

‘We Are Same-sex Couples, We Are Not Doing Same-sex Marriage’: Raising Same-sex Marriage for Indonesian Same-sex Couples in France

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Abstract

In 2013, same-sex marriage became legal in France. The Government believes that opening up marriage to all couples demonstrates society’s respect for all individuals, regardless of their sexuality, making our society fairer and more inclusive for all its members. The number of Indonesian gays who have migrated to Paris has also opened their eyes to same-sex marriage, but what they do is maintain their love relationship with their partner without marriage ties. Most of them live in Paris with a French partner without getting married. This is actually not to blame for those who choose to be same-sex couples, but there are some legal rules that can be very useful for those who carry out same-sex marriage. This research will look at how same-sex marriage is defined by Indonesian gays who live in Paris. This is very interesting because most of them said that taking care of their husband, wife or children is something that makes them dizzy. This study will use qualitative research. The informants who will be interviewed will only be around five peoples and will use their narratives as the final results.

Introduction

Same-sex couples can and do have stable, committed, satisfying relationships. In every healthy long-term intimate relationship, whether same-sex or different-sex, partners need to develop good relationships skills and social support. In fact, same-sex and different-sex couples’ relationships are more alike than different. Unlike different-sex couples, same-sex couples face stigma, prejudice, and discrimination because of their same-sex attraction, their relationships, and the families they create. They still do not enjoy the same access to social and institutional support for their relationship that different-sex couples often take for granted. These challenges, taken together, can cause a lot of stress. Same-sex couples are a very diverse group made up of individuals with endless combinations of complex intersecting identities. Most same-sex couples experience some form of minority stress. Minority stress includes experiences of prejudice or discrimination, anticipation and fear of rejection, decisions about when to conceal or disclose the identity, negative feelings that have been internalized about the identity and efforts to cope with the stress that stigma creates. Prejudice based on stigma can be expressed in both subtle and in blatant forms, which can make it difficult for couples to recognize and label these stressors. Sometimes couples do not realize the impact of these stressors until one or both partners begin to experience psychological or physical health symptoms. Stigma is perpetuated by a culture that supports different-sex couples while devaluing or excluding same-sex couples from these same support systems. In other countries around the world, people grow up in a social system that supports heterosexual privilege, which is the unquestioned acceptance of heterosexuality as normal, natural, and expected. Teaching people that same-sex relationships are inferior to different-sex relationships and creating policies and stereotypes that support this belief is called heterosexism. Minority stress, as experienced by same-sex couples (and people who identify

as LGBTIQ+), results from living in a heterosexist society that privileges heterosexual identity and devalues non-heterosexual identities.

Same-sex couples can benefit enormously from learning how to recognize and positively cope with minority stress. Creating a positive identity as a same-sex couple involves actively thinking about social expectations and reimagining the lives in new, creative ways. Doing so can help same-sex couples to replace negative ideas with positive ones. Couples need to practice prizing their relationship and asserting appropriate boundaries when others devalue them. They also need to learn ways to trust their partnership in the face of life's challenges. Same-sex couples can build enduring and satisfying relationships by recognizing and reframing minority stress experiences as opportunities for enhancing their relationship skills, for building their social support networks, and for taking positive action. A satisfying relationship is good for mental and physical health. A strong, loving relationship makes them more confident, more resilient, and better able to cope with life's challenges. Solidifying a loving partnership can make a positive difference in the physical and psychological health and well-being of couple members. To do this, it needs the appropriate resources, tools, and skills to nurture the relationship. Talking to each other about the experiences and how it impact the relationship can enhance the intimacy in the relationship and keep strongly aligned as it collaborate to create a meaningful and joyful life together.

