

# The Formation of Homosexual Behavior in South Sulawesi Province (Study on Young Homosexual in Makassar City and Bulukumba District)

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## ABSTRACT

Homosexuality is emotional, romantic, sexual and affectionate attraction to the same sex. Many factors can trigger such behavior, including the influence of the social environment, friendship, past trauma and economic problems. The objective of this study was to examine the patterns of the homosexual behavior formation in South Sulawesi. The research method used was qualitative with a phenomenological approach to explore the patterns of homosexual behavior formation in South Sulawesi using observation, in-depth interviews and documentation techniques. There were 5 research informants from Makassar City consisting of 3 young homosexuals, 1 companion as the supporting informant and 1 coordinator as the key informant. Meanwhile, there were 7 informants from Bulukumba District consisting of 4 young homosexuals, 2 companions and 1 partner. The data collected were then analyzed through domain and taxonomic analysis, while the data validity was tested through triangulation. According to the research result, it was found that there were differences on the triggers of being homosexual in Makassar City and Bulukumba District. In Makassar City, the formation of homosexuals was motivated by the influence of the social environment and the love trauma. This is because Makassar City is a city center where the activities of various professions allow the presence of promiscuity. Meanwhile, in Bulukumba District of which the educational background was lower, it was triggered by economic problems, in which people wanted to follow the current lifestyle but did not have the capital so they chose to become homosexual to get money to meet their daily needs. However, homosexuals in these two locations tend to close themselves regarding their sexual orientation in order to be accepted in the outside of their group.

**Keywords:** Young homosexuals, trauma, environment, economy

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## INTRODUCTION

Behavior is formed by the social environment where the individual grows and develops. In such social environment, there is a socialization process to learn value, norms, behavioral pattern and others in the community including its customs (Asrina, Palutturi, & Andayanie, 2018; Asrina, Palutturi, & Tenri, 2018; Tenri, Asrina, Nafii, Munafi, & Palutturi, 2019). Individuals in a community cannot be separated from the norms as the standards of behavior. Norms are binding and guide people in socializing, so that if there is a behavior that is not in accordance with the general norms in the community, it will be considered as a deviation.

According to Kartono (2014), deviation is defined as behavior that deviates from the central tendency or the average typical characteristics of most people in a population. One of the deviant behaviors in community is homosexual behavior. Homosexuals or same-sex enthusiasts, in this case men and men, have a desire for fellow men. Their existence cannot be accepted yet by the community because they are considered as a disgrace, shame and can cause disease which then leads to discrimination.

Although they are not accepted by the community, their existence cannot be denied, even recently they are no longer hiding themselves like before. Homosexuals form special communities and special online media which facilitates the communication between them. Research conducted by Gesti Lestari (2012) regarding homosexual

phenomenon revealed that the presence of homosexuals cannot be separated from their existence. Homosexuals can maintain and even increase their existence because of the strength of the in-group itself. Homosexuals have their own playgroup. Such same-sex behavior is formed due to the influence of the social environment such as past trauma and peer conformity, although some are due to a tendency to experience same-sex attraction.

Apart from being considered deviant, one of the negative effects of homosexual behavior is the spread of AIDS (*Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome*) which is caused by HIV infection (*Human Immunodeficiency Virus*) due to the loss of immunity so that a person is prone to contracting infectious diseases that lead to death (Adam, Badwi, & Palutturi, 2019; Suswani, Arsin, Amiruddin, Syafar, & Palutturi, 2018; Verma & Collumbien, 2004; White & Carr, 2005).

Homosexual is not only in the big cities but has spread to the regions (Azizah, 2013; Lestari, 2012). Likewise, the occurrence in South Sulawesi in which the number of homosexual behaviors increases even though there is no definite data on the number of same-sex enthusiasts. However, based on the data from the health office, there has been an increase in the number of transgenders, gay and male sex who suffered from HIV in Makassar City and other areas. Likewise, with the existence of homosexuals which becoming more showing themselves with the existence of sheltering communities and the existence of sexual relations practices among them.

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In addition to Makassar as the highest city with HIV/AIDS in South Sulawesi, Bulukumba is the third highest district after ParePare City. Based on the preliminary data, it was found that in addition to the existence of tourist destinations in Bulukumba District, young people behavior also tends to be at risk. Based on the preliminary information obtained from KPAD Bulukumba, there were 228 HIV/AIDS cases and those were recorded from homosexuals up to 2019. The number of homosexuals in Bulukumba is not known certainly since they hide themselves and does not have a community, but it is estimated that there are more than 100 people of them (MSM only). Although the exact number of homosexuals in Bulukumba District is not known, it is believed that there is an increase every year because there is a pattern of forming behavior as a result of relationship. The facts in the field indicate that many young homosexuals were formed due to economic problems, past trauma, friendship or emotional attraction to the same sex.

