Self-Disclosure Process in Gay/Lesbian Adolescents: Influencing Factors

Tommy Mozes La'lang[1*], Ratriana Y. E. Kusumiati[2] (iD)

[1,2] Psikologi, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga, Indonesia

A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A K

Permasalahan yang tengah dihadapi oleh kaum gay maupun lesbian terkhususnya remaja sekarang ini yaitu bagaimana menempatkan diri dalam kehidupan bermasyarakat. Permasalahan yang dihadapi oleh remaja gay dan lesbian dalam mengungkapkan orientasi seksual mereka kepada keluarga menjadi topik penting dalam penelitian ini. Remaja dengan orientasi seksual non-heteroseksual sering kali menghadapi stigma dan diskriminasi, yang dapat berdampak negatif pada kesehatan mental dan kepercayaan diri mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana proses self-disclosure terjadi pada remaja gay dan lesbian, serta faktor-faktor apa saja yang mempengaruhi proses tersebut. Untuk mencapai tujuan ini, penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologi, dengan subjek penelitian terdiri dari dua remaja, masing-masing seorang gay dan seorang lesbian yang telah melakukan self-disclosure kepada keluarganya. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan wawancara mendalam untuk mendapatkan gambaran yang kaya tentang pengalaman mereka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa self-disclosure kepada keluarga inti memberikan dukungan emosional yang signifikan bagi remaja, meskipun masih ada ketakutan terhadap reaksi negatif dari orang tua. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya dukungan keluarga dan perlunya pendidikan seksual yang inklusif untuk menciptakan lingkungan yang lebih menerima dan mendukung bagi remaja dengan identitas seksual yang beragam.

A B S T R A C T

The problem currently being faced by gays and lesbians, especially teenagers, is how to position themselves in social life. The problems faced by gay and lesbian adolescents in expressing their sexual orientation to their families are an important topic in this study. Adolescents with non-heterosexual sexual orientation often face stigma and discrimination, which can negatively impact their mental health and confidence. This study aims to understand how the process of self-disclosure occurs in gay and lesbian adolescents, as well as what factors affect the process. To achieve this goal, the research uses a qualitative phenomenological approach, with the research subjects consisting of two adolescents, one gay and one lesbian who have self-disclosed to their families. Data were collected through in-depth observations and interviews to gain a rich picture of their experiences. The results showed that self-disclosure to the nuclear family provided significant emotional support for adolescents, although there was still a fear of negative reactions from parents. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of family support and the need for inclusive sexual education to create a more accepting and supportive environment for adolescents with diverse sexual identities.

1. INTRODUCTION

People generally have sexual attraction to the opposite sex. However, in some cases certain people have a sexual orientation where they do not have that feeling or only a small amount of liking the opposite sex, they are instead "more" attracted to the same sex, therefore there will be problems for homosexual individuals, especially gays and lesbians (Ningsih et al., 2017; Yuan et al., 2017). The problem currently being faced by gays and lesbians, especially teenagers today, is how to position themselves in social life. An individual who has understood himself as a homosexual or is currently called gay or lesbian and has been open about his sexual orientation, this is called coming out (Asmara & Valentina, 2018;

*Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: tommymozes1234@gmail.com (Tommy Mozes La'lang)

Tambunan, 2021). A homosexual who has revealed himself will face various negative experiences in his life, one of which is being ostracized by the people around him (Barutu et al., 2021; Caceres et al., 2020; Choukas-Bradley & Thoma, 2022). Society still often views gay/lesbian as a deviant, sinful act that causes damage to the social order of humanity and even leads to the extinction of the human species (Adnyani, 2022; Sari, 2021; Tambunan, 2021). The doctrine of society towards homosexuals, results in the average homosexual preferring to hide their identity as a homosexual or often referred to as covert homosexual (Mutiara et al., 2023; Seran & Riwu, 2022; Terutung & Sukmaningrum, 2024). Because society is more accepting of someone who is heterosexual (Tarigan & Harahap, 2022; Utami, 2020).

