THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMOSEXUAL WHO DISCLOSE THEMSELVES TO FAMILY

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this research aims to study the characteristics of female and male homosexuals who disclose themselves to their families. This research was conducted by using the qualitative research form and gathered information by thoroughly interviewing specified sample groups, then using the snowball method to select 30 female and male aged 20-39 years. The study revealed that family is one factor of self-disclosure of homosexuals. Their behavior is based on how one has been raised, and homosexuals are bound to express themselves according to how they were brought up. Their behavior also depends on the environment around them. Homosexuals express themselves according to the environment and experience they have been through.

Keywords: Self-discloser, Homosexuality, Male homosexual, Female homosexual, Family, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, not only female and male are heterosexual, or interested in the opposite sex, there are those who are found of the same sex; female attracted to female and male being fond of male. Homosexuals face troubles of disclosing themselves to their families [1]. According to the labeling theory of Hartwert Baker [2], explains that homosexuality is a result of being judged that they have sexual deviant. An individual is put in this status by society condemning that they have sexual deviation. Pavlov Watson and Skinner's behavioral theory [3] says that a character or behavior of an individual is formed by society. If the society does not accept such character or behavior, one will not disclose them, but if so then they will.

The objective of this research aims to study the characteristics of female and male homosexuals who disclose themselves to their families. Because the people who raise them up have an impact on them; self-disclosure will bring understanding and reduce the concern of their families [4]. Furthermore, it is a preparation in disclosing themselves to society. They can live in harmony with understanding from their society after disclosing; those involved in the same issue can learn from it by considering the importance of the problem and try to find a right solution.

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METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research which has collected information by doing thorough interviews with females and males who admit themselves as homosexuals. The data was collected from a sample group through an in-depth interview with open-ended questions. The sample group was selected by using a technique called "snowball technique" in order to get closer to the sample group. For each interview, the researcher would arrange a convenient location for the participant's comfort in providing the information. A rescheduling of interview would be arranged in case more information is needed. Also, the researcher would always keep close contacts with the participants.

The snowball method was used to select 30 homosexuals aged between 20-39 years. This aged group is mature people who can make their own decision. This selected group can refer their friends or other person who are the same characteristics, to researcher. Then, those newly introduced participants would continue to introduce more friends of the same characteristics and thus creating a network of participants for the interview. The data collection was done by conducting in-depth interview with open-ended questions. Apart from

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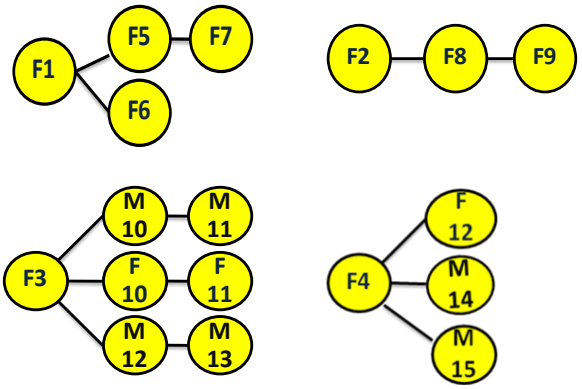


Figure 1 Snowball method used on the female homosexual subjects

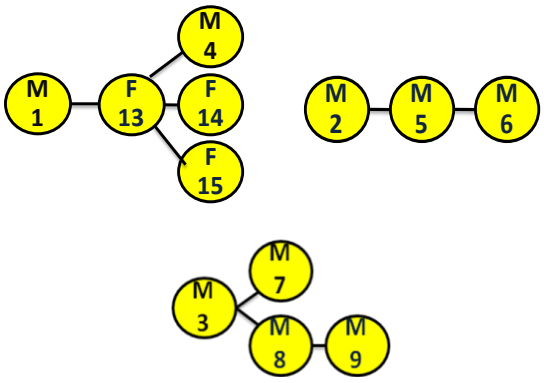


Figure 2 Snowball method used on the male homosexual subjects

snowball technique, the selection criteria of the sample group also required the participants to be homosexual who are willing to be interviewed, including having good communication skills, able to spare some of their time for the interview, and must be at the age of early adulthood by the following steps.

