

# Gay Efforts To Overcome Discriminatory Treatment: A Case Study On Gaya Mahardhika Foundation Surakarta

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## **Abstract.**

*The aim of this study is to explain the strategies employed by gay individuals to overcome discriminatory attitudes and behaviours perpetuated by society. This research is qualitative using , phenomenological approach and utilising a purposive sampling technique.. This paper used the data analysis from Creswell, utilising source triangulation and member checking. The subjects of this study were four gay individuals from the Gaya Mahardhika Foundation in Surakarta who had experienced discriminatory treatment from society. This research uses the social construction theory of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. This study shows that the social construction of homosexuality is shaped by a dialectical process. It involves externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation. These processes can be observed in the following ways (1) The externalisation process involves openly expressing one's social identity and sexual orientation, as well as forming alliances within the gay community and participating in community activities. (2) The objectivation process entails the ascription of values, norms and meanings to one's social identity and sexual orientation. The participants in this study perceive their social identity and sexual orientation as objective reality, formed naturally like that of other heterosexual people. They refuse to justify or accept society's negative views and stigma toward their social identity and sexual orientation. (3) The third process, internalisation, involves the participants trying to change society's views of their group (gay through community social activities. They proactively advocate for their rights to be treated fairly and equally. hey seek recognition from the government and society.*

**Keywords:** Social Construction, Gay and Discriminatory Treatment.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The debate over sensitive issues like social identity and sexual orientation continues this day. Consequently, it is unsurprising that negative stigma and stereotypes are frequently associated and directed towards specific social identities and sexual orientations, including those pertaining to homosexuality. On daily, members of the gay community in Indonesia face stigma that they are seen as criminals, pedophiles, jealously individual, mentally unstable, and as victims of urban life due to their "abnormal" lifestyle. The perception of homosexuality as an aberrant practice has a long historical trajectory, originating with the advent of Western colonialism in Asian countries, including Indonesia. This period saw the introduction of puritanical Christian values, which contributed to the formation of a societal outlook that regarded homosexuality as deviant. These values include the view that the appropriate, correct, and natural sexuality for humans is procreative sexuality, which is sexual activity that can provide or produce offspring. This view is based on heterosexual marriage that aims to continue the lineage (Yulius, 2015). Society often rejects those who are attracted to both men and women. Gay and lesbians are grouped into homosexual groups (Demartoto, 2010). The rejection of the homosexual community is caused by various factors, one if it is the belief that God and religion prohibit same-sex relationships. It leads to the conclusion that society and the state should not protect homosexuals. Many people believe that individuals can choose to avoid homosexuality if they desire. The homosexual lifestyle is seen as a destructive, deviant practice. It violates society's norms.

The sexual relationships, including sodomy and other related practices, engaged in by homosexual individuals are perceived as anomalous and deviant behaviours (Gadis, et al., 2015). This indicates that social and cultural constructions, in conjunction with the tenets of religious laws espoused and observed by our society, give rise to the perception that homosexuality is an abnormal, deviant, and unorthodox sexual attraction that deviates from the religious and cultural values of the local community, including the people of

Surakarta in general. The assumption that gay people have an abnormal sexual condition makes it hard to accept and integrate them into everyday life. Mastuti (cited in Hidayah, 2017) posits that some individuals perceive homosexuals as a symbol of abomination and shame for the family, leading to discriminatory treatment that is often inhumane. The negative stigma, ostracism, physical and psychological violence (including bullying and persecution) and other discriminatory treatment that they face on a daily basis is a result of their social identity and sexual orientation differing from those of their immediate social environment. These inhumane events are experienced by them in a multitude of settings and at any given moment, by anyone. Discrimination can be defined as the act of making a distinction between two or more individuals or groups based on one or more characteristics, such as race, religion, tribe, ethnicity, group, class, status, and socio-economic class, physical body condition, age, ideological and political views, national boundaries, nationality, gender, and sexual orientation (Setiadi, et al., 2008).

Setiadi, et al. (2011) explained that 'discrimination' describes harmful actions against individuals or groups with different, ascriptive traits. These include race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and age. Such actions come from a more dominant or majority group. For example, the experiences of gay people and other minority groups, such as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or transsexual) individuals, are often marginalised and subjected to discriminatory treatment. As Nurussalikhah (2015) notes, social stigma from conservative religious beliefs fuels discrimination against the LGBT community and other minorities. These beliefs and teachings often encourage the formation of social discrimination, manifesting in various forms such as stigmatisation, ridicule, bullying, harassment, and exclusion. Additionally, they can give rise to physical and psychological violence. This viewpoint is supported by the statements of Anjani et al (2019), that most Indonesians believe homosexuals have the right to live in Indonesia. However, empirical evidence suggests those discriminatory attitudes and negative social stigma continues to impede their social integration. Consequently, they encounter significant challenges in engaging with society in an open and unrestricted manner, as their social identity and sexual orientation are often perceived as anomalous and divergent. Consequently, the majority of our societies, including that of Surakarta, deems homosexual individuals to be a group that should be shunned and even ostracised, as their existence is perceived to deviate from prevailing social norms and values.

