

Perception of GKI SUMUT Medan Congregations About LGBT

Haposan Silalahi

Medan, Indonesia, ✉ (e-mail): hanslahi.hs@gmail.com

Abstract

The research carried out at GKI SUMUT MEDAN aims to find out the congregation's perception of LGBT. Researchers are interested in examining LGBT because of two reasons, namely that the existence of LGBT is still considered as a community or marginal people who receive negative labeling from the Christian congregation, Second LGBT is considered as an abnormal deviation. The study design uses a cross-sectional qualitative approach. Data collected using in-depth interview method. The results showed that LGBT was considered as something that deviated from religious teachings, as a disease or curse because of sin. Thus the attitude of the congregation mostly rejects and is antipathy with the existence of LGBT, trying to close themselves with the presence of LGBT. Through this research, the congregation is expected to be able to change the understanding of LGBT and provide a space for acceptance of them, so that LGBT people can feel God's acceptance of their existence, through the church's acceptance and treatment of their presence.

Keywords: *perception, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender*

Introduction

The issue of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, also known as LGBT, surfaced on the surface, and became a phenomenon found in the midst of the community even in the midst of Christian families or buildings of church congregations. This is none other than because of the increasingly visible social problems including health in the LGBT group. Lesbian, gay and bisexual is a matter of sexual identity, while transgender is a matter of gender identity. Bidstrup (2009) explains that basically ordinary people feel that homosexuality is despised for several reasons such as (1) homosexuality is not something that is commonly found, (2) being homosexual means "apostasy" towards the religious side, (3) being homosexual is something disgusting. The fact is the existence of LGBT adherents groups demands equal rights with heterosexuals. Homosexual groups generally assume that they are not sick people. Thus being an LGBT is an effort that is not easy and even afterwards it is not without problems, many problems and risks arise when young adolescents begin to engage in same-sex relationships, for young men lack of knowledge about the risk of sex can cause them to be exposed to HIV and sexual harassment from those more experienced. Ignorance of their state of self can also cause social turmoil and depression.

Health problems experienced by LGBT include diseases related to sexual behavior, drug use, and psychological problems such as depression or suicide. The social problems often experienced by LGBT groups are stigma and discrimination, including access to church acceptance for their existence, so that they are neglected by their identity. Wirawan (2010) said that the decision to become LGBT caused them to experience problems both internally and externally. The conflict arises due to differences in perception of a belief, values, outlook on life, even personal interests.¹

LGBT needs good acceptance from family, community and church, so that they are free from the snares of depression, promiscuity, and other social problems. So that in their identity, they are able to work and produce something that is beneficial to the people around them. In an effort to be accepted by the church towards LGBT, information is needed about the congregation's perception of LGBT, specifically the GKI SUMUT Medan congregation. With the aim to find out the understanding, attitudes and congregation of GKI SUMUT Medan towards LGBT, and explore experiences both directly and indirectly in dealing with LGBT problems.

Method

The study design uses a cross-sectional qualitative approach. Data were collected using in-depth interview methods and integrated group discussion. Qualitative data collected in the form of information, explanations, clarifications or arguments found by selected informants.

Information collected includes, among others: 1. The views of the GKI SUMUT Medan congregation on the existence of LGBT both in terms of behavior, social norms, and religion. 2. The attitude of the Medan GKI SUMUT Church towards LGBT and its reasons and actions that should be taken 3. The experience of the Medan GKI SUMUT Church facing/handling LGBT problems: (direct indirect experience)/treatment/handling that should be done

Data collection is done by interviewing selected informants using in-depth interview guidelines that have been prepared. In-depth interviews conducted by researchers. Informants were chosen purposively with consideration of being able to represent the target population of the study. Each informant was chosen based on the criteria compiled, among others: age, gender, and education. Analysis Results of interviews and discussions with various informants were recorded, transcribed and arranged based on themes in the data base matrix. Data analysis was performed using a conceptual framework that was prepared. The results / reports of the study are arranged on a thematic basis.

