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#### College Students' Attitude toward Homosexuality

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Homosexuality is remains a sensitive issue in Indonesia and recently its controversy brought up to universities campuses life. In addition, more government officials, political and religious leaders, and also religious groups speak out against homosexuality. Studies in Indonesia had shown that society tend to have resistance toward homosexuality. Due to increasing number of homosexuals and had interacted with various people, most of college students nowadays might became familiar with homosexuality in their life. This study aim to describe college students' attitude toward homosexuality. The college students' attitude toward homosexuality scale was constructed based on Kite and Whitley's theory. The scale was consisted of 78 statements in Likert scale, where its reliability and validity were .962 and .745, respectively. Participants were 92 college students, consists of 37 men (40.2%) and 55 women (59.8%), ages 19 to 29 years ( $M = 20.88$ ,  $SD = 1.734$ ), who were attending universities in Jakarta. One-sample t-test confirmed the hypothesis that participants' score ( $M = 203.93$ ;  $SD = 39.80$ ) were significantly lower than 234,  $t(91) = 7.245$ ,  $p < .05$ . In addition, demographic variables (gender, age, and religion) were not contribute significantly to attitude toward homosexuality, except for study program. Therefore, we conclude that college students' had a negative attitude toward homosexuality.

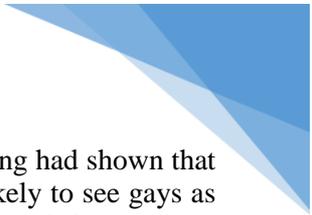
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#### 1. Introduction

Homosexuality is remains a sensitive issue in Indonesia. Some parties have shown support, but numerous parties shown great opposition toward homosexuality. Recently, controversy about homosexuality brought up to universities life. This controversial issue begun on January 24, 2016 when Minister of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia said that homosexual people should be banned from university campuses because they corrupt the nation's morals and a university is a moral safeguard.<sup>1</sup> Although then he revised his statement that rectors of universities can make their own rules about homosexuality in their campuses.<sup>2</sup> More recent, rejection of homosexual students by Andalas University, which then supported by Governor of West Sumatera<sup>3</sup>, add another controversy.

More government officials and also political and religious leaders speak out against homosexuality recently. People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) Chairman considered homosexuality to have no place in Indonesia.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Minister of Religious Affairs said that same-sex orientation is an illness, then homosexual people required treatment and counseling.<sup>5</sup> Religious groups, consist of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), the Indonesia Catholics Bishops Conference (KWI), the Council of Buddhist Communities (Walubi), and the Confucian Supreme Council of Indonesia (Matakin), had released a joint statement issued on February 18, 2016, said they rejected all forms of propaganda on and promotion of homosexuality legalization and development in the country.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, The Indonesian Psychiatrists Association (PDSKJI) still classified homosexuality as mental disorder, which it says can be cured through proper treatment.<sup>7</sup> This was a step-down from what American Psychiatric Association (APA) did in 1973<sup>8</sup> and World Health Organization (WHO) did in 1990<sup>7</sup>, which they had removed homosexuality from their lists of psychiatric disorders.

Several studies in Indonesia had shown that society tend to have resistance toward homosexuality. A Pew Research Center poll in 2013 found that 93% respondents in Indonesia saying that gay people should not be accepted.<sup>9</sup> In Jakarta, 73% of the adult participants in 2015 said that they did not want to be close



with homosexual people.<sup>10</sup> More specific, a study in 2016 at a state university in Lampung had shown that Muslim college students' attitudes toward gays tend to be negative, which they were likely to see gays as deviation and requiring great energy to recover to the heterosexual condition.<sup>11</sup> Although it has no laws against homosexuality or laws protecting against same sex discrimination, Indonesia is a nation that characterized by a strong survivalist orientation, which all residents may be less likely to tolerate attitudes and behaviors that deviate from the norm.<sup>12</sup>

Ministry of Health in 2012 had estimated over one million gay people itself in Indonesia<sup>13</sup>, which it had increased 37% than in 2009, and it was believed that in 2017 this number had increased significantly.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, nowadays most of college students might become familiar with homosexuality in their life because they had interacted with numerous people from various backgrounds. It is important to address homosexuality issue on the college campus because it is common for college students to “come out” during the college years about their sexual orientation.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Lubbers et al.<sup>16</sup> found higher educated to be more permissive towards same-sex marriage compared to lower educated persons. In other words, college students might had a positive attitude toward homosexuality. Then, it bring up a question: did college students tend to have negative attitude toward homosexuality, like society did?

