

ACCESSIBILITY TO MEDIA AND ITS RELATION TO STIGMATIZATION TOWARD LESBIAN-GAY-BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) INDIVIDUALS: A STUDY AMONG 2ND YEAR MIDWIFERY STUDENTS IN YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Stigmatization and discrimination toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people are regularly reported. Both, in urban and in rural areas, LGBT individuals experience marginalization and detachment from the community. The media plays a major role in providing information related to LGBT people and HIV-AIDS since stigmatization and discrimination toward LGBT people are largely caused by inadequate knowledge related to HIV and AIDS transmission. The study aimed to examine the relationship of accessibility to media and the midwifery students' attitudes toward LGBT.

Methods: The study employed a descriptive analytic method with a cross sectional approach. A total of 120 postgraduate midwifery students in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, who agreed to be involved in the study were recruited as participants.

Results: The vast majority of respondents (92.5%) lived in urban boarding homes and had no difficulty accessing media and obtaining reliable information related to LGBT people. Respondents expressed negative attitudes toward LGBT people; the data shows 28% unwilling to be in close proximity to LGBT people; and 90% agreed that parents should keep their children away from LGBT people because they are considered to be very dangerous. Although respondents' access to media information is relatively good, their attitudes toward LGBT people are distorted based on their roles as health providers and as a family member. When it comes to their children, respondents perceived that it is important to protect their children from LGBT people for safety reasons; whilst in the working place, the vast majority of respondents agreed that LGBT people should not be discriminated.

Conclusion: The misconception towards LGBT people highlights the urgent need for providing correct health education for lay people and health providers. Inconsistence and ambiguous attitudes toward LGBT people provides excellent evidence that the existing knowledge is not sufficient. With the role of media as a double edged-sword, there is a need for government and health providers to accurately and continuously provide health education for the general population in order to reduce stigmatization and discrimination toward LGBT people.

Keywords: Accessibility to media; Mass media; Stigmatization; LGBT; Health provider; Indonesia

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INTRODUCTION

Stigmatization and discrimination toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) have

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been reported continuously. Either in urban or rural areas, LGBT becomes marginalized and detached from the community [1]. Ministry of Health of Republic Indonesia reported, the number of same-sex partners increased significantly from 7 percent in 2009 to 12.8 percent in 2013. The number of male who have sex with male are also increasing from 5.3 percent to 12.4 percent in 13 cities of the survey settings [2]. With an increasing number of populations at risk, the need to reduce stigmatization and discrimination becomes necessary; therefore, HIV and AIDS prevention and control should be taken into account.

Stigmatization and discrimination have been acknowledged as the greatest barrier in the HIV and AIDS prevention and control [3, 4]. In a country with heterosexual mainstream such as Indonesia, LGBT is seen as a deviant sexual practice; because homosexual is believed against cultural and religious norms. Those who have same-sex relationship are usually hide to a certain extent behind the layers of public silence on sexuality [5, 6].

Midwife as a health provider who's responsible for maternity care actually plays many roles in service delivery point. Preliminary study among midwifery students related to LGBT revealed only few students understood the meaning of LGBT. Most of them were informed through news channel on the television. The midwifery students' perceptions and attitudes toward LGBT become important because in many cases, health provider's attitudes and behaviors toward people at risk to HIV-AIDS become a major boundary for marginal population to access health services [7-9]. Studies among health providers in Indonesia showed that level of stigmatization and discrimination toward marginalized group were quite high; and health care provider's stigmatized attitudes increased with the increment of irrational fear of HIV transmission [10, 11].

In addition, media plays a major role in providing information related to LGBT and HIV-AIDS. In many different settings, stigmatization and discrimination toward LGBT are partly caused by inadequate knowledge related to HIV and AIDS transmission. Scholars found that when people's knowledge to HIV-AIDS transmission and LGBT is improved, the stigmatization and discrimination tend to be decreased [12-14]. Media is one of the sources of information yielding a double-edged sword with its possibility to provide both reliable

and unreliable information for its users. Cultivation theory posited, viewers tend to believe media-directed version of reality than the reality itself [15]. Thus, media may also increase the level of stigmatization and discrimination by repeating the information which viewers store in their memory, form their perception and turn it to attitudes. Nonetheless, this study aimed to only focus on the midwifery students' attitudes toward LGBT, and their accessibility to media. It is expected that the finding of this study may provide evidences for the government and policy makers in improving the programs to combat stigmatization and discrimination toward LGBT particularly, and people at risk to HIV-AIDS in general.

METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a descriptive analytic method with a cross sectional approach. It explored the stigmatization towards LGBT as phenomenon and observed it in one point at a time [16]. A total population of 120 second-year midwifery diploma students who have completed the basic course works was recruited as participants. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaires, distributed by researcher at the end of reproductive health course. Prior to data collection, validity and reliability study were conducted to test the instruments. The result showed that out of 50 attitude questions, 42 questions were valid; whilst of 30 stigma questions, 26 were validated.