In 2013, same-sex marriage became legal in France. The Government believes that opening up marriage to all couples demonstrates society's respect for all individuals, regardless of their sexuality, making our society fairer and more inclusive for all its members. The number of Indonesian gays who have migrated to Paris has also opened their eyes to same-sex marriage, but what they do is maintain their love relationship with their partner without marriage ties. This is actually not to blame for those who choose to be same-sex couples, but there are some legal rules that can be very useful for those who carry out same-sex marriage. This research will look at how same-sex marriage is defined by Indonesian gays who live in Paris and how they deal with stress when others find out that they are just tying the knot without getting married. This is very interesting because most of them said that taking care of their husband, wife or children is something that makes them dizzy.

Method

This small research was held from February to May 2013 and only takes five participants. In point of fact, this research is a research for my doctoral degree that I did from 2010 to 2015 on migration and family relations for Indonesian gays at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS). In the midst of writing my dissertation, I was intrigued to find out how Indonesian same-sex couples, in this case gays, who have lived in Paris for a long time define and interpret the same-sex marriage policy. This research was based on informal qualitative interviews with only five Indonesian gay individuals. I gave my interviewees the choice of whether to be interviewed together or separately with their partners and they said that it is better whether they were interviewed alone without their partners. At that time, my interviewees were between 35 and 45 years of age and some of them had been together for as long as ten years. Because this research was not included in the dissertation chapter, the narrations that come out will be slightly censored because we had a conversation with rather 'dirty' words. To conduct these interviews, I follow where they go, such as to a shopping centre, restaurant or coffee shop. The following are the names of the participants and their ages. All the names used in this paper are pseudonyms and although ages are included any references which might compromise anonymity have been removed.

Name of participants	Age
Andi	35
Hartono	40
Herman	45
Michael	40
Handi	41

Due to the very dynamic nature of this research, as I said before, qualitative research methods will be used as a framework. Within each topic, the author is free to lead the conversation by asking questions and making some clarifications if the answers are not clear (Corbetta, 2003). In this form, the participants have a lot of freedom to answer questions. In a nutshell, qualitative research focuses on acquiring detailed and intimate information about a small group of people, to learn how and why actors behave rather than focusing on what people do or think on a large scale (Ambert, Adler, Adler & Detzner, 1995). On the other hand, the author also used the literature research method. This method can be explained as the technique used to classify study, interpret and identify limitation of physical sources. May (2001) added that this method tells us about additional information at a time when we were not yet born or were not present. The results of this research are given in the form of narratives or stories from the main participants.

Indonesian Same-sex Couples in France

Interpreting Same-sex Couples

Social norms and legal conditions affect how we live our lives. Psychologists document how social stigma directed toward LGBT people can be quite insidious and damage their health and wellbeing (Meyer, 2003). It can also affect how they form relationships and families. Is this because same-sex couple relationships differ from different-sex relationships in ways that lead to instability? Recent research suggests that the social and legal climate may explain a great deal about why same-sex couples behave differently from different-sex couples in terms of relationship formation and stability. As society has begun to treat same-sex couples more like different-sex couples, the differences between the two groups have narrowed. The social and legal climate for LGBT people also affects how they form families and become parents. In a climate of social stigma, LGBT people can feel pressure to hide their identities and have relationships with different-sex partners. Not surprisingly, some of those relationships produce children. Today, most children being raised by same-sex couples were born to different-sex parents, one of whom is now in the same-sex relationship. This pattern is changing, but in ways that may seem counterintuitive. The legal and political debates about allowing same-sex couples to marry tend to focus on two large themes that can be seen even in the earliest attempts to garner legal recognition of same-sex marriages. These two themes pit arguments about the inherent and traditional relationship between marriage and procreation (including the suitability of same-sex couples as parents) against arguments about the degree to which opposition to legal recognition of same-sex relationships is rooted in irrational animus and discrimination toward same-sex couple or lesbian, gay and bisexual. Take the following quotations on the subject of interpretation of same-sex couples as examples of this practice:

Andi (35): I think being a same-sex couple is no different than if we have to get married, especially if we live in Europe, in this case France. French society doesn't care whether we want to be same-sex couples or not, it's all the same. After all, our

lives here are the same, there is no difference, and I think it would be better if we became same-sex couples. We are both people who have an open partner relationship which means we have other partners too. If we are bored with our single partner, we can have sex with our other partners, in other words we can do three-some or even four-some. The sensation will be different if we do three-some or four-some. Of course we use condoms to avoid things we don't want [while laughing happily].