Based on this description, it is interesting to study the phenomenon of patterns of homosexual behavior formation in South Sulawesi (Studies on Men Who Have Sex with Men in Makassar City and Bulukumba District). The objective of this study was to explore the Patterns of Homosexual Behavior Formation in South Sulawesi.

### RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted through qualitative method using phenomenological approach (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Neuman, 2011) which was exploring the primary

data obtained through observation, in-depth interview, documentation and *Focus Group Discussion* (FGD). The source of the data in this research for Makassar City is the key informant who is the community leader who houses the homosexuals in Makassar City, the supporting informants who are 2 community assistants, 3 main informants who were selected purposively with the criteria of young men who have sex with men (MSM) at the age of 17-23 years old. Meanwhile, for Bulukumba District, the key informant was the Chairperson of the KPAD, 2 assistants/outreachers as the supporting informants, and 4 MSM as the main informant. The secondary data were obtained from the health offices of Makassar City and Bulukumba District. The data collected were then categorized, reduced and analyzed in the domain and interpreted in words or scientific narrative related to the pattern of homosexual behavior formation in Makassar and Bulukumba City.

### RESULT

This research was performed in March-August 2019 in two different locations, which are Makassar City and Bulukumba District. The consideration of selecting these 2 locations was that Makassar City was the center of activity and job seekers and had the highest HIV/AIDS cases, while Bulukumba was the highest HIV/AIDS district in South Sulawesi. Another consideration was based on the investigation that the two locations included the high number of homosexuals and activities related to the same-sex behavior. The total number of informants was 13 people, while the MSM was 7 people.

Table 1: The Characteristics of MSM Informants Characteristics of Makassar City and Bulukumba District

| No | Informant | Age | Education          | Occupation                                    | Address   | Information |
|----|-----------|-----|--------------------|---|-----------|-------------|
| 1  | Fr        | 23  | Senior High School | Private sector worker                         | Makassar  | IB          |
| 2  | Erw       | 20  | Senior High School | University students/<br>Private sector worker | Makassar  | IB          |
| 3  | Ir        | 19  | Senior High School | Student                                       | Makassar  | IB          |
| 4  | En        | 22  | Senior High School | Private sector worker/<br>Assistance          | Makassar  | IP          |
| 5  | AK        | 51  | S2                 | Private sector worker/<br>Coordinator         | Makassar  | IK          |
| 6  | Nr        | 23  | Junior High School | Private sector worker                         | Bulukumba | IB          |
| 7  | An        | 25  | Senior High School | Private sector worker                         | Bulukumba | IB          |
| 8  | IL        | 23  | Senior High School | Private sector worker                         | Bulukumba | IB          |
| 9  | Ui        | 19  | Senior High School | Private sector worker                         | Bulukumba | IB          |
| 10 | Aa        | 29  | D3                 | Partner                                       | Bulukumba | IP          |
| 11 | Mk        | 35  | Senior High School | Assistance                                    | Bulukumba | IP          |
| 12 | Zf        | 65  | S1                 | The head of                                   | Bulukumba | IK          |

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KPAD

Information:

IB: Supporting Informants, IK: Key Informants, IP: Supporting Informants

Based on the table, it can be described that the informants were at the age within 19-25 years old, which is the transition from late adolescence to early adulthood. At these ages, informants can make their own decisions regarding their sexual orientation. The informants' educational backgrounds varied from low level to higher education, indicating that the behavior was not necessarily linear with the knowledge they had. The varied occupations allowed the informants to have a wide association, especially since they were still in productive age. Informants who live in Makassar City and district indicate that gay behavior is no longer limited to big cities but has targeted the region.

