

PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION IN PREVENTING LGBT BEHAVIORS IN PADANG CITY

Muhammad Iqbal Suranta Tarigan¹⁾, Ernita Arif²⁾, Sarmiati³⁾

1. Master of Communication Science, Andalas University: myiqbaltarigan3@gmail.com
2. Master of Communication Science, Andalas University: ernitaarif@soc.unand.ac.id
3. Master of Communication Science, Andalas University: miaunand@gmail.com

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CORRESPONDENCE

Phone: +6281261371837

E-mail: myiqbaltarigan3@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research examines the role of parental communication in preventing LGBT behavior in Padang City. The study aims to explore parents' experiences in preventing LGBT behavior through communication, instilling values, and involving fathers in educating children. A qualitative method with a phenomenological approach was employed, conducting in-depth interviews with five research subjects, namely parents who have experience in taking action against LGBT perpetrators, are active in parenting studies, and have experience in raising children to prevent LGBT behavior. The results showed that communication plays a crucial role for parents in, establishing habits such as covering up, educating about body parts that are forbidden to be touched, and encouraging the presence of a father figure both socially and emotionally. Thus, effective communication, instilling values, and father involvement are key factors in preventing the presence of LGBT behavior within the family environment.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual orientation is a person's tendency to direct their feelings of attraction, romanticism, emotionality, and sexual affection towards men, women, or a combination of both (Putri, 2022). Deviant sexual behavior is carried out by groups of people who have deviant sexual orientation, or known as LGBT communities (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender/Transsexual). LGBT issues in Indonesia are still seen as controversial, both from the perspective of health, national ideology and the perspective of various religions. (Hasnah & Alang, 2019; Prayitna, 2018; Saleh & Arif, 2017). Especially in true West Sumatra, known for its philosophy of 'Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah'. LGBT behavior is viewed as

deviation from sexual orientation that contradicts human nature, religion, and society (Rahmadhani et al., 2021).

The large amount LGBT population figures in West Sumatra has been under scrutiny, with recent data indicating that more than 15.000 people are part of LGBT communities, according to the National AIDS Commission (Komisi Penanggulangan Aids Nasional) report in 2016 (Fajria, 2023). Additionally, the HIV VCT counselor association reported in 2018 that the number of gay individuals reached 14.46. However, there is currently no updated data available on the LGBT population in West Sumatra. Negative stigma and discrimination from society pose significant for LGBT individuals to openly identify themselves.

News related to LGBT cases continues to spread across the internet, indicating a significant growth in the LGBT population. Recently, three prominent cases have captured social media attention, involving not only civilians but also military officers and regional heads in West Sumatra. One report mentioned the dismissal of a military officer by a Military Court in Padang City due to alleged involvement in LGBT activities. Another case involved a village head from Padang Pariaman district accused of engaging in immoral acts with a student (Afrianto, 2024). The most recent incident occurred when two individuals were caught on CCTV engaging in indecent behavior in a mosque in Pesisir Selatan district (Aidil, 2024).

The growth of LGBT population cannot be separated from the influence of the family environment (Primanita et al., 2021). Parenting patterns, upbringing and other factors play crucial roles in shaping a person's sexual orientation. Bailey et al., (2016) argued that seven factors contribute to this: (1) developmental process, (2) genetics, (3) hormones, (4) neuroanatomy, (5) socio-cultural condition, (6) environmental factors and (7) parenting patterns. However, Fajria (2023) believes that inadequate parental parenting impacts on children's sexual orientations. Research by Primanita et al., (2021) concluded that LGBT-identified children in West Sumatra often experience low relationship attachment, lack of trust, poor communication and feelings of alienation from their parents. Several studies similarly suggest that parents are influential in their children's involvement in LGBT behavior (Afandi Md Ismail et al., 2020; Yusof & Timmiati, 2011; Zulfiqar et al., 2019).