Hartono (40): For me, I feel happy being same-sex couples, especially since I live in France. We didn't feel any difference. We can still travel together or eat together anywhere as long as we are in Europe. To hell with people who say that being same-sex couples is not happy. We are happy. I don't like people who say it's not normal. What criteria do they say it's not normal? I don't know. That's why we feel there is no difference.

Interpreting Same-sex Marriage

Legalization of same-sex marriage represents one important step toward advancing equal rights for sexual and gender minorities. Over the past two decades same-sex marriage has become legally recognized in multiple countries around the world (Drabble, Wootton, Veldhuis, Riggle, Rostosky, Lannutti, Balsam, Hughes, 2021). The purpose of marriage, as a form of heavily obligated cohabitation, may well be to protect the economically weaker cohabitant from a form of exploitation that would reflect opportunistic behaviour emanating from an asymmetry in the life cycle of men compared with women (Dnes, 2007). This theory of marriage is associated with Cohen (1987, 2002), who has made an influential argument that, to avoid encouraging opportunistic divorce, the equivalent of contract (expectations) damages should be awarded to the fault-free party in a divorce. The theory regards the defining aspects of marriage as the rules governing divorce and post dissolution obligations. National laws or policies that extend equal marriage rights to same-sex couples signal a reduction in structural stigma and have the potential to positively impact the health and wellbeing of sexual minorities. Structural stigma refers to norms and policies on societal, institutional and cultural levels that negatively impact the opportunities, access, and wellbeing of a particular group (Hatzenbuehler and Link, 2014). Forms of structural stigma that affect sexual minorities reflect and reinforce the social stigma against non-heterosexual people that occurs at individual, interpersonal, and community levels (Herek, 2009). Marriage is a fundamental institution across societies and access to the right to marry can reduce sexual-minority stigma by integrating sexual minority people more fully into society (Herdt and Kertzner, 2006). Same-sex marriage also provides access to a wide range of tangible benefits and social opportunities associated with marriage (Lannutti, 2014). Despite the benefits of marriage rights, sexual minorities continue to experience stigma-related stressors, such as rejection from family or community, and discrimination in employment and other life spheres (Drabble, Wootton, Veldhuis, Perry, Riggle, Trocki, et al., 2020). In addition, reactions to same-sex marriage appear to differ among sexual minorities and range from positive to ambivalent (Lannutti, 2011; Ocobock, 2018). Although legalization of same-sex marriage represents a positive shift in the social and political landscape, the negative impact of social stigma may persist over time. Regarding the interpretation of same-sex marriage, it is clear how the opinions of one respondent disagreed with the statements previously mentioned.

Herman (45): I agree with your statement that gay groups are always discriminated against but I do not agree with your statement that discredits same-sex couples. I do

same-sex couples and have been walking for almost 6 years. I live happily in France. We have never been discredited by anyone even my partner colleagues also see us as same-sex couples. We don't want to get married because we enjoy it. What's wrong if we choose to be same-sex couples?

