

Advocating for Sexual Health in the LGBTQ Community on Twitter through the Menfesspelangi_ Account

RIZKI IFNAFIAR¹, MUHAMAD ISNAINI²

^{1, 2} *Master of Communication Science, Bunda Mulia University, Jakarta, Indonesia*

Abstract—In Indonesia, the LGBTQ community faces significant discrimination and stigma, particularly in terms of employment, education, and health. Despite the existence of scientific explanations and religious views that debunk myths about LGBTQ individuals, negative stigma against them persists, such as being associated with HIV/AIDS and being deemed inappropriate behavior. This discrimination stems from homophobia and prejudice, and may even escalate to violence. LGBTQ individuals also encounter legal barriers, as their gender identity and sexual orientation are not explicitly recognized in the constitution. Society holds divergent perspectives, with some supporting LGBTQ rights and others rejecting them based on religious and cultural values. Activists and civil society organizations are actively combating this discrimination, yet the pro-LGBTQ movement faces opposition and pressure from conservative groups. In this context, the Twitter account @menfesspelangi_ serves as a platform enabling users to anonymously share LGBTQ stories and experiences, including those related to sexual health

Indexed Terms- LGBTQ, Discrimination, Sexual Health, Stigma, Sexual Orientation

I. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) individuals are a highly marginalized community. According to a study conducted by Fabiancha Embun Balqis in 2021, in their publication titled "Civil and Political Rights of Marginalized Groups: Efforts and Struggles of Trans Women," it was found that the government has not fully ensured the fulfillment of civil rights for Trans Women (including those within the LGBTQ community). This is based on the fact that the rights of

Trans Women, including the recognition of their identities, are not fully realized in accordance with the constitution and laws.[1]

In accordance with prevailing norms and customs in Indonesia, the LGBTQ community often faces discrimination in various aspects, including employment, education, and healthcare. The existence of this community is frequently considered taboo and in contrast to the cultural values embraced by the majority of the Indonesian population. In a journal publication titled "Oppression of Minority Groups: Persecution and Discrimination of the LGBT Community in Indonesia" by Cut IrdaPuspitasari in 2019, it was noted that the LGBTQ community still bears a negative stigma, despite the presence of numerous scientific explanations and religious perspectives that counter myths about the LGBTQ community. The enduring LGBTQ stigma includes associations with HIV/AIDS, deviance, and immorality.[2]

This discrimination has led to controversy within society, with some still regarding different sexual orientations as unnatural and in conflict with their religious and cultural values. This results in LGBTQ individuals experiencing discrimination and negative stigma in society.[3] On the other hand, there are also segments of Indonesian society that support LGBTQ rights and believe that everyone has equal rights in choosing their gender identity. There are activist groups and community organizations fighting against discrimination and violence targeting the LGBTQ community in Indonesia. With the support of these pro-LGBTQ community groups, there is a counter-reaction from conservative groups who oppose and disagree with the pro-LGBTQ movement.

According to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2021 titled "Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance 2019," by

Raul Romaguera, DMD, MPH, Acting Director of Division of STD Prevention, it is stated that gay and bisexual individuals are at a higher risk of contracting Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) such as HIV/AIDS, syphilis, and gonorrhea. The CDC also reveals that men who have sex with men continue to be a significant group with a high number of STD cases. In addition to the views of the anti-LGBTQ groups, which are based on the belief that LGBTQ issues are contrary to prevailing norms, customs, and religion, pro-LGBTQ perspectives also have their own beliefs. Their viewpoint is grounded in principles of equality and human rights, asserting that LGBTQ individuals deserve equal treatment. Pro-LGBTQ activists in Indonesia utilize social media to voice their opinions about the importance of human rights and equality for the LGBTQ community. Social media serves as an appropriate platform for expressing these opinions and acts as the forefront for mobilizing the public to become more aware of these issues.[4]

Twitter is one of the preferred platforms for both LGBTQ groups and individuals to express their opinions. In addition to voicing their opinions, Twitter is also used by LGBTQ groups or individuals to disseminate information and provide education about sexual health.[5]Health organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and Planned Parenthood have utilized Twitter to share information about sexual health, including factual information, safe sexual practices, and steps to prevent sexually transmitted diseases.

