Living a satisfied sexual identity: discovering wonders and unveiling secrets of selected Filipino LGB adults

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This study employed interpretative phenomenological analysis as an approach in investigating related aspects that constitutes sexual identity satisfaction among selected Filipino LGB adults. The research were participated by 13 self-identified Filipino LGB adults composed of 5 lesbians, 2 gay men, 4 bisexual males and 2 bisexual females through semi-structured interview. Findings revealed three major themes namely: self-affirmation and acceptance, positive support from family and peers and personal values and beliefs that constitutes to the sexual identity of the Filipino LGB adults.

Key words: LGB, adults, sexual identity, satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

In the editorial edition released by the Sexuality Research in Canada in 2013, they mentioned the importance of studying sexual identity in the different fields such as psychology, social work and women's studies for it has been an avenue in addressing developmental and relational aspects of sexuality. Satisfaction as a construct has been explained by McClelland (2011) to be a subjective experience wherein the person appraises one's feeling during an idiosyncratic experience. In addition, it is considered as a psychological variable that either being evaluated by a personal meaning or some-agreed upon definition (McClelland, 2010). On investigating sexual minorities sexual satisfaction, McClelland (2011) had openly expressed the lack of research using this group as a sample that leads her to also cite the study done by Schwartz and Young in 2009 that there were very few empirical studies that explore what constitutes the definition of satisfaction and how can one say if he or she is feeling satisfied or dissatisfied. Investigating the value of sexuality in Filipino gays, Garcia (2000) discussed that sexuality involves identity as one of its domains which is defined as what one individual does and not what one is. Meaning, it is the "I" factor each individual possess through repetitive performances of a certain discourse thereby producing a certain sense of uniqueness. Along with these findings, this paper will find out the different factors that constitutes to the sexual identity satisfaction among Filipino LGB group is expected.

Problem

Based on the literature review and findings revealed, this
study endeavors sought to answer the following research problems: (1) What are the factors that contribute to sexual identity satisfaction among Filipino LGB adults? (2) What is the developed definition for sexual identity satisfaction based on the findings?

METHOD

Dataset

To capture and fully represent all the sexual orientations, thirteen (13) self-identified LGB adults which resides at Metro Manila, Philippines participated in the study which is composed of five lesbians (38.46%), two gay men (15.38%), four bisexual males (30.77%) and two bisexual females (15.38%) with their age ranging from 25 to 53 years old (Mean= 32.85; SD =8.46) comprising 76.92% of young adults and 23.08% of middle adults.

The following has been the criteria for selection: lesbians (self-identified, attracted with females and had previous/current same-sex romantic and/or sexual relationship/s), gays (self-identified, attracted with males and had previous/current same-sex romantic and/or sexual relationship/s), bisexual males and females (self-identified, attracted to both male and female and had previous/current same or opposite sex romantic and/or sexual relationship/s).

Recruitment of participants was done through personal and online interviews. Content of questions were based from the qualifications set such as how long the participant has been an LGB and how many same and opposite sex relationships they had.

The total number of participants had followed the suggested number of participants as per analysis of interpretative phenomenological analysis by Lal, Suto & Ungar (2012) that sample size will range from 10 to 60 which is also consistent in the findings done by Starks and Trinidad (2007).

Research design

In order to capture the conceptual parallelism of the factors that contribute to the sexual identity satisfaction among lesbian, gay and bisexual, this study employed a qualitative design approach wherein it primarily focuses on paradigm and theoretical overviews that will guide researchers in identifying answers to a certain inquiry (Creswell et al., 2007).

As an approach, interpretative phenomenological analysis was employed, for Smith (2008) had described this type of approach in exploring personal experiences concerning a certain event. Furthermore, this method enables the researcher to understand the point of view of participants' personal and social world (Smith, 2008) which in this particular research endeavor, it will investigate how lesbian, gay and bisexual adults are being committed and synthesized with their chosen sexual identity.

Procedure

In order to gather pertinent data related to this analysis, semi-structured interview was done which were composed of five questions driven from the self-affirmation and identity functions model theory which states that an individual is committed to his identity if he maintained the process of self-integrity and a global sense of adequacy (Silverman, 2013). Moreover, the model aims that the individual wants to attain a well-established identity through sexuality (Grenemer et al., 2013).

Content analysis of questions were validated by seven (7) experts namely: four (4) registered and licensed guidance counselors, two (2) registered and licensed psychologists and one (1) registered and licensed professional teacher. The questions were presented in English as a medium for it is all of the participants had attained higher level/s of education.

