

OTHER SEXUALITY: A STUDY OF THE DISCOURSE OF LGBTQ SEXUALITY AND THE PLUSH COMMUNITY IN THE SPECIAL REGION OF YOGYAKARTA

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS

Discourse, Sexuality,
LGBTQ, Safe Space

The purpose of this research was to find out the experiences of informants with regard to their sexuality and to look at the role of PLUSH in the discourse of 'non-normative' sexuality in Indonesia, more specifically Yogyakarta. This research method is a qualitative research with a 'mini' approach to discourse analysis by Foucault, research informants, data collection techniques (interviews, literature studies, documentation, and other media sources), data presentation, and triangulation. The data used came from primary data, namely interviews with the five informants (Bhista (30), Shamil (37), Nakula (35), Abimanyu (23) and Rangga (26), as well as secondary data from reliable sources (documentation from the media, literature, and others). The results of this study are as follows: (1) a world dominated by heteronomous concepts, where general discourse tends to corner non-binary sexuality, as experienced by members of the PLUSH, an LGBTQ advocacy organization. (2) The research contributes to the fields of community empowerment, social movements, LGBTQ studies, and social policy by providing a platform for marginalized voices and documenting new social movements. (3) The research is based on the theory of panopticon prison theory, which is used to describe the experience of the informants in exploring and fighting for their sexual identity in the context of a dominating discourse. It is hoped that further research can involve informants from various sexual orientations such as asexual and bisexual, to provide a more comprehensive picture of non-heteronormal sexuality discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Failure to include sexuality in poverty reduction strategies can lead to or increase poverty for certain groups (Barrington et al., 2022; Bray et al., 2020; Ninsiima et al., 2020). This is because sexuality is seen as 'trivial' or irrelevant, as well as an approach developed through a focus on heteronormativeness. For example, economic and social assistance programs tend to be aimed at certain types of families, so households headed by single parents or with same-sex couples may not be able to access the same rights. Feminist analysis shows that sexuality intersects with other axes of oppression, so the decision not to conform to the 'norms' around gender and sexuality can affect a person's access to basic resources. 'Non-normative' groups such as LGBTQ are also often excluded from access to health, as seen in the increase in HIV/AIDS infection rates in Banten and Jakarta. In fact, they have difficulty accessing health because of their lack of courage to open up for fear of the judgement circulating in the community, as well as the lack of facilities to reach them with counseling and testing. In addition, organizations such as People Like Us Satu Hati (PLUSH) in Yogyakarta try to advocate for LGBTQ rights and fight for the human rights of LGBTQ groups, for the realization of a social order that is based on the values of equality.

In addition to the exclusion of LGBTQ groups in the development discourse, studies on this group are also very minimal. Gender studies mostly only look from a heteronormative perspective; In fact, sex, gender and sexuality are no longer considered 'rigid'; These three

things are already liquid and not only about men and women. Here are some studies from the PSDK department regarding heteronormative gender.

The first study was conducted by Sari (2016). This study discusses the level of understanding of gender equality obtained from gender equality discussion activities between husband and wife conducted at the Rifka Annisa institution, and its relationship with family economics and participation in the household. The second study was written by Susanto (2015). This study discusses how the values contained in traditional constructions that portray women as inferior parties have the perception of the perpetrators of snatching towards their potential victims/victims who are female. This research underscores the fact that in Yogyakarta, women are not completely free from gender construction (Susanto, 2015). The third study was conducted by Fachrurrazi (2013). This study tries to find out how the process of empowering women in the jamu group by PT. Pertamina TBBM Rewulu, reviewed from the aspects of planning, implementation, and challenges faced. One of the impacts felt by the jamu group is the improvement of the economy and the maturation of themselves in organizing (Fachrurrazi, 2013). It can be seen that the three studies only discuss binary gender, not including elements of the third gender, namely the LGBTQ group.

Outside of research under the PSDK department, there has also been no research related to the issues raised by the researcher. However, there are several studies whose discussion can be said to be similar, as follows. The first study was conducted by Hartanto (2016) with a focus on seeing the emergence of polemics about support for LGBTQ legalization in Indonesia. This phenomenon can be seen as the hegemony of Western culture that seeks to campaign for an emancipatory spirit that is not in accordance with values and norms in Indonesia (Hartanto, 2016). The second study was written by Saputra (2017) which focuses on the Pelangi Andalas Group community as a gay community and describes the form and strategy of social movements carried out by the Pelangi Andalas Group community (Saputra, 2017). Meanwhile, the third study made by Pinem (2014) focuses on dismantling and 'naked' the CSR discourse that is being widely discussed in society. This study does not talk about LGBTQ at all, but CSR, but the researcher feels that this research has a 'spirit' similar to the research by Pinem. These studies differ from the focus of this study, which is to discuss the experiences of PLUSH members, in relation to the 'non-normative' discourse of sexuality. In addition, this research aims to open the reader's horizons beyond heteronormative discourse.