### Homosexual Formation

Homosexual is used to describe men who have a sexual attraction or orientation towards other men. However, recently homosexual is used to describe the behavior of a person, whether male or female, who has a sexual orientation towards their same sex. Many things can trigger a person to be homosexual, for example traumatic experiences or having seen or experienced sexual violence, an imbalance in sex hormones, environmental influences and comfortable feeling when having relationships with the same sex. The social environment can affect or prevent someone from behaving sexually deviant because a good environment will make individuals behave well and vice versa. Regarding the influence of the social environment in this research, it can be explained based on the information from several male homosexual informants in Makassar City as follows:

*"I had a girlfriend until I was in Senior High School and I liked her. However, since I became a model, I used to work and socialize with males who manage clothes, make up and others. Initially I felt uncomfortable when I was touched by males but since it became so often, I eventually used to it and I forget since when I feel comfortable to have a relationship with them until now" (Fr, 23 years old).*

Fr initially became homosexual because of his association as a model. An attractive face and ideal body posture are certainly an asset in pursuing this job. Apart from getting comfortable in the job and in these relationships, Fr revealed that he did not want to take risks when dealing with women who were always jealous, especially when she got pregnant. According to Fr, men are more tolerant and can understand each other more.

Furthermore, another male homosexual revealed that:

*"I initially was not really interested with female. I had my first sexual intercourse with an adult male was when I was in senior high school of grade i. Since then I could meet my sexual needs and daily needs, moreover now there already an application of social media.... the payment can be agreeing, depends on whether there is massage, top or bot" (Ir, 19 years old)*

Different statement was given by another young homosexual as follow:

*"I initially had a boyfriend when I was at second grade of senior high school because of broken heart. My girlfriend married my neighbor while we had been in relationship for two years. Since then, I got mad and desired to stay away. I finally met a man who already have a wife and children. This person spoils and gives me attention, he likes me. Although I know that he already has a wife, but I feel comfortable (timidly)" (Erw, 20 years old).*

Although he was still a bit shy in telling us of how he started being a same-sex enthusiast, it was very clear that Erw held a grudge against women. For Erw, women only hurt and do not understand the meaning of a relationship. Information obtained in Bulukumba District regarding the triggers for the occurrence of same-sex behavior is as follows:

*"When I was graduated from junior high school, I did not have any money to continue my study to senior high school, so I worked as salon... I met men, transgender and learned of how to get my own money and help my own family until I have my own salon. Since then I like male and until now, I have a boyfriend. I do not want to be hypocrite. I am also financed because if we like someone we need to sacrifice" (Nr, 23 years old)*

NR is one of the MSM who are successful in his occupation and has permanent relationship due to mutual need and attachment. The same thing is also happened for AN and IL informants, the two MSM informants revealed that they initially financed their "girlfriends" starting from school needs to almost all of their partner's daily needs including cellphones, clothes and even motorbike payments. This was done so that the partner is bound by this same-sex relationship. However, informant Ui, who has had several relationships with men several times, was different, as follows:

*"Before, I also had a girlfriend too for a long time but then broken. Now I have been in a relationship with my current boyfriend. It just came... loving each other and always together, I live with him...if it is considered to get money, it is not really true because I also work" (Ui, 22 years old)*

Table 2: Domain and Taxonomy of Young Homosexuals (MSM) Triggers in Makassar City and Bulukumba District

| Domain Analysis    | Taxonomy Analysis  |             |                |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Location: Makassar | Social Environment | Occupation  | Model          |
|                    |                    | Male Dorm   | Designer       |
|                    |                    | Situational | Mates/ Make up |
|                    |                    |             | MSM boyfriend  |

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|                               |                    |  |  |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--|--|
| <b>Bulukumba</b>              | Trauma / emotional | Broken heart<br>Betrayed<br>Angry<br>Revenge   | Ex-boyfriend   |
|                               | Motive             | Comfortable<br>Lifestyle<br>Poverty            | MSM partner<br>Supported by the MSM couple to meet the life need |
|                               | Biological         | Innate   | Attracted to the same sex  |
|                               | Tarif              | Expensive                                      | Plus, massage as Top<br>Booking<br>Rent room                     |
| <b>Makassar and Bulukumba</b> |                    | Cheap  | Bot only<br>According to the agreement                           |
|                               | Education Level    | PT<br>Senior High School<br>Junior High School |  |
| <b>Makassar and Bulukumba</b> | Social Class       | Low<br>Medium                                  |  |

**DISCUSSION**

Community has its own views about homosexuals, so that it becomes a special concern. It is considered to be a deviation in social norms because homosexual offenders are considered not meeting the standard values and norms that apply in community as heterosexual adherents, so that they conflict with the standard of values understood. Ratri, E.M, et al (2012) revealed that community is more accepting someone with heterosexual condition. The problem faced by gays in Indonesia is regarding the existence of gays who is still considered as strange to be accepted in the common environment. This can be seen from the fact that some people see gay people as a symbol of abomination, a shame that humiliates the family. Gay people continue to fight for their self-existence and against the existing social discrimination.

