

## **Social resistance to LGBT intersubjectivity: A sociocultural analysis from Jambi, Indonesia**

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Submission	Revised	Accepted
February 23, 2024	April 16, 2025	December 11, 2025

### **Abstract**

*This article analyzes social resistance to LGBT intersubjectivity within the sociocultural context of Jambi, Indonesia, by examining divergent epistemological constructions of truth. Using a qualitative field-based research design, the study was conducted in Jambi City and involved in-depth interviews with religious leaders, traditional leaders, and health professionals as key social actors. Data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, and interpreted using an epistemological framework. The findings reveal two main insights. First, LGBT individuals articulate their identities and lived experiences through an intersubjective understanding of truth, grounded in shared meanings and collective experiences. Second, this intersubjective framework encounters social resistance manifested through three dominant sociocultural perspectives: religious perspectives grounded in subjective truth, medical perspectives emphasizing objective truth, and customary perspectives that also operate within an intersubjective understanding of truth. These differing epistemological positions shape how the Jambi community interprets and responds to LGBT presence. This study contributes to LGBT studies and sociocultural theory by demonstrating how competing constructions of truth underpin social resistance in local contexts. It highlights the importance of epistemological awareness in understanding social tensions surrounding sexual and gender diversity in culturally plural societies.*

**Keywords:** LGBT; intersubjectivity; Subjectivity; Objectivity

### **Abstrak**

Artikel ini menganalisis resistensi sosial terhadap intersubjektivitas LGBT dalam konteks sosiokultural masyarakat Jambi, Indonesia, dengan menelaah perbedaan konstruksi epistemologis tentang kebenaran. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif berbasis lapangan yang dilaksanakan



di Kota Jambi dengan melibatkan wawancara mendalam terhadap tokoh agama, tokoh adat, dan tenaga kesehatan sebagai aktor sosial utama. Data dianalisis melalui tahapan kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, serta diinterpretasikan menggunakan kerangka epistemologis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan dua temuan utama. Pertama, individu LGBT mengartikulasikan identitas dan pengalaman hidup mereka melalui pemahaman kebenaran yang bersifat intersubjektif, yang berakar pada makna bersama dan pengalaman kolektif. Kedua, kerangka intersubjektif ini menghadapi resistensi sosial yang dimanifestasikan melalui tiga perspektif sosiokultural dominan, yaitu perspektif keagamaan yang berpijak pada kebenaran subjektif, perspektif medis yang menekankan kebenaran objektif, serta perspektif adat yang juga beroperasi dalam pemahaman kebenaran intersubjektif. Perbedaan posisi epistemologis tersebut membentuk cara masyarakat Jambi dalam memaknai dan merespons keberadaan LGBT. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian studi LGBT dan teori sosiokultural dengan menunjukkan bagaimana konstruksi kebenaran yang saling berkompetisi melandasi resistensi sosial dalam konteks lokal. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya kesadaran epistemologis dalam memahami ketegangan sosial yang berkaitan dengan keberagaman seksual dan gender dalam masyarakat yang plural secara budaya.

**Kata Kunci:** LGBT; intesubjektivitas; subjektivitas; objektivitas.

## INTRODUCTION

The term LGBT is an acronym for the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. There are also the terms LGBTQ and LGBTQ+ with the addition of the word queer and the + sign. Quoted from the official Human Rights Campaign page (*Glossary of Terms*, 2023), the word “queer” is an identifier for people who consider themselves different from the mainstream or people who question their sexual or gender identity. Meanwhile the “+” sign is an identifier for unlimited sexual orientation and gender identity. There is debate in the general public regarding the LGBT phenomenon as a community with the various movements they have carried out. Some people accept the existence of the LGBT community for various reasons, especially regarding the issue of equal human rights that must be given to minority groups, including the LGBT community, of course. Meanwhile, other parts of society refuse for various reasons, especially related to religious teachings which generally reject the existence of the LGBT community.

