



# PERSONAL EXPERIENCES THAT IMPACT ON THE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LGBTs

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## ABSTRACT

*The factors that impact on people's attitude on homosexuality were mostly explored from the external perspectives, the objective of the study is to understand people's attitude toward LGBT (Lesbian; Gay; Bisexual; Transgender) from the perspective of personal experiences. The background is firstly described then the related theories are reviewed, finally the conclusion is provided.*

**KEY WORDS:** Personal experiences, LGBT, Homosexuality

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The factors that impact on people's attitude on homosexuality were mostly explored from the external perspectives, however, it is the researchers' standpoint that it's worthy for us to understand the issue from angles of individual internal and past experiences.

Based on the Ecological System Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), individual is placed in the center of the system, the outer layer including family and school, which is called micro system; and the micro system is what relied and contact with social environment by individual development. Meanwhile, though exosystem is not the one that individual directly gets involved in, however, the social system does have great impacts on individual. Therefore, how the personal experience impacts on individual attitude toward LGBT (Lesbian; Gay; Bisexual; Transgender) can be explored from the perspectives of family, school, and public opinion. Based on the above, the objective of the study is to explore the personal experiences that impacts on the attitude toward LGBT. The key factors are discussed as follows:

## 2. THEORY

### 2.1 Family factor

Family is the first field that an individual contacts; it is also the very first group that have impacts on our attitude, value, or behavior. The initial information that one receives is from his/her closest parents. Therefore, parents' life style, moral concept, and value do deeply impact on kids. Family therefore

becomes the most important reference group on people's identification. Foucault (1976) argued that family is the field that regulates kid's gender concept. One can understand kid's sexual concept development through the interaction among family members. Scott and Peebles (1986) also reported that parents usually have different expectations on boys and girls. The stereo type image that parents presented in family would become an object to be imitated by kids. It is because kids learned the household differences from parents since they were young: girls imitate mother, while boys do an impression on father. Kids therefore duplicate gender roles from the previous generation (Gao, 1998).

On the other hand, the most concern of the LGBT's coming out is the response of their family, and all of the ones expressed that the most difficult part come out to their fathers; mothers could almost sense keenly and go further to find out son's LGBT tendency, but deal with the problem in low profile; brothers or sisters tend to adopt more opened and accepted standpoints to face the problem. In addition, reports also indicated that no matter what the LGBT type is, the higher the family's acceptance, the better the psychiatry healthy condition and the lower the psychological disturbance and suicide tendency of the homosexuality.

Based on the above, individuals usually learned about gender roles from their parents. Meanwhile, fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers would have different impacts on the issue. Moreover, one is LGBT or not, the higher the family's acceptance, the better the psychiatry/psychological the object's condition. Therefore, it is granted that family factor



would have impacts on individual's LGBT attitude, and we may go further to explore if there is significant difference among father, mother, sisters and brothers.

## 2.2 Social factor

School is regarded as the second home of kids, teachers are even significant others to kids. School education plays a critical role on forming students' concept toward gender including teacher's instruction way, the attitude to deal with students, and the style to face problems. Basow (1996) argued that teachers usually provide gender role with stereo type information through the supply, enforcement and demonstration of varied activities. Meanwhile, school teachers' concept about gender role was influenced by the perspectives of traditional society and take it for granted that male should be strong and female should be soft. Therefore, teachers would adopt different ways to face students of varied genders.

Moreover, based on the concept of social learning theory in gender development, when kids found that people were applause by the others for performing the behavior that matching gender role, they would play similar behavior. Kids would therefore present imitating or different behavior because of the reference group (Burr, 1998). Meanwhile, when kids perform the behavior that is different from the traditional gender, they would usually become the offended or sneezed object (Gender Equality Education Committee, 2006).

On the other side, in the recent decades, it is because the promotion of gender equal education, a lot of teachers on the education spots started to try to face the issue of LGBT, they designed the related curriculum and have discussion and dialogue in order to let students remove the defame and myth of LGBT and go further to respect multiple genders so that friendly campus could be built.