First, is by selecting 4 female homosexuals who are acquaintances of the researcher. For the first person, the researcher made a phone call to introduce about the research and also did an interview with her. After the interview, she introduced more homosexuals, whom the researcher would like to refer to as F5 and F6 from now on. F6 had other female homosexual friends whom the researcher did not get a chance to interview, but however the researcher did get a chance to interview one of F5's acquaintances, whom will be referred to as F7. Afterwards, the researcher started interviewing another female homosexual who has already been selected which is F2. From then the researcher had a friend to introduce the researcher to F8, who volunteered to introduce another female homosexual friend of hers. By then the researcher got to interview F9 who is the third selected person, she then introduced three of her homosexual friends; two males and one female, who the researcher would like to refer to as M10, F10, and F12. M10 introduced M11 to researcher, F10 introduced F11, and M12 introduced M13. The researcher contacted and interviewed the fourth selected person (F4) on the same day, who introduced her friends; one lesbian and two gays. So the researcher got a chance to interview F12, M14, and M1, too (Figure 1).

As for male homosexuals, the researcher chose three people as the sample group. The first person (M1) was the researcher's colleague, so the interview was completed in no time. He then introduced F13, who is his junior colleague, and so F13 introduced three more friends who are M4, F14, and F15. After making an appointment with M2, he kindly introduced the researcher to M5, who later on introduced M6. As for the third selected male homosexual (M3), the researcher was acquaintances with his relatives, so he introduced two more homosexuals; M7 and M8. M8 then introduced M9 who was his friend. By the following steps, the researcher was able to gather enough information from 30 female and male homosexuals, which answers to the research's objective. The researcher

kept track of the given data by making notes and tape recording the conversations. The data were analyzed with given codes, then interpreted and given denotation (Figure 2).

Validity check of information was conducted by two following methods by making observation during the interview or during each visit and contact and reformulating the questions that were already answered by the participants and asked them again. If the same answer was given, then it means that the obtained information was correct.

The principal investigator (PI) based the study on Grounded Theory method, a systematic methodology in the social sciences involving the construction of theory through the analysis of data. It was started by asking the participant what he/she wanted to know before conducting the interview. Once data had been collected, a concept was formed before linking to the gathered information. When completed, the discussion process was executed in order to provide an explanation regarding the study results by selecting certain group of data for interpretation and drawing of conclusion

The PI also added research ethics section to inform that this research had been approved by the Ethics Review Committee for Research Involving Human Research Subjects, Health Science Group, Chulalongkorn University.

RESULTS

From the research, the characters of homosexuals who disclose and do not disclose themselves to their families are as follows:

From 15 female homosexuals; 6 tomboys, 4 lady lesbians, and 5 lesbians, 10 have disclosed themselves to their families, which include all 6 tomboys, 3 lady lesbians, and 1 lesbian. After studying all of the 15 female homosexuals, the characters of those who disclose and do not disclose themselves to their families are as follows:

Family:

Female homosexuals who disclose themselves to their families were raised up in families that aren't very strict. For example;

"…they always let me go with whomever I wanted. …they know and understand."

The relationships of their parents are good.

"…mom was always with dad, she went wherever he went to take care of him."

And they are close to their family members.

"…I'm always with my family. We'd have meals together everyday…"

But as for female homosexuals who choose not to disclose themselves to their families, they were raised in strict families.

"…I had to finish everything neatly or else my father would scold me…"

Their parents weren't in such a good relationship.

"My parents broke up so I lived with my grandmother in Bangkok instead."

And they weren't close to their families.

"My parents work in another province, so it was just the two of us, me and my sister…"

Environment:

Female homosexuals who disclose themselves to their families were raised up as if they were a boy. For example;

"…my father taught me how to ride a bicycle and how to shoot with a gun because he wanted me to be tough enough to look after my mom and younger sibling…"

They also usually start to recognize that they like the same sex since they were young.

"…around 5th or 6th grade I secretly liked one of my friends, but all I could do was look at her, and notice how cute she was. I also felt like hugging her…"

And their families weren't against them in situations when they exposed themselves.

"…I brought my girlfriend to my home for them to see…"

Furthermore, they normally have a loved one who they're in a relationship with.

"…I think of being with her, doing things together, and I want my parents to know that I'm in a serious relationship with her…"

On the other hand, female homosexuals who don't disclose themselves to their families some hate the opposite sex.

"…I didn't like my brothers so much. …Boys look rather rude and harsh…"

And they would start recognizing that they like the same sex as they start growing up.

"...I think it was certain when I was in my second or third year in college because I started dating a girl seriously then..."

Moreover, they are not in a relationship with anyone.

