DISCOURSE ON TABOOS IN ONLINE DATING: SEXUAL EXPRESSIONS OF JAKARTA OKCUPID USERS[1]

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ABSTRACT
The popularity of global dating platforms has affected the dating behavior of urban daters, including those who live in Jakarta. Compared to match-seeking via print media decades ago, there are some changes in the way people present themselves and express their sexuality on dating platforms. On one of the dating platforms, OKCupid, some Jakarta users boldly stated their intention of looking for a hookup or non-heterosexual partner. This creates a problem in Indonesia, where most societies consider sexual acts and expressions such as premarital sex and non-heterosexual relationship as taboos. In this research, we examine the practice of OKCupid use by adult online daters in Jakarta, specifically about how they present themselves to express their diverse sexualities through OKCupid unique features. We argue that OKCupid features help its users to disclose themselves in a more specific manner, and thus facilitate them to find people with a shared interest and preferred gender or sexual orientation. Furthermore, in our informants' self-presentations, we found some strategies they utilized to preserve their privacy, avoid the consequences of normativity that is perpetuated from offline context, or target certain users as their potential matches. These strategies are dependent upon sociocultural dynamics as well as facilities developed by OKCupid.

Keywords: *dating app; hook-up; OKCupid; sexual expression; urban dating*

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[1] The 5th ICUS 2019 in the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Airlangga in Surabaya focuses on the theme of rethinking *Border, Transportation, and Space*. As indicated by the number of ICUS, this year's conference is the fifth conference under the ICUS (International Conference on Urban Studies) held by our Faculty.

INTRODUCTION

On July 26th, 2017, online media *Tirto.id* released reports on dating app use on several informants who live in urban cities. Two of the reports revealed that besides finding true love for a straight user, dating apps are also used to find people to hook up with and LGBT to find partners (Kresna, 2017).

The reports mentioned one US-based dating app that is accessible in Indonesia, *OKCupid*. It facilitates its user to express their sexuality such as their sexual orientation, gender expression, and even their intention in finding a sexual partner rather than true love. This sort of sexual expression is common among Indonesian *OKCupid* users although pre/extramarital sex is still considered taboo for most Indonesians.

Alongside pre/extramarital sex, most Indonesians also consider the non-heterosexual relationship a sinful action. This fact is highlighted in a statement by an interviewee on the second *Tirto.id*'s report explained that there is a high rate of homophobia in Indonesia. Consequently, some of Indonesia's non-heterosexual people, including the interviewee, prefer to use dating apps to find potential partners.

Based on these reports and the popularity of dating apps use in the last few years, we conduct a study on how *OKCupid* users express their sexuality in the dating app. This study is not the first, and hopefully not the last, of its kind - some earlier studies have looked into the online dating behavior of Indonesians. For example, Indriyati (2015) described the utilization of *Facebook* for dating while other researchers focused on other platforms such as *Tinder* and focusing on one's self-disclosure (Wongsodiredjo, 2017; Noerlela, 2017; Manu, 2017). The discourse of sexuality in Indonesia has also been discussed in a number of researches through various perspectives and concerning a wide range of issues such as the use of mobile phones for dating and the sharing of pornographic content among lovers (Humphrey & Barker, 2007); the use of *Grindr* to find homosexual partners in Indonesia (Tampubolon, 2016); and the communication patterns and motives in intimate relationship among homosexuals in Semarang (Ramadhan & Lukmantoro, 2016). Meanwhile, related studies on *OKCupid* mostly covered issues outside the Indonesian context and examined data compiled by the dating app itself (Kim & Escobedo-Land, 2017; Gieseking 2017; Shishido et. al., 2016). There are also several international studies that mentioned Indonesian informants' experiences in using dating apps and showing their sexual orientation (Chalkley, 2016; Nanda et.al., 2018). However, those studies did not specifically focus on *OKCupid* users. We also found that *OKCupid* has certain distinct features compared to other dating apps—especially the level of detail users can express regarding their

personal information. Therefore, we decided to focus our study on how Indonesian users express and present themselves on *OKCupid*, specifically concerning their sexual expression.

Furthermore, we chose informants from Jakarta due to the notion that young people in Jakarta are markedly more liberal than previous generations, especially in their attitudes and behavior regarding marriage and premarital sex (Utomo, 1997: 228). This study examines how online daters present themselves and express their diverse sexuality through the use of features on *OKCupid*.

Urban match-seeking dynamics

In soulmate-searching, one of the more "conventional" ways to find lovers is by advertising one's self through mass media. This method was popular between the 1950s-1990s, reaching its peak popularity in the 1960s (Darmojuwono, 2000). Some magazines and daily newspapers which featured dating ads were *Vista* with their *Vista Fan Club* column, *Tjermin* with their *Laboratorium Asmara*, *Selecta* with their *Selecta Remaja Club*, and *Flambojan* with their *Flambojan Remadja* (Hutari, 2018).

Darmojuwono's (2000) study on dating ads on *Kompas* in 1997-1999 explains that advertisers' self-representation as well as the criteria of her ideal partners were mainly focused on the descriptions of character or personality. The matchmaking process via dating ads in print media was conducted through two different methods: involving mediation by the magazine or newspaper's editorial board, or through direct correspondence between viewers and advertisers.