Just as parents have a role in deciding their children's sexual behavior (Aspy et al., 2006), parents also play a role in anticipating LGBT behavior in their children (Wahyuni, 2018). The parental influence on shaping children's sexual orientation (Goldman, 2010) is considered to profoundly impact various aspects of their psychological and social functioning (Hrshika & Sharma,

2017). According to Hirschi (in Hoeve et al., 2012) the diminishing parental role is seen as potentially leading to risky deviant behavior, including delinquency and deviant sexual orientations such as LGBT behavior, among children in the future. Parents should reclaim their role as the primary source of information for their children regarding sexuality. (Hazariah et al., 2020). However, discussion about sexuality between parents and children are still generally considered taboo (Wiendijarti, 2011). This is due to cultural barriers and communication skills (Joodaki et al., 2020; Wamoyi et al., 2010).

Good-quality family communication is considered to have a positive impact on individual behavior (Rizaldi, 2017). Conversely, poor parental communication can make children fearful and less open to their parents. (Arif & Dewi, 2022). Wang's research shows that children often avoid discussing sexuality with their parents because their communication style tends to be implicit, indirect, or non-verbal (2016). Similarly, Amir et al. 's has revealed that parents, in general, are no longer the primary sources or references for children regarding sexuality (2022).

The urgency of preventing LGBT behavior underscores the lack of understanding and communication skills among parents, which forms the starting point and primary focus of this research. The study involves six informants, all parents with professional careers spanning various fields such as Civil Service (PNS), nursing and HIV counseling, psychology, education counseling, private sector employment, advocacy and education activism. Each informant possesses knowledge of deviant sexual orientations like LGBT, acquired through active participation in parenting studies. Additionally, four of them have extensive experience investigating LGBT cases in Padang City, driven either by professional responsibilities or internal improvement initiatives with their respective foundations, companies, or institutions.

Through a series of interview confirmation stages, the informants' participation in parenting studies, coupled with their years of experience in investigating and studying LGBT behavior patterns, has significantly influenced their parenting approaches. This includes how parents communicate to shape their children's understanding of LGBT behavior as a deviant sexual orientation. The term "social construction of reality," as defined by Berger and Luckmann, refers to a social process involving action and interaction, where individuals continuously create a shared and subjectively experienced reality. (Poloma, 2004).

Previous explorations in scientific literature have revealed limited findings on the reality of parental communication in the context of preventing LGBT behavior in children. Adopting a phenomenological approach, this study aims to investigate how parents actively construct their children's understanding of correct sexual orientation through communication, thereby preventing them from engaging in LGBT behavior as a deviant sexual orientation. The significance of this study lies in its potential to enrich academic understanding of family communication and to practically enhance parental awareness in fostering effective communication, particularly in preventing LGBT behavior among their children.

METHODS

This research utilizes a qualitative approach based on phenomenological design. Phenomenology examines events and their significance for individuals by conducting interviews with participants, culminating in identifying essences (Creswell, 1998 in Hasbiansyah, 2008). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with five research subjects selected via purposive sampling criteria. (1) parents actively involved in parenting, with children ranging from childhood to adolescence, (2) possessing awareness about LGBT issues through involvement in relevant cases or parenting classes (3) experienced in discussing LGBT behaviour with their children, and (4)

residing in Padang city. Thematic analysis, following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021) was employed for data analysis. This process included transcription, data coding, identification of themes, and interpretation of their meanings. The phenomenology design enables the researcher to explore parents' subjective experiences and understand how they construct social realities to prevent LGBT behavior in their children.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Introduce Intimate Parts to Children: A Matter of Privacy and Self Esteem

Intimate terms were the initial concept communicated by research subject to their children. Emphasizing the ethical importance of intimate parts, a belief shared by every research subject who embraces Islam. When teaching their children about the significance of safeguarding their intimate parts, parents employ various approaches and methods. However, they all share the common principle of instilling a sense of privacy and educating about intimate parts from an early age. Reni, one of the research subjects and a mother, stressed that the importance of starting LGBT prevention with the awareness of children grasp the concept of privacy and the importance of protecting themselves from unwanted attention.