From 15 male homosexuals; 10 gays, and 5 lady boys, 9 disclose themselves to their families which include 4 gays and all 5 lady boys. After studying all of the 15 male homosexuals, the characters of those who disclose and those who don't disclose themselves to their families are as follows:

Family:

Male homosexuals who disclose themselves to their families were raised up in families which aren't strict. For example;

"...they would ask me first if I was willing to do it or not, no matter what the issue was..."

They were also close to their families.

"...yes, I live with my family..."

But for male homosexuals who do not disclose themselves to their families were raised in strict families.

"...everything had to be perfect, if I failed my tests my dad would absolutely punish me..."

And they weren't close to their families.

"...not often, I rarely go out with my family, they don't have time because they're always busy working..."

Environment:

Families of male homosexuals who disclose themselves would notice their sexual deviant from their behavior since childhood. For example;

"...he liked wearing tight shirts, short pants, and wore spaghetti strip shirts underneath the school uniform..."

And they would start recognizing themselves since they're still young.

"...in junior high, because I had a crush on a guy and tried getting close to him..."

And mostly, there are situations where they disclose themselves but their families showed no rejection in response.

"...when I bring a guy over to my house I would tell them that this is my boyfriend, so they get to know him and can be less concerned..."

But male homosexuals who don't disclose themselves to their families ever get themselves in a situation of disclosure, and they are not having a relationship with anyone, so their families never know that they're actually homosexuals. For example;

"...I've never been in a relationship, I'm now 24, but I've never had a boyfriend..."

DISCUSSION

The conclusion procedure is as follows: the researcher assigned codes for each collected data according to its topic, followed by analyzing, interpreting, and providing meanings based on Grounded Theory. After completed, conclusions were drawn in order to reveal whether the interviewing topic was related to the disclosure of homosexuality or not. Then, the main points were grasped and the interview answers were found to have been repeated by many participants for the same question. For instance, a question regarding having to follow parents' choice of education can be interpreted and concluded that the participants were strictly raised by their parents and therefore they were unable to tell their parents that they are homosexual.

The limitations of study for this research on the disclosure of homosexual to family are as follows. The application of the findings of this research is limited since the study was only conducted on the population within Bangkok, which cannot be used to represent the overall population of the entire country. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that the research results were quite satisfactory, there were only 30 homosexuals who participated in the research, which is considered to be a small group of study and cannot be used as a reference for the overall population of the country

Female homosexual:

Self-disclosure of female homosexuals from this research shows that 9 disclose themselves to their families, who are F1, F11, F14, F8, F3, F9, F10, F13, and F15. From all 9 of them, some of them have same methods in disclosing themselves while some have other ways of doing it; such as disclosure by taking a girlfriend back home with them, thinking

that they are grown up enough that their parents would be less worried about them. This conforms to Punnika Chantrapunnik's research [5]. About communication for self-disclosure of female homosexuals, which concludes that in communicating for self-disclosure of female homosexuals to families, female homosexuals choose to tell their families indirectly about their homosexual status.

In self-disclosing that one is a homosexual, some female homosexuals choose not to disclose themselves because they think being homosexual is something inappropriate, dissimilar, and can cause them disgrace. This conforms to Hartwert Baker's labeling theory [2] which has concluded that sexual deviation is a result of social judgment, judging that one has sexual deviation, imprisoning and condemning that they have homosexual potential.

Male homosexual:

Parents of male homosexuals start recognizing their children since they're young; they notice that their children are unlike other boys of the same age from the girl-like behavior of their child. Homosexuals who disclose themselves to their families are those who are close to their families. This conforms to Satetawach Puttanasuwan's research [6] about mental and social affectation of parents with gay children where in the research concludes that parents acknowledge about their son being gay since their childhood or as they become teenagers. The behaviors of their sons are more like girls, which is a result of how they were raised and the environment around them. Parents who adapt and learn to accept that their child is gay are parents who are close to their child.

From research, some female homosexuals choose not to disclose themselves because their families can't accept it or have bad opinions about homosexuals. This conforms to the behavioral theory of Pavlov Watson & Skinner [3] which explains that reinforcement or society is a factor for homosexuals in choosing whether to disclose themselves or not. If the reinforcement or society accepts homosexuals, they might disclose themselves; but if not, they may choose not to.

This research shows that family is one of the factors of self-disclosure or non-self-disclosure of homosexuals to their families. How homosexuals expose themselves is based on how they were raised, their life experiences, and also the environment around them.

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