COUNSELORS EXPERIENCES IN HANDLING THE COUNSELING SESSION ON THE GAY AND LESBIAN CLIENTS: FACTORS CAUSING THE OCCURENCE OF GAY AND LESBIAN BEHAVIOR

*1Siti Hajar Jamal, 2Mohd Faradi Mohamed Ghazali, 3Nasrudin Subhi & 4Salleh Amat

1Guidance and Counselling. Faculty of Education. National University of Malaysia.
2School Of Modern Languages And Communication. Faculty of Languages And Communication. Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin.
3Psychology and Counselling. Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. National University of Malaysia.
4Guidance and Counselling. Faculty of Education. National University of Malaysia.

*Corresponding author: sitihajar_jamal@yahoo.com

Received: 25 February 2019, Accepted: 28 May 2019

ABSTRACT

Gay and lesbian phenomenon has become talk of the town in Malaysia nowadays. It is considered as a controversial issue as it has started to expand since ancient times. There are various notions and perceptions of society towards gay and lesbian culture. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to identify the driving factors of the clients’ involvement in gay and lesbian world based on counselors’ experiences in handling their counseling sessions. The study has used qualitative study design involving semi structured in-depth interviews on counselors’ experiences while handling the gay and lesbian cases. Purposive sampling is employed in interviewing the counselors who have been identified by the researcher to have information in counseling session management with regard to the causing factors of the client’s involvement in gay and lesbian activities. Data were analyzed by studying the transcription of interview recording and identifying the themes that emerged based on the objectives of the study with the help of the N’vivo 11 program. Based on the analyzed data, there are four themes that emerged from the interview results; (i) family factor, (ii) education and (iii) sexual abuse and (iv) environment. The results demonstrate that counselors should possess knowledge and information regarding the clients so that they can help and assist these individuals in obtaining better lives. These gay and lesbian individuals should be provided with moral and spiritual support since some of them are the victims of circumstances. Therefore, the implication of the study is so that it can enhance a counselor’s knowledge if he or she wants to provide better counseling services to their clients (the gay and lesbian individuals). Apart from that, the findings are accentuated to be able to assist educators in counseling field so that the trained counselors will be more competent in dealing with gay and lesbian issue.

Keyword : Cause Factor, Counselor, Counseling, Handling, Gay and Lesbian Clients

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Carol (2007) and Jenkins (2010), gay is defined as individual who is biologically born as man, but is attracted to another man in terms of feelings, emotions and sexual attraction. Gay is also defined as sexual orientation in which the men have the desire to attract or engage in romantic relationships with those of same sex as them. Perry and Halkitis (2009) has explained on the other hand that lesbian is defined as woman who is attracted emotionally, sexually and physically towards another women (Perry & Halkitis (2009). While from the Islamic perspective, lesbian is known by the term ‘musahahaq’ and ‘Al-sihaq’ which is a reverse and outward relationship between women (Nor Hafizah et al., 2016; Mohd Izwan, 2016).

Various factors are associated with the existence of these homosexual individuals around the world whether or not the factors of their existence involve the family, the psychological state of the individual instinctively, genetically and biologically including internet culture space in society (Friedman, 1998). The practice of homosexual lifestyle is also influenced greatly by an individual’s innate and environment. A study that does not explain empirically and just simply because of the media's emphasis and enlargement on the issue that the homosexuals are expanding broadly can be examined in more specific manner. The psychological state that works with the formation of internal development becomes a very fundamental element in discerning the existence of this group essentially (Syarifah Rohaniah, 2011) has elucidated that the brain development of those men categorized in gender identity disorder are disparate from the normal men because their brain sizes are relatively smaller. However, this study is still vague and ambiguous in which it is still in the process of finding a strong answer through future studies because such studies are less conducted by health experts (Amran Hassan & Salleh Amat, 2015).

