DISCLOSURE OF TRANSSEXUAL IDENTITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Charisma Asri Fitrananda¹
Communication Studies, FISIP UNPAS, Indonesia

Abstract
One of social construction is the existing of the influenced culture by gender, thus gave point of view of how sex identity and minority gender become marginalized viewed. In some levels transsexual were considered violate cultural norms because there were perfect identity shift to be social societies, who always do communication, relation and community. There were reasons for transsexual to show their identity. This article analyzed by using Communication Identity Theory, Privacy Management Theory and Self Disclosure Theory as a concept. The result of this article are social media is one of passing step or transition of a transsexual in expressing their identity. Starting from identified themselves as a transsexual, continued with constructing gender that still dominant in society and the last step was expressing the identity through social media such facebook, instagram and twitter. It concluded that the transsexual who already pass the passing through social media means has already in high level on self-actualization step to expressing self-identity as trans transpria and transpuan in the society.

Keywords: Self Disclosure, Transsexual, Social Media

¹Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Charisma Asri Fitrananda, Universitas Pasundan or at email: charisma.asri@unpas.ac.id.
Introduction

Indonesia has a thick history of trans-genders and transsexual, this fact contradicts the common belief that they are come from Western. Indonesia’s culture has long been accustomed to gender diversity before colonialism and modernity exerted their strong influence in the society. Transsexual has always been one of the social aspects of being the hottest news in Indonesian life because of the unequal attitude given by the society. For example, Indonesia have Bugis people in South Sulawesi with their gender flexibility. Since the pre-Islamic era, the Bugis people have recognized five genders. They divide the society into man (oroane), woman (makkunrai), transgender woman (calabai), transgender man (calalai) and androgynous priest (bissu)

Gay, Lesbian, Straight, Education Network (GLSEN, 2002) provide a definition of transgender as a place for individuals who express gender not according to sex, for example cross dresser, drag king and drag queens. Whereas transsexuals are individuals who do not follow gender according to their sex when they are born, and sometimes carry out surgery or hormone intervention to 'transition'.

Transsexuals at various levels are considered to "violate" cultural norms about how men and women should behave. Discrimination from the community makes it difficult for Trans to find work and get caught up in a circle of poverty. The 2015 research showed that 67 percent of transvestites worked as sex workers on the road, and nearly one third of the transgender population (27 percent) called busking their main job. Only a small percentage of them operate small businesses in the sectors of beauty and fashion, entertainment and office work.

There are several things that can influence the formation of transsexual behavior. From a biological point of view, genetic aspects can affect the condition. While from a psychological and socio-cultural point of view it is divided into three dominant aspects namely social environment, cognitive development, and personality. These three aspects are protected by human rights obtained from the time they were born.

Every human being is born by carrying inherent human rights and cannot be eliminated. These human rights must be fulfilled so that people can live properly. The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule. The liberty of man, in society, is to be under no other legislative power, but that established, by consent, in the commonwealth, nor under the dominion of any will, or restraint of any law, but what that legislative shall enact, according to the trust put in it (Locke, 1960:73-74).

---


Gender is considered as a social construction that divides individuals in the 'natural' category into men and women and this is assumed to originate from the physical bodies of men and women (Westbrook, in Sanger, 2010: 52). Also known as queer which aims to deconstruct social constructions that gender orientation and identity are not limited to two types such as men and women and those who cannot be identified as men and women are considered to be illness. Gender is odd from one another because of the deviation of sexual orientation that causes transsexuals to be seen as a deviant and pathological gender.

In gender identity there are only men and women, therefore those who do not behave according to the gender category are considered deviate. Two models of division in sex and gender according to Butler where men must be masculine and women must be feminine. This is to easily identify their sex, if there is a deviation, they will be discriminated against by the society.

Discrimination against transsexuals stems from the stigma of those who choose 'different' from the society. This stigma about transsexuals develops so thickly in the context of Indonesian society. Where there is a patriarchal construction in which men are constructed as male beings, the stigma of transsexuals is also associated with homophobia which sometimes comes from religious beliefs. That construction can be a social interpretation that influences people's behavior and reactions.