Homosexual behavior does not only happen but goes through a formation process that affects a person's sexual orientation, which is same-sex enthusiasts. In this research, the context is relationship between men which occur in Makassar City and Bulukumba District.

In Makassar City, many factors can cause this behavior, including internal and external environmental factors. The process of forming sexual identity begins at home, resulting in a socialization process. A child who is accustomed to being spoiled by his mother will be feminine especially if he has an authoritarian father. The next socialization process occurs in the social environment that supports homosexual behavior.

Based on this study, it was found that the formation of homosexuals in young men occurred due to several things, including the environment. Behavior is not innate but is the formation and upbringing of the people around him. Such homosexuals, the environment is an object of adaptation of various behaviors that sometimes force individuals to imitate and identify themselves, especially when it is perceived as challenging so that there is a desire to conquer it. Young homosexuals in this study are in the self-seeking stage, so they always respond to the

stimuli they feel without thinking about the positive or negative effects of the environmental influence. An adventurous spirit at the age of 17-23 years old becomes the trigger to try new things in order to be accepted in their new environment.

Arifin (2016) revealed that in a sociological point of view, how a person can play a deviant social role is closely related to the socialization he gets in the community system where he is. As explained above, family and social environment will greatly affect the formation of an individual's social role, this is because the family and the social environment are one of the support systems of community where an individual has a high intensity of interaction. In the context as a form of social deviation, gay people initially get socialization to be homosexual from their environment and family.

Since the behavior is the result of learning, observation, and identification thus a positive self-concept of homosexuality is formed and accepted as a normal behavior (Thaha & Palutturi, 2019). Self-acceptance is self-esteem, in this case is self-respect towards homosexual as a human being who has a place or acceptance in their social environment. This appreciation will affect in the interaction with other people, which is why homosexuals do not feel that their behavior is deviant because people in their social environment behave the same, who judge good or bad and consider homosexual deviant behavior are people outside the group or outside the heterosexual group.

The influence of the environment in the interaction process is supported by the interactionist assumptions from Herbert Blumer's theory regarding symbolic interaction. This theory states that a person's response is not made directly to other actions but is based on the meanings given to the actions of others. Interactions between individuals are bridged by the use of symbols, interpretations or trying to mutually understand the meaning of each individual's actions (Goodman, 2010).

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Regarding the symbolic interaction, Goffman furthermore in his dramaturgy assumes that during interaction, individuals want to display self-feelings that can be accepted by others, so that individuals need to adjust by controlling elements that can interfere. The relationship with the current research is that young homosexuals will display or open themselves (coming out) if they are in their community of fellow homosexuals, but will present themselves like normal people in general when outside the group. Inability to open up about their sexual orientation is due to the negative stigma and social sanctions they get, so that their tendency to show their masculinity to others even if they are only "displays" (Suswani et al., 2018). To be accepted as normal men in the community, several homosexuals in this study were married and even had children, but this was only to cover up their sexual deviations without changing their sexual interactions as same-sex enthusiasts. The prevailing sexual orientation in Indonesia is heterosexual, so that the culture cannot accept the presence of homosexuals and consider it as a deviation. According to Akbar, Sihabudin, and Nursih (2011), homosexuals are known as deviant group where the deviant behavior makes it difficult for most communities and even homosexual individuals to interact with the wider community. This is what is indicated in Goffman's theory that individuals always want to show what can be accepted by others by controlling the elements that can interfere.

Trauma due to love or romance is another factor that can change a person's sexual orientation. The trauma experienced by informants in this study led to feelings of hatred and heartache and loss of trust in women so that they chose the same sex who were considered more accepting and understanding of each other. Not all individuals are ready for trauma, as well as the young homosexuals in this study who were at the transition age from adolescence to early adulthood. Each person's response was different in responding the trauma experienced because traumatic experiences can form a behavior so that they lead to changes in sexual orientation.

Sarwono (2013) revealed that the formation of behavior does not happen just like that, but through a certain process, a continuous social contact with other individuals around them so that choice factors emerge. It is normal if humans cannot perceive all external stimuli through perception, therefore there is a process of choosing which stimuli should be shunned and approached. This choice is determined by the motives and tendencies within. Love trauma experienced by informants before choosing to be homosexual through a process of hurt, resentment and hatred towards women, so that the tendency to stay away from the opposite sex and approach the same sex because of the feeling of comfort. It is a human nature that a person will stay away from things that do not make him suffer and approach situations that provide a sense of comfort so that the behavior becomes repeated.