Concept of attitude itself refers to psychological tendency, which is expressed by evaluating a particular entity, being material or immaterial.<sup>17</sup> Since colleges and universities are the final stepping stone for many young adults who are about to enter the workforce<sup>18</sup> and society, it is important to describe college students' attitude toward homosexuality. Moreover, attitude helps to explain the consistency of a person's behavior.<sup>17</sup> College students' attitude will determine how they interacting with other people at work and society. Moreover, negative attitude toward homosexuality will lead to prejudice and discrimination toward homosexual people.<sup>10</sup> Scientific theory and empirical research can be used to understand why people hold the attitudes they do and how best to effect positive attitude change on a societal level.<sup>19</sup>

According to Hudson and Ricketts<sup>20</sup>, attitude towards homosexuality refers to a personal affective response to gay people. Attitudes toward homosexuality were classified into three subcomponents.<sup>21</sup> First, *attitudes toward homosexual persons*, conceptualized as “homosexuality as a threat to the respondent, to people close to the respondent, and to strangers, and the management of homosexuality by means of social restrictions”. Second, *attitudes toward homosexual behavior*, conceptualized as “the moral reprehensibility of homosexuality as a deviant sexual act and lifestyle”. And the last, *attitudes toward homosexual persons' civil rights*, conceptualized as “issues such as free speech, parental rights, and other legal and constitutional issues”.

Studies had shown that gender, age, and religion were the most contributing factors to attitude toward homosexuality. Men hold more negative attitudes toward homosexual people than women do.<sup>21</sup> Another study had shown that females are more accepting of homosexuality than males.<sup>15</sup> These negative attitudes were influenced by a generalized gender belief system, which includes stereotypes about women and men, attitude toward appropriate roles for the sexes, and perceptions of those who presumably violate the modal pattern, like homosexual people.<sup>21</sup> In term of age, young people are less prejudiced and less intolerant toward people perceived as being different from older people.<sup>22</sup> In other words, college students should have more positive attitude toward homosexuality compare to older people. This was consistent with a study in Albania who found that older students are more prejudiced against homosexuality.<sup>23</sup>

Religion has a large influence on an individual's attitude toward homosexuality. Muslims are less likely to approve of homosexuality than Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and people with no religion.<sup>12</sup> Regarding study program, studies found that study program was also contributed to attitude toward homosexuality. Students of Psychology Department in Albania<sup>23</sup>, Ghanaian students of Technology University<sup>24</sup>, and nursing students in Malaysia<sup>25</sup> tend to have a negative attitude toward homosexuality. In USA, students of the College of Arts and Sciences were found be more tolerant than students of the Colleges of Business and Education.<sup>15</sup>

Based on background above, the aim of this study was to describe college students' attitude toward homosexuality. As a part of society and supported by previous studies in Indonesia, it assumed that college students' attitude toward homosexuality will same as the society. Therefore, author propose a hypothesis: college students had a negative attitude toward homosexuality.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

Data was collected on May, 2016. Participants were 92 college students, consists of 37 men (40.2%) and 55 women (59.8%), ages 19 to 29 years ( $M = 20.88$ ,  $SD = 1.734$ ), who were attending universities in Jakarta. Most of the participants were Muslims (78%), successively followed by Protestants (10.9%), Catholics (5.4%), Buddhists (3.3%), Hindus (1%), and other (1%). Regarding marital status, 86 participants (93.5%) were unmarried, five (5.4%) were married, and a participant omitted. A total of 48 students (52.2%) were studied in psychology, the remaining were economics (11.9%), engineering (9.8%), health (medicine, dentistry, nursery, etc., 7.6%), and other studies (law, literate, social studies, etc., 16.3%), meanwhile 2.2% were omitted.

