How to Realize the Ideal Life of LGBT: Based on Field Observation of Mainland China

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Abstract. In this paper, the ideal life patterns of Chinese lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) are investigated. The ideal life includes the views of educational, policy environments, and LGBT-related organizations. The method employed is a semi-structured interview with questions about coming out experience, victimization, support networks, and demands. By the principle of identifying problems and seeking solutions, the inconveniences of LGBT life lead them to find their ideal objective environment by reviewing experience. Key results indicate that plebification outweighs explicit stipulations of anti-discrimination for LGBT people in Mainland China, which addresses the entrenched stigma from a demand perspective. These findings highlight the needs and expectations of living conditions in daily life occasion for LGBT people. Findings also have implications for LGBT-specific laws and regulations regarding suggestions for sex education and plebification in workplaces or schools in Mainland China.

Keywords: LGBT; Ideal life; Stigma; Living situation.

1. Introduction

China has the world's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community [1]. LGBT members regularly report obstacles such as discrimination that affect their normal lives and their mental health [2, 3]. Although with the development of social media, more comments on LGBT communities have become positive and supportive [4], there is still no specific authority responsible for issues relating to it [5].

The discrimination and abuse of LGBT people reflect their historical ‘invisibility’ of them. In ancient China, there was a long history of the record of male homosexual stories [6]. It was believed that the trend of male sexuality flourished again in the Song Dynasty (A.D.906-A.D.1279). Men openly for prostitution, gathering in brothels to solicit business. In the reign of Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty (7 June 1082- 4 June 1135), the law had to be enacted to arrest and prosecute: ‘If a man is a prostitute, he must receive a fine of 50 coins for his work.’ Afterward, the economic reforms freed people from the Mao’s era (1949-1976), and particularly during the Cultural Revolution period (1966–1976), people believed that discussing any aspect of one's personal life, romantic relationship, or sex was bourgeois. Ultimately, it was seen as taboo. [7]. In contrast with sex, talking about sexual orientation was more forbidden [8].

In the early days of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), because the majority of urban Chinese spent their entire lives in the confined society of a socialist labor unit from the end of Mao's reign until the 1990s, during which time homosexual groups experienced discrimination and were linked to public disorder or demoralization. [9]. ‘Lousy’ was the most common adjective to demonstrate the state of LGBT rights in China [7]. From 1979 to 1997, anti-hooliganism law was enacted by the Chinese government. However, in 1984, Xue Wanquan was sentenced to three years in prison for hooliganism after confessing to having sex with a man. In 2006, his appeal was rejected by The Shanghai Intermediate People’s Court, with a notice saying that he had "sodomy" [6]. As a result, once homosexuality is associated with criminality, more people in China will stigmatize them as a criminal.

In 1981, homosexuality was a type of psycho-sexual disorder in the definition of a text published by related administration, and have indicated that mental illness was stigmatized and significantly greater negative stereotypes such as unpredictability [10] and pejorative attitudes [11]. That text was

then published as Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders (CCMD-1) in 1989. During which time there is heavy stigmatization and stereotypes towards lesbians. For instance, the Chinese government forbade lesbians, irrespective of their sexual behaviour from donating blood which was canceled in 2012 [3].

The modification corresponded with shifts in how the broader population views homosexuality because the Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders did add homosexuality as a psychiatric disability until it was upgraded again in 2001 (CCMD-3). Accordingly, after PRC's scientific characterization of homosexuality, international standards were eventually adopted [12].

2. Methodology

The semi-structured online face-to-face interview is guided by a systematic literature review, with four parts in general including their coming out experience, victimization, support networks, and views on the ideal environment for the LGBT community anonymously. Interviews commence with demographic questions (age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and level of education). Participants are then invited to share their narratives, from their own experiences to their perspectives on ideal life. The method of research adopts involved self-report methodologies and data are analyzed using descriptive, thematic, and narrative analyses. The participants are from different provinces of Mainland China with diverse levels of education.

By the principle of identifying problems and seeking solutions, ascertaining the source of current pressure, discrimination, and other problems can infer where the breakthrough point is inductive. With further exploration of the ideal life for LGBT in Mainland China, this section discusses the results of their prediction and willingness to demonstrate an ideal life pattern for this community. Generally, all participants express stress from discrimination and prejudice when they were in school and coming out of interference. According to their narration of reviewing previous living inconveniences, they comment on the legalization of same-sex marriage, LGBT-related sex education, LGBT partner counseling, and others can achieve their ideal life pattern.

3. Living Situation and Ideal Life Pattern

The LGBT community in China still confronts a challenging position in their attempt to achieve equality and an ideal lifestyle. In contrast, China has started the crucial phase of creating an all-around prosperous society (2016-2020 according to the thirteenth Five-Year Plan). The critical moment of the Chinese nation's great rejuvenation necessitates increasing the people's sense of happiness. As a minority group among the mainstream, LGBT people's happiness should also be enhanced [13]. In this situation, limiting association with political controls and media censorship of sex-related content, such as sex education, hamper the development of LGBT culture and expression, as well as public awareness and advocacy on LGBT issues [12]. Furthermore, in 2016, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television and other related agencies cracked down on homosexual material in the media and actively took down numerous websites and web series accused of “immoral content” [14]. The implementation of these regulations has reduced the ways in which people can understand LGBT people, leading some people to believe that it is not open to the public to talk about.

