

A STUDY OF TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEXUAL MINORITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

The aims of this study are to investigate the teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual minorities, to determine whether the teachers' knowledge and attitudes vary according to age, qualification, teaching service and teaching position, to examine whether the teachers' attitudes vary according to knowledge level and to investigate the relationship between teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual minority students. Both quantitative and qualitative studies were conducted. For quantitative study, a set of questionnaire was used: knowledge questions with true-false items and attitude questions with five-point likert scale. For qualitative study, open-ended questions and interview were used. By using proportional stratified sampling method, a total of 210 teachers, 86 are senior teachers and 124 are junior teachers from Dawei Township, Tanintharyi Region were selected for sample. Descriptive statistics, Item Percent Correct (IPC), Independent Samples *t* Test, one-way ANOVA, Post-hoc Tukey HSD test and Pearson product moment correlation were utilized to analyse the data. Results indicated that most of the teachers were at the satisfactory level of knowledge concerning sexual minorities. Overall teachers' knowledge varied depending on teachers' personal factors such as, age and qualification. Findings revealed that the teachers held moderately positive attitude in such areas as "attitude towards lesbian" and "in giving equal rights to sexual minorities". And, the teachers held moderately negative attitude in such areas as "attitude towards gay men" and "in being comfortable in the presence of sexual minorities". It was also found that there were significant differences in teachers' attitudes according to their age and knowledge level. The younger teachers had more positive attitude towards sexual minorities than the older teachers. There was a statistically significant association between teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual minorities ($r = .24, p < 0.01$). It can be said that the teachers who were more knowledgeable about sexual minorities tend to have more positive attitude towards sexual minorities.

Keywords: Sexual minority, teachers' attitudes

Introduction

All forms of discrimination and violence in schools are barriers in giving the quality education to children and young people and no country can achieve inclusive and equitable quality education if students are discriminated against or experience violence because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. The term sexual minority includes a variety of gender and sexual identities and expressions that differs from cultural norms. Usually, sexual minorities are comprised of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals (Report of People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), nd). Gini and Pozzoli (2009) contended that minority youths especially as sexual minority students are facing homophobic bullying, abusive names by fellow students, homophobic comment by teachers, physically and verbally threatened by peers. Eccles and Roeser (2011) pointed out that schools are a critical setting for many aspects of youth development, ranging from academic to social development. Accordingly, every educator's responsibility is to create a school environment where children can thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

In Myanmar, although there is no much empirical research that is conducted concerning homosexuality issues, it is obvious that many LGBT youths can be seen in the society. In educational setting, teachers were reported to frequently insult gay and lesbian students in front of

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the class and bullying from peers and teachers alike causes a great deal of sexual minority students to drop out of school early, given them a severe disadvantage (Colors Rainbow, 2015).

According to Morgan (2003), teachers' positive or negative attitude will reflect to their behaviour and classroom climate. Consequently, the teachers who have knowledge about homosexuality and with positive attitude towards homosexuality can create inclusive classroom climate for all students. The primary focus of this study will help to investigate teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual minority students for creating safe and non-discrimination classroom climate. Moreover, this study can assist in providing training programs, sensitization workshops on diversity, culturally awareness and sensitivity for teachers to create welcome and safe learning environment for all students regardless of different sexual orientation.

Aims of the study

The main aim of the study is to investigate the teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual minority students.

The specific aims of the study are to study the teachers' knowledge levels about sexual minorities, to study the variations of teachers' knowledge about sexual minorities according to their personal factors, to study the teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities, to study the variations of teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities according to their personal factors, to study the variations of teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities according to their knowledge levels and to study the relationship between teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual minorities.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the levels of teachers' knowledge about sexual minorities?
2. Are there any significant differences in teachers' knowledge about sexual minorities according to their personal factors?
3. What are the teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities?
4. Are there any significant differences in teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities according to their personal factors?
5. Are there any significant differences in teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities according to their knowledge levels?
6. Is there any relationship between teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual minorities?

Definitions of Key Terms

Sexual minority: A sexual minority is a group whose sexual identity, orientation or practices differ from the majority of the surrounding society (Sullivan, 2003). Usually, sexual minorities comprise of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals (Report of People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), nd).

Attitudes towards sexual minorities: Attitudes toward sexual minorities can be defined as the perception or thought towards sexual minorities. According to Lehman and Thornwall (2010), negative perceptions can lead to hate crimes directed towards gay men and lesbians, whereas positive perceptions can bring about social activism for this minority group.

Lesbian: A female who is attracted toward other females (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

Gay: One who is attracted to a person of the same sex. The word gay can refer to both males and females, but is commonly used to identify males (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

LGBT: A common abbreviation for an individual who is either gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

Operational Definition

Attitudes towards sexual minorities: Attitudes towards sexual minorities refers to the respondents' scores on the questionnaire and higher score means the respondents have more positive attitude towards sexual minorities.

