

Religion and Morality: The study of The Religious Phenomenology Study of Gays Community

¹ Dadang Kahmad, ² Lina Herlina, ³ Iim Suryahim, ⁴ Hadi Nur Amin

Abstract : *The purpose of this study is to give a picture to the public about gays in terms of religion and morality, so they can find out whether gays can carry out their religion and have morals in accordance with the religion in which they profess. The research method used is a qualification in order to describe all the behavior of gays in everyday life. Findings about the moral and religious beliefs of gay people are still questioned by many people, and almost the community judges Gay people are not moral and disobedient to their religion, but in the midst of many gay people still perform prayers, zakat, umrah and even Hajj. The conclusions of this study provide a description that what happens to the gay religious phenomenon will be in the spotlight because not every gay person has no morals and does not obey religion. This research is basically an attempt by the writer to study and analyze the problem of the phenomenon of homosexuality and religious practices of homosexuals, especially gays, in the context of religious relations and morality.*

Keywords: *Gays, Morality, Phenomenology Studies, Religion*

Introduction

The phenomenon of homosexuality or same-sex sexual orientation, both fellow men (gay/ male homosexuality) and fellow women (lesbian/ female homosexuality), is basically a socio-psychological phenomenon that emerged long ago. Starting from the archeological relics that tell about same-sex couples Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum in Egypt (2400 BC) and various sexuality traditions in other ancient African regions, homosexual life in ancient Greece as mentioned in Plato's records, or various other homosexual phenomena found in various parts of the world world and culture (Rice, 1999), to what is today many surfaced in terms of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) and various supporting communities. In the religious version, whether Muslim, Christian, or Jewish, the story of the Sodomites, the people of the Prophet Lut (\pm 1950-1870 before century), is often used as an initial reference how such practices have even developed in the past. In ancient African society, especially in the kingdom of Lesotho in South Africa, there is the term motsoalle which means special friend (special friend), or people who are of the same sex without any marriage ties between them (Murray & Roscoe, 1998, p. 185). Women or men can love someone of the same sex, with true love and do not demand the legality of ties between them. The practice of homosexuality which was later considered to be the reason for the punishment of the Sodomites even became a reference for the prohibition of sexual practices that were considered to be deviant in the teachings religion.

In the teachings of Islam itself, the practice of homosexuality, never got a place in the Muslim community in general, apart from efforts to renew religious interpretations for example, verses that tell the story of the Sodomites and the Prophet Lut as. from some contemporary Muslim scholars, such as Muhsin Hendricks, Hassan el-Menyawi, and others, or Muslim scholars who try to explain how the phenomenon of homosexuality in the classical (pre-modern) Islamic world, such as Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah, Ibn Khaqan, Ibn Hazm, Syihabuddin Ahmad Al-Tifasyi, Khaled

¹ Doctoral Program of Religious Study, Postgraduate Program, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
dadang.kahmad@uinsgd.ac.id

² Doctoral Program of Religious Study, Postgraduate Program, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

³ Doctoral Program of Religious Study, Postgraduate Program, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

⁴ Doctoral Program of Religious Study, Postgraduate Program, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

el-Rouayheb, Mervat Hatem and others (Amer, 2009; El-Rouayheb, 2009; Ghuddah & Fatah, 1999; Habib, 2007; Hāqān, 1967; Hatem, 1986). The practice of homosexuality can never get an entrance to be accepted in Muslim societies in various parts of the world, not only because of the clear prohibition of such practices based on *istinbath* (efforts to withdraw the law) of the *Fuqaha*, but also the attitude of the Muslim community in general who cannot see the practice -practice like this as a natural or normal phenomenon in life. Muhsin Hendricks, a contemporary Muslim scholar, in his apologetic efforts to defend this homosexual practice and explain the situation faced by homosexuals in the Muslim community, stated that the rejection of Islamic societies for this practice in general has presented alienation for homosexuals which at its extreme makes them turned more to drugs, left Islam, or committed suicide (Hendricks, 2010).

Research Methodology

All types of research, in the effort of researchers to collect data, analyze data, and produce conclusions or results from research, must have certain methods that are used as a reference or guideline by the relevant researcher. In this context, this research then as generally qualitative research, the method that is more often used is a method that is to explain and analyze the object being studied, so that researchers can get the depth and meaning of the research they are doing. In that case, the researcher chose a qualitative method that is descriptive and holistic in this study to describe the phenomenon under study as a whole (Hannah, 2017). In addition, researchers also use phenomenological analysis as an analytical method in understanding the phenomenon, namely the religious practices of gays in the context of religious relations and morality in the city of Bandung, with the hope that researchers can get a complete picture, depth, meaning, concept, understanding, and explanation of the phenomenon.