Departing from this justification, the school of thought used by the researcher in this study is the paradigm approach of poststructuralism as a 'big umbrella' for the theories used, such as discourse according to Michel Foucault (Haryatmoko, 2002) and the idea of gender undoing by Judith Butler. This approach looks at how the relationship between the subject and the structure is unstable. That is, there is no domination between the two, as is the case in the structuralist approach that views the structure as more dominant over things that are intersectional (Ritzer, 2012). In the poststructuralist approach, it is no longer discussed about which is the most dominant and which is inferior (Derrida, 1967).

Michel Foucault is a French-born philosopher who was born on October 15, 1926. He was educated at the Lycée Henri-IV and later at the École Normale Supérieure. It was in the latter place that he developed his interest in philosophy. Foucault is one of the most prominent postcolonial thinkers, and one of his most famous thoughts is about discursive practices which is one of the theories used in this study. Discursive practice according to Foucault is a knowledge that is produced at a certain moment and will be constantly present in every accentuation of human life. In other words, it is discursive practices that give birth to common objects. In the beginning we as subjects give birth to an object, which in turn will become a subject for us. In addition, he also argued that discourse is not what can be said, but who can say, when and where. Thus, many of his works discuss power (Zamzam, 2018). Therefore, it can be said that discourse is a way that produces meaning, where it comes from

various powers that cannot be pinpointed specifically, which occur in people's lives. One form of discourse is LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender). How individuals who belong to the LGBTQ group interpret life, and the existing realities related to LGBTQ such as non-binary pop culture references and also knowledge of non-heteronormative sexuality are a small part of the LGBTQ discourse.

In addition to using Foucault's thinking, this study also uses Judith Butler's ideas from her book *Undoing Gender*, queer theory and performativity theory. Judith Butler, born on February 24, 1956, is an American academic whose theories on gender and sexuality were influential in the development of philosophical, cultural, and feminist theories from the late 20th century. One of his most famous thoughts is the understanding that gender is not the underlying essence of nature. Gender/performativity behavior is a series of constant repetitive actions, which eliminate the illusion that there is an underlying trait (Duignan, 2020). The idea of his book *Undoing Gender* is that his understanding of gender does not try to give rise to a new discourse narrative, but rather to delay, cancel and affirm the concept of gender that has been advocated, which is heteronormative; this idea only gives rise to variation, not tries to create a new discourse (Butler, 2004).

The ideas in *Undoing Gender* and Foucault's discourse are incorporated into one 'spirit' where both ideas are part of the study of poststructuralism. The researcher considers that the ideas of the two figures are appropriate to explain the various findings in this study. The most important thing is the connection of these theories to 'non-normative' sexuality in Indonesia, more specifically Yogyakarta with the locus PLUSH.

Departing from three concentrations in the PSdK department, namely Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Social Policy and Community Empowerment, this research is under the umbrella of the Community Empowerment concentration because it is related to a new social movement, namely PLUSH and the role of researchers in giving 'voices' to the LGBTQ group through this research. The purpose of this study was to find out the experiences of PLUSH members with regard to their sexuality and to look at the role of PLUSH in the discourse of 'non-normative' sexuality. the research contributes to the fields of community empowerment, social movements, LGBTQ studies, and social policy by providing a platform for marginalized voices, documenting new social movements, and offering insights into the discourse of 'non-normative' sexuality.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research method is a qualitative research with a 'mini' approach to discourse analysis by Foucault, research informants (five people who are members of PLUSH), data collection techniques (interviews, literature studies, documentation, and other media sources), data presentation, and triangulation. The data used came from primary data, namely interviews with the five informants, Bhista (30), Shamil (37), Nakula (35), Abimanyu (23) and Rangga (26), as well as secondary data from reliable sources (documentation from the media, literature and others). This research was conducted from October 2019 – March 2020.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

People Like Us Satu Hati

LGBTQ groups are often at a disadvantage in binary heteronormative societies. Their non-normative sexuality elicits a negative reaction from society, so the LGBTQ community implements various discursive actions and strategies to shape a new discourse and 'normalize' their existence. Various LGBTQ movements seek to achieve political freedom and equal opportunity, with the belief that sexual orientation and gender identity are innate. Attempts to change sexual orientation are usually opposed by the LGBTQ community because they are often based on religious beliefs that consider homosexuality to be an immoral act. In

America, the LGBTQ movement began with 'The Society for Human Rights' in 1924, while in Indonesia, this movement emerged in the late 1960s with the establishment of the Djakarta Wadam Association (Hiwad).