Gay/lesbian both those who have accepted themselves and those who have not will be restless if they hide their identity as gay/lesbian continuously so that sometimes there is a desire to reveal themselves especially to family, because gays/lesbians do not want people at home or family to hear about their identity from people outside the home so there is a desire to reveal their identity, but there are still doubts and fears in gays and lesbians. Family behavior in LGBT teenagers, parents who cannot accept the choice of their child's 'reversed' sexual orientation such as homosexuality, they often act to set aside their children or remove them from the house, and abuse occurs physically and mentally to their children, this behavior is what often becomes a fear for gays/lesbians who find it difficult to reveal themselves (Bunsaman & Krisnani, 2020; Tambunan, 2021). The family here actually has a responsibility for the safety of other family members, especially when members are "talking". A close relationship is an important thing in a family (Barsigian et al., 2020; Diamond, 2020; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2020). Communication is very important in a family. If it is well established in the family, it can form the basis, maintain and shape the family along with the image of each family member (Agustin & Tamburian, 2019; Jun, 2020; Rahmah, 2019).

Self-disclosure is a type of communication in which we reveal information about ourselves that we normally keep hidden. This information includes thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Self-disclosure involves personal information that is normally and actively hidden. This means that the information disclosed is information that is kept secret about oneself. Self-disclosure can help individuals build intimacy with others (Prabandari & Huwae, 2024; Prihantoro et al., 2020). Based on the initial interviews conducted by the researcher with 3 informants, it was found that there was a phenomenon that something happened that underlies the subject's desire to be able to open up, especially to the family, but what is considered is the response from the family that will be obtained later. If the family accepts their child with an open heart, it means that the parents want to see their child happy with their choice, but if the family of a gay/lesbian refuses, it can cause conflict. Therefore, there needs to be a right time when a gay/lesbian wants to reveal themselves to their family (Prabandari & Huwae, 2024; Prihantoro et al., 2020).

This study is novel in its focus on the self-disclosure process carried out by gay and lesbian adolescents to their families in a social environment that is still full of stigma and discrimination. The novelty lies in the in-depth phenomenological approach, which provides a more detailed understanding of the emotional and psychological dynamics experienced by adolescents when disclosing their sexual identity. This study also highlights the important role of the family in forming a supportive environment, as well as exploring specific factors that influence adolescents' courage to self-disclosure, such as familiarity with certain family members and the family's religious background. Thus, this study enriches the literature by providing a new perspective on how self-disclosure can be an important tool for improving the mental well-being of gay and lesbian adolescents, and how families can act as a source of support or vice versa as a barrier in this process. This makes this study relevant for the development of more effective interventions in supporting adolescents with non-heterosexual sexual identities in Indonesia, a context that has not been widely explored before. The relevance of this study was conducted by researchers to discuss the phenomenon of gay/lesbians in families that focuses on gay/lesbian considerations in disclosing their sexual identity in the family. In this study, the researcher also wanted to know what considerations were taken into account when disclosing themselves as gay or lesbian and the methods used to express their sexual identity.

2. METHOD

The type of research used in this study is a qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach. Qualitative research is used to obtain a reflection of phenomena and data that are more natural, thus minimizing the presence of manipulation. Not only that, according to his research, it also says that descriptive qualitative research is research to create reality with the right interpretation and researchers can relate it as a mixture of information from observations and interviews to make analysis (Kuway & Huwae, 2023).

The information collection technique used in this study uses observation and interviews to collect more in-depth information. Stating that qualitative interviews are interviews between researchers and participants conducted face-to-face, by telephone, or by focus group interviews. Interviews are based on dimensions of self-disclosure, including the size or amount of self-disclosure, valence of self-disclosure, accuracy and honesty, goals, and individual intimacy. Apart from that, researchers also get interviews based on issues related to factors that influence self-disclosure, one of which is the factor of group size or audience size, the factor of feelings of liking us to open up to people, the factor of dyadic effects, the factor of people's competence, the factor of people's character, topics and gender. This interview was conducted face-to-face or by telephone on several social media platforms (WhatsApp, Google meet, Zoom Meet) (Ardiansyah et al., 2023; Karakaya & Kutlu, 2021).