Twitter can also serve as a platform for campaigns aimed at raising awareness about sexual health issues and addressing associated stigmas.[6]For example, hashtag campaigns like #EndTheStigma or #SaferSex can help build a better understanding of sensitive sexual health topics, such as HIV/AIDS, condom usage, and sexual violence. This was revealed in a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2020.

Through the hashtag campaign #EndTheStigma, many Twitter users share their experiences and engage in discussions on issues such as HIV/AIDS transmission, depression, or other infectious diseases. Numerous influencers and activists on Twitter focus on sexual health and utilize the platform to disseminate

educational messages. By following and interacting with these accounts, Twitter users can access valuable information and inspiration related to sexual health, including educational content on the subject. In Indonesia, there is still a lack of sexual health education. One of the accounts supporting the LGBTQ community is the Twitter account @menfesspelangi_. This account, which was established in July 2022 and is based in Bali, Indonesia, has over 63,100 followers and is popular among alterbase account users. The @menfesspelangi_ alterbase account serves as a platform for Twitter users interested in LGBTQ discussion topics. This account plays a role as a communication bridge for those who wish to share their stories and experiences without revealing their original identities.

Concealing one's identity allows users to express themselves more freely without the fear of being ridiculed or insulted. This increased freedom of expression often results in more unfiltered and uninhibited statements, and many users tend to be quite outspoken on Twitter. While the content shared may be intended for the public's benefit, the language used often falls short of the norms and decorum prevailing in Indonesia. Topics related to LGBTQ issues, in particular, still tend to carry negative connotations in Indonesia.

The theory used to analyze this case is the Muted Group Theory, developed by Cheris Kramarae in the 1970s. This theory posits that in society, certain groups, particularly minorities or those with lower power, often face difficulties in conveying their experiences, ideas, and perspectives due to language and communication systems dominated by the majority group.[7]

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. *Virtual Communication*

Virtual communication in the field of communication refers to the process of communication that takes place through digital technology and online media. It involves the exchange of information, ideas, and messages between individuals or groups through platforms such as email, text messages, video chats, social media, and web conferences. Virtual communication has several distinctive features[8]:

- a. Technological mediation: Virtual communication involves the use of technology as an intermediary in the communication process. Messages are sent and received through digital tools such as computers, mobile phones, or other devices.
- b. Limited nonverbal cues: Virtual communication tends to have limitations in expressing nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions, body movements, and voice intonation. Therefore, messages often focus on text or images that are transmitted.
- c. Spatial and temporal separation: Virtual communication allows individuals to communicate without being bound by distance and time. Messages can be sent and received instantly, without requiring direct physical presence.
- d. Global accessibility: Virtual communication enables easier global access to information and communication with people from various parts of the world.

Formation of digital identity: Virtual communication provides individuals with the opportunity to shape their own digital identities through online profiles, social media posts, and online interactions. This identity can influence how others perceive them.

B. New Media

In the field of communication, new media refers to relatively new or rapidly evolving communication technologies and platforms that play a significant role in changing the way communication and social interaction occur. New media encompasses digital technology, the internet, social media, mobile devices, and other technological innovations. New media has several key characteristics[9]:

- a. Interactivity: New media allows for two-way interaction between users and content, as well as among users themselves. Users can actively participate, share, and communicate through new media platforms.
- b. Convergence: New media combines and integrates various media formats, such as text, images, audio, and video. This convergence enables users to access and consume content in various forms through a single device or platform.
- c. Public Participation: New media provides opportunities for individuals to participate in the production and distribution of content. Users can become content producers, creators, and curators,

as well as engage in public discussions and social movements.

Accessibility and Mobility: New media allows for easy access and high mobility of information, content, and communication. Users can access new media from mobile devices and stay updated on the latest developments wherever they are.