Stigmatization and discrimination in the present study were measured in attitudinal scales, ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree including 21 questions related to respondents' perception towards LGBT. Stigma was implied in respondent's personal responses toward social relationship with LGBT either in working place or community. Accessibility to media was measured as types of media that respondents have accessed to obtain information related to LGBT and frequency of access ranged from never to more than 5 hours per day. The present study obtained its approval from Ethical Committee Board of Universitas Aisyiyah Yogyakarta with reference number 01/KEP-UNISAYOGYA/IX/2016, dated September 2nd, 2016.

RESULTS

Of 120 respondents, all were female who currently studying at the second year of postgraduate

Table 1 Respondents' attitudes toward LGBT

| No | Statements | Attitudes | | | | Total |
|----|---|-----------|----------------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| | | Agree | Strongly agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | |
| 1 | I am not afraid to make friends with LGBT although many people said their sexual disorder may infect me | 21.7 | 9.2 | 53.3 | 15.8 | 100.0 |
| 2 | If one of my family is an LGBT, I will disgrace and avoid him | 8.3 | 2.5 | 61.7 | 27.5 | 100.0 |
| 3 | LGBT is not a sexual disorders and I don't have to avoid them | 27.5 | 9.2 | 50.8 | 12.5 | 100.0 |
| 4 | I think LGBT's presence will not harm anyone | 9.2 | 2.5 | 58.3 | 30.0 | 100.0 |
| 5 | I will not refuse to visit LGBT's house | 42.5 | 5.0 | 44.2 | 8.3 | 100.0 |
| 6 | LGBT will have some difficulties in finding jobs | 55.0 | 17.5 | 21.7 | 5.8 | 100.0 |
| 7 | I don't want to have any relationship with LGBT | 28.3 | 16.7 | 51.7 | 3.3 | 100.0 |
| 8 | When I am working at hospital, I will not put LGBT patient at the bottom of the line for the service | 4.2 | 3.3 | 42.5 | 50.0 | 100.0 |
| 9 | People with different sexual orientation such as LGBT should be given freedom to live and socialize in the community | 32.5 | 7.5 | 47.5 | 12.5 | 100.0 |
| 10 | People with different sexual orientation such as LGBT should be excluded from the community | 12.5 | 3.3 | 69.2 | 15.0 | 100.0 |
| 11 | LGBT should have equal right to obtain any health service | 5.8 | 5.0 | 57.5 | 31.7 | 100.0 |
| 12 | LGBT should have equal rights to in the workplace | 41.7 | 10.8 | 40.0 | 7.5 | 100.0 |
| 13 | When I am working at the hospital, I will ignore LGBT complaints | 4.2 | 5.0 | 60.0 | 30.8 | 100.0 |
| 14 | LGBT needs support to prevent them from sexually transmitted disease | 40.8 | 45.8 | 7.5 | 5.8 | 100.0 |
| 15 | I will avoid LGBT because they are very dangerous and related to sexual abuse | 29.2 | 15.0 | 50.8 | 5.0 | 100.0 |
| 16 | I would think LGBT contribute largely in HIV AIDS infection | 47.5 | 36.7 | 13.3 | 2.5 | 100.0 |
| 17 | Before stigmatizing and discriminating LGBT, people should find accurate information | 51.7 | 42.5 | 3.3 | 2.5 | 100.0 |
| 18 | LGBT is a dangerous group because many murder and violence were related to them | 50.0 | 28.3 | 18.3 | 3.3 | 100.0 |
| 19 | Government should reduce the information related to sexually transmitted infections for LGBT so they will change their behavior | 28.3 | 27.5 | 33.3 | 10.8 | 100.0 |
| 20 | I will never come to an event if the host is an LGBT | 28.3 | 16.7 | 50.0 | 5.0 | 100.0 |
| 21 | Parents should keep their children away from LGBT because they are very dangerous | 50.8 | 40.0 | 6.7 | 2.5 | 100.0 |

midwifery program in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and aged 20 years old in average. All respondents were full-time students and unemployed. Nevertheless, 38 percent of respondents received allowance more than IDR 1,000,000 (equal to \$77) per month.

Accessibility to media

Since the vast majority of respondents (92.5%) lived in urban boarding home, they had no difficulty accessing media and obtaining reliable information related to LGBT. Only a few of them (7.5%) experienced a barrier in accessing media information due to remote residential area. Given

that most of respondents (92%) were easily accessed any media related to HIV-AIDS; it is not surprising if the vast majority (99 %) ever heard about LGBT.

