

Family Relationship and Unreasonable Regulation: The Vulnerable Young LGBTQ+s in Conservative Countries in COVID-19

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Abstract: This article, based on literary review and social news and report analysis, aims to look for causes, consequences and solutions of the problem that LGBTQ+s suffer from greater human right invasion and health and security danger. Inharmonious family relationship and unreasonable regulations are found to be two significant contributors. Besides, mutual assistance community establishment, promotion of sexualorientational equality education, cooperation with the UN and introduction of certain policies are claimed to be valid on problem solving.

Keywords: LGBTQ+; COVID-19; Vulnerable; Solutions

Introduction

Since Covid-19 broke out in 2019, countries around the world have suffered from lockdown. People have been forced to stay at home and governments have been working on to avoid the spread of the virus. Sexual minorities, including lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, queers, questionings, intersexes, allies, asexuals and pansexuals, known as LGBTQ+, were claimed to suffering more negatively from the lockdown, especially in conservative countries. Conservative countries are defined as the countries where homosexual marriage has not been legalised, which are shown in Figure 1 (countries in yellow or different types of red). This essay is focused on the survival situation of young LGBTQ+s in conservative countries. The issue of vulnerability of LGBTQ+ will be analysed within the scope of inharmonious family relationship and unreasonable regulations. Also, solutions will also be discussed.

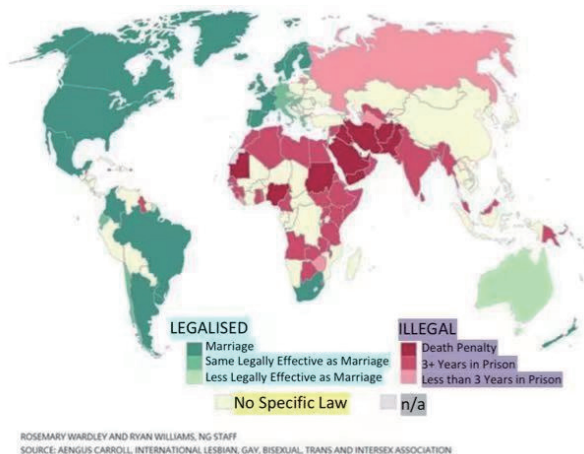


Figure 1 Map about Legislation of Homosexual Marriage before 2018^[1]

1. Inharmonious family relationships

1.1 Reason Analysis

According to former studies, there are three major reasons underlying the synergic effect. The first one is heteronormativity, which links to social cognition. People develop ideas by learning, which is conducted by observation and receiving reinforcement or punishment. Social history and culture make people learn to only accept heterosexual people by making them observe how homosexuals are being given positive punishment (like accusation) and negative punishment (like liberty), and even offering people who fight against homosexuals positive reinforcement (like higher social status). Hence, people tend to believe that heterosexuals are the orthodox sexual orientation. In contrast, LGBTQ+ will be considered as abnormal. The second reason is stereotype and implicit bias. This is because in history, homosexuals are discriminated due to religious or political reasons. These toxic thoughts now affect people's attitude towards LGBTQ+, thinking LGBTQ+s are always in the lower hierarchies, forming stereotypes and implicit bias (if people cannot sense the stereotype which they have by themselves). The third reason is homophobia and transphobia.^[2] Homophobia and transphobia makes people have negative impression of LGBTQ+s, like prejudice and aversion, which could also affect their value judgement and being afraid of them, thus being aggressive towards LGBTQ+s.

With the existence of these three factors, LGBTQ+s tend to pretend to be heterosexual in their family and try not to express their true selves, thus being pressured and facing several short term and long term psychological problems and disorders.