In line with the debate in general society, in the academic community there are also pros and cons in responding to this LGBT phenomenon. There are many studies that have looked at LGBT with various aspects or tendencies. *First*, there are studies that examine injustice and the struggle for equality for

the LGBT community, such as in the world of education (Ko et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2021), workplace (Brahma et al., 2023; Cayreyre et al., 2024; Shanaev et al., 2023; Shijaku & Elgoibar, 2023), social life (Carpenter & Sansone, 2021; Chan & Mak, 2021; Christou et al., 2024; Jarvis et al., 2022; Nedeljko & Kaučič, 2023), health (Crenitte et al., 2023; Demant et al., 2022; Sherman, Cimino, et al., 2021; Sherman, McDowell, et al., 2021; Van Hout et al., 2022), social media (Chan, 2023; Valcuende et al., 2023), as well as law and politics (Aftab & Imanpour, 2022; Mahardika, 2023; Preuss & Max, 2023; Weng et al., 2023). *Second*, there are studies that specifically look at the physical health of the LGBT community (Connolly, 2024; Ferrero et al., 2023; Ganz et al., 2024; Hill & Bulley, 2023; Ussher et al., 2023). *Third*, there are studies that focus on examining the mental health of the LGBT community (Barrientos et al., 2021; Carter et al., 2023; Frost & Meyer, 2023; Marzetti et al., 2022; Suen et al., 2020). *Fourth*, there are also studies that reject the LGBT community by looking closely at religious aspects (Abboud et al., 2024; Agovino et al., 2021). Between these pro and con attitudes, the author finds an empty space that has not been examined by various existing studies, that the pro and con attitudes were born because the LGBT community started from an understanding of the truth of intersubjectivity which of course in its journey will encounter the understanding of the truth of subjectivity and objectivity as well as other understandings of the truth of intersubjectivity, as seen in the Jambi community's rejection of the LGBT community.

This research aims to answer the main research problem, namely why does the LGBT community receive rejection from Jambi community? The author details the main problem of this research into the following two research questions: how does the LGBT community understand the truth? What are the forms of rejection of the LGBT community by the people of Jambi?

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted using a type of qualitative research in the form of a field study. The research location is in Jambi City, Indonesia. Data was collected through interviews with informants consisting of religious leaders, traditional leaders and health workers. The collected data is processed through the stages of data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing. Finally, the data was analyzed using epistemological theory to understand and reveal the understanding of the LGBT community and the Jambi community's rejection of it.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **Three Models of Understandings: Subjectivity, Objectivity and Intersubjectivity**

There are at least three models of understanding of truth that develop in society and the scientific world, namely subjectivity, objectivity and intersubjectivity (Davidson, 2001; McDowell, 2003; Poon & Cheong, 2009). These three models of understanding have their own tendencies which are different from each other. Subjective understanding is understanding that tends to be based on the personal understanding of the person who understands or understanding that takes the form of individual understanding. Objective understanding tends to form an understanding that applies generally to everyone. Meanwhile, intersubjective understanding is an understanding that departs from the understanding of each party who understands which is then sought to match the understanding of other parties so that an agreement is created. Further explanation of these three models of understanding can be seen in the following explanation.

The first mode of understanding, subjectivity, is the self-conscious perspective of a person or subject. Subjectivity is at odds with objectivity, so it is often looked down upon by positivistic social scientists, but it is seen as important in hermeneutics (Scott & Marshall, 2015). In subjectivity, it is necessary to have similar aspects of first-person experience between different people in order to develop anything beyond the pure subjectivity of each person in order for a level of mutual understanding to be possible. Each knowing subject likely has a unique structure of consciousness so that it is impossible for anyone to fully understand how things are from another person's point of view, but there are some aspects of experience that are common in every society where reciprocal communication occurs (Norgaard, 2021).

With regard to epistemological subjectivity, there are several meanings that can be obtained: (1) the theory that all knowledge (a) has its source and validity in the subjective mental state of the person who knows, and (b) knowledge about anything that is objective or real is externally presupposed or is based on inference from these subjective mental states; and (2) everything known is (a) a product selectively structured and created by the knower, and (b) it cannot be said that there is an externally real world corresponding to the knower (Bagus, 2002). Simply put, epistemologically, subjective understanding is based on individual knowledge or theory of knowledge.

The second mode of understanding, objectivity, is the idea that things exist, or that statements about things are true, absolutely and independently of human existence or belief. This view is contrary to subjectivity, which argues

that knowledge and truth cannot be separated from human existence (Darvill, 2009). Objectivity is established when members of a society communicate with each other through one or more shared media and are able to understand a neutral point of view with respect to objects that are external to them (Norgaard, 2021).

