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## Communication Experience and Self-Concept of Metrosexual Men in Indonesia

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### 1 Abstract

The passage of time and technological advancements can have an effect on human desires and lifestyles, and the emergence of the metrosexual man phenomenon is one of them. What makes metrosexual men interesting to study is the relationship between their self-concept and their interactions in their social environment. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to elucidate metrosexual men's communication experience and self-concept from a phenomenological perspective in terms of physical, psychological, social, and moral dimensions in the city of Bandar Lampung, Indonesia, Asia. The study is qualitative in nature and employed a phenomenological approach, with four metrosexual men being purposefully chosen as research subjects. The data were collected through unstructured interviews, observations, and literature review. The findings indicate that while the subjects under investigation have a pleasant communication experience with their family members, relatives, and friends, they do not have a positive experience communicating with the community. They have a positive self-concept, owing to their openness and confidence of all informants.

1 **Keywords:** Metrosexual Men, Communication Experience, Self-Concept, Phenomenological Perspective, Bandar Lampung

### 1. Introduction

Human demands and lifestyles can be influenced by the passage of time and technological advancements. The emergence of the metrosexual man phenomenon is one of them. Metrosexuals, alternatively referred to as women-oriented men, are men who are self-conscious about their

appearance and health (Hall 2015; Nimas Ayu et al. 2019; Perdana 2015; Simpson Mark 1994). Metrosexuals are known for their willingness to experiment with new fashion trends, for loving and even adoring themselves, and for seeking treatments that smooth and silken their skin, their faces with thin powder, polished nails, and shiny lips (Perdana 2015). As a result, metrosexuality is inextricably linked to men's shifting masculinity identities (Ardani, Christin, and Mahadian 2015). While normal men can be classified as metrosexual males, they place a premium on their feminist side (Khan et al. 2017). While the term metrosexual was coined relatively recently, this phenomenon has existed for a long period of time, even during the reign of Egypt's dandy kings (Tungate 2008).

Kartajaya (2004); Maciejewski and Lesznik (2021); Moon and Chung (2011) state that metrosexual men have several characteristics, including: 1) they live and work in big cities, which make it easier for them to get information and connect with people; 2) they have a lot of money because their lifestyle requires a lot of money; 3) they live an urban and hedonic lifestyle; 4) they are very interested in fashion; and 5) they usually look clean and tidy. Metrosexual men exist in Bandar Lampung City, Indonesia, just as they do elsewhere. Despite the fact that its infrastructure is not as sophisticated as that of Indonesia's major cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta, the number of males who appeared neat and clean indicated this during an observation. Metrosexual men in Bandar Lampung City have a hedonistic spending style, frequent salons and beauty clinics for skin and facial treatments, enjoy travelling and social smoking, and are foodies. This is consistent with the findings of several other studies, which indicate that metrosexual males spend more on grooming and appearance-related products, such as cosmetics, gym memberships, perfume, and clothing (Khoo and Karan 2007; Moon and Chung 2011; Del Saz-Rubio 2019). They congregate almost every night in malls or cafes, nightclubs, and karaoke establishments. Because they strive to appear as flawless as possible in public, their dress styles are always current and adhere to the latest trends.

1 What makes metrosexual men interesting to study is the relationship between their self-concept and their interactions in their social environment. This is because a person's self-concept is contingent upon his perspective, self-image, subsequent events and experiences as a metrosexual man, as well as previous events and experiences prior to becoming a metrosexual man (Knobloch 2019; Von Mollendorf 2021; Noviandari and Mursidi 2019). There are physical, psychological, social, and moral dimensions to one's self-concept (Burns and Dobson 1984; da Silva Lima 2019). Therefore, it was interesting to examine their characteristics from their own perspective, including their perceptions of positive and negative traits, psychological and social characteristics, as well as positive and negative phrases.