1.2 Short term effects^[3]

According to data collected by studies carried out in the US, there are alarming effects of inharmonious family relationship. Four very significant outcomes are depression, suicide, physical abuse suffering and illicit substance usage. Depression always shows with loneliness as the symptom. Loneliness is easier to be observed among LGBTQ+s as they are separated from "social and community support resources in schools" and "other affirming student organizations" where they expected to socialise with supportive people. Hence, it is unsurprised that the disorder incidence of depression among LGBTQ+ youths is 6 times higher than general population.

Physical abuse suffering is about suffering from violence. 44% of lesbians and 54% of bisexual women reports to experience certain types of physical harm, while the percentage is much lower among heterosexual females, which is 35%. Suicide may be a separate outcome, but also could be a result of depression or physical abuse. There are 40% of transgender youth committing suicide, which is three times more than heterosexual youths. To be wider, LGBT youth attempting suicide at three times higher than the rate of heterosexual youth and 8 times more than the general population. Illicit substance usage is always caused by great pressure. LGBTQ+ adolescents consume it about twice as much as heterosexual youngsters.

As mentioned above, these data are collected in the US, where people's attitudes towards LGBTQ+ are milder. So, it could be implied that the rate of these four indexes will be higher among LGBTQ+ living in conservative countries, where social environments for them are not as friendly as in the US.

1.3 Long term effects

Long term effects are defined as the impact that would influence their life after the lockdown and hard to be cured or dealt with. These effects always do with sexual identity. Sexual identity here links to sexual orientations. Vulnerable LGBTQ+, during the lock down, have to stay with their parents, who are always not opening to these minorities, considered as "abnormal" in conservative countries. British research R. Jaspal describes this dilemma as "feeling compelled to 'choose between' their sexual and family identities".^[4] Hence, the LGBTQ+ youths are tend not to disclosure their sexual and gender identities in order to avoid isolation from families and physical harm, thus being not able to be their authentic selves.

Moreover, LGBTQ+ includes a type of sexual orientation called "questioning", and some gays, lesbians, bisexuals and queers do not identify their sexual orientation until their 20s or older, so their self-identity might be harmed from inhibition of self expression during the lockdown. This effect of this kind of harm lasts very long, even to death.

2.Unreasonable regulations

2.1 HIV treatment detention

According to the UN reports, LGBTQ+ are one of the groups out of the general population who suffer HIV and AIDS more than the general population.^[5] UN officer suggests that the pandemic cause the collapse in transportation business, thus delaying the delivery of antiretroviral therapy, which is the target treatment for HIV. Numerical evidence is that 85% of HIV treatment has been blocked and 18% of them has experienced detention for too long time. UNAIDS, the special institute of the UN for HIV prevention, modelled the HIV treatment service interruptions with WHO, and found out that 500 000 additional deaths from AIDS-related illnesses was related to the detention. In some countries, such as Central Africa Republic, Chile, El Salvador, Ethiopia and Jamaica, some policy was not put into practice, which means the acts could not follow the policy.^[6] This is a violation to people's basic rights.

Moreover, the US researcher C. Kanno points that young LGBTQ+ could not get access to HIV safely when living with parents.^[7] Though his claim is about the US society, the situation in conservative countries may be worse. Both UN reports and Kanno's words suggests that governments do not provide sufficient HIV treatment in time to every patient, which they are obliged to do so. This is a reflection of unreasonable regulations.

2.2 Gender identity disrespect

Some regulations are made without considering sexual minorities. For example, in Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia, the authority announced that only males could get out on odd dates and only females could get out on even dates in order to decrease the amount of people on the street.^[8] This raised a problem that what time is proper for transgenders to go out as it forced transgenders to betray their true gender identity. Hence, such policy did not show take transgenders into consideration.