Pilot run of questions has been done to selected five (5) sexual minority adult participants namely two (2) bisexual males and three (3) gays in order to check the consistency of comprehension of the questions and allow discernments of pressing concerns that can be derived from it. The five participants in the pilot run were different from the set of participants in the actual study. All of them had given an opportunity to answer the questions modes of English, Tagalog and Taglish (combination of English and Tagalog) for their comfort and convenience. As a result of the run, four of the participants used English while the other one had employed Taglish.

By employing this method, it allowed the researcher to collect data from the participants based on their experiences and allowing them to be comfortable in sharing them. Moreover, this assisted the researcher to follow a set of probes that enables the participants to openly express and describe their idiosyncratic definitions in a certain experience (McClelland, 2011; Conrad and Shoher, 2008). Before conducting the interview, participants had been given an informed consent form wherein it indicated the aims of the study, extent of information to be used and an assurance of anonymous-ness of their identity. In connection, participants were encouraged to use pseudo-names upon signing the form and agreed that this pseudo name will be the ones to appear on the final paper and data presentation.

Furthermore, personal discussions and briefing on the interview procedures were done towards all the participants such as the recording process, transcription and presentation of data acquired. On the conduct of interview, an approximate of twenty to thirty minutes has been allotted for each. Those who preferred the face-to-face interview, recording of responses were done by means of written transcription and tape recording. Consent to do such were secured to the participant.

Hence, those who preferred online methodology, the researcher conducted this through the use of Skype, Facebook Video Chatting and Yahoo Messenger. Documentations were made through copying the entire typescript in the chat box and video recording of the session. Again, consent to do such has been given by the participant for ethical and confidentiality purposes.

Analysis

As prescribed by the rules in analyzing the data driven from interpretative phenomenological analysis as also stated in the study of Smith (2008), major themes based on the significant responses has been derived through re-reading the transcription for around three (3) times and then annotate interesting events.

After which, emergent themes has been listed and draw connections from it. It also allowed the researcher to cluster together common fascinating events that leads to further analyze the responses and create superordinate concepts underlying each identified themes. Once all the individual themes were driven, group themes were then constructed in order to find convergence of experiences each individual resulting to a theoretical model.

RESULTS

Identified emerging themes

Three major categorical themes where driven based on the responses of all the participants upon this analysis. Due to the limitation of page requirements, only two to three responses were presented yet it highlighted the main themes derived from all the participants. In
connection, it must be taken consideration that the responses were collectively driven, meaning, the age and sexuality group of the participants were disregarded.

To observe the confidentiality of the participants, their respective code names were used and actual sample verbatim responses were presented which were as follows:

**Self-affirmation and acceptance**

Str8 Mind Gayish (Bisexual Male): “I love myself so much. I am proud of who I am. My chosen sexual orientation makes me feel good, contented and happy.”

Wolverine (Gay): “With my chosen sexual orientation, it allows me to respect myself more. It makes me see things positively and able to be confident all the time. Being happy with it, it makes me more to think that I chose the right decision of being like this. Despite all some negative events in my life, I learned to accept it fully and always ready to face different problems without any hesitations.”

With such statements derived, these findings are supported by Jaremka, Bunyan, Collins and Sherman (2011) that self-affirmation has is a way of reflecting one's personal important values and reminding oneself of who they are that leads to defend a certain aspect of one's individuality.

Furthermore, Beckstead (2012) had described self-acceptance as a trait that yields in developing a positive self-identity that may prevent one to experience societal rejection and neglect (Beckstead and Israel, 2007; Szymanski and Gupta, 2009).

**Positive support from family and peers**

Wildflower (Gay): “When my parents and entire family had accepted my sexual orientation, it had give me a full

Kim (Lesbian): “The truth will set us free. As I come out with my friends and family, it allowed me to express more my love to them and they in turn also do it towards me. The truth has given me more reasons to love and be loved.”

Anonymosa (Lesbian): “I always feel the love of my family and friends all the time. With that I am happy and contented with it and no one can ever take it away.”

Attesting the driven data, Benedicto (2008) upon investigating Manila gays, had expressed the need of these specialized populations for longing and a precarious sense of belongingness on the entire global community of not only the heterosexuals but also within the circle of homosexuals themselves.

Moreover, Beckstead (2012) had identified that social environmental variables such as peer relations and parental dynamics and personal variables like self-concept and self-acceptance influence choice of sexual identity which therefore attests that homosexuality is a psychological condition (NARTH, 1997).