3.1 Coming Out Experience

All participants have come out to their close friends and classmates. By contrast, some of them are not willing to disclose their sexual orientation or gender orientation to their elder family members. This is mainly because they think those who are elder in the family may disapprove of LGBT especially homosexuality because of traditional dichotomy and limited consciousness of transgender. As participant 1 mentioned:

"I have not come out to my grandparents and other elderly in my family. Because my family has a substantial traditional concept, they generally will not accept my sexual orientation. I do not want to explain to them what a lesbian is."

In addition, participant 5 also referred to heterosexism and socialism to indicate the reason why they are afraid of coming out with their family member. They said that:

"My grandfather is a senior scholar who studies socialism. He will not understand transgender. All he could think of was the word 'lousy' for transsexualism."

3.2 Victimization

Victimization focused on three areas: school, workplace, and normal life. The experience of victimization made participants more likely to answer the fourth part of the question. However, because victimization would recall participants' memory of trauma, the interview was designed to introduce recent hot news about bullying towards homosexuality and ask participants' perspectives on the news like that. Subsequently, it was their own choice about whether they are willing to share minority stress and trauma experience in this interview as what had been quoted in the informed consent.

Apart from one participant who was unwilling to share victimization on themselves, other participants all experienced stigmatization including but not limited to isolation, verbal violence, cyberstalking:

"I have been sexually harassed. A man once sent me his genitals because I came out on social media and told all my followers that I'm proud of being a gay man." from participant 6.

In conclusion, the LGBT community in Mainland China is consistently experiencing discrimination and suffering from structural stigma as Parkin and Hua et al. Demonstrated.

3.3 Support Networks

In this part, the research focused on LGBT-related clubs and social activities such as public lectures. Support is focused on positive people and social forces around the LGBT community. This section will better guide participants to find better strategies and reasonable solutions to requirements in the next section

Only one participant joined an LGBT-related social organization at the university. Unfortunately, on July 6, 2021, the related department banned LGBT-related official accounts of a number of universities in Mainland China, including but not limited to Purple from Tsinghua University, Colors world from Peking University. Their activities were compelled to shut down.

3.4 Views on Ideal Environment for LGBT Community

From the previous review of the inconvenience and discrimination for the LGBT community, the ideal environment is intended to satisfy both external and internal demand.

3.4.1 External Demands

External demands are focusing on social minority security and relevant sex education.

On the one hand, social minority security. Article 33 of the Civil Code of the PRC, which came into force in January 2021, stipulates the "voluntary guardianship" system provides operational space for sexual minorities to designate non-marital partners as guardians according to their wishes. Similarly, this interview asked participants about other related laws and regulations towards LGBT people, which will be likely to promote reform of their life quality and release stigma. More than half of the participants agreed same-sex marriage should be allowed. They believe the majority of same-sex couples who are willing to have legal marriage will have a sense of security. Meanwhile, citizens in Mainland China may reduce their stereotypes of homosexuality, and the institution of marriage under non-traditional values will be no longer erroneously identified as a mistake. As participant 1 suggested:

"I think because of the law, it is at a higher level to tell people the things existence is reasonable, the minority has rights to enjoy equality and basic issues of security. Therefore, I think that will reduce some imprints."

In addition, even though only one participant prefers companies with anti-discrimination regulations that have been explicitly stipulated. Others tend to work in a company where colleagues do not blend private life into the workplace including sexual orientation and marriage etc.

On the other hand, relevant sex education. All participants suggested that LGBT-related sex education is necessary. However, they considered that type, of course, emphasizing liberal values that violate traditional values in contemporary China. Two of the participants conveyed that sex curriculum about proper sexual behavior and other linking to sex among males and females is essential if LGBT-related one is going to be generalized. As participant 5 said:

"So, our main goal is to let people accept the relationship between heterosexual relationship. And once the relationship between male and female is fully accepted, I think the LGBT education is very fast and very effective and very easy to the establishment of LGBT education can be rapidly popularized."

3.4.2 Internal Demands

Internal demands are focusing on internalization stress from family and LGBT-couple consultation.

On the one hand, internalization of stress from family. Being a member of LGBT community is still considered a kind of family shame from the previous review. The leading reason is the conflict between strong traditional values and liberal views about LGBT. Some participants considered hiding their sexual orientation with the elderly family member during their whole lifetime. Moreover, those who are obligated to marry and reproduce because of stronger traditional values also choose to hide their self-identities as LGBT. As participant 3 said:

"I was also afraid that if I told them, they would look at me differently, or they would see me as a different person than the person they knew because of my sexuality. And you still have to face the family, so I think there is still a certain risk."