Raising Same-sex Marriage for Indonesian Same-sex Couples in France

The Meaning of Marriage

State recognition of same-sex relationships, whether through marriage, civil unions, de facto schemes or other official forms of relationship recognition have become increasingly common globally (Paternotte and Kollman, 2013). Scholars posit three explanations for same-sex couples' decisions to formalize their relationships: differences in the benefits that attach to formal relationship recognition; differences in the rate of parenthood between male and female couples; and the structure and provisions of the social safety net (Bernstein, Naples and Harvey, 2016). In addition to its symbolic value, the material benefits of the marital contract generally encompass three main areas: (i) laws that build on assumed emotional relationships between spouses, such as the ability to make financial and medical decisions for one's partner should he or she become incapacitated; (ii) regulation of the financial relationship between married people and the state, such as taxes, social security, student stipends, or child benefits; and (iii) assumptions about paternity and parental status, regulations addressing parenting, such as custody, visitation, and child support (Bernstein, Naples and Harvey, 2013; Chambers, 2001). But at the heart of the same-sex marriage are three crucial questions: What is marriage, why does marriage matter for public policy, and what would be the consequences of redefining marriage to exclude sexual complementarity? (Anderson, 2013). Government recognizes marriage because it is an institution that benefits society in a way that no other relationship does. Marriage is society's least restrictive means of ensuring the well-being of children. While respecting everyone's liberty, government rightly recognizes, protects, and promotes marriage as the ideal institution for childbearing and childrearing. Promoting marriage does not ban any type of relationship: Adults are free to make choices about their relationships, and they do not need government sanction or license to do so (Anderson, 2013). Marriage connects people and goods that otherwise tend to fragment. It helps to connect sex with love. Marriage is a uniquely comprehensive union. It involves a union of hearts and minds, but also, and distinctively, a bodily union made possible by sexual complementarity. As the act by which a husband and wife (or a husband and husband or a wife and wife) make marital love also makes new life, so marriage itself is inherently extended and enriched by family life and calls for all-encompassing commitment that is permanent and exclusive. In short, marriage unites a man and a woman (a man and a man, a wife and a wife) holistically, emotionally and bodily, in acts of conjugal love and in the children such love brings forth, for the whole of life (Anderson, 2013; Girgis, Anderson and George, 2012). The meaning of this marriage was then responded by one of my respondents,

Michael (40): I totally agree with your opinion about the concept of marriage. Marriage can strengthen the bond of love between two people. With marriage we can get what we want such as child rights, and so on. But for me [with a chuckle], I don't want to get married. I am satisfied with my life like this, have a partner who can be said to be handsome and he has a good job. A few years ago I asked him if we were going to get married and he said why get married when the state and society can accept us. He also said to hell with what people say about marriage. If you just get

married, you can quickly get divorced, why get married? For him divorce is an affair. Once we have an affair then divorce will occur. And he didn't want that to happen to our relationship. We are happy with this relationship. We can do what we want. We can also three-some or four-some with other people of course using condoms [while laughing out loud and lighting a cigarette].

Religion versus Same-sex Marriage

Religious intensity and commitment can be manifested in a number of ways. Religiosity involves a number of elements or facets of one's life, and there are multiple aspects as to what the term or concept conveys (Ellison, Gay and Glass, 1989; Glock and Stark, 1965). The literature examining the relationship between religiosity and social attitudes and behaviours has a long history in social science research. Personal identity with a religious tradition, denomination, or family of denominations reinforces personal outlooks of what is viewed as acceptable or unacceptable behaviour (Gay, Lynxwiler and Smith, 2015). Identity with a religious tradition likely affects attitudes toward same-sex marriage and may vary by birth cohort. In this research, all respondents are Muslim, thus I will only discuss how Islam acts and sees sexuality and homosexuality. Muslims are connected by their common Islamic faith, heritage and belief in: one God; angels; God's revealed books; prophets through whom God's revelations were brought to mankind; a day of judgment; individual accountability for actions; God's complete authority over human destiny; and, life after death (Rassool, 2003). Muslims view the Qur'an as a record of the exact words, revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel, to the Prophet Muhammad and on to the people (Ibrahim and Songwathana, 2008). Thus, the Qur'an serves as the prime source of every Muslim's faith and life practices. Islam is a religion that incorporated ritual practices and guidelines for a complete way of life, and is reflected in Muslim cultural beliefs and practices. The five pillars of Islam include: faith (*Sahadah*), prayers (*Shalat*), concerns for the needy (*Zakat*), self-purification (fasting), and pilgrimage, by those who are able, to Makah (Ibrahim and Songwathana, 2008). In a Muslim's world, Islam defines culture, and culture gives meaning to every aspect of an individual's life, including his/her behaviours, perceptions, emotions, language, family structure, diet, dress, body image, concepts of space and time, and attitudes towards health and illnesses. Islam views marriage as sacred and family as the foundation of society, which provides stability and security to individuals and families. Homosexuality is condemned, and considered sinful and punishable by Allah. Muslims couples are encouraged to have children, sex outside of marriage is discouraged and contraception and family planning are allowed. Regarding this, there is one respondent of mine, who reacts rather strongly about the teachings of Islam even though he is a Muslim,