Theoretical Framework

Essentialist Theories

Essentialist theories support that sexuality is the essence of an individual, basically means the biological and psychological inner state and structure which can either exist from the prenatal periods biologically or attained in very early years of life, shaping the sexual orientation of an individual. Furthermore according to the essentialist theory, one's sexuality is fixed and cannot change in time (Yukse, 2016). The causes of homosexuality were tried to be defined through many studies in the framework of essentialist theories: Meyer-Bahlburg (1979), hormonal arguments; Simon LeVey (1991), brain study; Dennis McFadden et al., (1998), auditory systems study; and Dean Hamer (1993), gene study.

Gay and Lesbian Identity Development Model (Cass Identity Model)

There are stage development theories that attempt to describe the process of coming out. In 1979, Vivienne Cass released her "Homosexual Identity Model" based on her empirical research of gays and lesbians in Australia. Cass is the most widely known and used. This model includes six stages that are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The stages are: stage 1: identity confusion, stage 2: identity comparison, stage 3: identity tolerance, stage 4: identity acceptance, stage 5: identity pride and stage 6: identity synthesis.

The Sexual Minority Stress Model

Meyer (2003) defined minority stress as a chronic level of stress caused by prejudice, discrimination, lack of social support, and other factors that the members of stigmatized minority groups are experiencing. Meyer (2003) described the minority stress model in terms of distal stressors and proximal stressors. The distal stressors are defined as objective stressors that are brought on from the outside and do not depend on the individual's subjective assessment. The proximal stressors are internal processes that appear under the influence of the individual's cognitive, emotional, and social experiences. Some of the proximal stressors relevant for the LGB individuals include the following: the expectation of rejection by other people; the concealment of their own identity; and internalized homonegativity.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

As a complement to the minority stress model, social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2000) to frame the discussion of sexual minority and gender-variant youths' experiences in the school and academic domain. Much of SCCT is grounded in Bandura's work on social learning theory and self-efficacy. SCCT proposes that individuals' personal attributes (e.g., sexual orientation) and their context (e.g., environmental conditions and events) influence their learning experiences. Contextual factors such as unwelcoming school climates and

victimization can exert a sizeable negative effect on the learning experiences of sexual minority and gender-variant youth. In turn, these learning experiences influence individuals' self-efficacy, interest, outcome expectations, and personal goals. (Lent et al., 2000).

General Psychological Mediating Process

Hatzenbuehler (2009) expanded on Meyer's minority stress theory by formulating the general psychological mediating process. The psychological mediation framework seeks to gain a better understanding of the processes that can explain the relation between stigma-related stressors and psychopathology among sexual minorities. Hatzenbuehler (2009) separated the three mental health disorders of depression, anxiety, and alcohol use disorder, which are the most common among sexual minorities, into internalizing and externalizing realms. According to Hatzenbuehler (2009), there are a number of different psychosocial processes that may impact the relationship between stigma-related stress and mental health morbidity, but hypothesized that coping and emotion regulation processes, social/interpersonal processes, and cognitive processes contain the "strongest empirical support as risk factors".

Methodology

In this study, quantitative and qualitative research methods were used. For quantitative study, a set of questionnaire was used and this questionnaire was developed based on related literature under the guidance of supervisor. There were three parts in the questionnaire: the first one is collecting personal information of participants. The second part is examining participants' knowledge by defining true-false items and measure by scoring 1-mark for one true item and 0-mark for one false item on 27-items questionnaire. And, the third part is examining participants' attitudes on a five-point Likert scale with twenty-eight items. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree", (2) "disagree", (3) "neutral" (4) "agree" and (5) "strongly agree". Reverse scoring was used for some items on the instrument and the scale ranging from (1) "strongly agree", (2) "agree", (3) neutral", (4) "disagree" and (5) "strongly disagree". The higher mean scores reflecting more positive attitudes towards sexual minorities. For qualitative study, open-ended questions and interview were used. By using proportional stratified sampling method, a total of 210 teachers, 86 are senior teachers and 124 are junior teachers from Dawei Township, Tanintharyi Region were selected for sample. Descriptive statistics, Item Percent Correct (IPC), Independent Samples *t* Test, one-way ANOVA, Post-hoc Tukey HSD test and Pearson product moment correlation were utilized to analyse the data.

Findings

The results of the study were presented in the following part.

Findings from Quantitative Study

Table 1 Numbers and Percentages of Teachers Showing Levels of Knowledge about Sexual Minority Students (N=210)

No.	Scoring Range	No. of Items that Correctly Answer	No. of Correct Teachers (%)	Remark
1.	≥75%	21 - 27	16 (7.61%)	Above Satisfactory Level
2.	50% - 74%	14 - 20	163 (77.47%)	Satisfactory Level
3.	<50%	0 - 13	31 (14.62%)	Below Satisfactory Level

Scoring Range: <50% (0-13) = Below Satisfactory Level
50% - 74% (14-20) = Satisfactory Level
≥75% (21-27) = Above Satisfactory Level

As shown in Table 5, participants who were the age of (31-40 years) group was significantly different from participants who were the age of (41-50 years) group in knowledge concerning sexual minority students. Thus, it can be said that the teachers who were the age of 31 to 40 years group was more knowledgeable with higher mean values than the age of 41-50 years group.