Family internal conflict is also one of the factors that leads the clients to be involved in gay and lesbian world (Kimmel, 2002; Schumm, 2010; Remafedi, Farrow & Deisher, 1998). Family internal conflicts experienced by the teenagers have led them to seek out the pleasure outside of their home through same sex relationship considerably as relationship that can replace their parents’ love and attention. The lack of communication with the parents has also resulted in the lesbian issue (Schumm, 2010). Parents who are too occupied with work and cause them to spend less time with their children have instigated the children to seek love and attention from other people through relationship with same sex partners. Close relationship with the father compared to the mother has also contributed to lesbian issue (Frisch, 2006). This happened mostly because of the lack of love and attention from the mother since childhood resulting in the lesbian teenagers to keep their distance and find those of same sex partner who can act as a mother to her.

The involvement of gay and lesbian culture takes place at various ages. Despite of that, most of the studies found out that the initiation of this kind of relationship significantly occur at the adolescent age. This is because at this stage, it is predominantly significant for the teens to seek for love and attentions as they tend to be a little bit immature in leading their life (John, 2008). Adolescents involved with lesbian symptom are said to have been ensnared starting around the age range of 13 years to 21 years and there are also some studies that find samples of those who started to get entangled with this symptom after the age of 25 and above (Kurdex, 2004). In accordance with studies by Graber & Archibald (2001), at the earlier generation, gay and lesbian teenagers have started to identify themselves as non-heterosexual at the beginning of their adulthood in which it was the moment where they
started to obtain freedom and independence from their families.

Therefore, in order to understand about gay and lesbian world, counselors should explore on the factors that lead to the clients’ involvement in gay and lesbian world. In respect to that, information that has been discussed is fundamental to counselors in conducting counseling session with gay and lesbian clients. Counselors should also have information on their clients’ background in terms of lifestyle and the driving factors of their behaviors. It is essential to possess this knowledge so as to facilitate counselors in forming an understanding regarding client’s lifestyle as well as to comprehend on their world without flaunting any bias and judgmental attitude.

2.0 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to explore on counselors’ experiences in identifying the factors of clients’ involvement in gay and lesbian world

3.0 METHODOLOGY

For this study, qualitative research design involving semi structured in-depth interview on counselors’ experiences in handling gay and lesbian cases is used. Purposive sampling was used to interview counselors who have been identified by the researcher that they have information on the handling of counseling sessions on the causes of the client's involvement in gay and lesbian activities. Purposive sampling was also used to interview counselors who meet with three sampling criteria that are (i) registered counselors with practice certificate (ii) counselors who have more than three years of experiences and (iii) counselors who have experiences in conducting counseling session with gay and lesbian clients. Fifteen research participants have been chosen comprise of seven males and eight females. All of them are the registered counselors who have been chosen by researcher. The number of the respondents are mentioned to be adequate in obtaining rich data for qualitative research (Hill et. al., 1997; Meriam, 2001). The names of the respondents who are involved in this study were not mentioned, however were substituted with Research Participant 1 (Peserta Kajian 1), Research Participant 2 (Peserta Kajian 2) and so on to comply with research ethics which requires the respondents as research subjects to be protected from being recognized so as to avoid any harassment, threats and misinterpretation towards them (Cresswell, 2003).

During data collection, researcher used voice recorders and telephone recorders as a means of recording conversations with research participants used in collecting this study information. For the procedure of data analysis, the researcher chose a three-tier data analysis approach by Miles & Hubberman (1994), the reduction, presentation and conclusion stage and data validation. Next, main themes are listed based on the objective of the study through the transcripts that will be analyzed (Othman Lebar, 2012; Meriam 2009; Creswell, 2015). For the reason that the data was collected from various sources such as interviews and document analysis, ergo in order to understand this large and unorganized data, a data management system was framed that is through data cleaning, understanding data in producing analytical concepts and categories with the aid of N’VIVO version 11 program.
4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interview data analysis, there are four themes that have been mentioned by the participants; (i) lack of love, (ii) family upbringing, (iii) sexually abused and (iv) environment factor. These four themes are the causing factor leading to clients’ involvement in gay and lesbian world based on counselors’ experiences in handling cases with clients.