Individuals' self-concepts are shaped by the information they obtain from others through interpersonal interactions (Burns and Dobson 1984; Noviandari and Mursidi 2019; da Silva Lima 2019). When a metrosexual man engages in social interaction and communication with others, he exchanges symbols. Interactions with those in his immediate circle, such as friends and family, contribute to the development of his self-concept (O'Connor et al. 2018). His self-concept evolves as a result of his interpretation of reaction symbols from the social milieu with which he interacts, such as style, sophistication, and self-awareness (Flocker 2003). Naturally, this occurs as a 3 result of their hobbies and preferences, which allow them to become more masculine and confident. In this study, the self-concept of the participants was examined in terms of how they perceived themselves in terms of positive and negative values, their interactions with their environment, and the extent to which the environment influenced their self-concept. Additionally, this study sought to illuminate how metrosexual men perceived their communication experiences with their surroundings, including family, partners, friends, and strangers, through verbal and non-verbal behaviour, as well as their self-concept.

## 5. Methods

### 2.1 Research Design

This study is qualitative in nature, adopting a phenomenological approach, which is defined as a study that focuses on phenomenological experiences or research subjects in order to develop a perspective on human subjective experience (Leavy 2017; Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014). The phenomenological approach enabled a more in-depth examination of the self-concept of metrosexual men under investigation (Noon 2018; Usher and Jackson 2019; Wilding and Whiteford 2005).

### 2.2 Participants

This study adopted a purposive sampling technique (see, among others, (Campbell et al. 2020; Klar and Leeper 2019) based on the following criteria: 1) men who admitted to being metrosexual men; 2) men who were members of a metrosexual men club in Bandar Lampung City; 3) metrosexual men who agreed to participate and be involved in the research; and 4) metrosexual men under the age of 27 years (we found out that the average age of metrosexual men in Bandar Lampung City is 27 years old). Four informants were recruited for this study using these criteria.

### 2.3 Data Collection

Malls, cafes, karaoke bars, and nightclubs were used as the study's target locations, which served as a socialising and meeting place for the metrosexual men community. The data were collected through unstructured interviews, observation, documentation, and a literature review. This study focused on metrosexual men's self-concept and communication experiences in Bandar Lampung City, Indonesia, from a phenomenological standpoint.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were then analysed using the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. To determine the validity of the study data, several examination techniques were used, including 1) extending participation; 2) persistent observation; and 3) research triangulation.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Descriptive Analysis Results

External and internal influences are among the most influential factors on a person's self-concept, according to the results of informant interviews. Four informants admitted that they were metrosexual men and were aware of it as a result of others' perceptions of them. Furthermore, the fourth informant stated that they valued his appearance. As a result of the current social media trend, they became a metrosexual man. On average, the informants in this study admitted to being a metrosexual man since college. Their motivation was that they discovered numerous new things and social changes during their transition from high school to college; all informants stated that the influence of social media and the evolution of the times also played a role.

All four informants agreed on one thing: appearance was the most critical and decisive factor. According to the first informant, appearances can influence employment and dating prospects. They dressed in response to variables in their environment, such as friends and family. Additionally, they were influenced by technological advancements and innovations, such as social media. Even the first informant stated that he was inspired by the Korean drama films he watched on a regular basis. Meanwhile, the second informant stated that he was influenced by western fashion styles.

### 3.2 *Physical Aspect Interview Results*

The physical aspect, which includes a person's assessment of everything a metrosexual man owns, such as his body, clothes, and possessions, has an effect on him. In this physical component, we examined the informant's bodily self-perception. They asserted their confidence in themselves, claiming that their physical appearance met the standards for an ideal man. Both the first and second informants described themselves as tall, with a casual fashion sense. Meanwhile, other informants stated that their ideal appearance varied depending on the situation. Even the third informant stated that he liked the appearance, which was false. Each informant possessed items that aided in their appearance. As was the case with the first informant, he concealed his flaws through the use of a bracelet. In his small hands, he justified his lack of faith. In general, informants asserted that cell phones, bracelets, and watches were required attire.