C. Twitter Social Media

Educating on LGBTQ Sexual Health on Twitter refers to efforts to provide information, resources, and support related to sexual health that is relevant to the LGBTQ community through the Twitter social media platform. Twitter can be an effective tool for disseminating information about sexual health, expanding reach, and helping to address stigma and misconceptions related to LGBTQ issues. Some ways LGBTQ sexual health education is conducted on Twitter include:

- a. Information Campaigns: LGBTQ organizations and support groups can use Twitter to spread information about sexual health, including HIV/AIDS prevention, mental health, gender identity, and sexuality. They can share articles, resources, infographics, videos, and health tips with their followers.
- b. Chats and Live Discussions: Through features like Twitter Chat or Live Streaming, LGBTQ sexual health experts can interact directly with Twitter users to provide information, answer questions, and offer advice on sexual health. This creates opportunities for real-time dialogue and information exchange.
- c. Hashtag Usage: By using relevant hashtags, information related to LGBTQ sexual health can be organized and easily found by Twitter users. For example, hashtags like #LGBTQHealth, #SexualHealth, or hashtags related to specific events or campaigns can be used to gather and share related content.

B. Digital Activism

Digital activism involves the use of digital technology and social media to mobilize support, advocate for social change, and promote specific issues. Using blogs, social media platforms, and websites, digital activists can spread their messages, raise awareness, and coordinate collective action. The primary advantages of digital activism include easier and more

inclusive participation, as well as the ability to reach a broader audience. However, digital activism also faces challenges such as the risk of surveillance, censorship, and the spread of false information that can affect the effectiveness of messages and campaigns.[10]

III. Menfesspelangi_ AS A WAY TO FIND COMFORTABLE SPACE

Fess Pelangi or @menfesspelangi_ is a Twitter menfess account that operates on the Twitter platform. The Twitter account @menfesspelangi_ is one of the "menfess" accounts that operate on the Twitter platform. Like typical menfess accounts, this account receives anonymous messages or confessions from its followers. Anonymity is a key feature of the @menfesspelangi_ account, allowing users to send messages without revealing their identities to the account owner.

The process of posting anonymous messages is a task performed by the owner of the @menfesspelangi_ account. Users send their messages to this account with a request to have their messages posted there. The account owner then filters these messages and posts them on their Twitter account, maintaining the senders' confidentiality. The @menfesspelangi_ account can be used in various contexts, depending on its use. The messages posted in this account can vary, ranging from personal confessions, secret revelations, questions, advice, to expressions of gratitude to someone without revealing the sender's identity. This creates a space where Twitter users can interact anonymously and share their thoughts more freely. Online ethics and community guidelines still apply within the @menfesspelangi_ account and when using other menfess accounts. Adhering to the rules and maintaining respect for others are important principles to uphold when communicating on social media platforms like Twitter.

Menfess accounts offer several advantages that make them appealing to users on various social media platforms. One of the key advantages is the anonymity they provide. Users can send messages or confessions without revealing their identities, granting them the freedom to discuss their feelings, thoughts, or personal issues without the fear of judgment or being known by others. Another advantage is that menfess accounts are

often used as a space for venting and sharing personal struggles. This provides users with the opportunity to feel more comfortable discussing personal problems, conflicts, or confusion they may be experiencing, creating a supportive environment for the expression of emotions and feelings.

Furthermore, menfess accounts place a stronger focus on the messages being conveyed rather than the identity of the sender. In anonymous communication, stereotypes and biases that might arise in open communication can be avoided. This allows messages to be evaluated based on their substance rather than the attributes or identity of the individual sending them. Menfess accounts also enable users to share their experiences, advice, or insights without revealing their identities. This creates the possibility for people to contribute to their communities or assist others without having to step into the public eye.



Figure 1 Screenshot of Tweet from menfesspelangi_

Based on the screenshot, it is evident that an anonymous user is experiencing distress after engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse (e.g., without a condom) for a very brief moment. They are concerned about the potential consequences of this action and seek advice on what steps to take next.