In Indonesia, organizations like PLUSH (People Like Us Satu Hati) play an important role in fighting for LGBTQ rights. Founded in 2008, PLUSH aims to awareness, empower and empower LGBTQ people and influence policies that protect their rights. PLUSH members, who come from diverse backgrounds, share stories of their struggles with social constructs that do not support their identity. PLUSH emphasizes values such as justice, non-discrimination, and equality, and is active in various activities and networks. Through PLUSH, members of the LGBTQ community find a safe space to discuss and support each other, strengthening their passion and confidence in fighting for their rights in a society that still often rejects their existence.

The Voices of the Silenced Sexuality

Bhista the Activist

Bhista's experience in advocacy began in high school, when he and his social studies classmates fought for equality with science students at his school. They succeeded in establishing a special social studies lab after various discussions with the school. During this time, Bhista also began to realize his non-heteronormative sexuality, although the information he found about this was very limited. After high school, Bhista continued his studies in Yogyakarta and joined the Islamic religious student organization, which strengthened his awareness of his sexuality as opposed to religious teachings. Over time, Bhista switched to LGBTQ organizations on her campus and eventually joined PLUSH, although she initially faced suspicion due to her background in religious organizations.

After leaving the Islamic organization, Bhista founded the Indonesian Islamic Gay community to seek justification for her sexuality in the context of religion, but eventually she realized that religion and LGBTQ sexuality were difficult to unite. Bhista was then fully active at PLUSH, although she had a different view of sexuality and the roots of LGBTQ issues. These differences prompted Bhista to build another community of discussion, namely the Fruit Pickers and the Queer Language Club (QLC), which discussed minority and LGBTQ issues with a more intersectional and progressive approach. Bhista also underwent changes in her dress and beliefs, which she felt were not due to her sexuality, but because of her criticism and disbelief of the religious teachings she once adhered to.

Bhista currently lives with her boyfriend who she has been dating for six years. Prior to that, Bhista had domestic partner status with an Australian man, allowing him to manage his partner's estate and business after his partner died. Bhista never hid her sexuality, even when her parents questioned her. With his current partner, Bhista runs a website development business and remains active in discussing LGBTQ and pro-democracy issues on Twitter with an alter account that gives him more freedom. Her social media activities have expanded her reach, including accompanying people with HIV/AIDS, something she never did with her old account.

In addition to being an active member of PLUSH and the founder of the Queer Language Club and Fruit Picker, Bhista also founded a non-governmental organization (NGO) that supports the urban poor in Yogyakarta. The NGO focuses on issues of identity, education, reproductive health, and the creative economy, and includes the LGBTQ community, including many transgender people who experience discrimination and violence. Bhista seeks to upskill the urban poor to become more empowered, addressing challenges such as the lack of gender identity recognition in population administration that hinders their access to formal work. Bhista lived her life proudly as a queer and activist, focusing on defending marginalized groups in society.

The Honesty of Shamil

Shamil is a figure known for his love for children and his empathy for friends with disabilities, especially the deaf community. She has extensive experience in the field of early childhood education, including being a child therapist, kindergarten teacher, and principal at the first infant school in Bandung. In addition, Shamil is also active in advocating for disability rights through a line of volunteers in collaboration with the Magelang Deaf Community. Shamil's role as a sign language interpreter has made him involved in various events throughout Indonesia to ensure inclusivity for deaf friends.

Shamil's process of accepting herself as a different individual began when she was a child, when she was more attracted to her male friends. The journey to self-acceptance is not easy and takes time. Shamil uses discussions and dialogues to introduce minority issues to those closest to him before finally opening up about his sexuality. His honesty caused him to lose his job as a lecturer, but this was the beginning of his new journey with PLUSH. At PLUSH, Shamil found a discussion space that gave him cognitive satisfaction and supported his acceptance process.

Shamil is now the chairman of PLUSH and continues to actively discuss LGBTQ and sexuality issues in various places. PLUSH's acceptance of her as a different person, as well as her values of inclusivity and appreciation without judgement, made her feel fully accepted. In addition, Shamil continues to practice his worship even though he has accepted himself as gay. Her love life is also unique; She was in a relationship with a man who was the head of the Deaf community she was accompanying. The change in the way she dresses more comfortably and freely reflects her acceptance that she is now more confident in educating the public about LGBTQ issues.