Respondents in this study can be categorized as medium users of media because more than half spent about 1-3 hours per day; whilst 26% spent a longer duration up to 5 hours per day. Considering respondents are students; most of them prefer accessing information related LGBT from the internet and their mobile phones (94 and 84 percent, respectively), whilst other media such as television, books, magazines, newspaper and other printed media were rarely accessed.

Table 2 Accessibility to media and attitudes toward LGBT

| Attitudes toward LGBT | Accessibility to media | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-----|------|------|-------|------|
| | Difficult | | Easy | | Total | |
| | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Positive attitudes | 0 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 |
| Less positive attitudes | 0 | 0 | 64 | 53.3 | 64 | 53.3 |
| Negative attitudes | 9 | 7.5 | 41 | 34.2 | 50 | 41.7 |

Stigma toward LGBT

The present study found that the vast majority of respondents have negative attitudes toward LGBT. Stigmatization to LGBT was shown from the respondents' unwillingness to have proximate distance to LGBT and tends to build a social-distance. Table 1 shows 28% respondents refused to have any contact with LGBT and perceived LGBT group as the biggest contributor in HIV-AIDS transmission. Nevertheless, 61% of respondents showed their positive support if one of their family member happened to be an LBGT.

Respondents' attitudes toward LGBT seem to be inconsistent, as shown in the Table 1. Although about half of respondents disagreed to the statement "*I will avoid the LGBT group because they have risky sexual behavior*", negative stigma toward LBGT also shown by 50% of respondents who considered that being an LBGT means having sexual disorder; and therefore should be avoided. Although more than half (69%) of respondents perceived that LGBT should not be excluded from the community and stated not afraid of HIV transmission just by becoming friends; 58% believed that this group of people would be dangerous. The reluctance of respondents in having a close relationship with LGBT was also shown by 51% who do not want to have any relationship with LGBT, and refused to attend an event that is hosted by an LBGT. Respondents seemed that they did not only hesitate but also confused. The data shows 44% willing and 42% not willing to visit LGBT house. About 40% agreed that LGBT should have equal rights in the workplace; whilst 41% disagreed toward the statement.

A clearer picture of negative stigma depicted by 90% of respondents who agreed that parents should keep their children away from LGBT because they are considered to be very dangerous. More than 70% perceived that LGBT can be very dangerous because many violence and murder case reports were done by this group. Stigma in the workplace was portrayed by more than half of respondents who believed that LGBT will not be easily accepted in

any workplace because of their status. Although generally positive, the respondents' responses toward equal rights for LGBT in the workplace were also diverted into two groups, agree (41%) and disagree (40%).

Association between accessibility to media and stigma toward LGBT

Studies found that media helps to shape people's perception toward a phenomenon [17]. Several theories posited that media plays a great role in building community's awareness. In its relation to stigma, media may influence people by providing information or inflicting fear to its users. The nature of media as information source may improve people's knowledge which in turn will affect their attitudes and behaviors toward LGBT [18-20].

Table 2 shows the cross tabulation between attitudes toward LGBT and accessibility to media. The cut of points defining less positive and negative was set based on respondents' scores compared to total attitudes score. Respondents who scored less than 60% of total expected scores were categorized as negative; whilst those who scored 60-80% were considered to have less positive attitudes. Midwifery students who have favorable (more than 80%) responses toward LGBT were regarded as having positive attitudes.

The findings of the present study revealed that those who have better access to media information are less likely to have positive attitudes toward LGBT. Among those who have better access, the proportion of midwives who have positive attitudes was at the lowest compared to those who have negative or less positive attitudes. Statistical analysis by chi-square showed that access to media information is associated to respondents' attitudes toward LGBT, a p -value <0.01 .

DISCUSSION

Stigma has been studied widely across different settings. Since many scholars have their own definition of "stigma", there are many definitions of the word. Therefore, most of them relied on Goffman's initial definition "tribute that is deeply

discrediting" and that reduces the bearer "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" [21, 22]. Stigma can also be seen as a relationship between an attribute and a stereotype to produce a definition of stigma as a "mark" (attribute) that links a person to undesirable characteristics [23].

Midwife is one of health providers that are expected to provide an equal service to anyone, regardless their sexual preference and HIV status. Unfortunately, stigmatization and discrimination by health providers are continuously reported in many settings. LGBTs are less likely to visit health services and tend to disclose themselves from the community. This is because not only they attached to LGBT themselves; stigma also creates a social barrier for their family. Social seclusion to LGBT and their family has put this group under a social distressed [18].