Anxiety about Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) can be highly disruptive for individuals who have engaged in unprotected sexual activity. This anxiety is related to the possibility of contracting STDs during the act. After such an encounter, many people reflect on whether they have adequately protected themselves and avoided infection risks. This anxiety often leads to

questions like "Have I been exposed to an STD?" or "What if I get infected?" that can disturb their thoughts and emotions.

This heightened concern often leads to considerations of testing and STD diagnosis. Following a distressing situation, individuals may feel the need to undergo STD testing, which can be a very stressful experience. They may worry about the test results, the time it takes to receive them, and how the results will affect their lives. Such anxiety can put additional pressure on one's emotional and mental well-being.

Anxiety about STDs can also impact interpersonal relationships. If the worried individual shares their concerns with their partner, it can affect the dynamics within the relationship. Open communication with a partner's availability can be a crucial factor in addressing anxiety and determining the next steps to prevent STD transmission or handle the situation.

After seeking advice, @menfesspelangi_ also opens access for other users to provide suggestions on the discussed topic. In the responses shown in the screenshot thread, one individual recommends undergoing an HIV detection test, commonly referred to as VCT (Voluntary Counseling and Testing), two weeks after engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse (without a condom). In this thread, the individual will undergo an HIV detection test for the first time to check if they have been infected with the HIV virus after that act. The test results will provide initial information about their HIV status.

Subsequently, the user suggests undergoing another HIV detection test after three months. This is because there is a window period in HIV tests, during which the virus may not be detected in the body shortly after infection. An HIV detection test after three months will provide a more accurate picture of their HIV status, as the virus is usually detectable in the blood after that period.

After obtaining a negative result or a "non-reactive" result in the HIV detection test performed after three months, the individual plans to consider using PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) as an additional preventive measure. PrEP is a medication that can be used by individuals at high risk of contracting HIV to

prevent infection if they are exposed to the virus. Even though their HIV test results are negative, PrEP can be used as an additional measure to protect against the risk of HIV, especially if a condom breaks or a similar situation occurs.

Additionally, the individual is reminded to continue undergoing routine testing for other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). STIs such as gonorrhea, syphilis, and chlamydia can have serious health consequences, and routine testing is a way to detect and treat these conditions if they are found. This is an essential step in maintaining comprehensive sexual health.

IV. STATEMENT FROM PERSON WHOM CONCERNED WITH THIS ISSUE

Discrimination in the realm of sexual health is a serious issue that has become a concerning problem for various communities worldwide. This topic reflects the complexity of the relationship between sexual health rights, human rights, and various social, cultural, and political factors that influence access to and care related to sexual health.

Highlighting issues related to gender equality, sexual identity, sexual orientation, and cultural diversity. Sexual health is a human right, and every individual has the right to receive fair, safe, and discrimination-free care. Therefore, this paper will discuss the topic of discrimination in sexual health, outline the factors influencing it, its implications for individuals and society, and the steps taken to address this issue. This research will delve deeper into discrimination in the pursuit of inclusive and equitable sexual health.

Below is an interview excerpt with a speaker that illustrates discrimination in sexual health:

"Yesterday, I found a flyer in the Pekanbaru area that said to avoid LGBTQ, as they can spread HIV. It makes you think, 'Oh, there are still misconceptions like this circulating in society and being used for political gain, to gather the votes of the majority or power relations.' When talking about health, the LGBTQ community is always linked to HIV; that's what sticks. Yet, we're talking about the disease, but it's about how we can humanize people, that's it."

This statement refers to an individual's experience of encountering a flyer in the Pekanbaru area that campaigns to avoid LGBTQ individuals by linking them to the spread of HIV. Flyers like this are examples of misinformation and discrimination that still exist in society. Discrimination against the LGBTQ community is a serious issue that continues to persist in many parts of the world, including Indonesia.

Messages like those listed in the flyer can foster negative views and trigger prejudices against LGBTQ individuals. Such issues are often exploited in politics, where negative views of certain communities are used as a tool to gather the votes of the majority or gain political support. Discrimination faced by the LGBTQ community is often used as an issue by politicians to strengthen their positions in the political landscape.

