

Exploring Same-Sex Attraction in Indonesian Churches: Teachings, Attitudes, and Experiences

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The aim of this study is to explore the issue of same-sex attraction (SSA) among church members in Indonesia. Using both qualitative and quantitative method, the teaching of the leaders, attitudes of the church members, and the experiences of SSA are described. Six church leaders of six churches in Surabaya, Indonesia were interviewed in semi-structured interviews and 268 church youths filled questionnaires on SSA. The results show that the majority of church leaders and church youths have conservative attitude toward SSA. As many as 5.6% of participants have experienced SSA at a time of his/her life. Similar with Indonesian church youths in general, most of them agree with and do maintain abstinent sexual lifestyle. Implications and suggestions are discussed.

Keywords: Same-sex attraction, church youths, Surabaya

Tujuan studi ini adalah meneliti isu daya tarik terhadap sesama jenis kelamin (*same sex attraction* = SSA) di antara anggota gereja di Surabaya. Studi ini memakai pendekatan kualitatif dan kuantitatif, untuk mengungkap pengajaran para pemimpin gereja, sikap anggota gereja, dan pengalaman SSA. Enam pemimpin gereja dari enam gereja di Surabaya, diwawancarai dengan wawancara semi-terstruktur dan 268 remaja gereja mengisi kuesioner tentang SSA. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas pemimpin gereja dan remaja gereja memiliki sikap konservatif terhadap SSA. Sejumlah 5.6% partisipan pernah mengalami SSA dalam hidupnya. Serupa dengan remaja gereja pada umumnya, kebanyakan mereka setuju dengan atau bergaya hidup abstinensi secara seksual. Didiskusikan implikasi dan saran-saran.

Kata kunci: ketertarikan sesama jenis kelamin, remaja gereja, Surabaya

The history of same-sex attraction (SSA) in academic literatures started on 19th century, with the publication of Karl Ulrich's concept of "urnings" (referring to gay). After that publication, other classic theorists continue to write about SSA, such as Karl Kertbeny, Magnus Hirschfeld, Evelyn Hooker, and Michel Foucault with his controversial book "The History of Sexuality" (as cited in Strong, DeVault, Sayad, & Yarber, 2005).

One intriguing question is the prevalence of SSA in the population. Various studies found different figures on this question. The most frequently cited data is Alfred Kinsey's finding on 1948 and 1953. It was found that 10% of the 16,000 participants admitted experiencing SSA. But the study was criticized because the samples are not randomly chosen, so it is not representative to the population. Other data from General Social Survey 1994 in USA showed that 2.5% of US population engaged in

same-sex sexual activities during the last 12 months prior to the survey. National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLs), another US survey in the same year which is claimed nationally representative, demonstrated that 4% of women and 9% of men admit have same-sex partner (Kelly, 2006). More recent data among Australian population shows that the prevalence of SSA is 8.6% among women and 5.9% among men. But this number decreases into 5.7% and 5% respectively when non-genital sexual activities are neglected (Grulich, de Visser, Smith, Rissel, & Richters, 2003).

Another intriguing question in this issue is what the origin of SSA is. Psychoanalytic theory explains the origin of SSA is a weak, detach, ineffective father and overprotective, attach, controlling mother; so that the son identify himself to the mother rather than to the father. But this psychoanalytic explanation is not supported by empirical findings. On the other hand, twin studies and advancement in biochemical and genetics demonstrate that the origin of SSA is more biological (genetic, neurological, and hormonal)

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and inborn (Weiten, 2010). But those findings are also criticized. For instance, Welch (2006) argues that Bailey and Pillard's twin study in 1991 can not conclude the sufficiency of genetic factor in explaining SSA. He asks, if genetic explanation is sufficient, why the percentage of SSA twin (when the twin is gay/lesbian) is only around 50%, not around 90%. He argues that genetic factors are necessary, but not sufficient to explain SSA. Environmental factors should not be neglected. Kauth (2002) concludes that the origin of SSA is a complex interaction between biological predispositions and processes, social experiences in certain culture, neurological structures, genes, and brain development.

One of the significant milestones in the history of SSA in academic setting was the removal of SSA from Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-II) by American Psychiatric Association in 1973 (as cited in Strong et al., 2005). Therefore, many contemporary studies on SSA issue shifted from exploring the origin and treatment to sexual health and wellbeing, equality, cross-cultural comparison, formation of social identity, and religious related issues of the people with SSA (Kelly, 2006). The debate over Sexual Orientation Change Effort (SOCE) was also started after that. Most of the defenders and practitioners of SOCE are religious counselors and therapists (APA Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation, 2009).