4.1 Lack of love factor

Based on the findings, research participants emphasized on the lack of love from parents as the causing factor in leading the clients to be involved in gay and lesbian world. Most of the clients’ parents always quarrel, have lack of communication, tend to hit their children and frequently neglect their children. For this reason, clients tend to share their problems with their friends. This was shared by PK15 and PK6 based on the below interview transcripts:

As for the lesbian on the other hand, she did not get the love and attention she should get from her parents and there is no communication between her and her parents. Thus, they feel lonely. I have experience in conducting session with the daughter of ustaz and tok imam, his daughter is a lesbian.

(PK15)

Another one thing is they become this way is because of family factor. In the session itself, I will explore on the client’s background to see how the clients’ relationship with their family members were. As for the relationship of the clients with the parents who are divorced, their trust to men is relatively smaller and that is another factor why the client chose to be with partner of same sex as them.

(PK6)

Based on research participants’ statements, the lack of love factor covers lack of communication factor and drifted relationship with family members leading them to get less attention and love from their parents. Apart from that, poor family environment has caused the children to acquire less attention and indirectly diminishes the development and growth of a child (Gartrell et al., 2000; Patterson, 2000; Perrin, 2002; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). In family relationships, effective communication factors are especially important for children to be loved and to feel that their parents are concerned about them. According to Carlson and Lewis (1988), communication between parents and children is one of the important aspects of showing affection. This is due to the fact that when the interaction process occurs, love can be expressed whether from the parents to the children or from the children to the parents. If an inefficient interaction exists in a family institution, it will be difficult for the love in the family to be developed. This will indirectly led to the family members to engage with outsiders to obtain the love and affection they need (Nichols, 2014).

Khadijah Alavi et al., (2012) expressed a strained relationship between parents and children will cause children to go out and engage in sexual intercourse. Parents need to play an important role in the development of adolescent teens. Adolescent age is generally a stage where they often require someone to share their feelings (Remafedi et al., 1998). In family institutions, teenage girls for instance often refer to their mothers as a place for them to share issues that arise. However, this ill-advised parent has caused the teenagers to find their friends as an alternative to expressing the matter. Furthermore, according to Kurdex (2004)
on the other hand, in same sex relationship, lesbian partners act as friends and not as family. Therefore, it facilitates the communication process that occurs because friends tend to be more understanding than family members is.

4.2 Family upbringing

The upbringing factor is fundamental in forming a harmonious family. Parents should be the role model for the children. This is because based on the findings of the study, the study participants accentuated on the parents’ upbringing as a factor that has led them into being gay and lesbian. For instance, the parents’ rejection on the children’s real gender due to the parents’ desire on having children of the opposite sex has caused the child to be given an early exposure on being gay or lesbian by dressing the children with the clothes typical of the opposite sex (cross-dressing). Moreover, this also concerns the way of the children are raised in which the parents’ roles are changed as in the mother plays the role as a father and the father on the other hand is less involved in child rearing. This is shared by PK2 and PK1 as follows:

Like my clients, they mentioned that since they are small, the female clients are dressed as guys or the male clients are dressed ad women. So now when he or she has grown up, more mature and are not hedged like when he or she was small, he or she allegedly has choices into becoming whatever and whoever they want. He or she also can choose whoever he or she likes.

(PK2)

I think it might be from the family background itself as this happens to my own clients. From all those cases that I handled, I will observe from their family backgrounds, the number of siblings they have, the siblings’ genders. The questions on the family should be taken into consideration in the session in order to do exploration during the session held. There was one case when all of her siblings are guys and she is the only girl in the family. Since she was a child, she was treated as guys just like her other brothers. She has the characteristics as a man despite of the fact that she is a woman; probably her emotion and feeling are just like a man who loves another woman disregard of her real gender.