Handi (41): It's true I am Muslim but I am a liberal Muslim. When I was in Jakarta, I strictly adhered to the teachings of Islam because I did not know that Islam strictly forbids homosexuality. I worship, fast and sometimes I also pay *zakat*. When I studied at a university in Jakarta, I noticed a strange thing in myself that I liked men more than women. I don't know where that desire came from, maybe it was when I was little or when I was growing up, I really don't know. I attended many lectures and until one day I heard that Islam forbids homosexuality. Hasn't homosexuality been there from the beginning? I read several books about my religion and homosexuality and sure enough, my religion forbids it. Once I met one of the old preachers, he said that Islam is not what we imagine. Islam is permissive towards such things. Then I asked about a rather sensitive question about same-sex marriage and I was surprised and amazed by the answer from the preacher, he replied that I want to be anything, I

am the one who has to live it as long as I don't forget to pray five times a day, diligently fast and if I can still pay *zakat*. From there I then thought that the religion I follow is a very permissive religion, not like what people imagine. Then I asked again if I sinned if I only did same-sex couples instead of same-sex marriage. The preacher just smiled at me and said that running same-sex couples was what I wanted. What I can't get out of my head is that he always advises me to worship diligently because he said later up there when I was resurrected, the first thing that my Lord asked was how your worship was.

The Impact of Parenthood

Every child with homosexual guardians has lost at least one biological parent. Loss of a parent is universally regarded as a great misfortune. If the child has one biological parent, the other adult is a step-parent. In fables step-parents are typically hostile to their step-children. Homosexual couples with children often experience competition or jealousy over parenting, and the children often have a preference for or “primary bond” with one parent. If one is the child’s biological parent, it would be natural for the child to identify the other as secondary, or as not a true parent at all (Dent, 2011). The child with homosexual custodians has lost both parents. Adoption can be a great blessing for children whose parents are unable or unwilling to care for them, but even adoption by a traditional married couple is not equal to the biological family. If same-sex couples are just as good as biological parents, they must be better than traditional married couples as adoptive parents. Adopted children often crave knowledge of and contact with their biological parents (Fagan, 2010). In effect, these children assert the natural importance of blood ties and a human right to access to their biological parents. Other aspects of homosexual relationships make same-sex couples less likely to be good parents. Heterosexual relationships are more durable. The bond between woman and man is rooted in the biological necessity to nurture human infants for a long time (Wade, 2011). Homosexuals have less reason to bond as couples and, when they do bond, less reason for the bond to be enduring and exclusive. Not surprisingly, then, homosexuals are less inclined than heterosexuals to marry (Dent, 2011). Where homosexuals (especially gay men) do marry or otherwise enter into a committed relationship, it generally happens later in life than it generally does for normal couples. Given the fragility of homosexual relationships, children in these homes are more likely to suffer the stresses of divorce and to learn that marriage is temporary, not a lasting relationship of trust. Every child raised by a homosexual couple has already lost at least one biological parent, so a divorce may cause heightened trauma. Given the frequent infidelity in homosexual couples, children in these homes are more likely to witness conflict over infidelity and to see it as a normal part of marriage. Consequently, parental stability is an important issue because children whose parents have divorced or separated show poorer psychological adjustment than children whose fathers have died (MacCallum and Golombok, 2004). Regarding the impact of parenthood, two of my respondents said,

Herman (45): It's true that getting married is good for living together forever but I don't like children, neither do my partners. You can imagine after we took care of all the marriage administration then we had to take care of the administration to adopt children. It's at least very inconvenient for us since we both work here. We don't have time to deal with that. I am old but I still have great jealousy. My partner is already 50 years old, we are 5 years apart. But we both still have feelings of jealousy that are so great. If the jealousy is still in us, how can we take care of the children? I also feel

sorry for the child because later he will be confused because both parents are male. So it's better for us to choose to do same-sex couples instead of same-sex marriage.