### 2.2. Instrument

The college students' attitude toward homosexuality scale was constructed by the author in *bahasa* based on three subcomponents according theory by Kite and Whitley<sup>21</sup>, which were: *attitudes toward homosexual persons* (30 statements, e.g. "Saya tidak mau berteman dengan mahasiswa homoseksual", unfavorable), *attitudes toward homosexual behavior* (36 statements, e.g. "Melakukan hubungan sesama jenis adalah perbuatan melanggar perintah Tuhan", unfavorable), and *attitudes toward homosexual persons' civil rights* (12 statements, e.g. "Setiap mahasiswa berhak mendapat perlakuan yang sama, apapun orientasi seksualnya", favorable). There were 78 statements with a 5-point scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Unfavorable statements are reverse coded, such that higher scale scores indicate more positive attitudes. The overall scale and subcomponents had high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .962, .942, .937, and .840, respectively) and also a high construct validity ( $r = .745$ ), which had correlated with social distance toward homosexuality scale from Yulianto.<sup>10</sup>

### 2.3. Procedure

The scale was distributed in several locations in Jakarta; most of them were in universities campuses. Students were approached by research assistants and briefed on the research study and also anonymity and confidentiality in participation. If they were agree, research assistants gave the scale.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

One sample t-test was conducted for hypothesis testing. Based on the scale, negative attitude was operationalized as "the scale score below or equal to 234". It came from the scale theoretical mean, which is 78 statements times 3. Therefore, the participants mean scale will be compare to test value of 234 in one sample t-test. For further analysis, one-way ANOVA test were used to compare attitude based on gender, religion, marital status, and study program. In addition, Pearson's correlation was used to correlate attitude toward homosexuality and age. IBM SPSS version 23.0 was used in all data analysis.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The participants' scores on the scale ranged from 106 to 298 ( $M = 203.93$ ;  $SD = 39.80$ ). One-sample t-test indicated that participants' score were significantly lower than the scale's theoretical mean of 234,  $t(91) = 7.245$ ,  $p < .05$ . In addition, there were 72 participants (78.3%) who had score lower than or equal to 234. Therefore, college students had a negative attitude toward homosexuality. This finding is consistent with studies from Pew Research Center<sup>9</sup>, Yulianto<sup>10</sup>, and Haryanto<sup>11</sup>, that society in Indonesia tend to have a negative attitude toward homosexuality. This was not surprising given that homosexuality is not welcome in Indonesia, although it is not illegal. College students and society in Indonesia consider homosexuality as a form of deviation or "disease" that should be avoided or cured.<sup>11</sup>

There was no significant correlation between age and attitude toward homosexuality,  $r(90) = .201$ ,  $p > .05$ . Therefore, age was also not become a significant factor contributed to attitude toward homosexuality. These finding are consistent with Ng et al.<sup>25</sup> and also Haryanto<sup>11</sup>. Age no longer seems to be an important factor in shaping attitudes toward homosexuality over time.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, based on Levinson's developmental theory<sup>27</sup>, all participants were in adult stage, which had similar social role requirements and also similar interaction between personal growth and relationships, so their attitude would be the same across sub-stages of adult stage.

Although group sizes among demographical variables were unequal, Field<sup>28</sup> said that is not a problem for ANOVA test but assumption of homogeneity of variance should not be violated. Using Levene's test of homogeneity of variance, all demographic variables (gender, religion, marital status, and study program) did not violate this assumption. Table 1 displays descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA tests for demographic variables.

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics and ANOVA Test for Demographical Variables (N=92)*

Variable	n (%)	M (SD)	F (df1, df2)
Gender			1.735 (1, 90)
Men	37 (40.2)	197.29 (42.19)	
Women	55 (59.8)	208.40 (37.85)	
Marital Status			3.017 (1, 89)
Married	5 (5.4)	234.00 (39.57)	
Unmarried	86 (93.5)	202.42 (39.52)	
Omitted <sup>a</sup>	1 (1.1)	-	
Religion			1.470 (3, 86)
Muslim	72 (78.3)	198.23 (37.95)	
Protestant	10 (10.9)	210.30 (43.83)	
Catholic	5 (5.4)	224.40 (28.63)	
Buddhist	3 (3.3)	228.33 (4.93)	
Hindus <sup>a</sup>	1 (1.1)	294.00 (-)	
Other <sup>a</sup>	1 (1.1)	285.00 (-)	
Study Program			5.375 (4, 85)*
Psychology	48 (52.2)	219.40 (36.33)	
Economics	11 (11.9)	180.00 (34.34)	
Engineering	9 (9.8)	177.33 (44.74)	
Health studies	7 (7.6)	188.71 (25.96)	
Other	15 (16.3)	190.33 (36.56)	
Omitted <sup>a</sup>	2 (2.2)	-	