The assumption that sexuality and gender are socially constructed shows that concepts such as homosexual, heterosexual, male, female, third gender, transgender and transsexual are historical findings. Social construction is liquid and changes according to place and time. The transsexual behavior in Indonesia and abroad has a significant difference, as well as the attitude given by their society. It also distinguishes how the process of transsexual self-disclosure becomes itself or through the passing stage, one of which is through social media. Social media is still a safe channel for Transsexuals to express their true identity, because only a few people can confront directly.

Being on social media means exposing ourselves with or without real identity. It means, we can use any identity behind social media accounts. This is used by transsexuals in passing the stage to self-actualization, disclosure their identity and to communicate with new people. However, there are only a limited number of studies on transsexuals in Indonesia. Therefore, this research can add information about literacy of transsexual identity on social media.

**Research Methods**

**Research designs**

The ethnographic research method uses qualitative analysis to get the original perspective. The main data collection techniques are participatory observation, open and in-depth interviews conducted over a period of time. Participants recruited from Indonesian Transsexuals who actualize their identity using social media such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. The researcher interviewed five informants and they were verbally informed about research project which included the objective the study, how they involved, confidentiality, anonymous issues, and ability to withdraw all times without loss of their benefits. Research with ethnographic methods focusing on the subject's view as the object of research, usually examines
culture in society which is the construction of researchers from various information. Data that has been found will be analyzed by using Communication Identity Theory, Privacy Management Theory and Self Disclosure Theory as a concept.

**Instruments**

The interview guide for participant observation is done by providing information about how they use social media to actualize themselves. Questions are asked to increase understanding of how Transsexuals actualize themselves through social media, including the following: What do you want to be identified? What do you think about the concept of gender? Why do you think? How do you use social media to actualize yourself? How do you make public opinion about Transsexuals more positive? Do you tell people on your social media about your gender or sexuality? Why do you do that?

**Results**

**Transsexual Identity**

Findings of this study illustrate that the Transsexual context in Indonesian society often perceive gender and sexuality in a binary way – male and female, masculine and feminine – without considering other genders and sexuality. Heterosexuality is deemed as the “normal” sexual orientation, if not compulsory. Transgender and transsexual is better known as the term *waria* which has an extension of *wanita* (women) and *pria* (man). In addition there are other nicknames, namely *bunci* or sissy, but the context of this use has a negative meaning and its use becomes wider such as for words that are considered cowardly or irresponsible.

The construction of society does not stop at defining transgender and transsexuals that are considered 'deviant'. Social prejudice is defined as a condition related to attitudes and beliefs, expressions of negative feelings or discriminatory behavior. Certain cases related to acts of sexism and racism are also considered prejudices. In addition, labeling by the mass media confirms that transsexuals are not part of the community system, which triggers transphobia. Besides being forbidden in Islam religion, the assumption that transsexuals are a disorder or something "other" is considered unacceptable in the social system, so transsexuals become objects of transphobia and make them victims of discrimination.

Identity is defined as a cultural, social, relational and individual self-conceptual image, and has implications for group and interpersonal membership. Identity in communication science understands how individuals define them for various reasons, people can communicate with other people who are culturally different with sensitivity and interpersonal understanding. Social identity according to Henri Tajfel on Sarwono (1999) understands individual identity consists of social identity and personal identity on a psychological level. Social identity can include cultural or ethnic membership identity, gender identity, gender identity, sexual orientation identity and so on.

The disclosure of a transsexual identity can be seen from the Communication Theory of Identity developed by Michael Hecht on Littlejohn (2009) as part of the shift in the discussion of identity as a central element of human existence to identity as a social phenomenon. Identity
is described as a frame with many aspects, such as a personal framework, an implementation framework and a communal framework. The first step is to define his identity and conceptualize himself culturally, socially, relationally and individually. What do they want to be identified? Are they like women, men, transgender or transsexual? These questions are what they have to find the answer by myself. The informant identifies his identity as a transsexual, they have chosen to be like that and will be responsible for his decision. Although there will definitely be resistance from the environment and the social system, this is what is called the personal framework which covers things traditionally and is considered a self-concept.