Results and Discussion

Knowledge about LGBT

- First impression and characteristics of LGBT

In general, upon hearing LGBT, the informants gave a bad impression, because according to them LGBT was something strange because it was against nature that had been set by the Creator. LGBT is a curse of sin, disease, so it must be treated, otherwise we can be damned like the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, punished by God because of the rampant practice of sodomy in those days. Thus there is the impression of antipasti displayed by the informants towards LGBT, because according to them it is something that is unnatural and inappropriate.

Most informants can describe the characteristics of LGBT behavior, such as transgender and graceful men, tomboy women.

Some informants can explain the behavioral characteristics of LGBT that can be seen in public, but most of them feel that the behavioral characteristics of bisexuals are less visible because of their usual nature in public. And there are also informants who are not able to describe well the characteristics of behavior found in lesbians, gays, bisexuals and can only describe the behavioral characteristics of transgender people. There are several informants who said that LGBT traits and behavior are often difficult to recognize.

- Causes of LGBT

Some informants explained that the initial cause of LGBT was sin, because of sin there was a deviation in man. God used to create men and women. Thus that is the legal sex of humans, apart from that it is a deviation, according to the informants, there is no room for LGBT people in the Bible, because they run away from the path established by God. Humans who are not able to accept nature, then rebel, men do not accept the maleness, the wage becomes a woman, or vice versa, women do not accept the femininity then become a man. That is a big problem, which is very contrary to the Bible.

There are also informants who say that LGBT is caused by the environment around them, both in the home environment and also the work environment such as in the fashion, model and dance industries. Thus the environment influences the process of LGBT. Boys who are educated like girls, it will cause problems, children who lose their parents' love because of broken home.

But there are also informants who feel LGBT is caused by themselves, such as feelings of hurt, wanting to try new things, and from biological elements from birth, where they do feel different from ordinary people

Perceptions About LGBT

- Congregational Perceptions of LGBT.

Based on the informant's explanation, it can be seen that the majority still discriminates against LGBT people, this is due to the norms and teachings of the Bible that they understand, assuming that the Bible does not provide space for LGBT, so the congregation must not open up space for LGBT, because if the congregation opens the space for LGBT people, so this congregation will be dirty and unclean, because of their damned existence. The majority of the congregation did not behave well towards the existence of LGBT, for reasons due to the truth of God's word. And this is very influential on the congregation's acceptance of the presence of people who recognize themselves as LGBT. Thus the existence of LGBT is not revealed in the church, even though they are actually among the congregation, but they are not open to their LGBT identity for fear of being rejected and get discriminatory treatment or are considered unfair with their identities.

The researcher asks, if there is a congregation who claims to be LGBT, and he wants to serve in the Church, because he has talent, about being given space to join in the service, right? all informants said no because it was something wrong, they were not given room to serve because they had violated God's law.

From some information obtained from informants, the researchers concluded about the perception of GKI SUMUT Medan Church towards LGBT:

LGBT people are human beings created by God who deviate from the truth

The Bible data show that humans are God's creation. Genesis 1: 27-28, written thus: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female He created them. God blessed them, then God said to them: 'Spoil and multiply; fill the earth and conquer it ... "

The text reveals the following truths: Humans are God's creations, and therefore reject the theory of atheistic evolution, which views humans as the result of a constant process of natural selection; and theistic evolution, which views humans as evolving gradually from the lower form, and in the supervision of God, not in creation. Humans are made in the image of God, who is psychologically personal, has a fresh intellect, emotion and will. Other creations are not in the image of God because they do not have intellect. Similarity with God is non-physically, because God is Spirit (Jn 4:24). Man was created by God, who is physically, only in two sexes, male gender and female gender, there is no third gender and so on. The Lord Jesus acknowledged that humans are God's creation and only in male and female gender (Matthew 19: 4) . God bless humans, the creatures in His image, as evidence of the acknowledgment of the perfection of creation and the validation of His creations, so that they no longer need changes or improvements, including gender issues. God mandates humanity to have children, to multiply, to fulfill, and to conquer the earth; so sexual relations of the two sexes must produce children and grandchildren and many humans, so that in all corners of the earth will be inhabited by humans, men and women.

