

Exploring Same-Sex Attraction in Indonesian Churches: Teachings, Attitudes, and Experiences

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The aim of this study is to explore the issue of same-sex attraction (SSA) among church members in Indonesia. Using both qualitative and quantitative method, the teaching of the leaders, attitudes of the church members, and the experiences of SSA are described. Six church leaders of six churches in Surabaya, Indonesia were interviewed in semi-structured interviews and 268 church youths filled questionnaires on SSA. The results show that the majority of church leaders and church youths have conservative attitude toward SSA. As many as 5.6% of participants have experienced SSA at a time of his/her life. Similar with Indonesian church youths in general, most of them agree with and do maintain abstinent sexual lifestyle. Implications and suggestions are discussed.

Keywords: Same-sex attraction, church youths, Surabaya

Tujuan studi ini adalah meneliti isu daya tarik terhadap sesama jenis kelamin (*same sex attraction* = SSA) di antara anggota gereja di Surabaya. Studi ini memakai pendekatan kualitatif dan kuantitatif, untuk mengungkap pengajaran para pemimpin gereja, sikap anggota gereja, dan pengalaman SSA. Enam pemimpin gereja dari enam gereja di Surabaya, diwawancarai dengan wawancara semi-terstruktur dan 268 remaja gereja mengisi kuesioner tentang SSA. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas pemimpin gereja dan remaja gereja memiliki sikap konservatif terhadap SSA. Sejumlah 5.6% partisipan pernah mengalami SSA dalam hidupnya. Serupa dengan remaja gereja pada umumnya, kebanyakan mereka setuju dengan atau bergaya hidup abstinensi secara seksual. Didiskusikan implikasi dan saran-saran.

Kata kunci: ketertarikan sesama jenis kelamin, remaja gereja, Surabaya

The history of same-sex attraction (SSA) in academic literatures started on 19th century, with the publication of Karl Ulrich's concept of "urnings" (referring to gay). After that publication, other classic theorists continue to write about SSA, such as Karl Kertbeny, Magnus Hirschfeld, Evelyn Hooker, and Michel Foucault with his controversial book "The History of Sexuality" (as cited in Strong, DeVault, Sayad, & Yarber, 2005).

One intriguing question is the prevalence of SSA in the population. Various studies found different figures on this question. The most frequently cited data is Alfred Kinsey's finding on 1948 and 1953. It was found that 10% of the 16,000 participants admitted experiencing SSA. But the study was criticized because the samples are not randomly chosen, so it is not representative to the population. Other data from General Social Survey 1994 in USA showed that 2.5% of US population engaged in

same-sex sexual activities during the last 12 months prior to the survey. National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLS), another US survey in the same year which is claimed nationally representative, demonstrated that 4% of women and 9% of men admit have same-sex partner (Kelly, 2006). More recent data among Australian population shows that the prevalence of SSA is 8.6% among women and 5.9% among men. But this number decreases into 5.7% and 5% respectively when non-genital sexual activities are neglected (Grulich, de Visser, Smith, Rissel, & Richters, 2003).

Another intriguing question in this issue is what the origin of SSA is. Psychoanalytic theory explains the origin of SSA is a weak, detach, ineffective father and overprotective, attach, controlling mother; so that the son identify himself to the mother rather than to the father. But this psychoanalytic explanation is not supported by empirical findings. On the other hand, twin studies and advancement in biochemical and genetics demonstrate that the origin of SSA is more biological (genetic, neurological, and hormonal)

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