First of all, if transsexuals want to do sex reassignment surgery in Indonesia, there will be several stages such as getting recommendations from a psychologist. Psychologists will examine by conducting interviews, do patients suffer enough from their condition before surgery? Is there a tendency for patients to become depressed with the condition before surgery? To get to know patients more about themselves, how they identify their identity and commitment in their decision to change sex genitals.

Then, the framework of implementation in which transsexuals express from the identity they have chosen. This can be seen from how they conceptualize themselves to become someone who is trapped in the wrong gender and make changes to their genitals. There is a performance or action taken to support the self-concept they has chosen. For example, transpuan that is being more gentle and feminine is either an attitude or a way of speaking. Then, the relational framework of identity refers to identity in a relation. The existence of a transsexual self-view (personal identity) in conjunction with the way other people see themselves as transsexual (communal identity) describes that social position.

On social media, Transsexuals in Indonesia have two identities that want to be called, there are Transpria and Transpuan. Transpria is an individual who changes his sex from woman to man, while transpuan is an individual who changes his sex from male to female. Both have social descriptions that are generally the same as real men and women. For example, transpuan judged to have a slim body, white skin, bottle shape waist, long hair, smooth skin, sharp nose, plump eyelashes, cheeks and red lips, and tight breasts. So, to become a Transpuan, they must carry out further operations to reach the public’s perception of how to be a real woman.

While Transpria who has the image to have a broad chest, a sturdy shoulder, short hair, a mustache or a beard, there needs to be changes in physical and hormonal forms addition as a validation requirement for their identity as men. Compared to the term sissy, transpria and transpuan is a more positive call and transsexuals prefer that term in communicating on social media.

Privacy Management

After they can identify themselves, then they have entered into the next phase, how to do privacy management in using social media. A Transsexual delivers personal information in seeking personal support first, meaning they provide information about being transsexual to people who can be trusted in maintaining their identity. Then they ask for support when using social media to actualize themselves. Informants do this until they reach a stage that they
consider comfortable using social media, meaning that they approach as many people in society as possible.

Why is disclosure of identity important in using social media? Because identity is one of the attractions of others to start friendships, especially for informants who use Instagram to express their true identity. On Instagram, the informant prefers to post his picture after becoming a transsexual to give confidence to them and others.

According to the theory of Communication Privacy Management developed by Sandra Peronio on Littlejohn (2009), the way people handle choices is whether to open or hide private information when they have social interactions with others. Informants make self-disclosures by choosing whether to open all information directly or hide information in private. There are informants who choose to start their lives by creating new accounts on social media, after which information about their new identity will be openly given to others.

Other informants slowly provide information about their identity through their social media accounts to express their new identity. There are informants who do not reveal their identity on social media, this is because the informant is not yet comfortable to open his identity to the new person. The third informant is waiting for the other person to assume what their identity is, then they will give further explanation. Linking privacy and self-disclosure in this way provides opportunities for Transsexuals to see how people behave socially as well as individually at the same time. There is a desire from some informants who want to socialize but by keeping their identity as transsexuals. In other words, private information about sexuality is usually expressed be delayed.

How mutual transsexuals help each other on social media so that they can be well received in society. For example, by inviting his friends to be more active in contributing to community activities. because they assume that if you want to be accepted, hang out with people. If you don’t get along, you can’t control people's perceptions. This makes a transsexual more confident and a negative perception of them decreases. Therefore, it is important for transsexual to become part of the society.

