

Youth Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Relationships and Homosexual Contents on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Living in a society that upholds religious teachings and traditional values, like Indonesia, is not easy for the youth when they must face controversies like same-sex relationships and homosexuality. This article reveals how the Indonesian youth coming from different faith traditions in Manado dan Kotamobagu, North Sulawesi, respond to same-sex relationships and homosexual content available on social media. It is based on survey data from 1,250 school students delivered online during Covid-19 in 2020. The cross-tabulation results show that most of them hold very negative attitudes toward same-sex relationships as something that has become common in society. This high negativity, however, is not found in their attitudes toward homosexual content on social media. Many of them agree not to avoid homosexual content found on social media. This discrepancy might be explained by the nature of secrecy and repression around this nonnormative sexual practice in the physical and digital world that differs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, there has been a recent increase in support for same-sex relationships - a form of sexual behavior that is considered abnormal in many cultures and traditions (Janmaat & Keating, 2017; Slenders et al., 2014). In Indonesia, since 2015, discussions about LGBT have attracted public attention, sparked by a same-sex marriage in Bali between an Indonesian and a foreign man whose photos circulated widely on social media (Fatgehipon et al., 2020).

The emergence of anti-LGBT discourse in Indonesia since 2016, therefore, cannot be separated from an incident like this. Images of LGBT were circulating on social

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media. Such circulation sparked a debate between those for and against this relationship phenomenon, which was considered non-normative. Through public discussions of the LGBT images, the perception of Indonesians, especially youth, was reported to have shifted. For those who are anti, these images caused moral panic, and for those who are pro, they gave birth to movements and political power to convey positive discourse about LGBT to the public (Hegarty, 2022; Rodriguez & Murtagh, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic and information and communication technology availability have created space for a contestation regarding LGBT issues. Anti-LGBT groups mobilized criticism and violence against LGBT groups. This violence that occurred in cyberspace had a tangible impact on the real lives of LGBT supporters and practitioners. On the other hand, this condition created a new space for LGBT supporters and actors to fight back (Wijaya, 2022). This contestation gave rise to a change in rhetorical tone from those who previously had a very harsh attitude towards LGBT groups to a softer one (Thajib, 2022).

Indonesia is not a secular or religious state. It does not withdraw religious affairs from public life and state governance. However, at the same time, it does not make a particular religion to be part of the state constitution. Its constitution, Pancasila, was created based on people's aspirations and constituted of all existing traditions and religions. It is, however, undeniable that from the outset of its establishment as a modern state, it has always been a domain of contestation by many parties involved in shaping what Indonesia should be.

Islam is the religion of most Indonesians (87%), followed by Christianity (7.5%), Catholicism (3%), Hinduism (1.7%), Buddhism (0.7%), Confucianism, and other minority groups (Kementrian Agama RI, 2024), including indigenous religions, Judaism, Ahmadiyah, and Bahaism. Islam is not the first majority religion. Before Islam, before the 13th century, Hinduism and Buddhism became the religions of the majority alongside local religions. Since time immemorial, Indonesia has been a meeting point for various religions and traditions, both local and foreign. So, Indonesian society has been very religious for a very long time. Interestingly, the issue of non-normative sexual relations became the object of controversy and persecution only later in modern Indonesia (Wieringa, 2011). For a long time, people with different gender identities have existed in Indonesian society, such as the Bugis tribe in South Sulawesi, which recognized five gender identities (Setyaningrum, 2023).

Differences in responding to same-sex relationships and homosexuality geographically, according to Smith (2011), can be explained based on the level of development and religious diversity of society. The higher the level of economic progress and the higher the level of social diversity, the higher the support for same-sex relationships. On the other hand, countries that are developed or developing and have strong religiosity and traditions have lower acceptance of same-sex relationships. In addition, young, better-educated, more secular people and residents of metropolitan cities tend to be more accepting of same-sex relationships. Furthermore, acceptance of same-sex relationships or marriage is higher in countries with regulations recognizing same-sex marriage (Aksoy et al., 2020). Finally, higher

acceptance also occurs among people who actively live as LGBTs (Ramadan et al., 2022).