This leads to the social sanctions that are currently in place against them being viewed as entirely justifiable. Furthermore, there is a concern that their presence may have a detrimental impact on the mental health and well-being of heterosexual individuals. The discriminatory treatment and negative views attached to gay people have resulted in some individuals choosing to conceal their social identity and sexual orientation. Society's prevalent sexual relations pattern is mostly heterosexual in nature. This heterosexual pattern of society exerts an influence on their respective views. The heterosexual view that considers homosexuality to be deviant and abnormal leads homosexual individuals to choose to present themselves as heterosexual and experience feelings of disgust towards their sexual orientation. This is done deliberately and assertively in order to survive in the context of blasphemy, insults, and discriminatory treatment from heterosexual society (Oetomo, 2001). The diverse experiences that a gay person encounters throughout their life, from developing self-awareness about their gay or homosexual identity to facing various forms of rejection, both from themselves and from their surrounding environment, ultimately leading to the full acceptance of their homosexual orientation, constitute a social construction that they navigate and live with throughout their lifetime. In their social reality construction theory, Berger and Luckmann (cited in Kuswarno, 2013) posit that social reality exists objectively, yet its meaning is derived from and ascribed by the subjective relationship between the individual and the objective world.

This implies that, in this instance, despite the objective existence of the social structure, the structure's meaning is shaped by an individual's interpretation and engagement with the social environment. In the context of social reality construction theory, Peter and Luckmann further elucidated that they conceptualised the term 'dialectic between the self and the sociocultural world' in three simultaneous 'moments', namely externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation (cited in Bungin, 2015). This research will explain how the Gaya Mahardhika Surakarta Foundation's efforts to combat discriminatory treatment from society align with the aforementioned three simultaneous moments.

## II. METHODS

This research is a qualitative study employing a phenomenological approach utilising a purposive sampling technique tailored to the research objectives. The informants in this study were members of the Gay Gaya Mahardhika Foundation in Surakarta, totaling four individuals. The data analysis employed was that proposed by Creswell (1998) for the analysis of data obtained from a phenomenological research study. This involved the following stages: data management, reading and remembering data, describing data, data classification, and depiction and visualisation. To ensure the data's validity, we used two methods. They were source triangulation and member checking (Sugiyono, 2013). Additionally, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's theory of social reality construction (cited in Bungin, 2015) informed the analysis in this study.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In their analysis, Berger and Luckmann (cited in Fithri, et al., 2015) posit that social construction represents a process of interpreting individual experiences about their surrounding environment and external factors. They argue that individuals shape this interpretation based on their subjective understanding of reality as they engage in daily life activities. Berger and Luckmann posit that social reality is a construct that exists independently of the individual. The most significant aspect of social reality is derived from the reality of everyday life, namely, the events or facts that an individual encounters or confronts in the course of their daily existence. In other words, Berger and Luckmann consider social reality to have an objective side and a static structure. Yet, they also say that a person's understanding of social reality is subjective. A person interacts with the objective world, but the meaning they produce is formed through personal experiences and social interactions. In their view, social reality encompasses more than physical or structural existence, it emerges from social interactions and is shaped by individual perceptions within relationships.

In their work, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann posit that identity constitutes form a pivotal aspect of subjective reality, and that a subjective reality is dialectically intertwined with societal structures (cited in Demartoto, 2013). They also argue personal existence interacts closely with social institutions. Identity is formed through social processes. Social relationships then maintain, modify, or reshape it. The social processes involved in the formation and maintenance of identities are shaped by the underlying social structures. Conversely, identities formed through the interaction between organisms, individual consciousness, and social structures respond to the prevailing social structure, maintain it, modify it, and even reshape it. This implies that in this instance, personal identity and one's subjective reality (society) are interactive and influence each other in a broader social and cultural context. Identity is formed, maintained, and changed through ongoing interaction with social structures, and serves to influence and change these social structures. Furthermore, identity influences how an individual assesses, understands, and defines themselves, both personally and in terms of their social identity within society.