Each informant indicated that they needed to maintain an up-to-date appearance. As with the second informant, he believed that living in a globalised world necessitated maintaining one's appearance, as he worked in the entertainment industry, where appearance is always the centre of attention. Additionally, they believed that a pleasing appearance correlated with sound judgement in society. The second and fourth informants stated that they frequented gym activities in order to maintain their body shape. Other informants did not go to the gym but maintained an ideal body shape through a healthy diet. Meanwhile, their statements were consistent across all informants: all informants used facial treatments to maintain a youthful appearance. Additionally, they expressed a preference for clothing shopping, with the fourth informant stating that they did so almost daily.

### 3.3 *Psychological Aspect Interview Results*

Psychological characteristics include an individual's thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward oneself. A person's identity is defined by his capacity for self-evaluation. According to the informants in this study, metrosexual men prioritise appearance. They argued that metrosexual men were beneficial because their appearance was always immaculate and attractive to others. The second informant asserted that because metrosexual men were attractive and well-dressed, they possessed an aura that distinguished them from other men. They believed that appearance was the most important consideration. Although the environment may have an adverse effect at times. The first and third informants were frequently subjected to peer bullying, but they remained unconcerned. When someone scoffs behind him, the second informant, like the first and third, responded indifferently. On the other hand, the fourth informant received favourable feedback from his closest friends and acquaintances.

### 3.4 *Social Aspect Interview Results*

Individual social roles and judgments about these responsibilities are social elements that pertain to his ability to relate to other people and things. Numerous individuals made negative judgments about their behaviour based on their appearance, but none of the informants expressed concern about society's negative views of metrosexual men. Each of them stated that their family was complete. According to the third informant, he was an only child raised by his mother and described himself as a loving and open person. The majority of informants identified as extroverts.

On average, all informants stated that their families were unconcerned about their appearance as metrosexual men. The family of the first informant was overjoyed and viewed the informant's transformation into a metrosexual man as a positive development. It was not difficult to communicate with metrosexual men's families. Their relatives were aware of their metropolitan sexuality. Metrosexual men had no difficulty communicating with society, the environment, education, and co-workers. Additionally, as the first informant indicated, conversing with the opposing sex was not a problem because the opposing sex still saw them as men despite their appearance as metrosexual men.

### 3.5 Moral Aspect Interview Results

The moral element encompasses the values and ideals that provide meaning and direction for one's life. The informants' lives were influenced by their average number of friends and their environment; the second informant also indicated that his family, specifically his mother, influenced his life. Additionally, they frequently sought advice from their fellow metrosexual men or other close friends. The first and second informants had similar aspirations, particularly in the entertainment industry, whereas the third and fourth informants desired to establish their own business. If the third informant was confined to expectations, the fourth informant was learning to be an entrepreneur. All informants shared a common expectation: they desired to be better than they were.

### 3.6 Metrosexual Male Communication Experience

Individuals' communication experiences were analysed in this study, and they were correlated with communication characteristics such as procedures, symbols, and meanings formed, as well as encouragement to act. The findings indicated that the first and third informants were frequently subjected to bullying by those in their immediate environment. On the other hand, the first and third informants were oblivious to the treatment. Like the second informant, he would be unconcerned if someone sneered at him from behind. The fourth informant had a positive encounter in which he received affirmation from those in his immediate vicinity. On this basis, one could infer that the four informants had a favourable self-concept. Furthermore, the four informants possessed superior interpersonal communication abilities.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Views about Metrosexual Men

According to the four informants, the most critical factor is appearance. They are constantly abreast of the latest fashion trends and technological advancements. Environmental and social media trends are increasing in popularity. Each informant, according to the findings of the preceding research, has his or her own perspective on metro-sexuality. A metrosexual man, on the other hand, is defined as one who is constantly neat, clean, and fragrant, as well as one who takes care of himself and maintains a proportionate body posture (Phinta 2019; Ricciardelli, Clow, and White 2010).