Alongside print media, radios and matchmaking agencies also helped Indonesians to find their true love. For example, Jakarta-based radio station, SPFM, produced a program called "Kedip-kedipan" in 1997 to facilitate its listeners to find a match ("Kedip-kedipan! Cari Jodoh lewat Radio", 1999). Meanwhile, matchmaking agencies that play the role of "mak comblang" emerged in Jakarta. One of the most popular and successful is Yayasan Scorpio (YASCO) which is founded on May 11th, 1974 by M. Subkky Hasbie in Jakarta[2] (Utama, 2016).

With the development of communication technology, internet and mobile phone plays more important roles in initiating romantic relationships among youth in Indonesia (Humphreys & Barker, 2007).

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[2]YASCO reached its peak popularity in the 1970s and 1980s with more than 15.000 members. In 1975, those who want to use the YASCO service have to pay IDR 200,000 for the registration fee. Besides holding some gatherings for the match seekers, the agency also holds "Temu Jodoh" events for singles.

This case can be traced from the rising of *mIRC* in 1995[3]. *mIRC* is able to replace the previous matchmaking pattern by emphasizing the users' chemistry through chatting rather than physical or proclaimed personality factors which was the main focus in printed matchmaking ads. Due to its feature that facilitates interpersonal virtual chat, the practicality of digital technology, and the spread of internet cafés in Indonesia, *mIRC* became a very popular part of urban youth culture at the time (Slama, 2010: 316).

The development of communication technology also drives some matchmaking agencies to combine online and offline systems for their services. Indonesian Dating Service (IDS) and Heart Inc.co— two matchmaking agencies founded in the 2000s—example, open registration for new members and promote their service online, but the matchmaking process is still conducted offline. Those matchmaking agencies targeted high-income match seekers since their premium services cost millions of rupiah. Besides those two matchmaking agencies, there is also a matchmaking site that collects membership fees such as *AyoNikah.com*. By paying around 300.000 rupiahs, someone could join as an *AyoNikah.com* member (for a maximum of five years or until they got married). By doing so, he or she may access some facilities such as webcam chatting and video profile recordings. *AyoNikah.com* provides these facilities to overcome the use of fake profile photos.

The emergence of social media in the past decades has given another alternative for Indonesian—mostly youth—to find a lover. Some social media users directly send messages to the people they find on the platforms, while others may prefer using mediators. *Twitter* hashtag *#BiroJomblo*, pioneered by writer and social media "influencer" Alitt Susanto, is one example of a matchmaking method that uses a mediator in social media. Besides *Twitter*, there are also Instagram accounts that facilitate its followers in finding potential partners such as *@taaruf.islami*. Founded by Al-Hikmah Corporation, the account promotes Islamic matchmaking, which encourages the followers to marry their match as soon as possible and avoid dating which is often considered against Islamic teaching[4].

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[3]mIRC is an internet chatting software that allows users to have private chats. Their privacies are guaranteed because they do not need to reveal any personal information except a username which can be changed anytime. The chats in mIRC are location-based which facilitates the users to find a match nearby or from a different city.

[4]The process of matchmaking started with member registration, payment of fees, and an agreement on certain policies. Then, the registrant will get a number such

After social media, dating apps gain popularity, especially these past few years. A survey by *JakPat* on 1.606 respondents aged between 20-39 years old from 34 provinces in Indonesia in 2016 shows that 23.04% use dating apps. The survey also mentions that 38.38% of those dating app users access the apps every day. Interestingly, the main purpose of online dating apps mentioned in the survey is not to look for romantic partners, but to "meet new friends" (74.59%). Meanwhile, "looking for romantic partners" was only mentioned by 37.84% of respondents.

There is various type of dating apps based on their target audience characteristics, location, or features. There are dating apps for heterosexual users such as Setipe; religion-based dating apps such as *Muzmatch* and *Join* (Islam) or *Christian Dating* (Christian); dating apps for homosexual users such as *Grindr, Hornet*, and *Romeo* (for gay) and *Her*, *Fem*, and *Blendr* (for lesbian). While these dating apps try to reach a segmented audience, others try to be more inclusive in regards to religion, race, or sexual orientation and internationally operating such as Tinder, OKCupid, and Badoo.

Sexual expressions of urbanites throughout the times

In general, the only acceptable sexual relationship in Indonesia is between married partners (Ayudra, 2014: 1), and same-sex relationship is regarded as deviant (Kusumah, 1980). People who do not conform to heteronormativity and marital sex will be sanctioned with shaming which, according to Sharyn Davies (2018), is the most striking form of control on sexuality in this country. In some cases, police are involved to control people's sexuality. For examples, the raids of a same-sex couple who live together, and teenagers who allegedly conducted extramarital sex (Faisal, 2018; Lova, 2018).

Despite social surveillance in this country, some people do not hesitate to express their sexuality in public spaces or in the media. Sexual behavior and expression of some citizens were portrayed in various media decades ago. For example, in an interview with X! Men Magazine in 2006, curator Jim Supangkat discussed people's lifestyles in Bandung in the 1970s.

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as Ikhwan 821, Akhwat 324, etc. Unlike the other matchmaking services, this service does not allow members to upload their photos.

There was a massive change in 1965… There is vulgarity. In films, magazines... I live in Bandung and at that time, terms such as gong li, bagong lieur, and pitik which refer to prostitute emerged. At night, Cicadas is more crowded than Bina Ria Ancol… I think that was the era of sexual freedom…("Jangan Samakan Seksualitas, Erotisme, dan Pornografi", 2006: 38-39).