Handi (41): Incidentally we do not like it when we adopt a child. We both love children very much, they are cute but we decided to give love only to our nieces and nephews, not to adopted children. We are comfortable here. Without children, we could even have sex every day [while laughing out loud]. If there are children, we will be disturbed when we are having sex [laughs out loud again]. Don't tell anyone that we are a hypersex couple [laughs out loud] that's why we prefer to be same-sex couples instead of being attached to a same-sex marriage [smiles]. So we proud to be same-sex couples. We are same-sex couples and we are not doing same-sex marriage

The three sections above; the meaning of marriage, religion versus same-sex marriage and the impact of parenthood, illustrates that the awareness of Indonesian same-sex couples is still very low to carry out same-sex marriage. This is because in Indonesia they cannot do same-sex couples. Same-sex couples in Indonesia are strongly opposed by all parties, even same-sex couples are considered as an immoral act. This happens not only to homosexual couples but also to heterosexual couples. Marriage is something that is considered very sacred but marriage must be done by a heterosexual couple, not a homosexual couple. Even though homosexual culture in Indonesia has basically existed for thousands of years, but since 1965 with the bloody events carried out by the Indonesian Communist Party, the Indonesian government banned homosexuality on the assumption that being gay (lesbian or transgender) is something that is considered despicable, full of sin and have no religion or atheism.

Conclusion

Being a person who has a different sexual orientation or homosexual is a very difficult in Indonesia. The feeling of being discriminated against and even criminalized is something that is very feared by homosexual groups. Therefore, they migrate to countries that are least able to tolerate their existence. However, most of them do not do same-sex marriage but they only do same-sex couples with their partners. Their awareness to do the same-sex marriage is still very lacking even though doing the same-sex marriage is something that is highly recommended to improve their lives. By conducting same-sex marriage they can claim what they need and can adopt children according to the policies of the country they live in. It is not a mistake to read their opinions and experiences from the three sections above. In the meaning of marriage, we can find that marriage is a choice between both parties. Michael and his partner don't want to get married because by getting married their free life can be disrupted. It is stated by Michael that they can still do three-some or even four-some with other people. It is also very important that Michael underlined the issue of divorce. Michael and his partner presuppose a divorce with infidelity. In the section on religion versus same-sex marriage, it is also clear how Handi responded to these two things. Handi considers that the position of Islam as a religion can be said to be permissive. Islam does not discriminate against people who have different sexual orientations. The most important thing for Handi is that even though he is gay and lives in France, he still performs the five daily prayers, fasts and pays zakat. He believed that God would not torture him after He was called by God because he had done the things that his religion required him to do. The impact of parenthood section explains that they do not want their private life to be disturbed just because of a child. Herman and his partner had excessive jealousy, thus they decided to have same-sex couples instead of doing same-sex marriage which would result in divorce. Meanwhile, Handi, who admitted that he and his partner had hypersex, stated that they actually liked children, but

they only expressed their affection for their nieces and nephews. At the beginning of this paper, namely the interpretation of same-sex couples and same-sex marriage, I also found very interesting responses from Andi, Hartono and Herman. They said that they were very happy with their current state. Even though they are doing same-sex couples, they feel they are not discriminated against by anyone. To conclude this paper, it can be said that same-sex marriage is not something that must be done by Indonesian gays who have migrated to France because by doing same-sex couples they feel that they can do everything that is good for both of them.

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