(PK11)

The findings are parallel to the one by Mohd Tajudin (2003) who expressed that psychological theory relates a certain behavior with the way of someone being brought up and nurtured since he or she is an infant to adolescent age and next until adult age. All of the behaviors that occur and revolve in a family will affect the children. Nevertheless, the parents’ interaction with their children is vital. This is due to the fact that the way they nurture and shape the children’s personalities may affect the children’s identities, roles and gender orientation. Opinion on parenting issues has been suggested as one of the reasons for gender dysphoria or formerly known as gender identity disorder. For instance, if the father is someone who is strict and the mother is too close to the son, then the child is likely to have difficulty in fostering friendship with women. From another point of view, a daughter who is too close to the father but excluded from the mother will lead her to be more comfortable in fostering relationship with women. Although it is difficult to evaluate this kind of view systematically but has always been displayed and proved whether through studies or
observations done by the experts about human’s development and psychology (Smith et al., 2005).

In addition, each person will go through different experiences in shaping who they are. Factors such as breed and environment are often associated when describing issues of individual differences. Meriam Omar Din (2001) and Noriah Ishak (2001), also asserted that there are several factors which contribute to bisexual such as children’s experiences in which the parents’ roles in encouraging the children’s behaviors will be used as the experience and guideline for the children’s future behaviors. As an example, in cross-dressing the children’s clothing to the opposite sex (boys are dressed as girls and vice versa).

4.3 Sexual abuse

Based on the findings, most of the counselors articulate that their clients are involved in gay and lesbian world because of the effect they experienced as victims of sexual abuse during their childhood days. It stems from the fact that they were sodomized by their father or close family members. This has caused the client to be traumatized from the incident and cause them to have wrong thoughts on their sexual desire and feelings toward same-sex relationships. The quotes are further explained through below transcripts:

Sometimes, I do feel sympathy for them. I have this one client where his own father sodomized him, force his own son to do oral sex, so all of these things can influence my client when he grows up. For example, if I had a son and I told my son to hold my private part, and he was around four or five years old. This is just as an example. All of the things he did slowly will make him to get used to it and when he grows up, he will feel excited and enjoy this just like childhood conditioning. So, when he grows up later on, he will tell other people to do that to him as well and he will find those from the same sex as his because the earlier role model was also of the same sex as his.

(PK9)

The findings are supported by PK15 who expressed that their client used to be sodomized by his own foster father. The love showed by his foster father was misinterpreted by him and finally led him to always become the victim of sodomy. Although it was on the basis of coercion but over time, it has become something common to him because he felt that this is like how the love is shown by a father to a son. This is further explained through below quote:

Why did they become gay? Some of them are being sodomized by their own family members for instance my client, he had been sodomized by his foster father because he had no father, his father never hugged him, never gave him affection, although he had a father but it seems like he has none, a very dominant father or the father is too fierce.

(PK15)

Therefore, it is crystal clear that sexual abuse and experiences have given negative effects to the client. According to Freud, between the ages of three to six years old, in which during the phallic stage, it is the stage where children have started to realize about their gender status and they started to learn the suitable role (Amran & Noriah, 2014). Their
personality’s development may be disrupted if they ever experience something bad such as being sodomized. It affects them in the way when they get to the genital stage, it will cause them to be driven by lust for men (if the individual is a man) or women (if the individual is a woman) if the exposure to the role of sex from the beginning is already wrong. Hormonal changes in the body during teen’s age cause them to be often affected by a change of mood (De Berg, 2003).

The influence of sexual abuse causes children to not accept what they have done and it will affect their lifestyle when they grow up (Amran & Suriati, 2013). The lifestyle of harboring feelings for individual of same sex has become their life basis in the quest for their life partner from the individuals of same sex as them. As a consequence, the existence of that kind of lifestyle occurs with the experiences of being sexually abused during their childhood day. It becomes the practice of their lives although they know that it is strictly forbidden and contrary to the teachings of Islam (Amran et al., 2011).