Data collection, in this session the author collects data and the reality in the community used in the study. In this study, the information collection method used was in-depth interviews with research subjects. Then carry out data reduction, namely summarizing, sorting the main points, focusing on important things, looking for themes and removing things that are considered unnecessary in the research data. Where this process makes it easier for researchers to obtain a clearer reflection and makes it easier to carry out further data collection that is needed. After carrying out data reduction, the next step is to describe the data obtained in the form of descriptions or narratives. The presentation of this data aims to make it easier to master the data that is interwoven in the community. The last session that was tried was to carry out conclusions and verify the results of the data owned. Where can the data obtained respond to the formulation of existing problems or the emergence of new discoveries that have not previously existed. The interview guidelines used are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Interview Guidelines

No		Interview Guide
1	**Participant identity**	1. Asking for a name. 2. How old are you now? 3. What are you busy with now? 4. How was your activity today?

2	**Self-Disclosure Dimensions**
	  1. Size/amount of self-disclosure.
	  2. Self-Disclosure Valence.
	  3. Accuracy and Honesty.
	  4. Purpose and objectives.
	  5. Familiarity.
		1. Tell us to what extent you have shared information about their sexual orientation with your family?
		2. After sharing this information, do you feel that you still need to tell the story again or tell everything to your family, or do you feel that the information you have provided is sufficient?
		3. How about after you describe your sexual orientation to your family. Do they see it as something positive, negative or neutral?
		4. How do you feel and hope about your family's response to your self-disclosure to them?
		5. To what extent do you want to convey accurate information about your sexual orientation to your family?
		6. Do you think it is necessary to provide additional explanations or education to the family to ensure correct understanding?
		7. The intention of disclosing your sexual orientation to your family. Is it to build understanding, seek support, or encourage a change in family attitudes?
		8. Tell us about your hopes and goals regarding your self-disclosure.
		9. To what extent would you like to share very personal and intimate information about your sexual orientation with your family?
		10. What are your boundaries and comfort levels in intimacy with your family?

3	**Factors that influence self-disclosure.**
	  1. Group Size.
	  2. Feeling of liking.
	  3. Dyadic effect.
	  4. Competence.
		1. Who do you want to tell about your sexual orientation in your family?
		2. Is there a difference in how you want to share information with your family? If so, how is it different and what are your

No	Interview Guide
5. Personality. 6. Topic.Gender.	interests in sharing information with certain family members such as parents, siblings, or other family members? 3. How do you feel and what are your emotions when you want to talk about self-disclosure to your family? 4. What are your hopes regarding the response of your family who support and accept you? 5. How will your views on your relationships with other family members change after self-disclosure? 6. Do you have any concerns about possible changes in family dynamics after self-disclosure? If so, please explain further! 7. What communication skills do you feel are necessary to facilitate self-disclosure with family? 8. How do you feel about your ability to manage any arguments or conflicts that may arise after self-disclosure? 9. How does your personality influence the way you want to communicate with your family about your sexual orientation? 10. How does your personality affect self-disclosure, do you tend to be introverted or extroverted when communicating with your family? 11. What specific topics do you want to discuss with your family during self-disclosure? Why are those topics important to you? 12. Are there any topics that you feel need to be prepared more carefully or approached in a special way when talking to your family about your sexual orientation? Explain why! 13. How does your gender influence your expectations or concerns regarding your family's response to self-disclosure? 14. Do you feel there is a difference in the way you want to communicate with family members of the opposite gender?

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The data analysis process begins by producing verbatim from interviews conducted in detail and systematically. The research was conducted in June 2023 and the time in conducting this research was a month with the subjects. Furthermore, significant factual solids from the data were identified and coded. The goal is to obtain a clear picture of the facts. Identification is carried out on the themes and categories that emerge, so that major themes are formed. These major themes are then explained as the final step in data analysis. The major themes explained are as follows: Although there were still doubts when doing self-disclosure about sexual orientation, both subjects dared to provide information about their sexual orientation to family members they felt close to and both people told their siblings. The anxiety and worry felt by both subjects made them very careful in choosing people to talk to and do the self-disclosure. The subjects had communicated well to their siblings whom they chose to tell about themselves. The quality that was present was finally positive, namely both subjects received good responses from their siblings with each of the subjects' siblings' opinions to the subjects. Support from the subjects' siblings made the subjects feel safe even though with their circumstances where not everyone could accept the subjects' conditions. The subjects have recognized themselves, therefore they can carefully think about the situation they will face if they have honestly told their story. The subjects finally decided to limit the discussion raised in the family regarding their respective sexuality. The subjects also expressed that rather than telling their story directly to family other than siblings who have done self-disclosure, it is better for them to provide education about sexual orientation that cannot be linked to religious values. This also happened because both families of these two subjects are families with religious backgrounds. The hope of the subjects is to change the family's attitude towards views on homosexuality, and at the same time build a better understanding within the family. The subjects have the hope that through this disclosure, the family will see the human side of the subjects and replace prejudice with a more inclusive