With regard to epistemological objectivity, it contains several understandings that can be obtained as follows: (1) the theory that the world (a) exists within itself, independent of and outside of one's understanding of it and (b) that one can know the world indirectly. depending on any subjective point of view (2) the view that knowledge is based on factual evidence which (a) is discovered by scientific methods and objective reasoning and (b) describes things as they are (3) the view that the only knowledge which means (true) is knowledge derived from and/or confirmed by sensory experience (Bagus, 2002). Thus, epistemologically, objective understanding is based on knowledge or a theory of knowledge that is neutral or as it is, independent of human views or beliefs.

The third model of understanding, intersubjectivity, is the process and product of sharing experiences, knowledge, understanding, and hopes with others. The existence, nature, and meaning of things do not depend entirely on an individual but are subject to social and linguistic constraints within a culture or subculture (Chandler & Munday, 2011). Intersubjective understanding is formed when members of a community can communicate and understand ideas and/or structures of consciousness that are shared among the group, or at least that are similar enough that members of the community can relate to the inner experiences of others who try to convey what they think and feel. The inner experience is unique to each person, and it differs significantly from person to person, but there is also the potential for interconnectedness between people so that one person can imagine another person's perspective, even if they have not personally had that experience (Norgaard, 2021). The concept of intersubjectivity has been used widely, but with different meanings. However, in general, intersubjectivity refers to the various possible relationships between people's perspectives (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010).

With regard to epistemological intersubjectivity, each community of thought shares social experiences that are different from the social experiences of other communities of thought, creating different beliefs among people who adhere to different communities of thought. These experiences transcend one's subjectivity, which explains why they can be shared by entire communities of thought (Zerubavel, 1997). So, epistemologically, intersubjective understanding

is based on knowledge or theories of knowledge that apply to a particular community.

Subjective, objective and intersubjective models of understanding are used by various aspects of human life. The subjective understanding model can be seen in its use in religious life. The objective understanding model can be seen in its use in the world of science. Meanwhile, the intersubjective understanding model can be seen in its use in cultural life. Meanwhile, the understanding model used by the LGBT community will be discussed in the following section.

### **Intersubjective Understanding of LGBT Community**

The LGBT phenomenon has surfaced and been debated in Indonesian society several times in recent years. First, in the DC podcast, which invite the homosexual couple RM from Indonesia and FV from Germany, which caused a stir in Indonesia peoples. Then during the World Cup event in Qatar, the LGBT community demanded that rainbow flags be flown in various stadiums where the matches were taking place and also asked each competing team captain to wear a rainbow colored captain's armband. This phenomenon was also raised again when the band Coldplay performed in Indonesia at the end of 2023, while this band was known as a supporter of the LGBT community which received a lot of opposition from Indonesian society. In the latest development, this phenomenon resurfaced when it was planned to hold an ASEAN LGBT meeting in Jakarta entitled The ASEAN Queer Advocacy Week in Jakarta which was canceled because it caused widespread controversy in Indonesia.

The term LGBT appeared in 1988, while the term LGBTQ+ also appeared in 1996. In Indonesia, the LGBT phenomenon has existed since at least the 1960s. Some call it the 1920s. However, most opinions say that the LGBT phenomenon began around the 60s. Then it developed in the 80s, 90s, and exploded in the millennium era from the 2000s until now. LGBT always uses sexual rights and human rights as a shield. However, they forget that Indonesians who do not agree with LGBT also have human rights. If they use this right as a weapon, society also has the basic right to save future generations of LGBT people, namely saving future generations from deviant sex, violating nature, norms and religion (*Menelisik Perjalanan LGBT Di Indonesia*, 2016).

Quantitatively, the number of LGBT followers in Indonesia is currently at a very worrying level. Data from 2012 shows that there are more than 1 million gay people in Indonesia, not including lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders. This number is likely to continue to increase. Apart from the problem of increasingly massive numbers, LGBT is no longer just an individual

problem, but is increasingly organized, structured, defended and fought for systematically. Data also shows that by the end of 2013 there were 119 LGBT organizations in 28 provinces in Indonesia (*LGBT Tak Lagi Persoalan Individu Tapi Semakin Terorganisasi*, 2020).