Following Reni's perspective, Dede, another research subject, emphasized the importance of teaching children about boundaries related to intimate parts. He began instilling these boundaries through how he dressed his daughter, starting from before she could even walk. As a Muslim, he explained that Islam delineates these boundaries, such as wearing the hijab, avoiding sleeping with others under the same blanket, and bathing separately. Dede emphasized his firm commitment to educating his daughter about the importance of protecting her intimate parts.

Rozi, another subject and a father, emphasized that teaching children about private parts forms the foundation for

preventing LGBT behavior. He acknowledged that he has not directly introduced the term “LGBT” to his two young sons who are still in early childhood and introducing unfamiliar terms could be challenging for them. Rozi frequently reminds his sons not to undress spontaneously long before reaching the toilet, using the word “embarrassed” to emphasize discretion. Another research subject, Adnan, added that protecting intimate parts is crucial for shielding their children from exposure to others’ private parts. Adnan established boundaries to ensure his sons do not witness their mother breastfeeding or bathing their younger siblings.

Akmal explained how his family implements SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) for urination and defecation activities. He ensures his children use private facilities rather than public ones. After training with practitioner Sinyo, Akmal’s family even provided each child with two blankets, including their two-year-old. They also adhere to the Prophet’s hadith by observing their rule of not bathing together. These measures reflect the parents’ heightened awareness of the importance of teaching children about private parts as a foundational step in preventing inappropriate behavior. Their efforts aim to foster an environment that nurtures children’s understanding of privacy and boundaries in everyday life.

According to Reni, this habit was introduced to children from the age of two. Akmal emphasized that early implementation makes it easier for children to adopt such habits. Reni stressed the importance of using concrete communication, specifically addressing concepts like ‘shame’ and ‘privacy’. None of the research subjects have introduced the concept of sin to their children yet, including discussion on LGBT issues, as Adnan and Rozi pointed out. Reni explained that this cautious approach stems from children’s limited ability to grasp abstract concepts, for instance sins, whereas shame and privacy are more tangible

concepts that children can understand. Akmal illustrated the concept of shame to his children through verbal visualization, asking them, ‘What would you think if someone went outside with their private parts exposed?’ The research subject commonly use verbal visualization to help their children understand these concepts clearly.

The following will be a summary of the habits parents have when teaching children about intimate body parts.

Table 3.1 Parents habits to introduce intimate parts

No.	The Habits
1.	Boys wear long trousers
2.	Girls are introduced to wearing the hijab from childhood
3.	Limit children’s exposure to observing their siblings or other children being breastfed or bathed.
4.	Standard rules are implemented for defecating in the bathroom, including no showering together.
5.	Children are forbidden from sleeping on the same blanket with anyone else.
<p>The goal is to instil a sense of dignity and respect for privacy in children, helping them understand the importance of personal boundaries. This education ensures they recognize the value of their bodies, making them less susceptible to being seen or touched carelessly by others, including their own parents.</p>	

Teaching Children About Private Body Parts: Protecting Them from Sexual Predators

In addition to teaching children about the boundaries of private parts to foster awareness of shame and privacy, the research subjects actively educate their children about which body parts others should not touch. This practice is crucial for establishing social boundaries, as highlighted by one of research subject, Reni, and for instilling in children a sense of self-protection against potentials sexual harassment. This includes empowering children to assertively communicate and report any inappropriate touching they may encounter.

Akmal, a teacher, underscored that many cases of sexual harassment he encountered often started with touching sensitive areas such as thighs and buttocks. He stressed the critical need for educating about boundaries regarding which body parts are off-limits to touch. Similarly with Rozi, a parent, emphasized this education by instructing his children to promptly report any unwanted touching of specific body parts. Reni, another teacher, connects early education about social boundaries, including limits on touching certain body areas, to prevention of LGBT behaviors.