### 4.2 Fashion as a means of Presenting Yourself

Each informant has an opinion about how they should present themselves in public and maintain their appearance. His appearance is paramount; if his appearance does not improve his day, he does not have to go out; his ideal appearance, he believes, is to be able to follow current trends while maintaining his own style. The appearance is how they communicate their fashion to the public, and it is obvious that appearance is paramount, with the ideal appearance consisting of extremely comfortable clothing (Barry and Martin 2015; Pan, Jamnia, and others 2015).

### 4.3 Overview of Self-Concept

Physical, psychological, and social aspects all contribute to the self-concept description. On a physical level, it refers to a person's perception of his physical appearance. Existing physical descriptions take into account an individual's physical and sexual attractiveness, as well as his understanding of the significance of the limbs he possesses; this latter component is more commonly referred to as the physical self-concept. Physical appearance is a more positive aspect of informants' self-concept, with all informants reporting feeling physically good, having a positive view of

metrosexual men's lifestyle, and having an appearance that supports activities. Each informant, without a doubt, has flaws, but they are able to conceal them by displaying their unique style as a metrosexual male. The physical aspect consists of the individual's adjustment quality in life, such as self-confidence, honesty, independence, and courage, as well as anything that may be in conflict with these values, all of which must be weighed in terms of the benefits and drawbacks to each informant. Individuals who retain a relationship with their social environment have a social component to their self-concept (Burns and Dobson 1984; Noviandari and Mursidi 2019). This social dimension is composed of three components: parents, siblings, and relatives, friends and neighbourhood life, and the school environment. Each informant is self-aware and comfortable in his own skin, which results in a positive self-concept.

#### 4.4 *Interpersonal Communication on Self-Concept*

Self-concept is critical in interpersonal communication because everyone will always act in accordance with their own self-concept. Positive or negative self-concept has a significant impact on interpersonal communication. Each informant possesses a strong sense of self-confidence, demonstrates sound self-control, and appears to be in good physical condition in order to accomplish that condition, where each informant possesses a strong sense of self-confidence, demonstrates sound self-control, and appears to be in good physical condition in order to accomplish that condition. Environmental influences have a sizable impact on metrosexual men's self-concept formation (Lertwannawit and Mandhachitara 2012), as evidenced by their statements during informant and close friend interviews. In reality, no one has a true positive or negative self-concept. Having a more positive self-concept, on the other hand, is preferable. As with the other traits mentioned previously, the informants in this study have a high level of self-confidence in the sense that they believe in themselves, even if they are aware that they have a few flaws that can be compensated for with positive attributes (Adam 2017; Lertwannawit and Mandhachitara 2012; da Silva Lima 2019).

#### 4.5 *Communication Experience*

Individuals interact with and interpret symbols, which is defined as a systemic process (Radford 2005). This demonstrates that communication is a systemic interaction between individuals who create and interpret meaning through the use of symbols (Sharonova, Trubnikova, and Sokolova 2018; Tang and Hew 2019). Individual communication experiences shape an individual's self-concept in ways that are dependent on the physical, psychological, social, and moral dimensions of the experience, which can be characterised by the meaning derived from the event. According to this definition, every purposeful experience is themed. Another characteristic of deliberate experience is its hyletic characteristics, which refer to the experiences we have (Moustakas 1994; Noviandari and Mursidi 2019). Additionally, it is stated that every experienced phenomenon is related to or reflects the mode of experiencing in which it occurs, and each experienced phenomenon has its own reference point for orienting oneself toward the experience (Albertazzi 2021; Fisher and Adams 1994; Moustakas 1994). That is, the phenomenon will be divided into distinct experiences. This statement demonstrates that each experience is distinct in its own way, including the textures and structures present.