The sexual freedom mentioned by Supangkat also appeared in an article in Varianada magazine in 1973 (Shinta, 1973). The article reports a criminal act by a man who stole jewelry from several of his ex-lovers in Bandung. Their dating activities involved sexual activities as portrayed in the article: "they already engaged in intimate (sexual) relations even though they had only known each other for a short while. The man, who is quite sympathetic and good-looking, even slept with her. Not only that, Atjeng [the perpetrator] had stayed in Oneng's [the victim] house for several nights." (p. 9). Furthermore, discussions on sexual expression have been continuously published in the media since the 1990s until today, both in counseling columns and personal stories as portrayed in Fakta Plus Psikologia magazine and other targeted magazines—be it for men or women—such as FHM, Popular, and Cosmopolitan.

Since the early 2000s, some Indonesians used a mobile phones to express their sexuality. This includes pornographic text and video messages which contains explicit sexual acts between couples (Barendregt, 2006 in Humphreys & Barker, 2007). In line with Barendregt's finding, Maharani & Manalu (2017) stated in their study that the search for sexual partners becomes the main motive in the use of online dating by Indonesians.

OKCupid Overview

OKCupid is an online dating platform that was released in 2004 and can be accessed through the website or the mobile application. This platform features a match calculating algorithm based on answers to various questions and demographic information (age, sex, sexual orientation, location, etc.). The algorithm allows users to find people who match their preferences and calculates percentages of similarity based on specific categories such as *dating, ethics, religion, sex, lifestyle,* and *other*[5]. When users answers the questions, they can choose to show the answers publicly or private.

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[5]Detail explanation on algorithm can be accesed from https://www.*OKCupid*.com/help/match-percentages
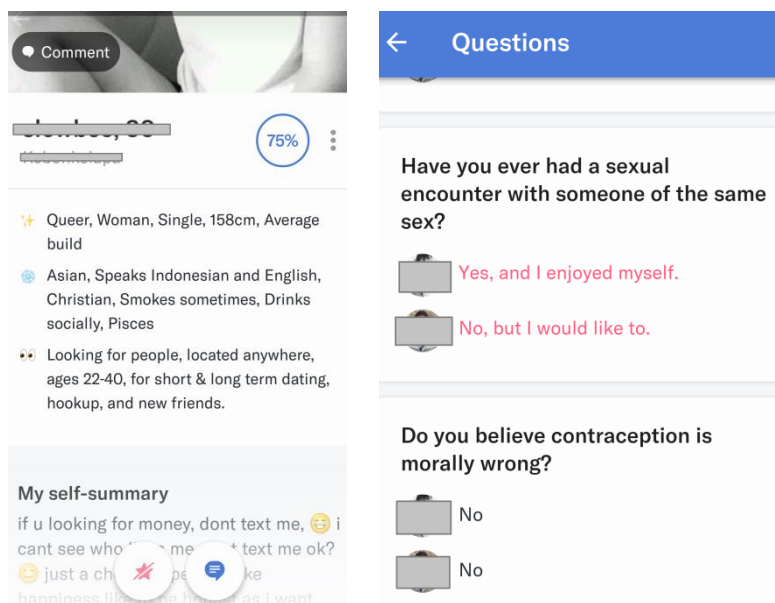
(Figure 1. Profile and questions feature on *OKCupid*)

The difference between *OKCupid* and other dating apps is in the detailed profile of its user (see figure 1). In their profile, *OKCupid* users may add information such as their self-summaries, aspirations, talent, traits, needs, hobbies, moments, secrets, etc.

Like many other dating apps, *OKCupid* has swiping feature. However, unlike most other apps, *OKCupid* allows its users to read profile descriptions and bookmark other users without going through the swiping process. The users may also send a direct message to other users without being matched.

The search feature in *OKCupid* also allows the user to filter candidates based on some characteristics such as their religion, race, and height. Some filters can only be accessed by premium users which incurs a monthly fee. Besides filters, other facilities that can be accessed by premium users include seeing who liked them and A-list status—which enables them to become more popular when others use their swiping feature.

Regarding sexual expression on this platform, in late 2014 *OKCupid* added thirteen sexual orientations and twenty-two kinds of gender preferences that users can display on their profile. Since September 2018, *OKCupid* added pronoun options on their user profiles ("*OKCupid* Becomes First Leading Dating App to Launch Pronoun Feature", 2018). As mentioned by the platform, *"OKCupid is an inclusive environment where transgender and nonbinary people may express themselves however they'd like"*.

Self-presentation

One of the most crucial factors in starting a relationship is self-presentation. Erving Goffman (1959 in Marwick & Boyd, 2010) argues that the individual self is an actor who presents his or herself in a specific context or audience. Differing conditions in regard to context or audience may demand him or her to present several different self-images.

This continuous change in self-presentation happens in both their offline and online lives. In the digital realm, one's audience may extend beyond his or her expectation. Therefore, Marwick & Boyd (2010) suggests that internet users may create strategies to trigger "curated" impressions.

Self-presentation is related to self-disclosure. In the online dating context, Ben-Ze'ev explains that self-disclosure is the most important aspect to decrease uncertainty in an online relationship (2004: 41). People who engaged in more self-disclosure gained more responses than other match seekers (Gibbs et. al. 2006 in Muhleisen, 2016). The existence of detailed profile features on dating apps encouraged users to perform their disclosure on a more personal dimension (Choi & Chan, 2013). This more detailed self-presentation may garner more responses since it helps other users engage with the profile owner because it adds potential conversation material.