2.3 Lack of regulations and guidance for journalism

Journalism is one elementary way of spreading ideas, and people's ideas are always influenced by the attitudes of journalists. Consequently, governments should make clear and strict rules to prevent citizens from being misled. However, in conservative countries, governments often overlook LGBTQ+s's rights. For example, an incident of a gay man spreading the virus through gay night clubs in Itaewon, Seoul was reported by many Korean newspapers and websites. However, many of those reports emphasised the elements like "gay" or "homosexual".^[9] This harms LGBTQ+'s reputation, preventing them from telling truth about whether they had visited the bar to the government staff as they did not want others to imply their identity as LGBTQ+. This made medical workers impossible to provide medical help to them as they could not know whether they had caught the virus. Also, the regulation seemed to be inefficient, as the government was not able to know how the virus spread, so it couldn't stop it spreading to more people.

3.Solutions

3.1 Mutual assistant community

During the lock down, offline person gatherings is banned by government, so mutual assistant community do help to LGBTQ+ by organising online meetings. These meetings always include sections where professional psychologists give counselling to both LGBTQ+ and their families to deal with their mental stress and stressful relationship. Such meetings also provide LGBTQ+ youths with opportunities to express themselves to other LGBTQ+ youths, giving them chances to re-realise their identity and making effort to reducing the long term harm mentioned before. For example, one very famous organisation is Beijing LGBT Centre, a LGBT organisation in China. They have held lots of online gatherings which help LGBT people to deal with discrimination in schools and workplaces. This is beneficial to LGBTQ+s' future development and mental health.

3.2 Education on sexual orientation

Sexual orientation education is vital, as people form their thoughts through learning. Through education, the discriminating ideas could be prevented to appear in citizens' cognition and behaviours. One guideline of education is that all heterosexuals people should be included. This is because though the content of the education is about equality and sexual orientation identity, the equality is easily to be reached with the help with the majority, which is the heterosexuals. Two suggestions to help with the education programme are starting from young generations and starting from women. This first/former/latter one is because that young people are often more open-minded as their ideas and thoughts are not fixed, and they are less likely to be influence by stereotypes. The latter is because women will be more emotional, meaning that the sentimental LGBTQ+ experiences are more emotionally acceptable to them, suggesting by the HEXACO-60 Scales.^[10] And, a study carried out in China by South Daily points out that about 50% of the young Chinese people aged under 30 support to legalise homosexual marriage whilst less than 15% of senior citizens aged over 61 support so. And in terms of how well they accept homosexual love, the rate of women is 34%, which is 7% higher than men. Hence, to put the education programme into practice more quickly, the authority or unofficial organisations can start with youngsters and females.

3.3 Cooperating with the UN

According to United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, UN has achieved a lot in promoting sexual orientation equality. In the recent 30 years, the organisation has raised awareness of the urgency of the question for many countries. Its actions have led to the first adopted UN resolution on the issue, the first official UN report about the problem, and the first formal intergovernmental debate at the UN Human Rights Council. All these actions are aiming to maximise the LGBTQ+'s welfare. So, to solve the problem, governments could cooperate with UN.^[11]

3.4 A revise of the DADT policy

The DADT policy means "Don't ask; Don't tell.", which was made to restrict the LGBTQ+s to express themselves in the U.S. army during Clinton's ruling period.^[12] On the one hand, it harms LGBTQ+s by banning them expressing themselves. On the other hand, this policy tried not to differentiate LGBTQ+s from the general population, which was a protection as it kept their identities as privacy and minimise the possible for them to be treated differently. Hence, a better version might be: Don't ask others about their sexual orientation; Don't tell the third people about others'sexual orientation; Don't always distinguish LGBTQ+ from heterosexuals.

Conclusion

During Covid-19 lockdown, lockdown and some regulations do harm to vulnerable LGBTQ+s in some certain ways. Inharmonious family relationship during lockdown, HIV detention and some policies cause psychological and physical harms, while some other policies also reduce the effect of some epidemic prevention policies by annoying LGBTQ+s and making them not enthusiastic to cooperate with public healthcare departments. To deal with these problems, government could support the work of some mutual assistant communications, work hard on education on equality, participate in UN's plans, or release certain policies to eliminating discrimination.

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