Religion is one of the most important sources in determining one's acceptance of SSA (Kelly, 2006). Abrahamic faiths (Islam-Christianity-Judaism) generally consider SSA as a condemned sin, although there are minority groups which oppose that view. The identity formation processes of people with SSA are often in conflict with their religious beliefs, so that they found difficulties in integrating their religious and sexual identity (Garcia, Gray-Stanley, & Ramirez-Valles, 2008; Gross, 2008; Walton, 2006).

There are scriptures that explicitly state prohibition toward same-sex sexual practices. For instance, in the book of Romans chapter 1 verse 25-27 - in the New Testament of the Bible - it is stated:

"They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. (New International Version [NIV], Biblegateway, 2010)"

In recent years, some Christian scholars are involved in gay/lesbian anti-discrimination movement (such as

Eastman, 1990; Haffner, 2004; Locke, 2004; and Sayler, 2005) and they offer different interpretations of passages in the Bible concerning SSA. For instance, regarding verses in the Romans 1:25-27 mentioned above, these scholars believe that Apostle Paul wrote the passage to rebuke idolatry practices by non-Jewish communities involving same-sex sexual practices. The main problem is the idolatry, not the same-sex sexual activities. This verse is claimed irrelevant in today's same-sex sexual practices which based on love, respect, and responsible decision making (Eastman, 1990; Haffner, 2004; Locke, 2004; Sayler, 2005).

These theological reinterpretations lead to the emergence of gay/lesbian-friendly churches. One of those churches is Metropolitan Community Church in Los Angeles (Eastman, 1990). Another example is Dignity community which based on Catholic denomination (Harris, 2001). There are also Christian institutions designed to help people with SSA to integrate their Christian and sexual identity, such as Good News (Thumma, 1991). In Indonesia, as far as the author knows, there is no gay/lesbian-friendly church or Christian institution like these.

On the other hand, there are Christian organizations which study and campaign for SSA healing. They argue that removal of SSA from DSM is political rather than scientific, that sexual orientation can be changed, and sexual abstinence is possible (Jones & Yarhouse, 2000; 2009). Some of the examples of these organizations are National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) (www.narth.com) and Exodus International North America (www.exodusnorthamerica.org). Some of these organizations have local branches in Indonesia.

The concept of attitude toward SSA is more complex than just agree or disagree with SSA practices. There are theories on Christians' attitude toward SSA. Townsend (2000) categorizes these attitudes into four types, i.e. rejecting-punitive, rejecting-compassionate, qualified acceptance, and full acceptance. Moreover, Holben (as cited in Robinson, 2004) classifies Christians' attitude toward SSA into six categories: abomination, change is expected, celibacy is expected, marginally acceptable, equality, and liberation. The most conservative attitude is abomination, meaning SSA is always immoral at any time and place, it must be condemned. This position is similar with rejecting-punitive approach from Townsend (2000). In the history of Christianity, this position is the norm for churches before the issue of SSA is openly discusses in academic literatures. The second position is "change is expected", which assume that people with SSA should and must change their sexual orientation into hetero-sexuality. This position is similar with rejecting-compassionate approach (Townsend, 2000). The third is "celibacy is expected".

In this position, church admits that sexual orientation can not be changed, but same-sex sexual behavior is unacceptable. Therefore, living a celibate life is the only option for Christian gay/lesbians. The fourth position is “marginally acceptable”, which is comparable to qualified acceptance approach from Townsend (2000). In this approach, the option of celibacy is considered difficult and not applicable for all Christians. Rather than tempted by various irresponsible sexual practices, Christians with SSA are allowed to live a monogamous and responsible loving relationship, although celibacy is preferred. The fifth is “equality”, which argues that SSA is morally neutral and people with SSA should not be treated differently, including their rights in marriage. This position is comparable to Townsend’s (2000) full acceptance approach. The last position in Holben’s (as cited in Robinson, 2004) classification is “liberation”. This attitude assumes that the main function of sexuality is to generate love, joy, and positive emotions. All sexual attraction and practices should be evaluated using these criteria, not the sexual orientation. The scriptures in the Bible which condemned SSA were written in the context of science-blind and patriarchal societies. They are no longer relevant in today’s modern societies. Homophobia is sin, because it promotes hatred toward minorities - which are also created according to the image of God.