Besides their ability to present detailed personalities, dating apps also allow their users to edit their published profile information (de Vries, 2014). This editing feature in dating apps marks a significant difference between printed dating ads and face-to-face meetings because users can now continue to change and improve their self-presentation in the dating app profile.

Sexual expression & sexual permissiveness

This study involves Creti & Libman's (1989) conceptual framework on sexual expression;

> *Sexual expression is multidimensional. It consists of overt behaviors which include a range of both interpersonal (e.g., coital and noncoital sexual interactions) and individual activities (e.g., masturbation, reading or viewing erotica); covert behaviors (e.g., sexual thoughts and fantasies); motivational aspects of the sexual experience (e.g., desire and interest); and subjective evaluation of the sexual experience (e.g., enjoyment, satisfaction)* (p. 84).

Regarding sexual expression, we focus on *OKCupid* users' self-presentation who show their sexual orientation and ticked "looking for hook-up". According to the American Psychological Association, sexual orientation refers to a fixed pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual interests towards males, females, or both. Those interests and attitudes are related to one's identity. Subsequently, the term "hook up" is defined as sexual activities between couples outside of a romantic relationship or between strangers or brief acquaintances – or more colloquially known as "casual sex" (Currier, 2013; Penhollow et. al., 2007). Additionally, hookups may encompass various kinds of sexual activities which extend beyond heterosexual penetration.

Therefore, we view the issue of hookups as related to issues of sexual permissiveness – which has already been explored by a number of studies. According to Jonathan Kelley, in the context of sexuality, permissiveness refers to *"favorable attitudes toward, or participation in; any form of premarital sex"* (1978: 456). He adds that one's permissiveness is equivalent to his or her sexual preferences at the beginning of the relationship. This attitude may relate to one's intention to prove his or her love to the partner or its purpose may be merely recreational where commitment is not necessary (Reiss, 1960 in Sprecher & Heathfield, 1996).

METHODOLOGY

In studying *OKCupid* users' sexual expression, we use a sex-positive approach. Williams et. al. (2013) describe a sex-positive approach as one that includes openness and acceptance of different sexualities and sexual attitudes. Regarding sexual expression, they state that this approach allows various sexual expressions which include identity, orientation, and sexual behavior (p. 273).

This study also utilizes the participant observation method. Two researchers, Kirnandita and Umamah, actively used the *OKCupid* application and interacted with a number of its users. While interacting with other *OKCupid* users, Kirnandita and Umamah were also involved in self-disclosure to trigger reciprocity from informant candidates. As mentioned by Oakley (1998), personal experience and knowledge of certain aspects help *participant observers* to approach *interviewees* and engage in a non-hierarchal intimate relationship with them. In gaining informants' consent, we always stated our purpose in creating such a profile—to conduct research—from the beginning of each conversation.
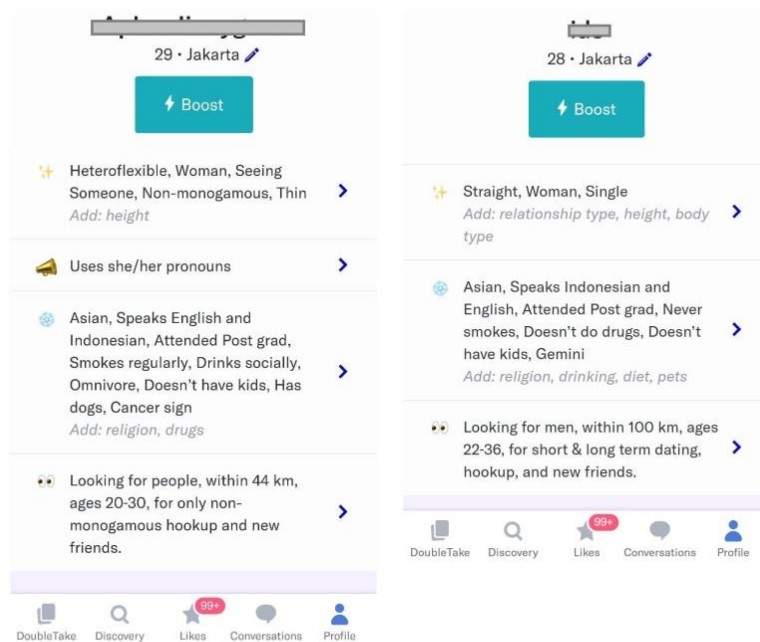
(Figure 2. Kirnandita's & Umamah's brief profiles on *OKCupid*)

The selection for informants begins with our observation of their self-presentation based on their profile and answers to questions regarding sexuality in *OKCupid's* questions feature. This selection was conducted between August and September 2018. After an initial conversation, we then interacted with the informants through the chat feature or through other messaging applications such as *Line* and *WhatsApp*. Through the whole process, we finally got three *OKCupid* users to agree to support our research by meeting with us for a face-to-face interview. Our four interviewees self-identifies as heterosexual males, a queer female, a bisexual male, and a heterosexual female.

FINDINGS
Brief profile

Our informants' profiles contain a wide variety of information, below is a brief overview of their profiles.