### **Externalisation, Objectification, Internalisation**

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann proposed a theory on social reality. It says a dialectic exists between the self and the sociocultural world. The research on the efforts of gay men from Yayasan Gaya Mahardhika Surakarta in overcoming discriminatory treatment from society reveals the dialectic between the self and the sociocultural world experienced by them to occur through three simultaneous 'moments'. This signifies that the endeavour to surmount discriminatory treatment from society unfolds in a series of temporal sequences, concurrently with their process of realising and categorising their social identity as a gay person. The three simultaneous 'moments' as described by Berger and Luckmann include externalisation, objectivation and internalisation. Here is an explanation for each: (1) Externalisation is the process of adjusting to the sociocultural world, a human product. From a biological and social perspective, humans continue to grow and develop throughout their lives, necessitating ongoing adjustments, learning, and efforts to ensure survival. Furthermore, externalisation can be defined as an active process whereby an individual pours and expresses themselves to the outside world (society). This is achieved through physical and mental activities, such as releasing their expressions, ideas or emotions into a form that can be observed and experienced by others.

This process is not solely about expressing oneself verbally or through creative works; it also encompasses the manner in which the individual interacts with their surroundings and exerts influence upon that environment through their expressions and actions. In essence, it is the process through which an individual conveys and introduces meanings, values and norms derived from within the self (personal) and is accepted by society. (2) Objectivation can be defined as the result that an individual has achieved, both mentally and physically, as a consequence of their externalisation activities or processes. The reality of everyday life is objectivised, or understood as the objective reality of the individual. Furthermore, objectivation is defined as the achievement of human activity products that are externalised and subsequently acquire objective properties. This signifies that the values, norms, and meanings that are generated through the externalisation process are regarded as the objective reality of the individual. (3) Internalisation is defined as a process in which individuals align themselves with social institutions or social organisations where the individual is a member. In this context, the process demonstrates that the individual begins to comprehend and accept social meanings and norms that have been objectified as part of their views and behavioural guidelines (cited in Bungin, 2015).

### **Gay Efforts of Gaya Mahardhika Surakarta Foundation in Overcoming Discriminatory Treatment in Society**

In the social construction theory proposed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, the term 'externalisation' is used to describe the process by which individuals or social groups in a particular society create differences or boundaries between themselves and others. In discussions about gay individuals overcoming discrimination, a process occurs. Society's social norms view the identities and orientations of gays and other minorities as deviant. They are seen as a transgression of the prevailing heterosexual norms (Kuswarno, 2013). Despite the prevailing social attitudes, the informants in this study express themselves openly and honestly about their social identity and sexual orientation, and identify themselves as homosexual (gay). This is demonstrated by their willingness to be open about their sexual orientation with family, friends, and society at large, both in person and on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and other dating applications like Walla. They are forthright in their acknowledgement of their social identity and sexual orientation. Furthermore, in order to obtain assistance and protection from their respective groups, they form alliances and join communities that possess a similar social identity and sexual orientation background. The process of "coming out" to one's social identity and sexual orientation, as well as the formation of alliances within the gay community and participation in gay community activities, is undertaken with the intention of introducing and presenting oneself and one's group in a positive light.

This is done with the hope that societal views and stigma towards the gay community in a positive direction. The term "objectification" is used to describe a phenomenon whereby social norms and views towards members of minority groups, including the LGBTQ+ community, are perceived as objective and unquestionable truths. In this context, members of the LGBT community and other minority groups are viewed as having negative and deviant social identities and sexual orientations that are subjected to unequal treatment due to a lack of societal acceptance of their existence. These views have their origins in religious values and norms, cultural stereotypes, and the historical beliefs of the people in the region (Kuswarno, 2013). The community subjected the four informants in this study to unfair treatment through discriminatory behavior, bullying, and physical and psychological violence by both the community at large and certain community organizations. Such individuals frequently encounter verbal abuse and vitriolic rhetoric when they are in public spaces. This occurs because both society and gay people themselves are aware that their social identity and sexual orientation differ from those of heterosexual individuals in general. The distinction between heterosexual and homosexual sexual attraction is based on the emotional and physical attraction to the opposite or same sex, respectively (Pratama, et al., 2018). In addition to striving to conduct themselves in an ethical and responsible manner within the community, they respond to instances of discriminatory and criminal behaviour, as well as instances of bullying, by reporting the incident to the relevant authorities.

This is done in collaboration with a representative from a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that provides assistance to community groups belonging to one of the five key population groups (transgender women, female sex workers, male sex workers, people who inject drugs, and people living with HIV/AIDS).



Despite the implementation of certain restrictive measures, discriminatory practices against these groups continue to be observed. In this process, the values, norms and meanings attributed to gay people in terms of their social identity and sexual orientation are regarded as the objective reality of their group. Whereas members of the gay community perceive their social identity and sexual orientation to be a natural aspect of their individuality, rather than a defect, they regard insults, ridicule, diatribes, bullying, and other discriminatory treatment against their group as inhumane and unjustifiable. This is based on the objective reality of those who refuse to justify and believe the negative views of society about their social identity and sexual orientation. From their perspective, their sexual orientation is a natural phenomenon and not a fault. Consequently, they believe that discrimination against their group is unwarranted, despite the fact that this view is at odds with the conventional wisdom in heterosexual society, which regards gay social identity and sexual orientation as deviant and contrary to social norms and religious teachings.