Empirical inquiries have found some variables contributing to the attitude toward SSA. Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008) demonstrate that the strongest predictor of the attitude toward SSA is the belief on the nature and the cause of SSA. If someone believes that sexual orientation can not be changed, he/she tends to have positive attitude toward SSA; and vice versa. Another study by Harris (2001) shows that post-conventional religious reasoning (ability to formulate religious beliefs personally and make decision independently beyond any pressures of various authorities such as parents, religious leaders, and peers) can predict positive attitude toward SSA. A study by Maher, Sever, and Pichler (2008) in a Catholic campus shows that the attitude of the students toward SSA is relatively positive. One factor associated with this attitude is the existence of gay/lesbian friend. Sense of nationalism that emphasizes masculinity is also a predictor of rejection of SSA, because of the high level of heteronormativity (Alimi, 2004; Ward, 2005). In the church community, it is found that teaching resources (books, libraries, websites, treaties, Bible classes) which reject SSA is a predictor for negative attitude toward SSA among congregants (Cadge, Olson, & Wildeman, 2008).

Furthermore, studies on religion and SSA in the developed countries have mapped out the strategies used to integrate religious beliefs with gay/lesbian identity. Walton

(2006) found several strategies, namely reinterpretation of sacred texts, separation between the will of God with the teaching of the church, and acceptance the fact that God created them to be gay/lesbian. Garcia et al. (2008) study the stages of identity development among Christian gay/lesbian and identify three stages: (a) period of religious indoctrination during childhood by parents, schools and churches, (b) period of conflict and questioning during adolescence, and (c) period of decision as an adult to move from the current church, look for a gay/lesbian friendly church, and perform remedial religious beliefs to integrate spirituality with sexuality. Accordingly, Gross (2008) describes the stages that occur among Christian gay/lesbian are feeling stuck with the teachings of the church, decided to secede, and find new meaning of life. Gross argues that this process is comparable to religious conversion experience.

In Indonesia, similar studies have not been done among Christian gay/lesbians. Therefore, this exploratory study aims to describe: (1) church teachings on SSA, (2) congregants attitude towards SSA, beliefs about the causes, and possibility of sexual orientation change, and (3) prevalence of the church member who had experienced SSA and their characteristics. This research is intended to be the foundation for subsequent studies to a deeper understanding of SSA in the context of Indonesian Christians. In practice, using descriptive data in this study, it is expected that churches and other parties concerning SSA in Indonesia can develop appropriate strategies and programs.

Method

The participants in this study are six Christian churches in Surabaya, Indonesia. The member of these churches range from 1,000 to 17,000 people. The total number of people committed in these churches exceeds 25,000 people. One leader from each church was interviewed in an audio-taped-semi-structure interview to collect the data regarding the teaching of each church on SSA, including: Holben’s six viewpoints (as cited in Robinson, 2004), Biblical scriptures underlying the teaching, and responses when a church member is a gay/lesbian. The interview tapes are transcribed, then the data categorized according to the interview guide.

A questionnaire on attitude, belief, and experience of SSA are given to 268 church youths (122 male, 137 female, 9 did not fill this item) of these six churches. Their age range from 14-35 years, the mean is 22.6 years. Most of the participants are holding high school certificate (114 participants) and bachelor degree (95 participants). As many as 149 participants are single, 77 in a dating relationship, 14 married, and 12 engaged.

Considering the questions could make participants feel hesitate or reluctant, the questionnaire is intentionally designed to be anonymous. It was also explained that participants have the right to refuse filling the questionnaire without any consequences, but if they willing to fill, they are gently asked to fill it honestly. Most of the questionnaires are distributed by youth leaders of these churches, only one church allowed me to distribute the questionnaires myself.

The response rate is relatively low, i.e. 44.5%. There is one church which was cancelled as participant because the youth leaders refused the distribution of questionnaires, although I have already gotten the permission from the top leader. Some reasons given by these church leaders regarding the low response rate are: (a) church youths are reluctant to participate because it is un-common to

fill questionnaire at church, (b) the sexual questions in the questionnaire and the explanation that this survey is voluntarily (without any consequences) make church youths prefer not to participate.