LGBT is the same as other people as God's creation, but his life behavior deviates from the truth. They are human beings created by God who deviate from the truth. They are not people who are created as LGBT and are powerless to live as normal human beings.

LGBT people are sinful people who need life renewal

LGBT people are not sinful people who must be rejected, removed and exiled; but sinful humans who must be led to renewal of life, repentance, forgiveness of sins or salvation. The biblical text that reveals the importance of life renewal is written in Romans 6: 16-23, thus:

"Do you not know that if you surrender yourself to someone as a servant to obey him, you are that person's servant, whom you must obey, both in sin that leads you to death, and in obedience that leads you to truth? But thank God! Previously, you were a slave to sin, but now you have wholeheartedly obeyed the teaching that was passed on to you. You have been set free from sin and have become servants of righteousness. I'm saying this humanly because of your weakness. For just as you gave up the members of your body to become servants of uncleanness and iniquity that brought you to iniquity, so now you must submit your limbs to be servants of righteousness that lead you to sanctification. Because when you are a slave to sin, you are free from the truth. And what fruit did you pick from him? All of that causes you to feel ashamed now, because the end of it all is death. But now, after you are set free from sin and after you have become God's servants, you have the fruit that brings you to sanctification and as a result is eternal life. Because the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. "

thus the church understands that LGBT is a sinner who is in the power and attachment of sin and leads to eternal death. thus LGBT requires liberation or freedom from sin. Renewal or change of life from the tendency to live in defilement and lawlessness and turn to righteous and holy life. LGBT requires the gift of God to be free from the penalty of death and obtain eternal life in Christ Jesus.

These four truths reveal that LGBT people are the same as other sinners, because they deviate from the truth, and therefore demand reform. They will lead to eternal death if they continue to allow themselves to be bound and enslaved by LGBT behavior. They must realize that they are living in a corrupt and lawless life before God, so they must be willing to renew themselves to live righteously and holy. They need the gift of God for eternal life in Jesus Christ.

LGBT people are sinful people who need services

LGBT people are sinful people who need service, so they do not deserve to be anointed as servants in any field of church worship before experiencing renewal of life in Christ. They need service to bring about renewal of life; and after that they need service to be able to grow to faith. If they can reach a certain level of maturity then they are given the opportunity to take part in the ministry.

- Individual perception of LGBT

Some informants have behaved ignorantly in the presence of LGBT, because for him it is their privacy. Thus they are not so closed to the presence of LGBT.

But on the other hand the majority of informants gave a less friendly attitude to LGBT, because they understood that LGBT was something abnormal. Thus they always feel that LGBT is something strange.

One informant said: I who was rejected was the behavior not the culprit because in my opinion, God teaches us to love our fellow human beings so that those who are homosexual feel accepted and valued so that we as believers can be role models and provide comfort to them first so they can be open with us and we can help them escape from the homosexual sin. From the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, it is clear that the Bible does not justify the existence of same-sex relationships. Sodom and Gomorrah are 2 cities that are famous for sinning, so God planned to destroy both cities after God negotiated with Abraham and it turned out that only Lot and his family were clean in God's eyes so that God would continue to rain fire on Sodom and Gomorrah.

In Genesis 19: 4-5, it is told that men in Sodom approached Lot's house to find 2 angels from God to use. The sentence in "use" comes from the Hebrew word "yada" which means sexual relations. The same word used adam to air for sexual intercourse. From this word sodom comes the word sodomy The only way of sexual relations according to biblical standards is sexual relations between men and women in a monogamous marriage. Same-sex sex is a sin which is a sin among other sins where the penalty is death. Paul said that same-sex relationships are shameful and unnatural. They are considered heretics and do not recognize God

- Congregational Attitudes towards Similar Marriage

Overall the informant said that same-sex marriage was not acceptable, because it was contrary to God's Word. Marriage is between man and woman, so same marriage is a defamation of God. Marriage in Indonesia must use the religious foundation and the marriage law so that same marriage cannot be accepted because religion already regulates marriage and prohibits same marriage.