and positive understanding of LGBT identities. Both subjects realized that this process was not easy and full of challenges, but they considered it important to build a deeper understanding within their religious families. Thus, the subjects hope that their families will be able to see beyond stereotypes and prejudices, and strengthen relationships full of love, loyalty, and understanding.

Subjects felt that their families provided a comfortable and non-judgmental space, so that there were no restrictions placed on the subjects' comfort zone in terms of self-disclosure. Subjects felt that their families had created an environment where subjects felt free to share or not share information about their sexual orientation. Subjects appreciated the fact that their families did not force or feel nosy (kepo) to know things that the subjects did not want to tell at this time. In this context, subjects felt respected and recognized in their decision to maintain their privacy.

In terms of factors such as group size, liking, and dyadic effects greatly influence both participants where the desire to share with others other than family is also quite high even though feelings of worry, anxiety, and fear arise when it will be discussed. In terms of topics, gender, competence and personality in this self-disclosure are the most important things because in doing self-disclosure what we want to see is the type of communication of these things that are so touching on how participants build relationships with others through self-disclosure communication that can be applied. self-disclosure is the process of disclosing information about oneself to others and is an important aspect of interpersonal communication to have closer relationships.

Discussion

Based on the analysis of data obtained from the research results, the author found similarities between research participants in the self-disclosure process of late adolescents who are gay/lesbian to their families. The following is a discussion of the self-disclosure process carried out by late adolescents who are gay/lesbian (Prihantoro et al., 2020; Sari, 2021). In this study, both participants have different genders, but have in common that they like the same sex. In living a life where feelings of liking the same sex have been going on for a long time, especially entering late adolescence and being in a community environment that is still taboo in terms of LGBT, especially gay/lesbian. So if gay/lesbian teenagers are able to do self-disclosure, especially to their families, then it can be said that this can be a support for the progress of life (Prabandari & Huwae, 2024; Prihantoro et al., 2020). Gay/lesbian teens can improve better communication and can be open to people especially family. Gay/lesbian teens are also able to do self-disclosure when sharing personal information about themselves such as hopes, fears, feelings, thoughts, and experiences.

Self-disclosure for a gay/lesbian is a situation with a focus on the interaction and experience of participants in sharing information about their sexual identity to their siblings. This situation was considered difficult by the participants, but they managed to overcome fear and doubt to open up to their siblings (Bazarova & Choi, 2014; Whale et al., 2018). Although self-disclosure is still limited to the nuclear family environment, both participants have overcome these challenges and have succeeded in creating space to tell stories and share experiences that are important in their self-development process. Both participants have not yet disclosed to their parents because they still have concerns within themselves. The difference between the first and second participants is that the first participant disclosed herself when gathering with her siblings and cousins, while the second participant disclosed herself to her siblings because of the strong closeness between the participant and her siblings (Gnambs & Kaspar, 2014; Kristanti & Eva, 2022). This closeness allows them to exchange messages and share experiences whenever they want. The participants still feel worried even though they have done self-disclosure to their siblings. They feel burdened with the desire to share and express themselves to their parents, but until now they have not found the right moment to do so (Prabandari & Huwae, 2024; Whale et al., 2018). This feeling of worry arises because they want to convey this to their parents, but they are still waiting for the right time so that their self-disclosure can go better and hopefully be accepted by their parents.(Etengoff et al., 2022; Hasnita et al., 2020; Rahmah et al., 2023).

In terms of the quality of self-disclosure from both participants, there are differences where the first participant considered that when he finished doing self-disclosure, he felt the valence of the quality he got was positive, because according to the participant no one judged him. While the second participant felt that the valence of the quality was quite neutral which was almost similar to the response of the first participant that his brother did not judge him, but the participant was given advice not to go beyond the boundaries (Bazarova & Choi, 2014; Mazer et al., 2007). The second feeling that participants felt was a sense of relief because they could tell about their true selves and it turned out that their families, namely their siblings, could accept them without any judgment in it so that the quality they got was also a positive quality valence. Communication is done by someone to convey information that has been stored to others,

and it can be seen that other people can also give a positive response (Prabandari & Huwae, 2024; Prihantoro et al., 2020).