Research using a qualitative approach, as mentioned earlier, basically seeks to find explanations that are both descriptive and holistic in nature, and examine theories that are used more deeply based on findings and interpretations of data in the field. In this context, this research also seeks to make a description that explains about the religious practices of gays in the city of Bandung, in the frame of religion and morality, by involving various factors and contexts of theoretical scope and research situation to gain a holistic and holistic understanding. Theoretically, this research is in accordance with the form of explanatory research, which seeks to find answers to the phenomena encountered based on the theory as a criteria framework for these answers. This is in line with Bhattacharjee's explanation that (Bhattacharjee, 2012):

“Explanatory research seeks explanations of observed phenomena, problems, or behaviors. While descriptive research examines the what, where, and when of a phenomenon, explanatory research seeks answers to why and how types of questions. It attempts to “connect the dots” in research, by identifying causal factors and outcomes of the target phenomenon. Examples include understanding the reasons behind adolescent crime or gang violence, with the goal of prescribing strategies to overcome such societal ailments. Most academic or doctoral research belongs to the explanation category, though some amount of exploratory and/or descriptive research may also be needed during initial phases of academic research. Seeking explanations for observed events requires strong theoretical and interpretation skills, along with intuition, insights, and personal

Based on an overview, approaches and research methods that have been presented previously, the researcher then compiles a design that will be used in this study. The research design itself is a tool that helps researchers in conducting research in a systematic way. This design will help researchers especially as a guide in conducting data collection, data analysis, interpretation of data, and formulating research conclusions.

Data sources used in this study include all data sources commonly used in qualitative research, which include documents, records, archives, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical devices such as videos and figures. (Flick, 2018, pp. 147–160). However, in this study, the source of the data will be categorized in 3 categories, namely: (1) *verbal data*; in the form of interviews or interviews with research subjects, namely gays in the city of Bandung; (2) *observational data*; in the form of data from observations or observations by researchers; and (3) *mediated data*; in the form of data sourced from documents, records, archives, and physical devices. While the types of data used in the study consisted of two types, namely: (1) primary data; and (2) secondary data. Primary data includes data on gays (male homosexuals), data on religious practices they carry out, moral construction and religious values they understand, data on the influence and relationship between religious teachings, and moral criteria of the community.

Unit analysis in a study generally refers to a particular unit of what is studied, both individuals, institutions, a social event, certain phenomena, and others that are subject to research. The unit of analysis that will be used in this study is gay people in the city of Bandung, represented by several research subjects from the gay communities

themselves. While the interpretation criteria in this case refer to a standard assessment of the quality of the findings in research (Creswell, 2007). The criteria for interpretation of data findings in this study are formulated as follows:

- a. Data is obtained from relevant sources and is not merely a researcher's subjective assumption.
- b. Data can be interpreted by certain methods, according to the needs and theoretical and methodological contexts of research.
- c. Data interpretation is carried out in accordance with the formulation of the problem that has been determined in this study.

Result and Discussion

Based on the previous explanation, especially regarding the research design, this research will be carried out with procedures or steps which include the following stages: (1) *Preparation Stage*, at this preparation stage, the researcher will do the things that later become the basis for starting the research, which includes the following steps: (a) Initial observations of reality and actual phenomena, study of documentation and literature, methodological comparative studies, preparation of research proposals, followed by seminar on research proposals; (b) Taking care of permits, conduct research from the head of the study program; (c) Before the research is conducted, the researcher also conducts consultations and tests the material with the research supervisor especially those related to the focus of the problem and the questions that will be formulated in the study. (2) *Implementation Stage*, after obtaining approval of the research proposal submitted, the researcher then begins to compile a research schedule required for the research, among others: (a) Researchers move to find and collect data needed in accordance with the design of the data source (observation, documents, interviews) that will be used; (b) Researchers carry out the process of organization, selection, classification based on a specific theme or category on the findings of data collected, which is then continued.