However, youth in developing countries such as Indonesia now face the most serious challenges. They, because of increasingly open access to information, are increasingly connected to information and culture that supports same-sex relationships and homosexuality. On the other hand, because they live in a traditional society, they must remain firm in their traditional and religious values. Mass media often presents them with contradictory attitudes. For example, in Indonesia, some mainstream media have a negative stigma toward the practice of same-sex relationships and homosexuality, such as *Republika*. On the other hand, there are mainstream media that are supportive of such relationships in the name of human rights which must be respected, such as *Koran Tempo* (Syam et al., 2021). They must think hard to determine attitudes and choices amidst complicated differences of opinion.

This article looks specifically at how young people respond to the phenomenon of same-sex relationships, which is increasingly being discussed in public spaces recently, both in the real world and in cyberspace. This article examines how their religion and gender shape their attitudes toward the phenomenon of same-sex relationships and homosexual content that is widely circulating on social media today. Although research on youth attitudes based on religion and gender toward same-sex relationships or homosexuality has been studied quite extensively in other countries (Janmaat & Keating, 2017; S. et al., 2016), such research has not been done enough in the Indonesian context (Ridwan & Wu, 2018). Considering the many discussions in the public sphere recently about whether same-sex relationships or homosexuality should receive public recognition or not, from a social perspective, we need to examine their attitudes. Indonesia is known as a religious society and still adheres to the values of traditional gender relations. So, it is necessary to explore the extent to which existing cultural values have been negotiated and developed in line with the changes in discourse.

In Indonesia, same-sex relationships and homosexuality are two things that are widely opposed in the name of culture and religion. There are no regulations dealing with same-sex relationships and homosexuality except in cases of sexual relations with minors with a prison sentence of five years (Fatgehipon et al., 2020). People's attitudes toward same-sex relationships are generally determined by their respective religions and traditions within the family and surrounding environment. However, that does not mean that same-sex relationships and homosexuality do not occur. It happens, but in disguise. It is still something that is hidden and not discussed openly. As discussions about LGBT issues often fill public spaces, recently, various groups of actors and activists in same-sex relationships have begun to emerge. However, due to strong repression in the name of tradition and religion in the public sphere (Foucault, 1978), their presence remains under the shadow of concern so that their secrecy is maintained wherever possible (Rahmatullah & Azhar, 2018).

Religion has long been reported to have a negative impact on dealing with homosexuality and same-sex relationships. For example, Christians and Muslims,

regardless of their more conservative and authoritarian views on gender roles, have always been found to have more negative views of homosexuality. Religious people always have a higher prejudice against homosexuality than non-religious people. The higher their religiousness, the higher their tendency to have a prejudice against homosexuality (Roggemans et al., 2015).

Globally, some studies show that although all religious people tend to have negative attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex relationships, there are varying degrees among religions. Jews, Catholics, people with no religious affiliation, and non-active Christians have supportive and more tolerant attitudes toward gays and lesbians compared to Protestants (Besen & Zicklin, 2020). Attendance at religious services in houses of worship also can cause more negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians. The more often people attend religious services, other than weddings and funerals, the less tolerant they are of gays and lesbians. This effect may be caused by the negative messages often conveyed in less progressive places of worship or because most people who attend places of worship are less tolerant (Besen & Zicklin, 2020; Smith, 2011). According to Roggemans et al. (2015), two factors explain the relationship between religiousness and negative attitudes toward homosexuality, namely right-wing authoritarianism and traditional beliefs about gender.

In the Indonesian context, using political economy analysis, Wieringa (1992, 1994, 2003, 2011) underscores that the contemporary gender problems, including sexual narrative and control, in Indonesia cannot be understood without taking historical and political developments in the country, especially the presence of the New Order regime, into consideration. Under this regime, military and Islamism have been used coercively to define how women and sexuality should be, both in private and public lives. During the Reformasi era, although freedom or gender participation was encouraged, it should be in line with the state policy that Islamism and the political status quo heavily dictated. It was then translated into a state policy emphasizing gender harmony and a happy family (Wieringa, 2015). Even though homosexuality and other forms of non-normative sexual relations have not been legally prohibited, this emphasis consequently has defamed any form of sexual behavior that deviates from the traditional gender and family system.