Next, according to Simari and Baskin (1982) and Jenkins (2010), the negative sexual abuse and experiences will lead an individual into becoming homosexual. The understanding and concern displayed by same sex couple somehow has become the support for the respondent to continue with their inverse life. According to Reis et al., (2000), the understanding in a relationship enables the relationship to experience less conflict, be positive and have quality. Hence, the understanding and concern obtained from the lesbian partner has made their relationship to experience less conflicts.

4.4 Environment factor

Based on the findings, participants of the study have stressed on the environment factor in terms of peer influences, social media and hostel life. These factors that have been mentioned by the participants of the study contribute to the clients’ involvement in gay and lesbian world. This is also shared through the below interview quote:

From my observation and experience in handling this case, I can see boarding school as one of the elements that can trigger these individuals existence because in one of the cases that I handled, the client used to go to boarding school. So there at the boarding school, they have been living together (the students who are of the same sex), hence they probably have no experience in love or anything. With the individuals of same sex (the students from their school), they somehow started the love story between them especially at the boarding school in which the same sex students are placed together (all boys or all girls boarding school).

(PK7)

They share a lot about their family and their peer influence because they live in the dorms that are all women. So, these are the things that can influence them to be involved in lesbian world.

(PK8)

From my experience of handling these gay cases, they started from hostel as in boarding school.

(PK10)
Based on the above findings, same sex relationship often occurs among teenagers regardless of their genders. This often happens in full boarding schools, preferably separate sexes that are more susceptible to the feeling because they routinely deal with friends of the same sex. This is due to the fact that there are a lot of homosexual cases betide in boarding school for instance senior students are attracted to cute junior students. They often use the foster brother term for this. This kind of situation also even takes place in religious based schools such as Islamic integration schools (Roslee et al., 2017). Although it seems normal yet if it is not monitored closely, it may cause the temporary sexual orientation to be eternal especially to those teenagers who have been involved directly with physical touch (Utusan Online, 2012).

Past experiences also contribute to these cases to occur for instance if an individual had sexual relationship with the person of same sex and he or she tends to enjoy it more, probably he or she will continue to do so. Bad experiences such as rape, abuse and others will probably cause someone to make generalization and lead them to hate the men. The guys on the other hand who have become gay since their school life (boarding school) and were used to be sodomized by their school senior will tend to do it again (Giertsen & Anderrsen, 2007; Hughes, 2006). Hughes (2006) explained that about 28% of those who are homosexuals were exposed to being sexually abused during their childhood days and these conditions have influenced their sexual orientation to harbor feelings for individuals of same sex. The sexual abuse influence itself has resulted in the children to not being able to accept what they have done until it affects their lifestyle when they become adults (Amran & Suriati, 2013).

5.0 CONCLUSION

The study has highlighted several factors and issues arising out of gay and lesbian symptoms based on the experience of counselors in handling the related cases. Gay and lesbian individuals are those who suffer from psychological and internal problems. They need to be provided with help so they will not be carried away in the modernization. This study is not only addressed to counselors but also to parents, NGOs and the government itself to take this matter into consideration and to monitor these symptoms in a close manner. In addition, family institutions should also be strengthened as in general, family institution is considered as an excellent human capital formation agent. Parents, in particular, should play their part in order to ensure that their children have enough love and attention. With the role of various parties, these gay and lesbian individuals are expected to recover and thus help in developing religions, races and nation. The implication of this study is that it can increase the level of knowledge of the counselors in providing counseling services to gay and lesbian individuals. Last but not least, the findings of this study are anticipated to help educators in the field of counseling with the purpose that the counselors that are trained will be more competent in handling gay and lesbian issues.
REFERENCES


Perry N. Halkitis et.al. (2009). The meanings and manifestations of religion and spirituality among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. *Journal Adult Development* 16 (2) : 301-310.