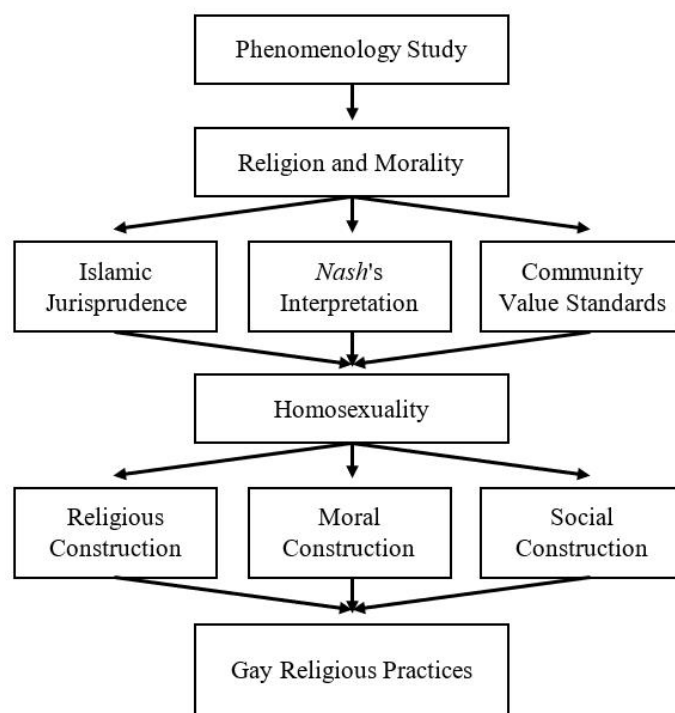


Figure 1 The Model of Religion and Morality towards Gay Religious Practices

The results of the study produce a model of the relationship of religion and morality to the religious practices of gays available in Figure 1. This phenomenon finally raises its own question, related to how in a society that morally and religiously rejects the practice of homosexuality, in fact an increase in the number of perpetrators of homosexuality. This phenomenon seems to indicate that the higher moral standards actually lead to high resistance also in the form of behavior against these standards. The more publications of religious teachings that emphasize the prohibition of the practice of homosexuality, the more discourses of resistance that emerge to counter it. The more restrained, the practice of homosexuality is actually growing.

In 2008 for example, there was a quite unique phenomenon related to homosexuality, namely the establishment of the Al-Fatah Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta. This pesantren was founded by Shinta, a transvestite, for other transvestites. This phenomenon had drawn strong protests from the surrounding community or other Islamic community organizations, because it was considered contrary to the values and teachings of Islam itself which did not

provide space for transgender people. In an interview published in Kumparan media for example, related to protests addressed to the existence of his Islamic Boarding School, Shinta stated that the Islamic Boarding School was established only to meet their spiritual needs (Pragota, 2017). What was stated by Shinta as the leader of the Al-Fatah Islamic Boarding School seemed to confirm that religious teachings (Islam) and moral (social) perspectives which denied their existence, did not necessarily become obstacles to living their spiritual path. There is a tension present in the faith held by transgender people or homosexuals, where they still feel able to draw closer to God, even though on the other hand they have to clash with religious doctrines that do not accept their existence.

The same thing was stated by one of the homosexuals in a pre-research study conducted by the writer in Bandung, that his sexual-affection orientation, even though it was forbidden in religion, did not necessarily become an obstacle for him to keep worshiping closer to God. Being a MSM, lesbian, or transgender does not necessarily make people always have to live in life behaviors that completely deviate from religious teachings. A gay person can even live like a pious person, even though there is an unusual sexual desire in themselves and is prohibited by the religion he believes (based on interviews with a gay person in the city of Bandung).

Phenomena such as this that ultimately underlie the author's interest to research, analyze, and discuss these matters in more depth, especially how homosexuals, especially gay people live and practice the teachings of their religion (Islam), in the midst of many doctrines and interpretations of the scholars who forbid the practice of homosexuality itself. The selection of the city of Bandung itself is based on data from the Ministry of Health which states that West Java is the province with the largest number of gays in Indonesia, where the city of Bandung is the center.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of religion and morality in gay religious practices is still an interesting discussion. There is an influence of religious, moral, and social construction that affects the religious activities of gays. Society still holds that gays have no morals and do not practice worship. However, the reality is that gays still carry out religious activities. The phenomenon of pros and cons of gays in carrying out religious activities is an initial discussion that can be further investigated in future research in more depth and comprehensively.

References

- Amer, S. (2009). Medieval Arab lesbians and lesbian-like women. *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 18(2), 215–236.
- Bhattacharjee, A. (2012). *Social science research: Principles, methods, and practices*.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208956>
- El-Rouayheb, K. (2009). *Before homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic world, 1500-1800*. University of Chicago Press.
- Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research*. Sage Publications Limited.
- Ghuddah, A., & Fatah, A. (1999). Al Ulama Al Uzzab alladzina Atsaru Al Ilm ala Al Zawaj. *Beirut: Dar Al Basya'ir Al Islamiyyah*.
- Habib, S. (2007). *Female homosexuality in the Middle East: Histories and representations* (Vol. 13). Routledge.
- Hannah, N. (2017). Seksualitas dalam Alquran, Hadis dan Fikih: Mengimbangi Wacana Patriarki. *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama Dan Sosial Budaya*, 2(1), 45–60.
- Hāqān, al-F. ibn M. I. (1967). *Deuxieme Partie Des Qala'id Al-'Iqyan Wa-Mahasin Al-A'yan*.
- Hatem, M. (1986). The politics of sexuality and gender in segregated patriarchal systems: the case of eighteenth-and nineteenth-century Egypt. *Feminist Studies*, 12(2), 251.
- Hendricks, M. (2010). Islamic Texts: A Source for Acceptance of Queer Individuals into Mainstream Muslim Society. *The Equal Rights Review*, 5, 31–51.
- Murray, S. O., & Roscoe, W. (1998). *Boy-wives and female husbands: Studies of African homosexualities*.
- Pragota, A. (2017). *Pesantren Al-Fatah: Menuntun Waria di Persimpangan Iman*. Kumparan. <https://kumparan.com/@kumparannews/pesantren-al-fatah-menuntun-waria-di-persimpangan-iman>
- Rice, M. (1999). *Who's who in Ancient Egypt*. Psychology Press.