Nakula and the Journey to Find Himself

Nakula's journey of self-discovery begins with humor surrounding his appearance and hilarious comments about meeting an older man. However, a deeper understanding of his identity began when he was still in college when he worked as a male sex worker, mostly interacting with gay clients. Over time, this experience helped Nakula recognize his attraction to men, which then led him to admit his sexual orientation.

Currently, Nakula is living a dynamic love life with five partners in various cities in Indonesia, embracing the labeling of himself as a playboy due to his various relationships. Before dating exclusively with men, he had been in a brief relationship with a woman. Despite his romantic relationship, Nakula has not been open with his family about his sexuality, and has chosen to hint subtly through humorous conversations, thus avoiding direct statements.

Nakula not only navigates his personal relationships, but also challenges heteronormative constructs within his family. She supports her niece's freedom to choose their toys, regardless of gender norms, on the grounds of personal expression and comfort. In addition, Nakula's involvement in sexuality advocacy and education began early in organizations such as the HIV Corporate for Indonesia and the AIDS Commission, which reflects his commitment to LGBTQ+ issues long before his involvement with PLUSH, an organization he founded and currently oversees as a watchdog.

Abhimanyu and His Two New Identities

Abimanyu's journey towards self-acceptance and activism began with internal struggles and societal pressure to conform to heteronormative expectations. Before discovering PLUSH, she suppressed her sexuality, often pretending to be Elsa from Disney's Frozen and singing "Let it Go" alone in his room as a form of venting. He goes to great lengths to maintain a conventional display of masculinity to avoid judgment from others. Despite

feeling isolated and lacking a strong support system, Abhimanyu eventually embraced his identity as a non-binary man with an attraction to men, and found solace in being himself.

Joining PLUSH marked a significant turning point for Abimanyu, where he found a supportive community and a platform to advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. Initially seeking friendship, she found a deeper purpose in advocating with like-minded individuals within PLUSH, feeling empowered to express herself openly and confidently. The friendships and knowledge gained from PLUSH enriched her understanding of sexuality and LGBTQ+ issues, giving him a sense of belonging and empowerment.

Outside of PLUSH, Abimanyu actively contributes to LGBTQ+ visibility and education through his social media platforms, and has recently highlighted events such as Transgender Memorial Day. His journey was full of challenges, including reconciling his sexuality with his religious beliefs. After exploring various scientific perspectives on sexual orientation and finding solace in Buddhism's neutral attitude towards sexuality, Abhimanyu turned to Buddhism, which he said was more in line with his beliefs. Despite these personal advances, he has not fully revealed his sexuality or religious conversion to his family, although they have inadvertently discovered part of the truth, thus giving rise to uncomfortable silence and unspoken tension. However, for Abhimanyu, he no longer hides who he is and proudly affirms, "I am gay and I am a Buddhist."

Rangga, a Newborn Baby

Rangga's journey towards identity discovery and self-acceptance is marked by various challenges and personal growth. Although outwardly appearing as a macho man, complete with short hair and dark-colored clothes, Rangga was born a woman and is transgender. Growing up in a highly heteronormative Indonesian society presented significant challenges, especially when he realized his true identity at a young age, feeling compelled to fill the role of a father figure after his own father died when he was five years old. He rejected the label "tomboy" and always felt that he was a boy.

Throughout her teenage years, Rangga struggled to align her true identity with societal expectations, initially identifying herself as bisexual before eventually understanding herself as heterosexual. She went through periods of self-denial to conform to societal norms, including dating boys and occasionally appearing in more feminine ways to appease others. However, key moments such as finding relevant blogs on melala.org and attending Rainbow Stream empowered her to embrace her transgender identity fully.

Although he has found acceptance in him, Rangga's journey is not without obstacles. She faced depression and suicidal thoughts, but did not find much help from conventional psychological and medical therapies. His ongoing struggles with gender dysphoria, exacerbated by financial constraints that prevented the medical transition, underscore the challenges she faces. Rangga continues to navigate his identity with courage, openly discussing her experiences on social media and advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, including participating in the Women's March Yogyakarta and engaging in discussions to challenge heteronormativity.

Spiritually, Rangga's journey is very complex. He has distanced himself from organized religion, choosing to pray in his own way and in a way that affirms his gender identity. Although he believed in a higher power, his beliefs remained personal and separate from organized religious practices. Through it all, Rangga continues to grow, educate, and advocate, sharing his stories to inspire others and promote understanding of the transgender experience.