Attitude toward SSA questionnaire is constructed based on six viewpoints from Holben (as cited in Robinson, 2004). The belief on the origin of SSA (inherited/environmental) and the belief on the possibility of change from SSA to heterosexuality (able to change/permanent) are also added. Participants are asked whether or not they experience SSA at a moment in their life. If the answer is yes, they are asked to continue to the questions: age of first SSA experience, current existence of SSA, and response toward his/her SSA. The result of the questionnaire is analyzed using descriptive statistics techniques.

Table 1
Church's Teachings on SSA

	Attitude	Arguments on scientific explanations on SSA removal from DSM	What if a church member is a gay/lesbian?
Church I	Change is expected	"Theology is not a single approach. Our denomination is young and still trying to establish our theological approach."	"There are some cases, but not many. First, we will conduct a counseling session to identify the problem and how strong the willingness to change. Second, we will try to find the solution. We are not experienced in this matter, so we have no link and information yet."
Church II	Change is expected	"I feel that I can not accept that. In the Bible it is clearly stated that it is sin."	"We will guide him/her into the right path."
Church III	Abomination	"Scientific studies do not consider supra-natural factor, i.e. curse of the sin. I believe it is real, because I've seen it myself in this church."	"I never counsel a gay or lesbian. But we have services for transgender. We accept them, and we help them to realize that they need to repent. I believe they can be changed."
Church IV	Equality	"Yeah I agree. To some extent, SSA is given, not a choice."	"If there is a gay/lesbian couple, mature, love each other, love Christ, and ask me to bless their marriage, I will suggest them to go to a church in another country that can bless them. Because I must comply to the denomination's regulations in this country."
Church V	Change is expected	"I am firm in my teaching: gay and lesbian are unacceptable."	"I guide him/her to understand our nature as man and woman. I will gently give examples, such as Sodom and Gomorrah, book of Rome, etc. I explain that there is no other ways, the Bible says he/she must repent, change into heterosexuality. They can change. I am currently counsel a case like this. Not a member of this church, but another church. I know it is really difficult to change."
Church VI	Change is expected	"Scientific research uses samples from general population. But if the studies were conducted on Christians, I don't think the result will be the same. Besides, many things can not be explained by science. Theories change overtime. God's word doesn't change. The pathway of truth is narrow. And it is not always popular."	"I will give explanation, then I will pray for them so he/she would repent. I believe they can change. God will help if they have faith. If you were sick and get healed, of course in the future you can fall sick again, right? But if Holy Spirit heals you, you can be changed permanently. I don't have many experiences. And I didn't follow up. There are some cases like this, but not among my church members. Someone not from my church come to me for counseling, but very few."

Results

In this section, the findings are explained in this arrangement: first, the teachings of the churches on SSA; second, attitudes and beliefs on SSA of the church youths; and last, prevalence and characteristics of gay and lesbian in the church.

Teachings on SSA

Data from the interviews show that most of the churches have conservative attitude toward SSA. Four churches believe that people with SSA must be accepted with love, but then be changed into heterosexuality (change is expected). One church (Church III) believes in abomination approach. And one church (Church IV) believes in equality for gay and lesbian. When I brought some scientific findings that lead to the removal of SSA from DSM, most of these church leaders argue that Bible is the principal source of truth and scientific studies are not perfect. Only one church (Church I) expresses openness to reconsider their theological beliefs in the future if scientific findings found certain findings. The data also indicate that these church leaders are inexperienced in dealing with gay and lesbian issue. Most of them will offer counseling and guidance toward repentance; they believe SSA can be changed into heterosexuality. Table 1 shown the summarizes the result of the interview with the church leaders.

All church leaders in this study use Biblical scriptures to support their argument on SSA issue. Some of the verses used to condemn SSA are (emphasis added) (New International Version [NIV], Biblegateway, 2010): (a) Genesis 1:27: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”; (b) Genesis 19 – the story of Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah; (c) Romans 1: 26-27: “Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men

also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error”; (d) I Corinthians 6:9: “Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men”.

On the other hand, leader of Church IV also uses Biblical scriptures to support SSA (emphasis added) (New International Version [NIV], Biblegateway, 2010): (a) Genesis 1:27: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”; (b) Matthew 7:1: “Do not judge, or you too will be judged”.

Genesis 1:27 is used by both argument accepting and rejecting SSA. Church leader accepting SSA focuses on mankind as the image of God, including people with SSA. While leaders rejecting SSA focus on the phrase “male and female”, implying that there is no “male and male” and “female and female” sexual relationship.