On the other hand, LGBT-couple consultation. Consultation for not only LGBT individuals but also couples is considered a scare in Mainland China. By contrast, with the development of the Chinese LGBT population, the demand for that service is growing rapidly.

4. How to Realize the Ideal Life Pattern of LGBT People

The elderly is influenced by traditional Chinese attitudes and past social stigma of the LGBT community, which attribute to the fact that they are less likely to support or approve of a family member's coming out. Children, especially teenagers, do not generally receive formal sex education about LGBT from an authoritative organization. In addition, some of the regulations in mainland China are particularizing and stigmatizing LGBT people. Such rules reinforce negative stereotypes for citizens in Mainland China. Finally, social bargaining organizations related to the LGBT community are restricted, which prevents some LGBT people from finding a perception of affiliation and gaining inner spiritual power.

4.1 Educational Environment: Public Sex Education

According to the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors (2020 Revision), Article 40, schools and kindergartens should provide age-appropriate sex education for minors and improve their self-protection awareness and ability to prevent sexual assault and harassment. This is the first time China refer sex education in law. To be more specific, education about gender and sexual orientation should be carried out by schools, especially high schools because of sex development and stronger self-awareness, to avoid discrimination and sexual harassment among minors by their peers. It can also teach children about human diversity, and by the time they grow up, they are more likely to respect people from different social backgrounds.

In addition, sex education about LGBT for the whole Chinese citizens is necessary. The core curriculum can concentrate on the disinfestation and plebification of LGBT because CCMD-3 has removed homosexuality from psycho-sexual disorder. It is essential to notify and emphasize those kinds of new announcements or regulations in the pervasive sex education towards all Chinese citizens to release rooted stereotypes and stigmatization.

4.2 Policy Environment: Plebification of Chinese LGBT People

In the previous interview, participants express their feelings about their preferred companies to work: whether banned by explicit regulation about discrimination towards LGBT colleagues or not, their respondents showed that they did not want to be privileged. Once they are privileged, they will be separated and categorized as the disadvantaged who are requiring the hand of the majority.

Apart from that, China is a collectivist country. The meaning of collectivism itself advocates that individuals should obey the collective, and the collective interest is greater than the individual. When everyone in the collective is equally subordinate to the collective, this meaning of equality is scientific and fulfills the holistic view in mainland China. To impose plebification is not about obligating sexual minorities to give up the right they ought to enjoy. Instead, they are citizens who live in Mainland China and belong to the public as a whole group, in which case the consideration of whole people including minorities should be treated equally except for physical disability.

To sum up, LGBT people are not special in social ethics. They should not be discriminated against nor stigmatized, or even treated as a disadvantaged group by the people as a whole and given preferential treatment from within the environment.

4.3 Bargaining Organization: Social Organization and Self Organization

Social organizations should be established to undertake the rights of LGBT and organize related social activities to improve the living standard of LGBT. Meanwhile, the previous interview has conveyed that it is necessary to invest in more psychological clinics providing services including but not limited to LGBT-couple psychological counseling, resilience towards minority stress, etc.

Self-organizations with both large and small scales have experienced highly restricted by the Chinese government recently. Speaking of large-scale self-organizations, Shanghai Pride and Queer Film Festivals are typical examples. Due to the limitation of administration, they were forced to suspend and obligated to move to a more private location [15]. In recent years, however, the situation of LGBT organizations and activities saw a considerable improvement with more popularization of LGBT-related legal cases and innovative public advocacy through diverse media figure. It makes it more convenient to form an online LGBT organization to reduce the color-eyed and stigmatized comments or other kinds of cyberbullying. Undoubtedly, Media has a wide range of audiences with various social identities.

5. Conclusion

To summarize, the interview demonstrates the experience, especially victimization, resulting in inconvenience and other kinds of social problems for the LGBT community. By ascertaining the source of current demands, the participants gave their ideal life patterns for living in Mainland China. It is interesting to find that plebification is a great strategy for endeavoring to have no discrimination and equality of rights. The ideal pattern of LGBT people living in Mainland China reinforces creating indistinct boundaries among all citizens, which notes the essential of popularizing the disinfestation of the LGBT community through diverse forms of activities and sexual education towards all Chinese people. Additionally, bargaining organizations including both social and self-ones should be decriminalized and generalized to break the barriers between the LGBT community and others.

In evaluation, this research only used qualitative methods to determine the ideal life patterns for the Chinese LGBT group, which was not representative enough. In addition, it localized in a small sample of LGBT people, which had no mathematical or demographic significance. In the end, the

sample was not so random and covered diverse levels of education, applications, and ages. As a result, the conclusion cannot carry all social desirability. To improve the universality of the research, the sample of participants can be increased and cover all age range within the diverse level of education. To investigate the plebification and arrangement of sexual education, a questionnaire can be conducted. The tolerance of different modalities for sex education and the acceptability of laws and regulations towards the LGBT community such as same-sex marriage is expected to be included in further investigation.

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