It's important to realize that this discrimination not only encompasses political aspects but also reflects inequality in terms of human rights. The causes of discrimination against the LGBTQ community are complex and may be correlated with cultural, religious, and societal perspectives deeply rooted in society.

The link between the LGBTQ community and HIV often arises in various contexts. This is due to false myths and prejudices that make this community a target of stigma related to this disease. Sexual health is a human right, and individuals from all backgrounds, including the LGBTQ community, have the right to receive equitable healthcare without discrimination.

Sexual health covers many aspects, including the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, reproductive healthcare, and other critical aspects that affect an individual's quality of life. Incorrectly connecting the LGBTQ community to the spread of HIV can emotionally and physically harm them. Such prejudices can hinder individuals from seeking the healthcare and information they need. Discrimination against the LGBTQ community also impacts mental health and individual well-being, as they often have to deal with inequality and stress related to stigma.

It's crucial to separate health issues from stigma and prejudice. Health is a fundamental right, and every individual is entitled to dignified and nondiscriminatory care. Health issues, including HIV, need to be addressed scientifically and objectively, rather than creating myths or using health issues as political tools. Education is a vital tool in combating stigma and prejudice. Accurate and trustworthy information about sexual health, including HIV, can help eliminate inequality and stop the spread of misinformation. Sexual health is a universal issue that concerns everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In this context, efforts need to be made to create a safe and inclusive space for the LGBTQ community where they can seek information about sexual health without fear or shame. These efforts should also include advocacy for changes in laws and policies to end discrimination against the LGBTQ community in the context of healthcare. Disseminating discriminatory messages, such as those seen in the mentioned flyer, is an unacceptable act in a society that respects human rights and equality. Creating a better understanding of sexual health issues and the need to avoid stigma is essential.

The more information shared, the greater the chance of eliminating biases and misconceptions that have developed. The struggle to eliminate stigma and discrimination against the LGBTQ community is a collective effort that requires cooperation from various parties, including civil society, NGOs, government, and individuals. Ultimately, the main goal is to humanize individuals and provide equal rights to all in terms of health and well-being. In addition to HIV, other sexual health issues, such as reproductive healthcare, protection against violence, and equal access to sexual healthcare services, are also vital parts of this agenda.

Sexual health is a crucial aspect of overall health and should be treated seriously and respectfully. We need to continue efforts to combat the stigma and discrimination related to sexual health, as well as create an environment that supports human rights for all individuals. This is an ongoing task that will require hard work and commitment from various stakeholders. Discrimination in the context of sexual health is not an

issue that can be ignored, as its consequences can be highly detrimental to individuals and society.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the Muted Group Theory, previously closely associated with the feminist context, can indeed be successfully applied to LGBTQ minority groups. This creates a more inclusive theoretical foundation, allowing us to better understand how this group encounters communication and cultural barriers.

The findings of this research make a valuable contribution to understanding the experiences of LGBTQ minority groups in society. By applying the Muted Group Theory, we can see how this group is often marginalized and suppressed in the media and popular culture, which has long been a hindrance for them in expressing their identities and experiences.

The research also underscores the crucial role of the media in shaping the image and framing of LGBTQ minority groups. Media plays a central role in disseminating messages and societal views about this group. Negative framing can reinforce discrimination and stereotypes that hinder LGBTQ groups, while positive framing can change public perceptions.

These findings provide a broader perspective in communication studies and related theories. It highlights the importance of examining communication theories from various perspectives and contexts, as well as making a valuable contribution to formulating more inclusive and fair communication practices.

This discovery encourages further research into the application of Muted Group Theory to other minority groups and various contexts. In future research, concrete ways to address negative framing issues in media and culture affecting minority groups need to be explored.

This can help promote better and more inclusive understanding of various communities worldwide. The research findings prompt us to reconsider how we view existing communication theories, understand the role of media in shaping public perceptions, and

continue efforts to achieve more inclusive and faircommun

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