Attitudes and Beliefs on SSA

Based on the Holben’s framework of Christian attitudes on SSA (as cited in Robinson, 2004), the largest proportion of the 268 church members choose ‘change is expected’ (46.1%) and the second largest proportion choose ‘abomination’ (36.1%). These two answers contribute more than 80% of the answers. All church members score low on all other answers, except Church III (11.1% on ‘celibacy is expected’) and Church IV (10% on ‘equality’ and 7.5% on ‘liberation’). The details are reported on Table 2.

Most of the participants (77.2%) believe that the origin of SSA is environmental factors (such as experience of sexual abuse and romantic relationship failure). Only 7.9% believe that SSA is inherited. This percentage is lower than the number of participant admitting not knowing the origin of SSA (10.9%). Accordingly, 70.4% of the participants believe that SSA

Table 2

Congregants’ Attitude on SSA

	Abomination	Change is expected	Celibacy is expected	Marginally acceptable	Equality	Liberation	Not Answering
Church I	21.1%	60.5%	2.6%	2.6%	0%	0%	13.2%
Church II	41.3%	39.7%	0%	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	14.3%
Church III	33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Church IV	32.5%	45%	2.5%	0%	10%	7.5%	2.5%
Church V	34.2%	47.4%	2.6%	0%	2.6%	5.3%	7.9%
Church VI	44.3%	43%	2.5%	0%	0%	0%	10.1%
All Churches	36.7%	46.1%	2.2%	0.7%	2.2%	2.2%	9.7%

can be changed into heterosexuality. In these figures, Church IV has the highest number of members answering inherited and unable to change, compared to other churches. The following Table 3 and Table 4 describe the details.

Prevalence and Characteristics of Gay and Lesbian in the Church

Among 268 church youths participated in this study, 15 people (5.6%) report 'had SSA at a moment in his/her life'. Among them, eight people are male and seven are female. The age ranges from 14-27 years old, with a mean of 21.3 years old. Most of them are single (12 people), only two are in a dating relationship (in heterosexual relationship), and one engaged (in heterosexual relationship). Most of them are actively involved in church ministries (12 people).

All of them (100%) agree that pre- and/or extra-marital sexual intercourse is unacceptable, but only 12 people (80%) report never engaged in pre- and/or extra-marital sexual intercourse. The rest three engaged in pre- and/or extra-marital sexual intercourse during the last year, and two of them report using condom sometimes (the other one did not fill this item).

In terms of attitude and beliefs on SSA, five people agree on "change is expected", three agree on "abomination", one on "celibacy is expected", one on "equality", and five did not fill this item. Ten of them believe that the origin of SSA is environmental, two believe that

SSA is inherited, and three choose "don't know". Accordingly, 12 believe that SSA can be changed into heterosexuality, one believes it can not be changed, and one do not know.

Age of first time experiencing SSA varies from 1 to 21 years old, the mean is 13.6 years old. There are seven people who left this item blank. Five people admit still experiencing SSA, while three say no longer experiencing SSA, and seven leave this item blank. Regarding their response to SSA, six report "quickly neglect my SSA", four "hate this SSA but can not help", one "admit and accept SSA as a part of my self", one "pray, read the Bible, and participate in church activities", one "think about my future", and two did not answer. Appendix 1 describes the details of these 15 people.

Discussion

The result of this study reveals that the majority of church leaders have relatively conservative attitude toward SSA. "Change is expected" is the most dominant approach, both by church leaders and church members. The gay-friendly churches/Christian communities like Metropolitan Community Church (Eastman, 1990), Dignity (Harris, 2001), and Good News (Thumma, 1991) are alien for the majority of them. Gay-friendly interpretations of Biblical scriptures (Eastman, 1990; Haffner, 2004; Locke, 2004; Sayler, 2005) are also not common among them.