The development of LGBT and the attitude of their community show that they carry the truth of intersubjectivity because their understanding can only be valid in their own community. In this case, to expand the reach of their understanding, the LGBT community uses various methods to demonstrate its existence, for example by lobbying various parties so that its existence can be recognized in Indonesia. In this case, the LGBT community has thought that society has the same thoughts as their thoughts, as revealed by Whittier and Melendez (2004) that intersubjectivity is what individuals think others think of them.

### **Rejection of LGBT Based on Religion, Medicine, and Custom**

Existing studies on LGBQ are mostly in a position to provide a space of equality for the LGBT community. The author himself does not pretend to oppose this position because the protection of minority groups must be our common concern. However, the struggle that has been carried out by the LGBT community shows that they carry an intersubjective model of understanding truth, namely a model of understanding truth that is based on consensus among themselves so that it can only apply exclusively within their community, without being able to reach a wider area.

This model of understanding of the LGBT community will of course in turn be confronted with other objective, subjective and intersubjective models of understanding that exist in society. Especially in Jambi society, they see that LGBT is not a crime, but it is contrary to the values that exist in Jambi, both religion, medicine and custom. In this case, religion carries a subjective model of understanding; medicine carries an objective model of understanding, while custom carries an intersubjective model of understanding.

The forms of rejection above were found in interviews as follows.

“The community is very firm in this matter, they do not hesitate to strictly punish the perpetrators of this LGBT group” (A. Halim, personal communication, December 29, 2022).

“It is very clear that custom, religion and science strictly prohibit LGBT groups. Not only does it damage a person, it even damages future generations” (A. Halim, personal communication, December 29, 2022).

“They will give strict sanctions to the perpetrators, both from the fields of religion, custom and medicine itself” (A. Halim, personal communication, December 29, 2022).

Based on several interview excerpts, the Jambi community's social resistance toward the LGBT community is articulated through three primary frameworks: religious, medical, and customary perspectives. These perspectives collectively express concerns regarding the perceived impact of LGBT presence on the moral, social, and cultural continuity of future generations. Participants emphasized that such concerns are rooted in beliefs about the potential disruption of established values and norms that are considered essential for maintaining social order and intergenerational continuity within the community..

The Jambi community's first rejection of the LGBT community was based on the teachings of the Islamic religion which most of them adhere to. For them, Islamic teachings never tolerate the existence of the LGBT community. In this case, Islam prohibits same-sex relations. Islam also only recognizes two genders, namely men and women, without a third gender or neutral gender as in the LGBT community. As additional information, for the people of Jambi, it is not only Islam that rejects the existence of the LGBT community because almost all religions that exist in Indonesia reject its existence, so it is not suitable for it to exist in Jambi City and Indonesia.

From the results of the interview, the author obtained the following notes from religious figures in Jambi City.

“The people of Jambi, who are adherents of Islam, tend to understand that LGBT is strictly prohibited in Islam. In fact, it is not only Islam that prohibits it, but all religions strictly prohibit the existence of LGBT because of its destructive nature” (A. Halim, personal communication, December 29, 2022).

“Jambi community itself strongly opposes the existence of LGBT, even though LGBT development in Jambi is almost invisible. Even if there were, the people of Jambi would not hesitate to punish them” (A. Halim, personal communication, December 29, 2022).

“In Jambi, LGBT groups actually already exist, but these groups still tend to be closed and do not open up. They gather in exclusive community” (A. Halim, personal communication, December 29, 2022).

The interview quotes above show that the Jambi community first rejection was based on the teachings of the Islamic religion. The rejection of the Jambi community based on Islamic religious teachings uses a subjective



understanding of truth. It will be difficult for the LGBT community's intersubjective understanding model to be able to go hand in hand with the Jambi community's subjective understanding model of Islamic teachings.

The second rejection by the Jambi community towards LGBT is based on a medicine perspective. For them, the behavior of the LGBT community that does not meet health standards will have a negative impact on health, both physical health and mental health, such as HIV AIDS and anxiety in living life.

In this case, the author obtained the following quotes from interviews with health workers.

“There are several factors that cause the emergence of the LGBT community, namely family or family upbringing, environment or relationships, and genetics” (Aswita, personal communication, January 2, 2023).