For the informants, their families' or environment's acceptance and motivation of their metrosexual men behaviour helps them develop confidence in their own potential, and they are able to respect themselves by not considering themselves to be different from others simply because of their appearance or style of dress. This is significant because when perpetrators are confident that their family, partner, or environment will accept their condition, they feel less ashamed or inferior because they no longer feel unattractive as they did prior to becoming metrosexual men.

#### 4.5.1 Enjoyable Communication Experience

Every event one attends will be a one-of-a-kind experience. There is an attempt made to characterise the types of experiences that occurred in the past through the lens of classical phenomenology. Heidegger coined a term hermeneutic to refer to the process of interpreting various types of experiences by associating them with particular characteristics of the context in which they occur, such as the various forms of communication experiences examined in this study (Toivonen, Charalambous, and Suhonen 2018; Usher and Jackson 2019). In the context of this study, pleasant communication experiences are defined as communication events that informants have had that are related to their habits of placing an excessive amount of emphasis on their appearance as women, where the informants feel and understand the content, context, or impact of the communication process, and where informants can foster self-confidence and improve their self-esteem and self-image through this study.

#### 4.5.2 Unpleasant Communication Experience

Not every communication interaction is fruitful. Negative communication experiences may result in a decrease in self-confidence. This results in unpleasant feelings (embarrassed, sad, disappointed, angry, and even hurt), and the findings of this study indicate that informants are subjected to unpleasant treatment as metrosexual men. Discrimination (treatment), verbal or nonverbal abuse (mocking), and unfavourable attitudes (viewing metrosexual men as strange creatures) are all examples of negative communication experiences (Labrague et al. 2019; Wahlbeck, Kvist, and Landgren 2018). There are trends that result in numerous variations of communication experiences within the three interaction contexts that comprise the category of unpleasant communication experiences, including: 1) communication with family and environment is unpleasant, but communication with the opposite sex is pleasurable; 2) conversation experience is pleasant with family, but not with the environment or the opposite sex; and 3) unfavourable interactions with family members and the opposite sex.

#### 4.6 Ratings from Close People

The informants' closest persons and family members have a significant influence on their lives; these individuals understand the informants' daily activities and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Their close friends and family members exchange stories and experiences and spend time together, observing and comprehending the informants' every move. Many people judge and look down on a metrosexual man who, in their opinion, exhibits strange and unusual behaviour when compared to men in general, but, in contrast to the majority of other people, the informants' closest persons and family members have their own judgement because they are so influential in their lives (McKenzie et al. 2018; Nizamutdinova et al. 2019).

"How do you feel about the informant's status as a metrosexual man?" as an illustration. The first informant's closest friend claimed that he behaves normally because he has a friend who understands and does not make negative comments about his appearance. According to the second informant's closest person, there are good and bad things, and it is beneficial to have good fashion without being extravagant. The third informant's closest friend indicated that as the informant's friend, he is extremely encouraging because the informant previously lacked confidence, but has grown more confident and concerned about his appearance since becoming a metrosexual man. It makes no difference to the fourth informant's closest friend because it causes no harm to anyone else.



## 5. Conclusions

From a phenomenological standpoint, we found out that all informants have a healthy self-concept. They continue to believe, however, that society and their social milieu look down on them, as evidenced by derision from friends who claim they are too stylish. Additionally, the informants report having positive interactions with their family members, relatives, and friends. However, the experience of communicating with the community is unpleasant due to the community's hostility toward them. Moreover, individuals with a high level of self-confidence report having more pleasant experiences than those with a low level of self-confidence. Additionally, individuals who have a high level of self-confidence are better equipped to deal with negative experiences and channel them into self-development in order to grow as individuals. Each informant has a favourable opinion of themselves. In other words, they are individuals who exude confidence and are unafraid of social situations. On this basis, it can be asserted that communication experience can assist metrosexual men in developing a positive self-concept.

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