These findings suggest that research subjects construct a framework for preventing LGBT behavior by associating it with efforts to prevent sexual harassment. Central to this construct is the education on boundaries regarding which body areas are prohibited from being touch

Table 3.2 Avoidance of types of touch

No.	Avoidance of Certain Types of Touch
1.	Wiping shoulders and arms (more than three times)
2.	Touching the head repeatedly (more than three times)
3.	Rubbing thighs
4.	Touching the buttocks
5.	Touching from navel to groin area
<p>Building an Assertive Attitude: encouraging children to confidently reject behaviors that are seen as harassing, deviant, or beyond normal and reasonable boundaries. This applies particularly to interactions with parents at home or teachers at school, where children may be at risk of being inappropriately seen or touched.</p>	

Akmal, shared his experience in handling harassment cases, emphasizing that many instances start with touching sensitive areas such as thighs and buttocks. According to Akmal, this initial touch is an assessment process used by individuals engaging in LGBT behaviors. If a child does not resist or appears comfortable, it signal approval for the perpetrator to proceed with further touches. However, when children are educated and aware, they react with alertness, discomfort, or even anger in response to such signals,

effectively deterring continued touching. Through fostering open communication, children learn to recognize their own boundaries regarding which touches and frequencies are acceptable, empowering them to report inappropriate behavior promptly.

In cultivating children’s awareness, particularly on sensitive topics like specific body parts, fostering open communication by parents is deemed crucial. This approach aims to encourage children to feel at ease discussing their bodies, especially when they encounter something unfamiliar or concerning. Reni strongly advises against substituting scientific names of body parts with alternative terms, such as replacing ‘penis’ with ‘burung’. Such substitutions can lead to confusion and hinder effective communication, which is essential for children to confide in trusted figures like parents or teachers.

Strengthening the Father-Child Relationship

The involvement of both parents is crucial. However, according to all research subjects, the presence of a father figure is consistently emphasized in the context of preventing LGBT behavior. Fathers are seen as pivotal in shaping gender identity for both boys and girls. Reni explains that the absence of a father deprives children of understanding authentic masculinity. Adnan adds that lacking a father’s presence can impede the development of a boy’s gender identity, as interaction and communication with fathers provide a crucial masculine role model. Therefore, the absence of a father figure is viewed as potentially contributing to vulnerability to LGBT behavior among children.

In discussions on the causes of sexual deviations like LGBT behaviors in children, all research subjects expressed a consensus on the crucial role of father involvement in their lives. Akmal pointed out that a lack of emotional closeness between fathers and their children, particularly sons, can contribute to these deviations. He stressed the importance of fathers as essential role models for boys, Reni further noted that the absence of a father figure in parenting can significantly impact a child’s

gender identity, especially during the formative first seven years of life, a critical period for learning gender roles. Reni also highlighted that when emotional needs are unmet by the father figure, it can lead the child to seek inappropriate substitutes, potentially contributing to these deviations.

Adnan highlighted that the absence of a father figure and ineffective communication patterns can lead children to develop altered perceptions of male and female gender roles. This underscores the critical role of fathers in shaping children’s understanding of gender. DEDE emphasized the harsh reality of fatherlessness or the lack of a father figure in the lives of LGBT children he encountered. He disclosed that many of them experienced profound sadness due to never having felt loved or close to their fathers. Seeking a surrogate father figure externally often results in behavior considered deviant. Dede also expressed the primary challenge in his paternal role: ensuring he becomes his daughter's first love to prevent deviant behavior, a constant reminder inspired by his own father’s role.

In summary, these perspectives underscore the critical role of fathers in a child’s emotional development and formation of gender identity, highlighting how their absence or inadequacy can influence the onset of sexual deviations.