Internalisation can be defined as the process by which individuals who identify as gay begin to adopt the values, meanings and beliefs associated with their social identity and sexual orientation. In this case, they evaluate and categorise their social identity as individuals or groups of people who are distinct from heterosexual society. They also reject the negative views and stigma associated with their identity, which is perceived as an abnormal social identity and sexual orientation that deviates from existing social constructions (Kuswarno, 2013). The informants in this study show how they internalize the process by actively trying to change societal attitudes and perceptions about their group (gay) through educational initiatives and participating in community social activities. The four informants in this study engage actively in activities at Yayasan Gaya Mahardhika Surakarta, frequently collaborating with government agencies (specifically, the Health Office and Social Office) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that focus on assisting five key population groups: transgender women, female sex workers, men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). They also collaborate with students and researchers, as well as other community institutions, where they serve as speakers on HIV/AIDS issues in public spaces. In addition to their involvement in social activities, they also actively advocate for the rights of their group to receive fair and equal treatment and seek recognition of their existence from the government and society at large. They hope that at least the government can be present in their midst to empower them through training programmes to develop their skills, interests and talents.

In addition, they want to be able to coexist with the community, respect each other without dropping or underestimating each other, and reduce prejudice and negativity towards their group. Another hope is that the government can provide a place for expression, for positive activities, and for their rights as citizens to be equalised in the public, government and legal spheres, although not to be legalised. This condition demonstrates that gay individuals begin to comprehend and accept the social meanings and norms that have been externalized as part of their views and behavioral guidelines. This enables them to engage actively in social activities and community involvement. This is done as a means of effecting a change in the views and stigma of society towards their group and other minority groups, with the objective of securing their acceptance by society. Furthermore, these activities are employed as a means of advocating for their rights in the public domain. This condition is consistent with the assertion made by Demartoto (2013) that, in practice, an individual's social identity frequently encompasses a specific group of people, the boundaries of which are defined by shared characteristics. These characteristics serve to differentiate the group from other community groups. Consequently, social identity demonstrates how we perceive and evaluate ourselves, and how others perceive and evaluate us.

Yulius further explained that this phenomenon occurs in homosexual individuals, who are perceived as having an anomalous sexual orientation and deviating from prevailing values and norms. Consequently, the majority of Indonesian communities, including the Surakarta community, can only accept individuals who adhere to the socially constructed and normative sexual and social identity constructs of procreative sexual orientation, which is defined as the capacity to produce offspring (Yulius, 2015). This condition serves to perpetuate discriminatory practices towards the LGBTQ+ community. This can be observed in the processes of externalisation, objectivation and internalisation of social norms, which serve to differentiate and often exclude and marginalise non-heterosexual social identities and sexual orientations. These processes

give rise to and perpetuate stigma and discriminatory treatment of individuals or groups that deviate from the prevailing social norms. So, Berger and Luckmann's theory offers insight into the manner in which discrimination against homosexual individuals and other minority groups emerges and perpetuates within society, through the operation of prevailing social and cultural processes.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In the context of social construction theory, as developed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, the overarching concepts of externalisation, objectivation and internalisation assist in comprehending the processes through which social constructions are formed, sustained and interpreted by individuals within a given society. This concept elucidates the formation, comprehension, and preservation of social norms pertaining to specific social identities, such as sexual orientation. In examining the efforts of gay individuals to overcome discriminatory treatment, it becomes evident that social and cultural processes play a pivotal role in the formation and maintenance of social identities and social groupings. The externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation of norms that prohibit or exclude certain sexual orientations different from heterosexual norms lead to society's discriminatory treatment of homosexual individuals, which is considered the benchmark of normalcy and non-deviance.

Despite the fact that society as a whole considers homosexuality to be an abnormal and deviant social identity and sexual orientation, those who identify as gay are nevertheless honest and open in expressing their social identity and sexual orientation. Furthermore, they establish gay community alliances and engage in community activities. This study sees the objectification of gay individuals as a fact. It reflects their social identity and sexual orientation. This reality is natural, like any other heterosexuals. It isn't seen as a deviant sexual orientation. Consequently, there is a refusal to justify or accept the negative views of society about their social identity and sexual orientation. The internalisation process, as observed in this study, manifests in their responses, which seek to alter societal attitudes and perceptions about their group (gay) through educational initiatives and engagement in community social activities. Furthermore, they engage actively in community social activities and advocate for the rights of their group to receive fair and equal treatment. They also seek recognition of their existence from the government and society at large.

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