Interestingly, respondent's attitudes toward LGBT in this study were diverted based on their roles as health provider and as a family member. When it comes to their children, respondents perceived that it is important to protect their children from LGBT because of safety reason. It should be noted that parents' perception in this case was perhaps influenced by media. Back to 1996, when many media channels broadcasted the *Robot Gedek* case, parents were exposed with excessive reports of an adult male who forced male children for sodomy and ended up by murdering them. Robot Gedek was just an example of a case which was blown up by the media; unfortunately, he was a same-sex oriented person [24]. Other than Robot Gedek, *Ryan* was another example of how media in 2012 overstated homosexual person as murderer. It is true that Ryan was a homosexual man; and he was also proven guilty by the court as a murderer of his boyfriend; but media's overexposure has inflicting fear to community and thus, increasing stigma towards LGBT.

Unlike for family case, health providers showed more positive attitude in the working place. The vast majority of respondents agreed that LGBT should not be discriminated. Ascribing a role as health provider, midwives are already vowed to provide treatment to everyone equally. Nevertheless, further attention should be addressed to health education curriculum for health provider in Indonesia, since 7.5% of midwifery postgraduate students were having negative attitudes toward LGBT; and they intend to discriminate LGBT when respondents

found them in service delivery points. Although the percentage of respondents who openly admitted the intention to discriminate LGBT seemed to be low, the actual practice might be higher than it is reported; because attitudes are unobserved; and some respondents were silent or in doubt [25].

The study confirmed that accessibility to media has an association to respondents' attitudes toward LGBT. Respondents who have better access to any media were more likely to have better attitudes and less stigmatized. As Cultivation theory posited, exposure to mass media creates and cultivates attitudes more consistent with a media-directed version of reality than with reality itself [17, 26]. Media portrayals and messages affect the behavior of young persons over time by enabling them to acquire new attitudes and behaviors, or by changing the likelihood that they will perform new, or previously learned responses [27]. Those who have higher exposure to media are more likely to have more permissive attitudes compared to their counterparts who have less exposure [28].

Internet is found as the most preferred media of the respondents. It can be understood since the internet is accessed through laptop, computer or mobile phone; and it is the most convenient to be accessed at a very low cost compared to other media such as book, magazine or DVD/VCD. The finding of the study corresponds to several media studies conducted among young people. The anonymity of the internet as a new medium has made it as the most preferred media to be accessed by the youngsters, replacing television and printed media that have no longer been a favorite source of information. With a lowered cost, the internet nowadays has become a highly accessible medium for its users; where they can obtain the information needed at their most convenient time [17, 26].

Not only the frequency and adequacy of media exposure to community, the contents that media provided are also influencing people's attitude and behavior related stigma. With the nature of media as double-edge swords, it cannot be denied that it plays a great role in shaping community's perception and awareness. Exposure to media representations of LGBT may help cultivate viewers' own attitudes about homosexuality [28]. In Robot Gedek and Ryan cases, excessive media exposures on the sodomy and murder by homosexual men were injecting fear to its viewer and contributing to the negative attitudes toward LGBT.

Of course the media's role in shaping

community's perception was not only in negative manners. Although it existed, media representation of a successful LGBT in Indonesia unfortunately was not as strong as the negative image. *Dorce Gamalama*, is perhaps can be one of the examples of transgendered women who have successfully built image as a woman and gained community acceptance. Several designers and actors that have already come out also can be considered of how media actually portray a positive side of LGBT through their successful entertainment careers. Nevertheless, given that homosexuality against the Indonesian mainstream on sexuality, it is not easy to portray a success story of LGBT. The most recent media polemics in 2016 revealed when some of Indonesian state figures provided unfavorable statements toward marginalized population and banned LGBT from campuses [29]. The controversy also flowed when a group of gay men was arrested at their apartment, and then finally released because there was no evidence they were committed a crime. Such circumstances somehow drew a backward in HIV-AIDS control in Indonesia especially for LGBT; because when Indonesian's public health concern was to reach the marginalized people out and bring them into services, media portrayal and social prejudice will be the greatest barrier of access.

CONCLUSION

The misconception towards LGBT alarms the importance of providing an adequate health education for lay people and health providers. Inconsistence and ambiguous attitudes toward LGBT provide an excellent evidence that the existing knowledge is not sufficient. With the role of media as double edged-sword, there is a need for government and health providers to accurately and continuously provide health education for general population in order to reduce stigmatization and discrimination toward LGBT. When the information given is correct, accurate and adequate, communities receive the message correctly and easily. When the messages of HIV and AIDS related stigma are given over time, it may reduce fear; and in turn, it will reduce stigma. Not only the frequency, but also careful assessment in the content of media would benefit the media users. Limitation of this study lies on the unavailability of information related to media content and duration of access based on the purpose of access such as information seeking, leisure, or networking. The questions posed to the respondents only cover general media use; but

it did not specify purpose of access. Further research and future studies therefore should include motive of access; and it should be specified each content of media.

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