**Personal values and beliefs**

Kevs (Bisexual Male): “With my uphold values, it gives me a lot of courage to show the real me.”

Str8 Mind Gayish (Bisexual Male): “With my values, it lets me become natural and realistic towards myself and others. It also allows me to better understand the complexity of being righteous as prescribed by others.”

Anonymosa (Lesbian): “The values I have in my life let me strengthened and am affirmed of who am I. As long as I am right and not hurting other people, it allows me to be happy and contented.

With the results driven, beliefs it has been truly believed to play a central role for individual's sense of self. With such, the individual enables himself to defend oneself in evoking with different threats that leads to a high level of positive self-concept (Correll et al., 2004 citing Boninger et al., 1995; Steele, 1988; Zuwerinck and Devine, 1996).

In addition, Corell et al. (2004) had explained that individuals derive their personal worth through their own beliefs and as they aligned it towards reality, the contradictory information they gain from the environment can endanger their self-worth.

**Collective analysis**

To have integration of all the individual analysis and as well as to develop a systematic pattern of a certain experience based on the interview results and related literature that supports it, illustrated below is the figure to synthesize the driven outcome: Integrating the identified themes that comprised the interview procedure, Figure 1 illustrates its interrelationship and describe a more specific nature the construct of sexual identity satisfaction as per reference to Creswell et al. (2007) that on this type of analysis, development of a figure or diagram is suggested in order to generate a model underlying in this core phenomenon. Through the model derived, it had showed the factors that contribute to the satisfaction of the LGB adults in terms of their preferred sexual identity. Furthermore, it can be inferred that internal and external factors can be linked towards attaining a sound sexual identity.

**DISCUSSION**

Similar to the objectives of the study done by Rosario et
al. (2008), this study had investigated the individual and social contexts that comprise the sexual identity development of lesbian, gay and bisexual adults that was then later on integrated in the development of a model that generated a nomenclature of sexual identity satisfaction.

It has been identified that besides social context factors such as positive relationships, there are also other elements that constitutes in developing identity integration among lesbian, gay and bisexuals yet investigations and researches must be done first in order to fully understand its dynamics (Rosario et al., 2008).

On identifying the role of self-affirmation and self-acceptance as a factor that contributes to sexual identity satisfaction, Corell et al. (2004) had implied that persons with strong self-affirmation enable them to adopt more with different life situations. This also suggests a notion that, the higher level of valuing, the higher level of self-affirming. Moreover, they also inferred that one’s individual attitudes enable them to have the sense of self-worth and strive for more to protect it.

In relating the findings of the function of support of family and peers, Wong and Tang (2003) had emphasized the value of social support to experience the feeling of satisfaction. They also suggested the significance of creating support groups exclusively for the sexual minorities in order to fully express their sexuality and had a stable group affiliation and identity.

Pertaining to personal values and beliefs as an element in promoting sexual identity satisfaction, Garcia (2000) applying the Filipino Psychology in perspective of dealing with sexuality explained the concept of kalooban or coreness of an individual which he inferred to further define the fundamental selfhood of an individual thereby renders external actions which now been observed as the panlabas or merely from without.

From the driven result, sexual identity satisfaction is

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**Figure 1.** Figure showing sexual identity satisfaction being a psychological construct.
now defined as a positive subjective state of an individual towards his chosen sexual orientation that comprises of integrated and synthesized contextual process coming from internal/personal factors (self-affirmation, personal values and beliefs, coping styles, psychological wellbeing) and external/environmental factors (perceived social competence, support from family and peers) leading to a feeling of happiness, contentment and pride. Despite this contribution to the LGB adults’ sexuality literature, this study had also some limitations such as all the participants had attained higher level of education. With such, it is recommended to investigate sexual minorities in the more areas particularly in the rural setting targeting participants with low or average educational attainment in order to better capture more information and set the questions to their own dialects that will aid them to comfortably express their insights. Another limitation is that the differences among age and sexuality groups were not addressed due to a low number of participants. This delves to have a more in-depth research that will focus either on only one sexuality group or age group to gather more pertinent results.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies are also recommended in order to explore the consistency of identity over time for this study had only investigated the present sexual identity disposition of the participants. Even identified with some deficiencies, yet this research has found to have a great advantage for it initiated the study of adult sexual minorities in the Philippines and at the same time it adds to the limited researches in Asia Pacific for most of the investigations were done in Western cultures. Moreover, it had developed a strong model of nomenclature of sexual identity satisfaction and has integrated the different stages comprising the sexual identity development for both homosexuals and bisexuals.

REFERENCES

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