Inform ant	Usern ame	A ge	Religi on	Gen der	Sexual orienta tion	Relation ship status	Lookin g for
Danni	Real name	22	Islam	Male	Bisexu al	Single	People, located anywhe re, ages 20-35, for hook-up, new friends
Raka	Alias	25	Other religio n	Male	Straigh t	Single	Women , located anywhe re, ages 23-35, for long term dating, hook-up, and new friends
Mila	Alias	30	Christ ian	Fem ale	Queer	Single	People, located anywhe re, ages 22-40, for short & long term dating, hook-up, and

							new friends
Darla	Alias	33	Agnostic	Female	Straight	Seeing someone	Men, within 81 km, ages 32-45, for only non-monogamous short & long term dating and new friends

Table 1. Informants' brief profiles

Regarding the use of personal photos, Mila and Danni use photos that clearly show their face, Darla uses a side photo, while Raka only uploads his illustrations.

Sexual expression in the profile column

Raka, Danni, and Mila all ticked "hook-up" because they felt that the dating app allows them to look for like-minded people who are interested in finding potential hook-up partners. Danni is of the opinion that finding a hook-up partner *offline* is harder than finding them through dating apps.

Nevertheless, all three of them have never actually hooked up with any of their dates from *OKCupid* – even though Mila, Raka, and Danni have used the app for three years, three months, and one month respectively. Raka says that this is because he is very selective

in choosing a hook-up partner, he still needs to meet for two to three dates first to get to know the person before hooking up – no matter how well their conversation through the app went.

Meanwhile, Darla does not tick "hook-up" on her profile because she felt that doing so might be construed to "only" be looking for a *fuckbuddy*[6] by other users. This is not because she fears being viewed as being "cheap", but rather because she places more value on how compatible she is with her potential hook-up partner's personality. She gauges personality compatibility not only based on the match percentage feature of *OKCupid*, but also from face-to-face meetings – similar to Raka.

Conversely, Danni and Mila say that they have no issues in finding dates and only want to become fuckbuddies without having to dig deeper into their personality. As a side note, Danni and Mila have both hooked up with strangers they have met through other dating apps.

On the other hand, Darla – who has been using *OKCupid* for seven years – has hooked up with two different people that she has met through the app. Darla has continued to see both of them as the three of them agreed to engage in a non-monogamous relationship.

Regarding sexual orientation, Danni and Mila both state that they are "non-heterosexual" on *OKCupid* while Mila ticked "queer". In the interview, Mila explained that she is actually a lesbian and has previously used that term in the app. However, she once met a coworker in the app so she decided to use the term "queer" instead because she feels that the term is vaguer or "subtle" compared to "lesbian" which has a higher potential for drawing the ire of other Indonesians. Subsequently, Danni and Mila also expressed their non-heterosexual identity in the other dating apps they use – Danni uses *Grindr* while Mila uses *Her*.

Sexual expression in OKCupid's "questions" feature

In the questions feature, we found that the various answers our informants gave are quite open in regard to their views on sexuality. For the question "how open are you to trying new things in bed?", Mila and Raka answered "very open. I'll try anything once". Mila also affirmed her sexual orientation by answering the question "have you ever had a sexual encounter with someone of the same sex?" with "yes, and I enjoyed myself".

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[6]According Collins Dictionary, *fuckbuddy* refers to a person with whom another person has a relationship based on casual sex only.

Our informants also expressed their sexual preferences through the questions feature. Darla answered various questions in a manner that affirmed her interest in *kinky, rough sex,* as well as *BDSM.* For example, she is turned on by *golden showers*, knows esoteric *BDSM* terms well, and likes buying sex toys. Raka also expressed interest in kinky and rough sex – he answered both "are you kinky?" and "would you like to receive pain during sex?" with a firm "yes".

There are various reasons why our informants like answering the questions on *OKCupid.* Darla says that the questions allow her to reflect a little bit about herself:

> *The questions force me to think about things I often ponder about, things I don't want to think about, or things I have thought of a long time ago but I forgot the answer to. This is how it helps me understand myself better as well as to explicate what I am looking for in a partner. So the filter is clear for me, if the match rating is below 70%, I won't pay any attention to the guy. No matter how good looking the guy is, I will not reply (to his message). This shows, for example in regards to sexuality, that he is not compatible with me. If he isn't kinky, not open-minded, too   religious, thinks that males have to be the head of the family, I think that's all bullshit. I'm tired of those types.* (Darla, interview, 20/10/2018)

Darla's open expression of sexuality is retained in all her discussions with her dates on the app. She does this because she is used to the practice throughout all her first dates even before using dating apps. Similarly, in her interview, Mila also expressed that she is always open to expressing her sexuality with her dates. For Mila, this openness in talking about hooking up is because she finds it quite easy to be trusting and open to the people that she meets on dating apps. Additionally, she stated:

> *I'm not worried because it's personal freedom. Hookup culture is quite common nowadays anyway. If you want to remain a holy virgin then don't do anything. I think it's quite common, not something that one should be ashamed of. I don't care what people think of me. It's my freedom, I don't ask for food from that person. I work. You're free to say whatever you want. I don't care if people call me a sinner.* (Mila, interview, 09/10/2018)

Offline expressions of sexuality

Raka, Mila, and Darla say that they have conducted sexual activity – be it through hooking up or in a relationship – since before using dating apps. Darla has been sexually active since her college years, Mila since she started working, and Raka since junior high. Meanwhile, Danni's first sexual encounter was initiated through the dating site *Manjam* when she was still in junior high.