Family education is also an essential factor that may influence people's attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex relationships. Parents who have a negative attitude toward homosexuality and same-sex relationships will shape their children's attitudes. Parents who are homophobic will have antipathy toward the practice of homosexuality and same-sex relationships. However, this influence will be more substantial if the child obeys his parents. Obedience to parents makes them internalize the traditional values of inter-gender relationships and attitudes against non-normative relationships more deeply (Ng et al., 2023). Such obedience to parents is often emphasized in Eastern religious teachings and traditions.

Studies also show that men tend to have more negative attitudes toward homosexuality than women (Besen & Zicklin, 2020; Janmaat & Keating, 2017; Roggemans et al., 2015; S. et al., 2016; Smith, 2011). Roggemans et al. (2015) explained that gender belief systems cause this difference. Gender belief systems are views and

beliefs about men and women and about the specific characteristics of men and women (Besen & Zicklin, 2020). Society has higher expectations for men to maintain their masculinity. If they step out of their masculinity, they will receive scorn from society. Therefore, with homosexuality, men feel their gender belief system is threatened (Wills & Crawford, 1999). In addition, women have more empathy than men. They care more about the welfare of others than men (Roggemans et al., 2015).

Religious teachings are a significant obstacle to the practice of same-sex relationships being considered normal (Small, 2018). Because of this, proponents of unusual same-sex relationships often must make a trade-off between same-sex relationships and religion. They sometimes have to leave their religion for the sake of freedom of sexual orientation (Wood & Conley, 2014). There are also LGBT groups that develop sub-religiousness within their religious groups. They develop a theological or religious understanding that can accommodate their freedom to choose and practice their sexual orientation, such as the *waria* community in Yogyakarta founded the Al-Falah *waria* boarding school (Toomistu, 2022). In addition, there are activist groups who are trying to advocate for the LGBT community by reinterpreting religious texts that have been considered to hinder their rights, such as *Menafsir LGBT dengan Alkitab* (Interpreting LGBT with the Bible) (Singgih, 2019), and *Memahami Keragaman Gender & Seksualitas: Sebuah Tafsir Kontekstual Islam* (Understanding Gender & Sexuality Diversity: An Islamic Contextual Interpretation) (Safri, 2020). Furthermore, various progressive Islamic activist groups support LGBT groups, such as student groups, interfaith forums, and the Gusdurian network. They had developed a human rights discourse that included recognition of the rights of people with non-normative sexual orientations. They offered alternative religious discourses to support the LGBT rights movement (Rodríguez, 2022)

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This paper uses quantitative data from a survey conducted online. It was conducted amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The respondents were those who were reached by invitation and were willing to participate in answering the survey.

Participants

The participants were grade XII high school students from ten schools in Manado and Kotamobagu. Data was collected online using Google Forms from early August to early September 2020. A letter of recommendation was obtained from the North Sulawesi Provincial Education Office and then forwarded to school principals to gain access to each school. The survey questionnaire link was distributed through the principals or accompanying teachers from each school and forwarded to the students' networks on WhatsApp groups. The questionnaire link was also shared with several people through personal networks to obtain student data. So, the sample was not obtained randomly but was conveniently targeted.

The cities of Manado and Kotamobagu were chosen as sampling locations because these two cities have different religious and ethnic compositions. Religiously, Manado and Kotamobagu have a majority of Protestant Christians and Muslims,

respectively. In terms of ethnicity, Manado is inhabited by a majority of the Minahasa ethnic group, and Kotamobagu has a majority of the Bolaang Mongondow people. Thus, it is hoped that the selection of these two cities will proportionally represent the character of the population of North Sulawesi.

Class XII students represent Indonesia's young population aged between 15 and 19. Their number is quite significant, namely around 8 percent of the total population of Indonesia (BPS, 2024). In the next few years, they will become active citizens in society. Thus, studying their attitudes can provide a general picture of young adults' attitudes in the future. They are now in the transition period between adolescence and adulthood. At this age, they can identify themselves socially and psychologically, although they are not yet as mature as adults. Because of this, they can express cultural attitudes, especially regarding same-sex relationships.

The schools chosen to be the sampling locations are the schools that have the most students. Such schools usually have students with quite diverse backgrounds compared to smaller schools.

Because the sampling was not done randomly, the religion of the research field assistant brought bias to the sample pattern in terms of distribution based on religion. Most research assistants at the school level were Muslim teachers. So, even though Manado is a city with a majority of Christians because the facilitators in the field are primarily Muslim, this has an impact on the sample pattern obtained. Field assistants have more comprehensive access to Muslim students. So, even in Manado, the number of Muslim samples captured was quite large. In addition, because survey administration is carried out online, the ability to proportionally control the delivery of survey questionnaires to potential participants is limited.