Conclusion

Based on field findings, some informants still consider LGBT as a disease, but when asked to describe the behavioral characteristics of the LGBT group, they cannot describe it well. The lack of knowledge about LGBT has led to many perceptions about LGBT such as LGBT behavior can be transmitted if they get too close to LGBT and unbalanced media reporting causes stigmatization of this group as a threat to the environment. Gender identity and LGBT sexual orientation can be well explained. Infromant students consider LGBT to be caused by feelings from within themselves, and also the environment that might affect them. This study shows that the congregation still discriminates against LGBT people, due to the existence of norms and Bible teachings that they understand about sexual orientation and LGBT is considered as a sexual orientation that is deviant. This shows the level of religiosity greatly influences the acceptance of LGBT in society, the higher the religious value of congregations, the stronger they reject the existence of LGBT,

especially in their sexual orientation. Thus the Church rejects the existence of LGBT and antipathy to the existence of LGBT.

Church doctrine apparently influences the concept of thinking of the congregation, so that their perceptions of LGBT are in line with how the doctrine of GKI SUMUT Medan understanding the existence of LGBT. then this study concludes how the perception of the North Sumatra GKI congregation on LGBT is:

1. Viewing them as human beings created by God who deviate from the truth, in the sense that their life behavior is not pleasing to God, so they are in a sinful behavior and in a sinful human existence.
2. Viewing them as sinful human beings who need life renewal, in the sense that the church must not justify LGBT behavior, let alone give endorsement in the form of blessing of same-sex marriage.
3. view them as sinful people who need service, in the sense that the church must not appoint or anoint them to occupy certain positions in the ministry.

So it is clear that the acceptance or rejection of LGBT behavior is greatly influenced by the theological perspective adopted. The perspective of Evangelical Theology rejects LGBT behavior because it bases its understanding solely from biblical sources, while the perspective of Contemporary Theology accepts LGBT behavior because it bases its understanding on sources outside the Bible, science and reason. Differences in attitudes, acceptance, and even treatment of each church denomination at the international, regional or national level towards the LGBT people are very dependent on the understanding of theology that is held, evangelical theology or contemporary theology, and on the acceptance of the Bible, which is acknowledged by the word of God without error or simply religious historical documents of certain religions.

References

- Christiani, K.Tabita. (2010). Remaja, HIV/AIDS dan LGBT Merancang Strategi dan Aksi Lintas Iman. Interfaith Youth Training oleh Fulbright. Hotel Puri Indah Inn : Jogjakarta.
- Prihatinningsih, S. (2011). Journal Juvenile Delinquency (Juvenile Delinquency) in Adolescent Victims Son Divorce of Parents. Papers.Gunadarma.ac.id.Fa kultas Psikologi Universitas Gunadarma: Jakarta.
- Sotjningsih. (2004). Tumbuh Kembang Remaja dan Permasalahannya. Jakarta: Cagung Seto.
- Wirawan, (2010). Konflik dan Manajemen Konflik: Teori, Aplikasi, dan Penelitian. Jakarta: Salemba Humanika.
- "Sexual Orientation". American Psychiatric Association. July 26, 2019
- "Sexual orientation, homosexuality and bisexuality". American Psychological Association. August 8, 2019.

ⁱCf. Sotjningsih. (2004). Tumbuh Kembang Remaja dan Permasalahannya. Jakarta: Cagung Seto. Before a person identifies himself sexually, the individual goes through three stages, namely (1) sensitization where the individual experiences different feelings (sexual orientation), (2) identity confusion (identity confusion) a person has stronger interests with the same sex than the opposite sex, usually at this phase adolescents who are identified as homosexuals will have a strong tendency towards drug, alcohol abuse, depression and even suicide, (3) Assumptions of identity (identity assumption), at this stage adolescents begin to accept themselves as homosexuals (lesbians) that occur in older adolescents (age 18-21 years) and starting to come out, (4) commitment (commitment), homosexual youth (lesbians) until early adulthood will realize and accept themselves and the community knows better as LGBT.