<sup>a</sup> excluded in ANOVA test

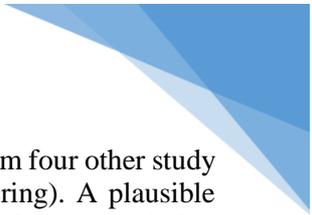
\*  $p < .05$

Even though female students ( $M = 208.40$ ,  $SD = 37.85$ ) slightly higher compare to male ( $M = 197.29$ ,  $SD = 42.19$ ), there were no significant different in attitude toward homosexuality,  $F(1, 90) = 1.735$ ,  $p > .05$ . This finding was consistent with Haryanto<sup>11</sup>. Another similar study, using nursing students of a public university In Malaysia, was also concluded that gender is not a determining factor for attitude toward homosexuality.<sup>25</sup> It seems both female and male college students in this study hold a same traditional gender roles belief, that is men should be masculine and women should be feminine. Studies have shown that adherence to traditional gender roles, which refer to acceptable and unacceptable behaviors prescribed by society for both men and women, have consistently been linked to anti-homosexual prejudice.<sup>24</sup>

Further, in this study marital status did not contribute to attitude toward homosexuality, where there was no significant different between married students ( $M = 234.00$ ,  $SD = 39.57$ ) and unmarried students ( $M = 202.42$ ,  $SD = 39.52$ ),  $F(1, 89) = 3.017$ ,  $p > .05$ . This result was consistent with study on college students in Turkey<sup>29</sup>. Similar to plausible reason in gender, it seems both married and unmarried students still hold the same traditional gender belief.

Similar with Ng et al.<sup>25</sup>, Muslim students, as well as students from other religions, had a negative attitude toward homosexuality in this study. Although Muslim students' attitude ( $M = 198.23$ ,  $SD = 37.95$ ) were slightly lowest compare to students from other religions (Protestant, Catholic, and Buddhist), it was found no significant different,  $F(3, 86) = 1.470$ ,  $p > .05$ . It could be happen because live in a Muslim-majority encourage disapproving attitudes about homosexuality.<sup>12</sup> Participants' attitude toward homosexuality appear to be consistent with religious and political leaders, which most of them are Muslims, that they rejected all forms of homosexuality in Indonesia.

The only demographic variable that had a significant difference was study program,  $F(4, 85) = 5.375$ ,  $p < .05$ . Post-hoc analyses using LSD indicated that attitude toward homosexuality were significantly highest



for students from psychology program ( $M = 219.40$ ,  $SD = 36.33$ ) compare to students from four other study programs (with mean difference between 29.06 for other study and 42.06 for engineering). A plausible reason for this finding is that according to Indonesian Higher Education Psychology Organizers Association (AP2TPI), one of objective of the undergraduate psychology study program is to produce bachelors in psychology which have respect to human dignity and value with professional and responsible, able to solve problem psychologically to the individual, group, organization, and community without discriminating based on tribe, religion, race, age, gender, and social-economic-culture status.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, psychology students are taught to be respect to every individuals regardless their background, including sexual orientation. It is very important that the students of Psychology should have good attitudes toward homosexuality.<sup>23</sup> However, it was surprising for students from health studies that they had a negative attitude toward homosexuality ( $M = 188.71$ ,  $SD = 25.96$ ). They should had more positive attitude toward homosexuality since the concept of fair and non-judgmental attitude toward all types of patients is crucial in medical treatment, and it should be emphasized to all healthcare professionals.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

This study confirm that college students' attitude toward homosexuality tend to be negative, similar to attitude of general society in Indonesia. The negative attitudes might be an indication of the people's unpreparedness to accept homosexual people as part of the society. This was not surprising given that homosexuality considered by society in Indonesia as a form of deviation or disease that should be avoided or cured. The negative attitude were influenced by traditional gender roles that hold by college students.

#### 5. Implication of the study

This study used a nonrandom sample and therefore it is unable to be generalized and compared to the larger population of all college students in Jakarta. Therefore, future researches should use a random sample in order to generalize the results. According to Whitehead<sup>31</sup>, one of the strongest predictors of attitudes toward homosexuality is the attribution of choice to sexual orientation, where people who believe that homosexuality is the result of natural or biological forces have more positive attitudes to homosexuals, whereas those attributing homosexuality as the result of a choice have more negative attitudes. Since the attribution of choice to sexual orientation did not measured in this study, then it should be explored in future research. In this study we were described attitudes toward homosexuality as a general. However, several studies had shown that attitude toward gay differ significantly than attitude toward lesbian.<sup>29,17</sup> Therefore, future researches should measure attitude separately, attitude toward gay and attitude toward lesbian.

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