As shown in Table 1, the total number of respondents obtained was 1,250. As many as 68.70 percent were females, and the remaining 31.30 percent were males. Most of them (96.60 %) were under 18 years old. In terms of religion, Muslims are 67.90 percent, and the rest are Protestants (28.20%), Catholics (3.10 %), and Hindus (0.70 %).

Table 1. Participant Profile ($n = 1250$)

| Information | Category | n (%) |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Gender | Female | 859 (68.70) |
| | Male | 391 (31.30) |
| Age | Under 16 years old | 212 (17.00) |
| | 16 years old | 452 (36.20) |
| | 17 years old | 543 (43.40) |
| | 18 and > 18 years old | 43 (3.40) |
| Religion | Islam | 849 (67.90) |
| | Protestantism | 353 (28.20) |
| | Catholicism | 39 (3.10) |

| Information | Category | n (%) |
|----------------|------------|-------------|
| | Hinduism | 9 (0.70) |
| City of Origin | Manado | 582 (46.00) |
| | Kotamobagu | 663 (53.00) |
| | Others | 5 (0.40) |

Instrument

As shown in Table 2, the research instrument was constructed and delivered in Bahasa Indonesia to represent two constructs. Firstly, attitudes toward same-sex relationship phenomenon to see how the Indonesian youth judge the normalcy of same-sex relationships today. It is to see whether the phenomenon of same-sex relationships today has become something normal for them. Secondly, attitudes toward homosexual content on social media. It is to see how far the youth has tried to avoid such content on social media today. The two constructs were asked in the survey in two different items.

Table 2. Instrument

| Construct | Item & Scale |
|---|--|
| Attitudes toward same-sex relationship phenomenon | “Menyukai sesama jenis adalah hal lumrah saat ini” (Liking people of the same sex is commonplace today). (Strongly Disagree 1 to Strongly Agree 5) |
| Attitudes toward homosexual content on social media | “Saya menghindari konten homoseksual di media sosial” (I avoid homosexual contents on social media). (Strongly Disagree 1 to Strongly Agree 5) |

The two questions were part of the fifty-five items prepared by a research team on Youth Social References from Hasanuddin University. The team conducted a survey in different regions in Indonesia, including Manado dan Kotamobagu city, where the author was assisting the data collection.

Analysis

The data were analyzed employing a cross-tabulation technique to reveal patterns of differences and similarities in their responses to the two questions used for this article. Four cross-tabulation tables were produced to see how religion and gender shape their responses on the issue of the normalcy of same-sex relationships and on homosexual content that they may encounter on social media.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Although most youth participating in this study have very negative attitudes toward same-sex relationship behavior, they are more lenient toward online

homosexual content. The results show that, in general, most respondents have negative attitudes both toward the statement about the ubiquitousness or normalcy of same-sex relationships nowadays and toward the statement about homosexual content on social media. This result is unsurprising because the people of North Sulawesi, like Indonesians in general, as Eastern people to this day, still use religion and tradition as part of the source of values in everyday life. However, there is an interesting fact that, both in terms of religion and gender, respondents show quite significant divisions in terms of responding to homosexual content on social media. Although around 85 percent, as shown in Tables 3 and 4, expressed disagreement regarding the statement that same-sex relationships have become commonplace today, there was much less disagreement about avoiding homosexual content on social media, as seen in Tables 5 and 6. In terms of religion, less than 60 percent agreed to avoid homosexual content on social media, except among Catholic respondents - nearly 70 percent of them agreed to avoid such content. Likewise, in terms of gender, for both men and women, no more than 60 percent agreed to avoid homosexual content on social media.

Religion and Gender on Normalcy of the Same-Sex Relationship

Table 3 shows that based on religion, the majority, more than 80 respondents, stated that they disagreed with the question that liking people of the same sex is commonplace today, except for Hindu respondents - as many as 44.40 percent of them disagreed, and 33.30 percent were undecided. Of Muslim youth, only 3.50 percent agreed. The remaining 10.80 percent were undecided, 40 percent disagreed, and 45.60 percent strongly disagreed. Likewise, respondents who are Protestant and Catholic. Only 2.30 and 2.60 percent strongly agreed, the remaining 13.90 and 10.30 percent were undecided, 38 and 43.60 percent disagreed, and 45.90 and 43.60 percent strongly disagreed.