“Interactions within the LGBT community have several negative impacts on their health, such as anal or anal cancer, oral cancer, meningitis, and HIV/AIDS. Apart from that, there are also several negative impacts on social life, such as a gay person will find it difficult to find peace in life because he always changes partners. Meanwhile, there are no more than 8 adulterous partners in their lifetime. As many as 43 percent of gay people who were recorded and researched stated that they had been homosexual with 500 people in their lifetime” (Aswita, personal communication, January 2, 2023).

“LGBT is a sexual orientation, but in other respects they remain the same as humans in general. Sometimes there are men who have relationships with men but do not have an emotional relationship, for example men who are paid by shemale. This is because they need money but it is not based on mutual consent, this is called sexual behavior, not sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is based on liking while sexual behavior is based on need or compulsion” (Antony & Saputra, personal communication, December 27, 2022).

“What people need to understand is that every LGBT person has their own type or taste, they don't like just anyone. For example, a man likes men, but the man he likes matches his type, such as his big body. If she meets a guy who doesn't fit her type then she won't be interested. LGBT is not a contagious disease but only a sexual orientation. Society must better understand that the only difference between LGBT people is their sexual orientation, in social life they have the same rights” (Antony & Saputra, personal communication, December 27, 2022).

“If there are cases in our family who have different sexual orientations, it is good to be informed but not to be judged. Because sexual orientation is fluid in nature, and heterosexuality and homosexuality are mental

disorders” (Antony & Saputra, personal communication, December 27, 2022).

“We also cannot justify someone being LGBT, because there are men who are gentle but are not LGBT and there are also those who are strong but are LGBT. This means that until the person is honest or admits it, we cannot say that person is LGBT” (Antony & Saputra, personal communication, December 27, 2022).

“From a health perspective, LGBT is a mental problem. It's different from mental disorders, if they have disorders they cannot interact” (Aswita, personal communication, January 2, 2023).

The results of this interview show that the Jambi community also rejects the LGBT community using a medicine perspective. The Jambi community's rejection of the LGBT community from a medicine perspective uses an objective understanding model because the proof is carried out using a scientific approach, as with various other branches of science that can be proven empirically so that it is objective.

The third rejection by the Jambi community towards LGBT is based on their custom. For them, the behavior of the LGBT community is behavior that violates human nature and has not been encountered before in Jambi community. In fact, it is not even found in the lives of indigenous people who are still underdeveloped.

From the results of interviews with traditional leader, the author obtained several interview notes as follows.

“I didn't find any LGBT phenomena in natives. Even the indigenous population, the Anak Dalam tribe for example, did not find any LGBT community in the Anak Dalam tribe, let alone outright rejection by custom” (Masiyan, personal communication, January 2, 2023).

Quotes from this interview show the Jambi community's rejection of the LGBT community based on custom perspectives. The Jambi community's rejection of the LGBT community with a custom perspective uses an intersubjective understanding model. Even though they use the same intersubjective understanding model as the LGBT community, their areas of application are different.

## CONCLUSION

The Jambi community rejects the existence of the LGBT community because of the different models of understanding that they use. The LGBT community adheres to intersubjective understanding. Meanwhile, the Jambi community adheres to three models of understanding, namely subjective understanding based on religion, objective understanding based on medicine, and intersubjective understanding based on custom. Based on this, this article has been able to properly answer the objectives and research questions, namely related to the reasons for the Jambi community's rejection of the LGBT community, as well as models of understanding of the LGBT community and Jambi society.

In contrast to previous researches which mostly stood in the position of defending the existence of the LGBT community with various perspectives and is also different from researches that opposes the existence of the LGBT community with an apologetic religious perspective, this article examines the rejection of the LGBT community based on models of understanding the truth in Jambi community

The results of this article have conceptually enriched the discourse on LGBT with an epistemological perspective, especially models of understanding truth. The results of this article also have implications for policy making from authorities, especially the government, regarding LGBT.

The author realizes that the focus of this research is limited to the issue of Jambi society's rejection of the LGBT community which is seen as using an intersubjective model of understanding truth. Rejection is based on religion with a subjective model of understanding, health science with an objective model of understanding, and custom with an intersubjective model of understanding. This research has not touched on the ideological issues that surround the understanding and movement of the LGBT community. Therefore, further research is needed on the issue of LGBT community ideology, both by researcher self and other researchers.

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