In terms of honesty, goals, competence and personality in self-disclosure are the most important things because in doing self-disclosure what is wanted to be seen is the type of communication of these things that are so touching on how participants build relationships with others through self-disclosure communication that can be applied. Self-disclosure is the process of disclosing information about oneself to others and is an important aspect of interpersonal communication to have a closer relationship (Prabandari & Huwae, 2024; Praptiningsih et al., 2020). For intimacy with family, wanting to build intimacy with family even though there are differences between them where some have established intimacy in the family and some are in the process of building a more intimate relationship in the family by gradually starting to reveal themselves, both those who already have intimacy with family and those who are still in the process of building family intimacy caused by each family being busy with their own interests. In this case, both participants can reach a definition that says where personal information includes thoughts that are believed so that they can form intimacy and closeness with others. In terms of factors such as group size, liking, and dyadic effects, it greatly influences both participants where the desire to share with others besides family is also quite high even though feelings of worry, anxiety, and fear arise when it comes to discussing it (Susilowati et al., 2024; Tambunan, 2021).

Self-disclosure includes thoughts, opinions, and feelings. By disclosing themselves to others, individuals feel valued, cared for, and trusted by others, so that communication relationships will become closer. However, when their families do not want to accept them because both participants have done self-disclosure, they will behave normally in their daily lives. In the field of psychology, it provides an understanding of the importance of doing self-disclosure, so that they can be more open and self-disclosure as one of the social skills and the formation of a positive self-concept, especially for Gays and Lesbians whose existence is quite difficult to accept by many people and is even considered a family disgrace or something that is not normal in the social circle (Sari, 2021; Zardeckaite-matulaitiene, 2014).The research conducted by the author is still considered imperfect, because there are limitations during the research process. These limitations include limited information about participants due to confidential status and identity. As well as circumstances that are not forced to meet one of the participants directly because the participant has a fairly busy schedule in the current week when the researcher wants to interview the participant (Adnyani, 2022; Riadil, 2020).

Gay and lesbian late adolescents certainly face challenges such as social challenges such as stigma or discrimination, although this is not necessarily in all their social environments, but this can affect their mental health and self-confidence. Therefore, it is important for adolescents to be able to make families, friends, and even communities able to overcome the negative stigma related to gays and lesbians. Awareness of diverse sexual identities can help reduce prejudice and discrimination. Creating a supportive environment can support gay or lesbian adolescents involving joint efforts from families, schools, and communities. Finally, inclusive and comprehensive sexual education can help adolescents understand their sexual identity and develop positive attitudes towards differences. This also helps prevent the emergence of prejudice or harmful stereotypes.

This study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged, including the limited number of participants and the challenges in data collection caused by the confidentiality and identity of the participants. In addition, the busy schedule of one participant also limited the opportunity to conduct in-depth and direct interviews. Nevertheless, this study still makes an important contribution to understanding the self-disclosure process in gay and lesbian adolescents, especially in the family context. The strength of this study is the qualitative phenomenological approach that allows for in-depth exploration of participants' personal experiences, resulting in rich and relevant insights. The implications of these findings emphasize the importance of emotional support from families in the self-disclosure process of adolescents with non-heterosexual sexual orientations. This study also underscores the need for inclusive sexual education and supportive environments to help reduce stigma and discrimination against diverse sexual identities. These findings can provide the basis for more effective interventions to support the mental well-being of gay and lesbian adolescents in challenging social environments.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be seen that self-disclosure can be done by the subjects, namely late adolescents who are gay and lesbian, and in the process of self-disclosure that involves the recognition of their sexual identity to others including their own family. Therefore, the reactions from their family environment are quite varied, such as from their siblings who have accepted them, but not necessarily with their parents. This will affect the emotional and social well-

being of the subjects of course. The importance of emotional support from the family can have a positive impact on the subjects on their mental well-being and can provide a space for open discussion to help the subjects and even other teenagers feel accepted and build a positive sense of self-esteem.

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