Before dating apps, Mila usually meets her dates or hookups in nightclubs or lesbian communities. Subsequently, Darla and Raka always found hookup partners from their acquaintances. Meanwhile, Danni says that he has never met a hookup partner before using dating apps - this is why he laments about how hard it is to find hookup partners offline.

In her interview, Darla states that she doesn't have an issue with people knowing about her sexual preferences – be it people she knows or strangers she met on *OKCupid*. This fact is affirmed by her answer to the question "are you comfortable with your sexual preference?". Furthermore, she says that her sexual expressions on *OKCupid* are not different from her *offline* behavior.

> *I always show who I really am in all contexts. My mother and my friends all know of my non-monogamy and hookups. Some of them knows of my love for BDSM. When joking about sex I like to add some details such as anal or things to shock them, to let them know that sexuality is a very varied affair. You are allowed to be vanilla, but there are others out there who like different things. Thus why I am certain that they know that I have been places, that I have done things.* (Darla, interview, 20/10/2018)

This view is markedly different from how Raka, Danni, and Mila view the issue. Raka feels that people around him do not need to know about his permissiveness towards hookup culture because he considers it a private matter. Meanwhile, Danni and Mila admit to not being as open about their sexual orientation to the people they meet on a daily basis. When asked, Danni will say that he is bisexual while Mila will try to weasel her way out of questions regarding her attraction towards the same sex. For example, Mila may say "I am looking for a foreigner" when asked why she is not married. Furthermore, Mila says that she upheld her religious doctrines throughout her childhood because she studied in an Islamic boarding school. This is why she never dated anyone and always held back her lesbian orientation until she graduated from high school. It is important to note that she is listed

as a Christian in this study because she converted to Christianity when she was around 26 years old in 2014.

Both Danni and Mila say that they have never displayed their affection for their homosexual partners *offline*. They choose to not express their affection openly because there is still a lot of negative stigma toward homosexuality in Indonesia. For example, Danni's mother once said that gays are scum when she caught her son watching gay porn in junior high. Meanwhile, Mila feels that her sexual orientation is not yet accepted by the general public in Indonesia because she was once discriminated against when applying for a job. She was applying to become a Human Resources officer, a job that she feels does not depend on physical appearance. However, when she dressed in a more masculine manner, she was asked to dress more femininely. Mila refused to change her appearance, so she did not get the job.

Due to these experiences, both Danni and Mila only express their sexuality in certain spaces. For example, Danni does so in Bina Antarbudaya – a community in which someone can talk and learn about diversity issues safely. Meanwhile, Mila is more open about her sexual orientation in *The Ardhanary Institute* and *Arus Pelangi*[7] which she is a part of.

Religiousity and sexual permissiveness

We have found that informants also find freedom in expressing their religious views in the dating app. Darla and Raka identify themselves as not affiliated with any religions in Indonesia while Danni identifies as a Muslim and Mila identifies as Christian. Both Danni and Mila says that they still practice their respective religions. Both knows that being non-heterosexual is not permitted by their religion, but it does not affect their faith.

> *I know that it (my sexual orientation) is forbidden in my religion, but I don't wanna play God to claim whether it is wrong or right. When I pray for a soulmate, I pray for a female. I still go to church, but not quite often, mostly for Christmas service.* (Mila, interview, 17/9/2018)

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[7] Both Ardhanary Institute and Arus Pelangi are Indonesian non-profit organizations concerned about non-heterosexual community rights. While Ardhanary Institute focuses on lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, Arus Pelangi focuses on the similar community plus intersex and gay people.

"Well I don't study my religion that deeply. My view is that being straight is a virtue, so I see homosexuality and bisexuality as a test.. But it's just that this temptation is too good...desire, sexual arousal. Many will try to justify their act because it is a most pleasurable temptation. Regarding this issue, for now I will express myself as I currently am, but in the future I will try to follow my religious teaching and avoid the temptation." (Danni, interview, 24/10/2018)

Danni explains that for him hooking up means specific sexual activities which lead to penetration. This is why he holds himself back as much as possible to not do the things his religion forbids, but he still engages in other sexual activities besides penetration. Danni says that he will feel lost without religion as he has witnessed how some of his atheist friends become overwhelmed when they are faced with big issues. Furthermore, Danni also says that being active in religious organizations makes his life feels more balanced.

DISCUSSION

All informants are quite open in expressing their ideas and experiences regarding sexuality. In this sense, self-disclosure implies a bias between the private and public in the digital world (Baym & Boyd, 2012). On the one side, hooking up is considered a part of a private *offline* business for Raka, but on the other side, by ticking hook-up in his profile, he allows the public to notice his sexual permissiveness. In Danni's context, sexual orientation is regarded as private in daily life, published openly in *OKCupid*.

Besides the ambiguity between things considered private and public by our informants, we also found some strategies applied by four of them in order to present themselves. The first strategy is sharing valid information about themselves which is considered by Wotipka & High (2016) as "warranting content". They argued that validated information leads to trust among online daters. We found some warranting content as we observed their profiles and compare them with stories that are shared during face-to-face meetings. For instance, Darla's answer about her love for kinky and rough sex corresponds with her statement in the direct interview; both Danni and Mila confirmed their non-heterosexual orientation as written in their profiles, and Raka confirmed one of his goals in using *OKCupid* is to search for a sexual partner.