Table 3. Frequency for Religion in the Normalcy of the Same-Sex Relationship

| Religion | Liking people of the same sex is commonplace today. | | | | | Total (n=1250) |
|---------------|---|-------|-----------|------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Strongly agree | Agree | Not sure | Disagree | Strongly disagree | |
| | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | |
| Islam | 30 (3.5) | 0 | 92 (10.8) | 340 (40.0) | 387 (45.6) | 849 |
| Protestantism | 8 (2.3) | 0 | 49 (13.9) | 134 (38.0) | 162 (45.9) | 353 |
| Catholicism | 1 (2.6) | 0 | 4 (10.3) | 17 (43.6) | 17 (43.6) | 39 |
| Hinduism | 2* (22.2) | 0 | 3 (33.3) | 2 (22.2) | 2 (22.2) | 9 |

**Due to the minimal number of Hindus participating, this number should be read carefully. It does not necessarily mean that they are highly supportive.*

Regardless of the religion they adhere to, most young people who participated in this research expressed their disagreement that same-sex relationships have become commonplace today. This very high level of disagreement can be interpreted, first, that they do not yet see it commonplace to find people of the same sex in romantic relationships as gay or lesbian couples. Second, this can mean that the presence of

people of the same sex in romantic relationships cannot be considered ordinary or commonplace in everyday life. In the first meaning, they understand this statement as an attempt to show facts happening in society. Meanwhile, in the second meaning, when they understand this statement as an attempt to find out their ideological attitude toward the prevalence of same-sex relationships in society.

This finding is in line with some studies that have been conducted previously regarding the influence of religion in determining people’s attitudes toward non-normative sexual behavior. Religious people, especially monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Islam, always show an anti-attitude toward non-normative sexual practices, such as gays and lesbians. Their resistance to these practices varies according to their religiosity, authoritarianism, and the degree to which their society emphasizes traditional gender values (Besen & Zicklin, 2020; Roggemans et al., 2015).

For gender, both males and females, as seen in Table 4, equally have an anti-attitude toward the prevalence of same-sex relationships; respectively, 83.80 percent and 85.30 percent reported an attitude of disapproval toward the statement that same-sex relationships have become commonplace - a common thing in today’s life. Although females generally dominated anti-attitudes, male respondents were more dominant than females in very anti-attitudes, namely 48.30 percent compared to 44.10 percent. Only 5.60 of males and 2.20 percent of females said they strongly agreed. This means that, in terms of gender, most respondents, both males and females, have the perception that same-sex relationships have not become or should not become commonplace in everyday life today. However, young males were more intolerant to the prevalence of same-sex relationships compared to females.

Table 4. Frequency for Gender in the Normalcy of the Same-Sex Relationship

| Gender | Liking people of the same sex is commonplace today. | | | | | Total (n=1250) |
|--------|---|-------|------------|------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Strongly agree | Agree | Not sure | Disagree | Strongly disagree | |
| | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | |
| Male | 22 (5.6) | 0 | 41 (10.5) | 139 (35.5) | 189 (48.3) | 391 |
| Female | 19 (2.2) | 0 | 107 (12.5) | 354 (41.2) | 379 (44.1) | 859 |

In terms of access to homosexual content, young females are more open than males, as seen in Table 6. More females stated that they did not agree to avoid homosexual content on social media compared to males.

The average attitude of young males who are very anti toward the statement about the prevalence of same-sex relationships confirms previous studies. Previous research shows that due to the traditional gender role values where men are always expected to act out the function of masculinity, homosexuality and same-sex relationships are seen by men as a threat (Besen & Zicklin, 2020; Wills & Crawford, 1999). In addition, there is a psychological reason that women are considered a group that has higher empathy than men for the happiness of others (Roggemans et al., 2015).

Therefore, they are more tolerant in responding to non-normative sexual practices to protect the rights or feelings of other people.

