws or clear policies or statements regarding LGBTQ people in the workplace. Lesbian women and gay men who are gender-conforming can avoid discrimination by keeping their behavior a secret. Most discrimination is directed at transgender groups who also experience problems with their KTPs, both in terms of their handling and because the KTPs do not include their chosen gender. These problems can have a continued

impact on the opportunity to find shelter, with transgender groups facing various challenges in finding permanent employment, identity cards and dealing with prejudice.

Lack of education about gender and sexuality in the school environment in general and issues related to LGBTQ sexuality, can adversely affect the confidence of LGBTQ youth, not to mention due to lack of information and guidance from parents. There are several LGBTQ organizations and NGOs that provide resources and organize various events to overcome this gap. Bullying (bullying accompanied by very degrading treatment) towards LGBTQ students is also a cause for concern.

The Important of Study about Sex and Gender in Higher Education

LGBTQ is not a new issue in Indonesia. LGBTQ communities had a respectable place in many different cultures in Indonesia. All this change when the politics and belief systems of Indonesian society changed. In South Sulawesi, for example we have five genders in the Bugis and Makassarese cultures. First is what we call "Uruane" as man. Second is 'Makkurai' or woman. Third is what we call "Calabai". Calabai is similar to the people we know today as waria or transgender in South Sulawesi society. The forth is "Calalai". Calalai is physically a woman with the behaviour of man character like tomboy women. Finally, someone who possesses all four elements of the genders mentioned earlier is "Bissu". These five gender categories we call Bissu, which is someone who has some elements of all four-gender categories. In their society, these five genders have equal status. There is no discrimination in our cultural context among the genders (Suliyati, 2018).

Discrimination towards LGBTQ community happened because the lack of knowledge from Indonesian people in general. Public barely exposed with this issue since the discussion considered as taboo. Even though media already talk about this issue but the debate regarding the issue is still happening.

Mass media coverage in Indonesia on LGBTQ issues is quite vary, ranging from supportive to hostile. LGBTQ activist training needed on media matters and training for media workers on LGBTQ issues, accompanied by a strategic approach to media relations. Meanwhile, LGBTQ individuals and organizations to disseminate information use information and communication technology. Despite facing several problems related to website blocking by internet service providers at the insistence of the government. This media shows the potential to encourage the development of LGBTQ communities.

The discussion regarding of these issues need to addressed from the root. LGBTQ community especially young people need to be able to have a forum where they feel safe and get a responsible information. Education institution must be able to provide this to young people. Nowadays, only several major in University that has special subject that addressing about sex and gender. While the problem keep arising the government especially in education institution needs to pay more attention and put more resources in providing a safe platform for young people to do further discussion.

Dita and Rama for example, both are student and currently study in University. When they realize they are different from the rest of their friend, they only able to relay information from the internet. Information in internet, not all is reliable. There is no platform for them to come out with their problem without being judge. They cannot rely on their parent and friends since all of them is not being educated in that matter.

LGBTQ people and activists in Indonesia are facing fierce opposition, homophobic attacks, and hate speech even launched by Indonesian authorities. There is a lot of discrimination carry out by police, who presumably to protect citizens. There are many cases where LGBTQ community in the end suffer coercion and are being denied access to justice because of their sexual orientation. Police are supposed to protect them, however in many instances they are not protected.

According to a 2013 report from Arus Pelangi, 89.3% of LGBTQ people in Indonesia have experienced violence (Erdianto: 2016). Therefore, it affect their right as part of a nation. For example, there is difficulty getting an ID card so they cannot access legal protections. Some local bylaws intentionally discriminate against them. In the 1945 Constitution, Article 18, it stated that no citizen should be discriminated for any reason. However, 'for any reason' has not been translated into policies to group with different sexual orientation and gender identities.

Nowadays only several higher education institution in Indonesia that provide subject in LGBTQ right and issues. Only several major that put subject about sex and gender in their curriculum, mostly is in social and politic science. Other than that, this kind of subject still has no place in their priority curriculum. University as higher education institution supposed to become one of the platform, a role model or a trailblazer for public to understand issues in gender, sex and especially in LGBTQ right. University supposed to involve in driving changes internally, which eventually will drive changes in the wider community.

If we want to change the view and stigma towards LGBTQ community, we can starts it from the root on how we educate public. All young people need access to information and opportunities to think about, question, and discuss issues related to relationships, gender, sexual identities, sexual orientation, sexual behaviour, sexual and reproductive health, and societal messages. There is several reason why this type of education is so necessary to apply in higher education institution:

First, Social Learning. Education is the key to the realization of deep gender justicesociety, because education is a tool for transferringthe norms of society, their knowledge and abilities.In other words, educational institutions are formal facilitiesfor socialization while transferring values and norms that are applies in society, including gender values and norms. Forfrom the outset it is necessary to strive for the realization of gender justice ineducational institutions.

Second, Safe Haven and Moral Support. Young people wants to be able to come to their parents whenever there is question regarding sexuality, gender and relationship. However, most parent usually has no confident or has no enough knowledge to answer those question. Young people tends to have high curiosity, tends to feel confused and unsure naturally. Having specific subject that discussing about sex and gender will be a big relief for those who still questioning themselves but has nowhere else to go to find the answer for their questions.

Third, Risk Prevention. The information gave during this program may help young adults to focus on information and prevention rather than focus on taking risk. Knowing about sexuality and gender is not only learning about social norm and empathy but we also learn about safe sex, relationship and what is appropriate and not.

CONCLUSION

As part of education institution, all university public and private actually has to become a role model and frontrunners in promoting social change especially when it comes to policies favouring rights of the LGBTQ community. The university nowadays needs to promote about diversity not only in context of race, colour, religion but also gender and sexual orientation. All stakeholders' needs to get involves in this agenda, not only NGO'S, private/public organization but also, local/regional/global government and in the future with this we can engage with public in general. If all these institutions work and band together hunt as a pack, we will be able to make social changes. There are so many of LGBTQ community who have to endure violence and discrimination. The road to equal rights, access to justice and acceptance by society is a long road.

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