The interviews show that most of the church leaders

Table 3
Congregants' Beliefs About the Origin of SSA

	Inherited	Environmental	Don't know	Not answering
Church I	5.3%	76.3%	10.5%	7.9%
Church II	11.1%	76.2%	6.3%	6.3%
Church III	0%	77.8%	22.2%	0%
Church IV	15%	75%	10%	0%
Church V	5.3%	86.8%	5.3%	2.6%
Church VI	5.1%	74.7%	16.5%	3.8%
All Churches	7.9%	77.2%	10.9%	4.1%

Table 4
Congregants' Beliefs About the Possibility of Sexual Orientation Change

	Able to change	Unable to change	Don't know	Not answering
Church I	78.9%	0%	13.2%	7.9%
Church II	61.9%	3.2%	31.7%	3.2%
Church III	77.8%	0%	22.2%	0%
Church IV	67.5%	5%	27.5%	0%
Church V	76.3%	2.6%	18.4%	2.6%
Church VI	70.9%	3.8%	21.5%	3.8%
All Churches	70.4%	3%	23.2%	3.4%

are inexperienced in dealing with gay and lesbian. Most of them are leader in their church for many years, and have counseled many cases or personal problems. Although these churches have members ranged from 1,000-25,000 people, but the leaders admit only dealt with 1-2 cases during his/her ministry. This shows that church leaders have relatively limited social interaction with people with SSA in the church ministry context. The importance of social interaction with people with SSA is also appeared in Maher et al. (2008) study. They found that having a gay/lesbian friend influencing Catholic students' attitude toward SSA.

Those findings indicate that the issue of SSA is still a terra incognita for these churches, both theologically and practically. Discussion between scientific findings and theological interpretations is an important key in this case. All church leaders show the importance of Biblical scriptures as the foundation of truth and argumentation. Excluding Church I and Church IV, all leaders believe that in occasions when the Bible and science are incompatible, Christians must choose to believe in the Bible with or without further discussion. Leader of Church VI stated: "Scientific research uses samples from the population. But if the studies were conducted on Christians, I don't think the result will be the same. Besides, many things can not be explained by science. Theories change overtime. God's word doesn't change. The pathway of truth is narrow. And it is not always popular."

One interesting pattern shown by two church leaders is their experience with gay/lesbian from other churches. Leader of Church V and VI have the experience of gay/lesbian asking for counseling, but they are from other churches. When I probe this issue, both leaders believe that it is done because gay/lesbian Christians are afraid of social rejection when they tell their pastor about their sexual orientation. This finding concurs with previous studies that religious identity and gay/lesbian identity often in conflict with each other, resulting in various ways of identity negotiation (Garcia et al., 2008; Gross, 2008; Walton, 2006).

However, the Church IV is an exception, compared to other churches. The leader believes that people with SSA must be treated equally because to some extent SSA is given by birth, not by choice. He also expresses support toward gay marriage, although he does not want to violate the regulation of his denomination. From an additional interview I found that this church leader has been living in Europe for several years, and he had several times mentioning "respect for individual choice" during the interview. In accordance with the leader, members of Church IV also show higher acceptance toward SSA (Table 2), higher number of members

believe in hereditary origin of SSA (Table 3) and less possibility of people with SSA changed into heterosexuality, compared to other churches; although the number is still relatively low.

The number of people with SSA in this study (5.6%) is relatively similar with previous studies in the larger population (as cited in Kelly, 2006). Most of these Christians with SSA are single (80%), actively involved in church activities (80%), agree (100%) and maintain (80%) an abstinent sexual lifestyle. Similar with other congregants in general, abstinence approach is the most dominant sexual lifestyle among church members in Surabaya, Indonesia (Wijaya Mulya, 2011).

Among church members with SSA in this study, only 6 out of 15 show a consistent attribution-attitude pattern as demonstrated by Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008). These six people believe that SSA can be changed, the origin is environmental, and the attitude is conservative ("change is expected" or "abomination"). The rest are inconsistent in their attribution-attitude (Appendix 1). The numbers of participants responding "don't know" and leaving blank these three items are also considerable, implying that they are unsure about their knowledge and attitude on SSA.

A large number of participants who leave blank various items on the questionnaire are also need to be considered. The age of first experiencing SSA is one of the items that are left blank by many participants (46.7%). One possibility of this difficulty in remembering first same-sex sexual attraction is because it could be emerged as natural as other sexual attraction so that it is difficult to be traced back. Another item that was left blank is the current existence of SSA (46.7%). The dichotomous choice used in the questionnaire need to be reconsidered, because SSA is not a simple dichotomy between exist and not exist. Jones and Yarhouse (2000) argue that change of sexual orientation is not an instant process, rather, the process can take a whole life time. Comparable to healing from alcoholism, healing from SSA does not always mean never been tempted or think about SSA at all.