The selection of situations in emotional regulation as stated by Gross and Thompson (2007), is a strategy that is carried out consciously or unconsciously to maintain, strengthen or reduce one or more aspects of an emotional response, which are emotional experiences and behaviors. The method used by the informant after being hurt is by staying away from situations and led him look for conditions that were pleasant for him. This was admitted

by the informant before becoming homosexual that "to forget about the hurt feelings, I used social media and finally met my partner who was very caring at that time even though he already had a wife and children". He chose not to vent anger and hold back the negative emotions experienced by informants as expressed by Astuti, Wasidi, and Sinthia (2019) that the ability to manage emotions, especially negative emotions such as anger, sadness, disappointment, resentment and hatred will make the individual not carried away and deeply affected by being unable to solve the problems he is facing, and will even bring up various unpleasant negative emotions in him. These negative emotions can be in the form of behaving aggressively to seek revenge. Such feelings were also experienced by informants in triggering their homosexual behavior, the anger and disappointment they felt became vengeance that was vented even though they were considered subjectively positive.

There are different things in the formation of homosexuals in Bulukumba District, where the tendency of the triggers is economic problems and the lifestyle of adolescents who want to follow the current trends. The MSM and transgender women in Bulukumba in this study come from middle to lower family backgrounds and hide their homosexuality. Homosexuals are considered as a minority group even though they are in the midst of community but negative acceptance in small areas such as in Bulukumba which implements Islamic law makes this community close itself. Adela (2010) revealed that people in rural areas are also more intolerant, perhaps this is because of traditional moral value assimilation, especially those with secondary education and not higher education.

Homosexuals in Bulukumba District consisted of MSM and transgender women who in the practice of same-sex relationships can change partners because they are based on economic needs or not based on commitment, although there are also those who make permanent partners. For those who are based on transactions or modest relationships, homosexuals who are still classified as early adolescents only need to get pocket money or daily necessities such as buying cigarettes, clothes and pocket money without thinking about the other effects of their risky behavior which can be infected with sexually transmitted infections. For homosexuals who have a permanent partner is because their life is more guaranteed in fulfilling their primary and secondary needs with the aim of binding, such as a guarantee of money needed every day, buying a cellphone, boarding fees, and a motorbike by their partner. For the last thing, the homosexuals who are financed will feel bound, especially from a less economic background, so there is no other way to survive and even live at home like husband and wife.

Although economic factors are classic and short cut reasons for getting better money and social status, in reality these reasons occur mostly especially for those who do not have skills. Nasution, Lubis, and Mukti (2019), revealed that economic inequality can also make a person have deviant behavior. An economic condition that is below average, will cause someone to do whatever to bring additional income. The adolescents in this study who wanted to live a better life but do not have money and work prefer to be homosexual for a while or forever in order to get money from their sex partners. Without realizing it, they are being targeted for commercialization

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to provide sexual services for adults. Afritayeni and Angraini (2019), revealed that a person's lifestyle is inseparable from economic status which is divided into various levels of groups. Income is one of the things that determines economic status. High income makes someone free to do anything, including turning one's lifestyle into deviant behavior.

Young homosexuals who need money do not even hesitate to offer prices according to the services provided, for example, the rates for satisfying their partners are different when accompanied by massage. Junaidi (2012), revealed that those who are involved in gay life are solely due to lifestyle and material factors. At first, they usually just try to have sex with the same sex for material rewards. The existence of a material stimulus facilitates the formation of young homosexuals and perpetuates the condition.

The handling of homosexual problems in certain groups is actually handled in a more comprehensive setting approach (Noor, Amiruddin, Awal, Palutturi, & Mallongi, 2017; Palutturi & Arifin, 2019; Palutturi & Asnawi, 2020; Palutturi, Chu, Moon, & Nam, 2015; Palutturi, Rutherford, Davey, & Chu, 2013, 2015; Palutturi, Sahiddin, Ishak, & Hamzah, 2018; Palutturi, Zulkifli, & Syam, 2017). Policy makers can analyse the problems and causes of the problems as a whole. the same as other health problems, for example various infectious, non-communicable diseases or problems related to social problems, for example narcotics users or the treatment of Commercial Sexual Workers, also requires a more comprehensive treatment.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it was found that there are differences on the formation of homosexuals. Homosexual behavior in Makassar City is triggered by the influence of the social environment and romantic trauma, while in Bulukumba District is due to economic problems. Although they are different in the formation of sexual orientation, young homosexuals from these two locations have something in common, which is not being open about their status as same-sex enthusiasts.

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