In the context of the importance of time with fathers, various subjects highlight the forms of interaction they have with their children. Reni emphasizes the significance of special activities that strengthen the father-son relationship, for instance playing futsal together. She suggests dedicating a special time called ‘Men’s time’ to foster this closeness.

Akmal shared that on the weekend, he spent the entire day with his children. He allows them the freedom to join in his activities, even if they may seem troublesome. Similarly, Rozi explained that weekends are often spent with his family. He mentioned that his son, Syauqi, is always excited when his parents take him to the market to shop, especially because he gets the opportunity to have a snack.

Dede admits that his busy schedule makes it difficult to consistently set aside special time. However, he emphasizes the importance of maintaining the quality of his interaction with his only daughter, even if they are spontaneous or one-on-one with his daughter. Adnan added that despite his busy schedule, he always makes time for simple activities like motorbike rides around the neighbourhood or including children in his works. He ensures his child feels involved in his daily activities.

Table 3.3 The activities to spent time with a father

No.	Different Ways to Spend Time with Dad
1.	Playing Soccer on the Weekend
2.	Accompanying Weekend Activities
3.	Weekend Market Shopping
4.	Having Breakfast or Lunch or Dinner together
A father is prioritizes scheduling quality time with his children	

In summary, these perspectives indicate that both structured and spontaneous interaction with fathers play a pivotal role in enhancing familial bonds and offering essential emotional support for children.

Prevention of LGBT Behaviour in Berger and Luckmann’s Construction of Social Reality

Social construction theory was developed by Berger and Luckmann in their book ‘The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in The Sociology of Knowledge’ (Dharma, 2018). Human efforts to sustain their existence and that of their groups necessitate the creation of social orders or institutions (Sulaiman, 2016). One such institution is the family, the smallest social unit, which serves as a psychological and social bond. Kuswarno (2009) noted that this institution gives rise to roles and laws, or rules. Through the role of parents, the family legitimizes the existence of community groups by establishing certain rules, boundaries, values and norms to prevent behaviours like LGBT, which are considered deviant due to conflicts with the societal norms and values (Widiastuti & Kartika, 2020).

From the definition above, we understand that everyday reality, according to Berger, is not given or natural but is created through social interaction (Ngangi, 2011), particularly between parents and children. In the family context, parents often shape their children's sexual orientation to align with religious and cultural values they hold true, rather than allowing it to develop naturally. Poloma describes this as a social process where individuals continuously create a shared and subjectively experienced reality through action and interaction (2004). Berger explains this social construction process using the concept of the dialectical triad: externalization, objectivation and internalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1990).

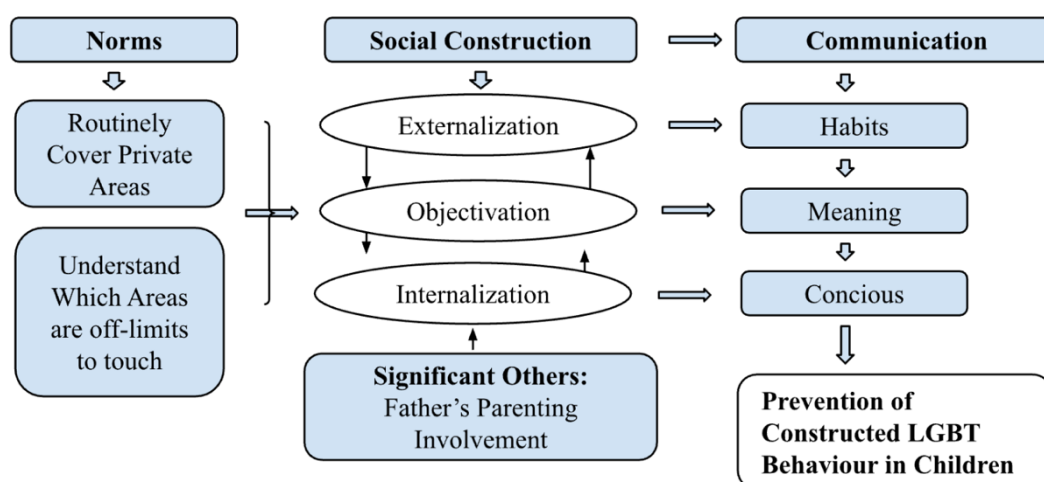
Berger describes externalization as the continuous projection of human selfhood into the world through both physical and mental activities (Berger, in Sulaiman, 2016). This process involves implementing ideas into reality, where individuals adapt to their social environment (Awaru, 2020). We see this externalization process in how parents emphasize the importance of covering private parts, understanding which body areas are off-limits to touch and increasing engagement with their children through space and communication to promote positive behaviour models. This interaction occurs repeatedly (Kuswarno, 2009).