The second strategy applied by our informants is creating selective self-presentation. This method allows them to increase their personal attractiveness (Toma & Hancock in Wotipka & High, 2016). Instead of attaching real photos, Raka attached his artworks because

he doesn't want other online daters to judge him based on his physical appearance. Besides, he also wants to be acknowledged as a person who has an interest in art and photography rather than be noticed as a person with certain physical qualities. Meanwhile, Darla chooses a side photo to avoid the misuse of her personal photo by other online daters. In the interview, she stated, "I preferred a more anonymous profile because I don't want any *OKCupid* user, with whom I interact and eventually gets upset or feels disappointed due to my words or acts, uses my personal photo and information to ruin my life in the future." Not only does she upload her side photos, but Darla also uses an alias for her username. This use of an alias is also found in Mila and Raka profiles.

Informants' anonymity and selective self-presentations allow them to preserve their privacy while increasing their emotional closeness and openness with others users (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004). This strategy enables them to shape personalities that might differ from the selves they present in daily life (Chalkley, 2016). By difference, we refer to the stressing on a certain aspect of one's self rather than the creation of fake identity or personality. In selective self-presentation, online daters can filter out unflattering information about themselves while highlighting their positive attributes (Ellison et. al., 2011 in Wotipka & High, 2016). This strategy can be seen for example in Raka's profile, in which he attaches photos of his artworks.

Furthermore, anonymity also makes someone express his or her ideas or disclosure his or herself more freely (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004). In Raka's case, he expresses his preference for kinky sexual activity on the features of the question while in his daily life practice he infrequently discusses his sexual preference with his friends or family.

We consider selective self-presentation as a strategy applied by online daters to create a segmentation of potential partners (Chalkley, 2016). When the informants ticked looking for a hookup and stated their sexual preferences and orientations, it will most likely have online daters who share similar sexual preferences and orientations interact with them.

Mila's strategy in editing her sexual orientation can be regarded as an attitude toward "unanticipated disclosure". The term refers to an unexpected condition that occurs after a person discloses his/her self (Cobb & Kohno, 2017: 1235). As Marwick & Boyd argued (2012), in the context of digital media, there might be a condition where one's audience extends to more than his/her expectation. This condition can affect the way online daters present themselves or control things they state online because they consider the consequences of presenting things in the open for the public profile. Therefore, Mila tried to manage

people's impressions of her—especially those related to her professional life—by changing "lesbian" to "queer".

Both Darla and Raka's unconventional sexual preferences indicate sex positivity. For some Indonesians, rough and kinky sexual activities are not common and are regarded as taboo. In contrast with common belief, Darla and Raka believe that BDSM, rough, and kinky sex, give them pleasure. Sex positivity is also shown in the way Mila and Danni express their sexual orientations. By mentioning queer and bisexuals, they show their resistance to dominant narratives or regulations and embrace the diversity of sexual practice and orientation.

Online daters' self-disclosure which is facilitated by *OKCupid* also helps them to get to know each other faster and better. Thus, they don't need to spend a lot more energy, time, and money to incur several face-to-face meetings to get to know each other as has been done by match seekers in the past decades. Furthermore, regarding sexuality issues, without having to meet in person first, online daters might be able to know one's sexual preference or orientation and how permissive he/she is—by seeing one's answers on *OKCupid*'s question feature or by looking for hook-up on his/her profile. This might not happen in the past when some people still think talking about sexuality is taboo in the initial conversation.

From our findings, we see high sexual permissiveness in all informants. Four of them have and still practicing premarital sex, be it with their romantic partners or hook-ups. This finding corresponds with an earlier study by Utomo (1997) which found a phenomenon of premarital sex behavior in the young middle class in Jakarta. She argued that this kind of behavior happens due to the rise of digital technology so young people in Jakarta might be exposed to foreign cultures and easily change their social values, lifestyle, and political ideology (p. 228-229).

Albeit all of our informants were raised within social norms which forbid premarital sex, the exposure to liberal values transmitted through conventional media, peer group interactions pre-dating apps, and digital media content made them more permissive regarding sexual practice. This argument is affirmed by Darla when she stated that she got knowledge of sexuality through her interaction with her cousins and friend, books, and information from the internet.

The increase of sexual permissiveness in some urban societies can also be affected by the low social surveillance in certain spaces, especially in the digital world regarding the use of the mobile device (Hayati, 2004 in Ayudra, 2014). The practice of using a mobile device is considered private for most adults, and so is the practice of using the dating app. Therefore, online daters might consider their one-on-

one interaction, as well as their sexual expression, on the dating platform to be much safer than *offline*. The sexual permissiveness of online daters can also be boosted by sexual experience they have gained long before they use the dating app, thus they explicitly say they are looking for a hookup.

One earlier study found that people who are in a romantic relationship showed high sexual permissiveness, especially men. This finding is related to the myth of virginity which affect women to be more sexually passive than men (Amirin, 2003). Meanwhile, our finding shows that both woman and man have high sexual permissiveness. However, this high sexual permissiveness doesn't warrant the sexual act with random people. In the interview, both Darla and Raka said that they prefer to get to know their sexual partner first through 2-3 meetings. Although they don't always expect to have a romantic relationship or befriend their hook-up partner in the first place, it is important for them to know their partners' personalities and preferences through face-to-face interaction. This implies that there are other factors in *offline* interaction which affect their decision to hook up or not with people they meet on *OKCupid*.