Safe Space for Other Sexuality

The Role of Plush (People Like Us One Heart) in Strengthening the Sexual Position of Its Members

Initially, People Like Us (PLU) was an LGBTQ organization that emphasized more on social and entertainment aspects, such as watching movies together and hosting events late into the night. These activities provide a space for freedom of expression for its members who often feel shackled by daily heteronormative norms. However, as it evolved, awareness of the importance of advocacy and the fight for LGBTQ rights became more and more felt, especially after the merger with the One Heart community in 2008, which gave birth to People Like Us One Heart (PLUSH). PLUSH not only promotes freedom of expression and fun, but is also active in voicing LGBTQ issues, providing a safe platform for its members, and increasing understanding of sexuality and LGBTQ concepts among the general public, as well as through collaboration with universities in Yogyakarta.

PLUSH members face the challenge of spreading the organization's values without using a doctrinal approach. They apply these values through everyday actions, such as supportive and non-judgmental interactions between members, as well as through formal activities such as collaborative lectures and discussions on identity politics and counseling for the LGBTQ community at various universities. PLUSH is also active in the use of media and pop culture to educate and enrich its members' insights on sexuality beyond heteronormative norms, demonstrating their commitment to fighting for rights and acceptance for the LGBTQ community.

PLUSH consistently builds networks with various communities to strengthen its existence, but they are very selective in choosing partnerships. They only collaborate with networks that are consistent with their values, such as non-discrimination, non-violence, and democracy. PLUSH's thinking on solidarity also includes the inclusion of the entire spectrum of members, including LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ people who act as alliances, demonstrating their commitment to uniting diverse identities in an inclusive movement.

PLUSH also interprets solidarity as an act of mutualism among groups that support each other. They not only share platforms and spaces with other groups, but are also active in supporting and voicing relevant issues through social media and physical presence, especially for often marginalized groups such as LGBTQ, Papuans, workers, and sex workers. This approach not only strengthens solidarity between groups, but also expands PLUSH's reach and influence in fighting for social justice.

SOGIESC, which stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression, and Sex Characteristics, introduces a deep understanding of the sexuality spectrum. This particular module provides a broad view, not only limited to normative sexuality but also addresses non-heteronormative variations of sexuality. For PLUSH, SOGIESC is the main guide in the exploration and understanding of sexuality of its members. However, members' approaches to SOGIESC are diverse; Rangga, for example, wholeheartedly adopted SOGIESC as a tool to deconstruct and understand her sexual identity in depth, while Bhista was more skeptical and saw it as a concept that limited the variation in understanding of an individual's sexuality.

Rangga sees SOGIESC as the key to understanding herself and others around her, acknowledging the complexity and spectrum that exists in sexuality and gender identity. On the other hand, Bhista highlighted that the approach to SOGIESC can become too rigid and overrides the variation in understanding of sexuality that exists in society. Shamil, in the middle of these two views, sees SOGIESC as an easy and clear entry into understanding her sexuality identity, yet remains open to criticism and alternative thinking such as Queer Theory in further exploration of the sexuality spectrum. This reflects the complexity and diversity in views of SOGIESC among PLUSH members.

In a powerful world with heteronormative concepts, such as those put forward by Foucault in panopticon prison theory, LGBTQ individuals face a fear of judgment and constant scrutiny of their sexuality expression. PLUSH exists as a safe space for its members, where they can express themselves freely without fear of stigma or negative judgment that they often face outside. While there is not always agreement on everything, such as SOGIESC, PLUSH fosters open discussions that enrich the perspectives of its members. The organization also provides them with the opportunity to network with other groups that support PLUSH values, as well as promote LGBTQ issues through various forums and universities. Thus, PLUSH serves as a sanctuary within the dominant structure and strengthens the sexual identity of its members who have been marginalized by heteronormative norms.

CONCLUSION

The study examines the LGBTQ advocacy organization PLUSH, where non-binary sexuality is often marginalized in heteronormative discourse. It uses Foucault and Butler's thinking to highlight the experiences of informants in exploring and fighting for their sexual identity. PLUSH provides a safe space for individuals to express themselves without fear of stigma or judgment. Despite differences in views, the organization reinforces and reaffirms marginalized sexuality identities. The research suggests further development by gaining a deeper understanding of non-normative sexuality, involving informants from different sexual orientations, and enriching lecture material with broader theories of sexuality and gender.

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