In this research, we observe how the communication process occurs repeatedly, whether through dialogue or family rules, which are interpreted by the child, leading to habituation. This habituation enables individuals to handle situations automatically and is also considered beneficial for others (Kuswarno, 2009). Parents hope that by consistently communicating and internalizing values, children will develop good self-control. In this context, they aim for children to have immunity against deviations in sexual orientation, avoid potential sexual harassment and direct romantic and sexual interests outside the family environment.

This repetition and habituation lead us to the second stage of Berger's dialectical triad: Objectivation is the process of integrating and forming certain objects in the mind from all externalization processes experienced or observed in the environment, thus allowing for new additional meanings (Awaru, 2020). Kuswarno (2009) refers to this as creative meaning typification, which involves specialization and a particular way of communicating according to a person's type. We have observed how parents set expectations through various communication roles, their appearance and the examples they present. They teach their children about self-esteem and privacy concerning private parts without emphasizing abstract concepts like "sin". Parents' guide children on protecting certain body parts from being touched by individuals with deviant intentions, defining what is acceptable and what is not. Fathers, in particular, serve as role models and the first example of love for their children's gender identity is the formation of a gender identity that align with religious norms and societal expectations.

The process of constructing LGBT prevention through habituation continues until it becomes an understanding for children. This stage is called internalization, where individuals integrate into a social order (Dharma, 2018) and perceive it as reality (Puspitasari & Rusmiati, 2021). Through informants' confessions and research observations, we have seen how children mimic their parents' behaviours, engage in various activities, wear long trousers are pulled down, avoid seeing their mothers breastfeed or bathe their baby siblings and do not share blankets. All these practices aim to achieve stable relationships within the social environment (Dharma, 2018).

Thus, through social construction, all forms of interaction and communication habits built by parents are efforts to guide their children to position themselves correctly within the sexual orientation spectrum and to view LGBT as a deviant sexual orientation. Ultimately, the researcher provides a conceptual framework for following discussion



Conceptual framework: Parental communication strategies aimed at preventing LGBT behavior in children. Illustration by Authors.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the crucial role of parents in preventing LGBT behavior in children through communication, habituation, and internalization of values that are in accordance with religious and cultural norms. It was found that teaching children the boundaries of private parts, shame and privacy is a significant first step in preventing LGBT behavior. It is hoped that good communication between parents and children in building a correct understanding regarding sexual orientation can be an effective defence against LGBT behavior in children.

Apart from that, fathers' involvement in educating children is also seen as a key factor in preventing children from falling into LGBT behavior. Fathers are considered an important model of behavior for boys and girls, so the presence and active role of fathers in educating children is very important. Conversely, the absence of a father figure can increase the risk of children engaging in LGBT behavior, emphasizing the important role of parents in shaping children's sexual identity and orientation.

In a nutshell, this research confirms that parental communication, instilling family values, and father's involvement in educating children are effective strategies in preventing LGBT behavior in children. By strengthening the foundation of

appropriate religious values, culture, and norms, parents can help children understand and respect existing boundaries, and build a healthy sexual identity. Therefore, efforts to prevent LGBT behavior in children can be more focused and effective when parents take proactive roles and prioritize children's development.

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