There are high numbers of sexual permissiveness in conventional relationship context and the established myth of virginity usually cause males more permissive than females (Amirin, 2003). Nevertheless, our findings show that female informants perform sexual permissiveness as high as male informants and are considered dating strangers. Meanwhile, it does not mean that they will automatically hook up with someone who is completely a stranger. In the case of Darla and Raka, their hook-up partner was firstly a brief acquaintance after went into meetings. The implication in the case shows that there were significant factors in the face-to-face meeting which influenced informants' decisions to hook up with other *OKCupid* users.

We consider online daters' self-presentation as behaviors conducted by consumers of a cultural product. In this sense, Stuart Hall views the relationship between this kind of behavior and other elements such as regulation in which a cultural product is distributed and consumed, and the way the producer creates a cultural product and shares meanings with consumers (Hall, 1997 in du Gay, 1997). Looking at features provided by *OKCupid*, we think this dating app is trying to frame its users to be more open in presenting themselves, in showing their dating goals (hook-up, new friends, long and short-term relationships), as well as presenting itself as an inclusive platform which celebrates diverse sexual expression and point of views. This agenda is well accepted by Darla, who stated question features on *OKCupid* help her contemplate so she can be more honest to herself and others.

Our informants are able to express their sexuality in dating apps because *OKCupid* as the producer of the cultural product facilitates them to do so through the profile column and questions feature. On the one hand, they create self-presentation in response to features provided by *OKCupid*. On the other hand, the producer creates certain features based on ongoing sociocultural situations, in the US in particular and worldwide in general. For instance, various gender identity and sexual orientation options might be related to the needs of some *OKCupid* users who don't identify themselves as heterosexual or man/woman or the nationwide urge to the acknowledgment of LGBTQ community in the US. Furthermore, questions regarding sexual preferences might be made as a response to various unconventional sexual behaviors which are depicted in popular media. Hence, we argue that online daters' sexual expressions appear simultaneously with the facility provided by *OKCupid*.

Regarding shared meaning, we found the ambiguity of "hook-up" when Danni interpret this term as merely penetrative sex. On *OKCupid*, there is no further explanation about this option. It means the producer enables consumers to perceive hook-up subjectively. Having known this, we explained the definition of hook-up as we elaborate on the theoretical framework before we asked our informants further regarding their sexual permissiveness.

Regarding regulation, normativity in Indonesia affects how people use a cultural product and give meaning to it. In this research, we found at some point the use of dating apps is considered a strategy to avoid social norms related to sexual orientation and premarital sex. However, in Mila's case, we found inconsistency in her sexual expression which is affected by social norms. She, as well as the rest of the informants, feels okay if other online daters or her relatives and acquaintances notice her intention in looking for a sexual partner through a dating app. Nevertheless, she is more concerned about her coworker's impression of her sexual orientation. This finding indicates that there is a strong influence of social norms regarding LGBT that somehow is still perpetuated in the digital world so she's more aware of choosing sexual orientation on *OKCupid*.

Internalized normativity in online daters is also found in Danni's statement about his religiosity, hook-up behavior, and sexual orientation. Despite his intention in looking for a hook-up through a dating app and his sexual orientation shown on his profile, Danni still believes in his religious value. This case indicates a contradiction due to conflicting values in Danni's self: one which beliefs in diverse sexualities, and another believe that homosexuality and premarital sex are sins. Interestingly, in spite of this contradiction, Danni doesn't choose one over another. He implements both values in a parallel

manner by justifying his sexual behavior as a "pleasurable temptation". Meanwhile, in Mila's statement about her religious view, we found that she has a different interpretation of religiosity and piety. She believes that it's God's authority to judge her choice to be lesbian and to hook-up, not an institution or people around her.

Both Danni and Mila still do some religious practice and don't come out to their family. This may be caused by one's dependency on the social institution so he/she tends to hold themselves back and be introspective in expressing their sexuality (Delameter, 1989 in Haerich, 1992: 364).

Not only consumption elements, but regulation elements also affect the way producers create a cultural product. On the one side, *OKCupid's* features enable online daters to express their sexuality. On the other side, at some point, *OKCupid* regulates users' sexual expression, for example regarding sexual harassment. Users may report harassment they get to the platform and accordingly, *OKCupid* may suspend the alleged harasser's account based on that report or its own consideration. The policy can be found in *OKCupid's* terms &conditions. This implies that *OKCupid* perpetuates *offline* normativity in which sexual harassment is not tolerated.

CONCLUSION

Our research demonstrates that online match-seeking behaviors perpetuates things in pre-dating app era such as sexual expression and sexual permissiveness in dating life of urban people. Nonetheless, there are some different strategies in self-presentation utilized by online daters. These strategies are affected by the rise of digital technology use and various facility provided by dating app.

This study also found that the goal of dating is not solely to find a romantic partner, but also for pleasure seeking and/or finding sexual partner. Nevertheless, there's possibility for online daters to build romantic relationship with people they meet on dating app even if the relationship starts with a hook-up.

We consider dating app as an alternative space for some urban people to express their sexualities. With the help of features provided by dating app, they can celebrate the diversity of sexual orientation, preferences, and thoughts which is often regarded as taboo or marginalized in offline realm.

As information flow from various countries expose urban people, online daters in Jakarta will face wide variety of cultural values alongside traditional values transferred by social institutions. Therefore, they use certain strategies in presenting themselves, be it to show their resistance against normativity, negotiation, or subservience. These strategies will change continuously along with

social and regulations shifts in Indonesia, as well as the change in content provided by digital dating service.

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