Based on the above, the development of gender role for individual would be impacted by teachers and peers. Especially the traditional social cultural image about gender had been deeply planted in people's mind. Therefore, the reproduction phenomenon of school education is certainly understood. However, in the recent decades, the entire social atmosphere is changing and some of the teachers have started to ponder over the issue about how to perform the related issue so that gender equality education could be thoroughly implemented.

## 2.3 Public opinion

In terms of stereotypes of gender role, Basow (1996) argued that media is the most popular channel. Except television, movie, magazine or the related magazines all hide stereotypes. In the society dominated by heterosexuality, the public have very limited understanding about homosexual. If people

received the stigma of homosexual constructed by the media or educational institution, they would usually hold negative opinion toward homosexual (Bih, 2003). Based on the analysis against news report in the 1970s and 1980s about homosexual in Taiwan, the reports about homosexual tend to be negative in the 70s (Wu, 1994; Wu, 1998); while it started to be positive in the 80s but the negative reports remain a substantial ratio (Lai, 2002). Researcher induced the media image of homosexual in the 70s to 90s and concluded that there are eight representative homosexual roles in the media. It is regretful that the description about homosexual in the past mostly tends to be negative, which would surely have certain impacts to the public perception (Wu, 1998).

Advancing with the times, under the efforts paid by the LGBT equality group, the image of LGBT has been tending to develop to the positive direction. Researcher classified the news reports about LGBT into three varied stages (Wang, 2018): The first one is limited resources and stereotype stage which covered the years from 2000 to 2005. During the times, the material collecting and reporting about LGBT was still unilateral and unfriendly; the second one is LGBT right striving and promotion stage, which included the years from 2006 to 2011. Legislators proposed Draft of Same-Sex Marriage Law and a movie entitled *Brokeback Mountain* awarded by the Oscar prize both drove the concern about the LGBT issue for the public and make the gender equality awareness gradually goes up; the third one is media and performing artist high attention stage, which roughly started from 2012 to 2016. The LGBT rights covered same-sex marriage, child adoption, and property inheritance, and the amount of the related reports is the highest among the three stages. It is exciting that the above evidence all proved that Taiwan society has jumped over the inherent mortar and started to accept the LGBTs, people would not reject to be friends with them only because their different sexual orientation or have impacts on their job-seeking rights. In addition, Taiwan has passed Same-Sex Marriage Law by the Legislative Yuan after third reading on 2019 May 17<sup>th</sup> and become the first country of admitting same-sex marriage is legal, which provides best evidence to prove that the society is mature enough and could be respectful to the LGBTs.

Based on the above, the public usually understand the LGBTs according to the media reports; therefore, the study explores the personal experiences that impact on the attitude the LGBTs.

## 3. METHOD

The study adopted quantitative method to conduct the investigation. The instrument, questionnaire, was firstly developed based on the above-stated theory



and then sent to two professionals for validity exam. Specifically, a total of 40 items were included in the questionnaire. After the development of the questionnaire, the researchers randomly sent 32 copies of which to the elementary school teacher to make sure if the instrument reliability and validity are acceptable.

A hundred percent of the pilot study questionnaires were collected. All of them were fully completed, which makes the effective response rate to be 100%. Then we analyzed the outcomes and utilized SPSS to conduct the questionnaire reliability and validity. The results indicated the following points: 1. The factor loading coefficients were between 0.5 ~ 0.8, which is quite acceptable and replies that the instrument validity is good; 2. The total Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was above 0.9, which reflects that the reliability is very good. Therefore, it is worthy to go further to explore the issue.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study has reviewed the related reports based on the phenomenon. The results of pilot study showed that the instrument reliability and validity were both good, which provides evidence that the issue is worthy to be deeply explored. Researchers in the future could go further to understand the inner factors to cause the phenomenon so the public could hold a brighter stand to face the situation. In addition, we do acknowledge that personal background does significantly impact on individual attitude toward homosexuality. However, under the advanced era of gender roles, the study argues that everyone should hold an open-minded perspective to face the situation. We have to not only respect the related concept but also embrace the friends with a healthy mind so that a real advanced and diversified society could be implemented.

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