Disclosure of Transsexual Identity on Social Media

The last stage of a transsexual to actualize himself is through the passing stage, which is the conn which transpria and tranpuan are comfortable with themselves as a new person, and not ashamed to admit it on social media. Because they can express their desires in posting anything about their new personality, new body and new look. Social media can provide all the affections they want to get, social needs to interact, self-esteem needs to make themselves comfortable, and instrumental desires to complete their desires. Mostly, transsexuals begin to want to express themselves to fulfill their social needs to interact with others.

In the era of digital society, the appearance displayed on social media is one of the attractions commonly used to actualize themselves. Physical attraction is the dominant prediction of how to build potential relationships. Therefore Transsexuals who are comfortable with themselves are not ashamed to post look after they are transformed. For example the
character of transpria that you want to notice on social media are short hair, a broad chest, a not curved waist, growing a beard and mustache. All these characteristics are tried to be posted on social media to display their identity as new individuals and get relationships that can accept what they are.

When transsexual starts to express their identity on social media, they must face discrimination from various parties. That condition will causes trauma so it will develop into depression, self-hatred, and paranoia. As a result, they will be in bad condition and tend to make irrational decisions, such as making unsafe and reckless transitions. However, the decision to reveal identity on social media is suitable and they are ready to accept the consequences from society.

Judging from the patriarchal concept which only recognizes binary gender, the existence of transsexual should be able to tear down the construction. However, stigma and discrimination make the transsexual community forced to follow the construction in different forms. In fact, they understand that stigma and discrimination occur because of a lack of public knowledge about diversity of gender and sexuality.

Quality and quantity are also determined by the level of self-disclosure, there are people who are too open to themselves called over disclosure, which is to inform everything about themselves to anyone. There are also people who are too close to themselves or under disclosure, which is rarely talk about themselves to others. In general, more people are between the two extremes, they choose which topics are disclosed and to whom they will express them. (Devito, 1999: 84-85)

Self-disclosure is a type of communication, namely the disclosure of information about themselves both hidden and not hidden. Self-disclosure is very important in communication, especially in the context of fostering and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Self-disclosure can help communication be effective, create more meaningful relationships and also for health to reduce stress.

The first step in expressing one’s identity is Open self, which is done by a Transsexual when they are first aware of things that happen to them, where they can be open to themselves and others. This area reflects someone’s openness to the world in general, a desire to be known. This quadrant includes all aspects of someone who is known and unknown to others. This quadrant is the basis for most communication between two people. In one of the more open informants about the nature, feelings, awareness, behavior, and motivation in using social media, it was easier to establish communication with anyone. Anyone here means friends, family, coworkers and people who are new to social media. Informants who are in the open area, usually use Instagram to show the appearance of their faces or bodies that have changed.

This affects the interaction between individuals or groups to create effective communication on social media. Transsexuals who are in open areas tend to start conversations more often, greet more often, send emoticons, and tell more about themselves. Of course, Transsexuals in this area have a great opportunity to lead public opinion towards transsexuals that are more positive. They tend to be more intense to provide information about the importance of self-actualization in personal and society.
The second area is Blind self, a condition where a Transsexual can understand the nature, feelings, thoughts, and motivation of a person, but that person cannot understand himself. This blind area often occurs in human interactions which can cause misunderstandings or other problems. Transsexuals who are in a blind self tend to be confused in expressing their identity and cannot create effective communication on social media, so that it will cause various problems.

Furthermore, Hidden self is a situation where a Transsexual has the ability or chooses to hide or keep secret about his gender identity that has changed. Other informants choose to keep their identities confidential, usually they use Twitter, because they feel more comfortable with social media that only displays thoughts through writing. The last, the Unknown self or unknown region is the condition of a person who cannot understand himself and even others cannot recognize him. This region is an area that cannot create effective interaction and communication because both of them feel there is no understanding.

Conclusion, transsexuals who have gone through the stage of passing through social media are already in the stage of self-actualization or disclosure of the highest self to society. Not only to actualize themselves on social media, but to lead public opinion about more positive transsexuals.

References

Butler, J. The unnatural sexual orientation.