The largest proportion of participants' response to SSA is "quickly neglect my SSA" (40%), and the second is "hate this SSA but can not help" (26.7%). These responses do not involved social support and informed decision. Rather, it implies simple negligence, isolation, and repression.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This exploratory study reveals the teaching, attitude, and experiences of SSA in Indonesian churches. The teaching and attitude are relatively consistent, with the

“change is expected” approach as the dominant approach. As many as 5.6% church youths experiencing SSA at a moment in his/her life, but most of them agree and maintain abstinent sexual lifestyle.

Further studies should deepen this explanatory study by exploring psychological dynamics of church members with SSA, including their internal conflicts, guilt, feeling of isolation, coping strategies, knowledge on SSA, social support, coming out or - on the contrary - healing processes. More samples of church members with SSA from various denominations are needed.

For Indonesian churches, it is suggested to include SSA discussions in their teaching classes, considering the possibility of the existence of people with SSA in their churches. They need more social support both informational and emotional, including an anonymous or confidential counseling. Church leaders also need to put special attention to a small minority of church members who failed to maintain abstinent lifestyle, so that they can have a healthy and positive physical, psychological, and spiritual wellbeing.

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(Appendix follows)

Appendix 1

Details of the Participants Reporting SSA

	Sex	Age	Level of Education	Marital Status	Involvement in Church Ministry(s)	Attitude toward Pre- and/or Extramarital Sexual Intercourse	Engage in Pre- and/or Extramarital Sexual Intercourse	Use Condom when Engaged in Intercourse
Subject A	M	25	Bachelor	Single	No	Unacceptable	Never	N/A
Subject B	M	22	-blank-	Single	Yes	Unacceptable	Never	N/A
Subject C	F	23	Bachelor	Dating	Yes	Unacceptable	Never	N/A
Subject D	M	25	High-school	Single	Yes	Unacceptable	Yes (within last 12 months)	-blank-
Subject E	F	21	Bachelor	Single	Yes	Unacceptable	Never	N/A
Subject F	F	20	High-school	Single	Yes	Unacceptable	Never	N/A
Subject G	F	20	High-school	Single	Yes	Unacceptable	Never	N/A
Subject H	M	24	Bachelor	Single	Yes	Unacceptable	Never	N/A
Subject I	F	15	Junior High	Single	Yes	Unacceptable	Never	N/A
Subject J	F	24	Bachelor	Engaged	No	Unacceptable	Never	N/A
Subject K	M	27	High-school	Single	Yes	Unacceptable	Yes (within last 12 months)	Sometimes
Subject L	F	20	High-school	Single	No	Unacceptable	Yes (within last 12 months)	Sometimes
Subject M	M	15	Junior High	Single	Yes	Unacceptable	Never	N/A
Subject N	M	25	Bachelor	Dating	Yes	Unacceptable	Never	N/A
Subject O	M	14	Junior High	Single	Yes	Unacceptable	Never	N/A

	Attitude toward SSA	Belief in the Origin of SSA	Belief in the Possibility of Change	Age of First Time Experiencing SSA	Does the SSA occur until now?	Personal Response to that SSA
Subject A	Celibacy is expected	Environmental	Able	12 year	-blank-	I hate this feeling, but I can't help
Subject B	-blank-	Don't know	Able	1 year	Yes	I admit and accept it as a part of myself
Subject C	Change is expected	Environmental	Able	20 year	No	I quickly neglect this feeling
Subject D	Change is expected	Environmental	Unable	-blank-	No	I quickly neglect this feeling
Subject E	-blank-	Environmental	Able	-blank-	-blank-	-blank-
Subject F	Change is expected	Inherited	Able	-blank-	-blank-	I quickly neglect this feeling
Subject G	Abomination	Environmental	Able	-blank-	-blank-	I quickly neglect this feeling
Subject H	Change is expected	Inherited	Able	21 year	Yes	I hate this feeling, but I can't help
Subject I	-blank-	Don't know	Don't know	-blank-	-blank-	I think about my future
Subject J	-blank-	Environmental	Don't know	-blank-	-blank-	-blank-
Subject K	-blank-	Environmental	Able	-blank-	-blank-	I quickly neglect this feeling
Subject L	Equality	Environmental	Able	17 year	Yes	I quickly neglect this feeling
Subject M	Change is expected	Environmental	Able	13 year	No	I hate this feeling, but I can't help
Subject N	Abomination	Environmental	Able	13 year	Yes	Pray, read the Bible, participate in church activities
Subject O	Abomination	Don't know	Able	12 year	Yes	I hate this feeling, but I can't help