Religion and Gender on the Avoidance of Homosexual Content on Social Media

Religion is assumed to cause or prevent someone from avoiding homosexual content available on social media. When compared with the very high anti-attitudes among young people of all religions toward the statement about the prevalence of same-sex relationships, Table 5 shows that religious factors do not cause very high anti-attitudes toward homosexual content, such as attitudes toward the statement about the prevalence of same-sex relationships. Although most respondents from Muslim, Protestant, and Catholic groups showed a high level of rejection of homosexual content on social media, those who agreed not to avoid this content were also relatively high. Of Muslim, Protestant, and Catholic respondents, 53.80, 54.10, and 69.20 percent, respectively, said they strongly agreed to avoid homosexual content on social media. In contrast, 41.70, 40, and 28.20 percent, respectively, disagreed with avoiding homosexual content on social media. Meanwhile, 33.30 percent of Hindus strongly agree and disagree with avoiding homosexual content on social media.

Table 5. Frequency of Religion in the Avoidance of Homosexual Content on Social Media

| Religion | I avoid homosexual content on social media. | | | | | Total (n=1250) |
|---------------|---|-------|----------|------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Strongly agree | Agree | Not sure | Disagree | Strongly disagree | |
| | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | |
| Islam | 457 (53.8) | 0 | 38 (4.5) | 318 (37.5) | 36 (4.2) | 849 |
| Protestantism | 191 (54.1) | 0 | 17 (4.8) | 135 (38.2) | 10 (2.8) | 353 |
| Catholicism | 27 (69.2) | 0 | 1 (2.6) | 10 (25.6) | 1 (2.6) | 39 |
| Hinduism | 3 (33.3) | 0 | 3 (33.3) | 3 (33.3) | 0 | 9 |

Thus, in terms of religion, most respondents strongly agreed to avoid homosexual content. However, many also disagreed with avoiding such content on social media. This kind of split attitude does not occur in responding to the statement regarding the prevalence of same-sex relationships today.

The same trend of split attitudes occurs for gender. For gender in terms of attitudes toward avoiding homosexual content on social media, the differences in acceptance or rejection are also not as sharp as their differences in terms of acceptance or rejection of the phenomenon of same-sex relationships. Although more than half, both male and female, chose to avoid homosexual content on social media, quite a number said there was no need to avoid homosexual content on social media. Among male respondents, 58.60 percent expressed very high agreement to avoid homosexual content, and 36 percent of them did not agree to avoid it. The trend was the same among female respondents; 52.30 percent of them strongly agreed to avoid homosexual content on social media, and the remaining 43.30 percent did not agree

with avoiding homosexual content on social media. Thus, young women tend to be more open to homosexual content on social media compared to men.

Table 6. Frequency for Gender in the Avoidance of Homosexual Content on Social Media

| Gender | I avoid homosexual content on social media. | | | | | Total (n=1250) |
|--------|---|-------|----------|------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Strongly agree | Agree | Not sure | Disagree | Strongly disagree | |
| | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | |
| Male | 229 (58.6) | 0 | 21 (5.4) | 126 (32.2) | 15 (3.8) | 391 |
| Female | 449 (52.3) | 0 | 38 (4.4) | 340 (39.6) | 32 (3.7) | 859 |

The difference in the level of opposition to the assertion that same-sex relationships or gay and lesbian relationships are commonplace today and opposition to homosexual content on social media is surprising. Opposition to both should proceed symmetrically because refusal to accept homosexual practices and same-sex relationships as something normal should lead to opposition to anything that can support and normalize these practices in society, such as openness to homosexual content on social media. Nevertheless, that did not happen. The young people who participated in this research showed a more lenient attitude toward homosexual content on social media, especially among young women.

This requires an explanation. First, in general, respondents may perceive the question about the prevalence of same-sex or gay and lesbian relationships today as a social fact that does not occur much in their society. They do not understand it in the sense that such practices do not need to be questioned because they are not strange and deviant acts. If they understood it in this last meaning, their response to the statement about the prevalence of the practice of same-sex relationships would be as divided as what happened to the question of whether to avoid homosexual content on social media or not. Second, it may also be because there are differences in how to respond to social facts in the real world and those in cyberspace or social media. This means that they are more unlikely to accept homosexuality as a social fact that occurs in the physical world than as a social fact that occurs in cyberspace via social media. Because of this, many of them are more open toward homosexual content available on social media compared to their acceptance of gay or lesbian relationship practices that are considered non-normative or abnormal in public culture.

Whether we use the first and second interpretations, the response of young people to the practice and content of same-sex relationships shows that this non-normative sexual behavior is still something that is hidden and kept secret from the public. They cannot accept it as usual because this non-normative behavior is still widely kept secret in the society where they live in Manado and Kotamobagu.

The author attended a discussion forum around 2018 where the problems faced by practitioners of same-sex relationships (gay or lesbian) in North Sulawesi were discussed. This event was attended by groups of LGBT actors and activists who are

partners in the struggle for their rights. According to one of the group leaders, the organization has around six thousand members who are LGBT actors. This means that, even though they are not visible in public spaces, they are a relatively large group and creep into society.

However, in cyberspace, this aspect of confidentiality becomes more lenient. Young people even though they do not accept the statement about the prevalence of the practice of same-sex relationships today, many of them do not feel the need to avoid homosexual content on social media. Perhaps they feel that access to such content via social media is nothing to worry about because they do it privately and confidentially, free from supervision and monitoring by the public.

As Foucault (1978) theorized, secrecy is a function of repression based on power. This means that people's efforts to keep secrets and hide what they do is directly proportional to how much repression is imposed on them by dominant parties. In terms of the practice of same-sex relations and homosexuality, the actors and their supporters will show their sexual practices to the public as the pressure from opponents, whether from the government, politicians, or religious figures and ordinary society, is reduced.

Thus, acceptance of non-normative sexual practices in Indonesia will grow along with the development of liberal democracy in society. The transformation of society to a liberal democracy will shift people's focus from considerations of custom and religion in making decisions to considerations of reason and human rights, including in responding to non-normative sexual practices, such as LGBT. In such conditions, customs and religion may still exist and survive. However, interpretations of sacred texts that are anti-nonnormative sexual practices will be reinterpreted by the spirit of humanist liberalism. On the other hand, if democracy does not undergo such a transformation, then attitudes against various sexual practices that have been considered non-normative based on religion and custom will remain strong. However, no matter how strong this anti-trait is, it will never eliminate the practice of same-sex relationships, which are considered non-normative by society. Being very conservative and fundamentalist in understanding religion in some countries, for example, has never eliminated such non-normative sexual practices.

Manado and Kotamobagu, the two cities where this research was conducted, represent two quite heterogeneous societies regarding religion, ethnicity, and culture. Because of this, the population, in general, has become accustomed to living side by side in diversity and peace. However, despite being heterogeneous regarding religion and ethnicity, both cities respect local religious and cultural values. Many people still attend houses of worship and other religious events. Their religious and cultural interpretations have not been open to accepting the freedom of sexual orientation outside of the pre-existing dominant interpretations. Thus, the implementation of democratic freedoms in this area is still limited by religious and cultural understandings that still tend to reject the practice of same-sex relations.

4. CONCLUSION

Most youth in this study, regardless of their religion, be they either males or females, show intolerant attitudes toward same-sex relationships. Most of them reject the presentation of this non-normative sexual behavior as something commonplace in public spaces. However, such intolerance toward this presentation is much less when it comes to the presence of homosexual content on social media. Although more than half prefer avoiding such content, a high percentage will do the opposite.

Thus, this research expands and confirms previous research conducted in various countries in different social and cultural contexts regarding, firstly, the common anti-attitudes of religious youth toward homosexuality and same-sex relationships. Secondly, it also confirms that females are more tolerant toward same-sex relationships than males. However, this research reveals that there are differences in attitudes toward homosexuality between being in the physical and the virtual world. They have a more lenient view of homosexuality in cyberspace than in the physical world. This can be explained by the theory of repression and secrecy, where the repressive attitude of dominant groups, both government and civil society, will cause non-normative acts to be hidden.

Of course, these results can only represent the youth involved in this study. Attempts to apply the conclusions to youth in general need to be done cautiously as the study sample was not randomly selected, and, more importantly, the analysis was not intended for generalization. The attitudes of youth from the two cities, Manado dan Kotamobagu, where this study was conducted, may differ from those in other cities. Therefore, research covering more cities or regions with more significant respondents in Indonesia needs to be conducted to make more comprehensive conclusions. Additionally, each religion needs to be studied to find out what is unique for each religious community regarding same-sex relations and homosexuality.

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