Table 6 Mean Values and Standard Deviations Showing Teachers' Knowledge about Sexual Minority Students Grouped by Qualification (N=210)

Variable	Qualification	N	Mean	SD
Overall Teachers' Knowledge	B.A./B.Sc./M.A./M.Sc.	115	16.48	2.79
	B.Ed./M.Ed.	95	17.26	2.52

To analyse and evaluate whether there was a significant difference in teachers' knowledge grouped by qualification, Independent Samples *t* Test was used.

Table 7 Independent Samples *t* Test Results Showing Teachers' Knowledge about Sexual Minority Students Grouped by Qualification

Variables	Qualification	N	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Teachers' Knowledge	B.A./B.Sc./M.A./M.Sc.	115	-2.095	208	.037*
	B.Ed./M.Ed.	95			

Note: * $p < .05$

Table 7 showed that the teachers who got B.A./B.Sc./M.A./M.Sc. degree were significantly different from the teachers who got B.Ed./M.Ed. degree in knowledge concerning sexual minorities ($p < .05$). So, it can be interpreted that the teachers who got B.Ed./M.Ed. holders were more knowledgeable with higher mean values than B.A./ B.Sc./M.A./M.Sc. holders concerning sexual minorities.

Table 8 Mean Values and Standard Deviations Showing Teachers' Attitudes towards Sexual Minority Students Grouped by Age (N=210)

No.	Variables	Age	N	Mean	SD
1.	Attitude towards Lesbian	≤30 years	22	3.57	.53
		31-40 years	61	3.23	.63
		41-50 years	60	3.08	.58
		≥ 51 years	67	3.10	.71
2.	Attitude towards Gay	≤30 years	22	2.79	.72
		31-40 years	61	2.66	.68
		41-50 years	60	2.58	.71
		≥ 51 years	67	2.60	.71
3.	Being comfortable in the presence of sexual minorities	≤30 years	22	3.02	.68
		31-40 years	61	2.87	.53
		41-50 years	60	2.76	.69
		≥ 51 years	67	2.76	.63
4.	Giving equal rights to sexual minorities	≤30 years	22	3.47	.43
		31-40 years	61	3.53	.50
		41-50 years	60	3.50	.58
		≥ 51 years	67	3.46	.51

Scoring Direction: 1.00-2.00 = negative attitude 2.01-3.00 = moderately negative attitude
3.01-4.00 = moderately positive attitude 4.01-5.00 = positive attitude

To analyse and evaluate whether there was a significant difference in teachers' attitudes grouped by age, one-way ANOVA was used.

Table 9 One Way ANOVA Results Showing Teachers' Attitudes towards Sexual Minority Students Grouped by Age

Variables		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Attitude towards Lesbian	Between Groups	4.52	3	1.51	3.73	.012*
	Within Groups	83.12	206	.40		
	Total	87.64	209			
Attitude towards Gay	Between Groups	.803	3	.268	.54	n.s
	Within Groups	101.67	206	.494		
	Total	102.47	209			
Being comfortable in the presence of sexual minorities	Between Groups	1.48	3	.49	1.27	n.s
	Within Groups	80.32	206	.39		
	Total	81.81	209			
Giving equal rights to sexual minorities	Between Groups	.14	3	.046	.169	n.s
	Within Groups	56.34	206	.273		
	Total	56.48	209			

Note: * $p < .05$, ns = not significant

According to the data presented in Table 9, significant difference was found in the area of attitude towards lesbian ($F(3,206) = 3.73, p < .05$) among age groups.

Table 10 Tukey HSD Results Showing Significantly Difference in Teachers' Attitudes Grouped by Age

Dependent Variables	Age of Participants (I)	Age of Participants (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	P
Attitude towards Lesbian	≤ 30 years	41-50 years	.49	.012*
	≤ 30 years	≥ 51 years	.47	.015*

Note: * $p < .05$

As shown in Table 10, participants who were the age of (≤ 30 years) group was significantly different from participants who were the age of (41-50) years group and the age of (≥ 51 years) group in relation with attitude towards lesbian women. It can be said that the teachers (≤ 30 years) group have more positive attitude with higher mean values towards lesbian than the teachers (41-50 years) group and the teachers (≥ 51 years) group.

Table 11 Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Attitudes towards Sexual Minority Students Relating to Knowledge (N=210)

No.	Variables	Knowledge Level	N	Mean	SD
1.	Attitude towards Lesbian	Group A (Below Satisfactory Level)	31	2.94	.69
		Group B (Satisfactory Level)	163	3.20	.61
		Group C (Above Satisfactory Level)	16	3.41	.65
2.	Attitude towards Gay	Group A (Below Satisfactory Level)	31	2.45	.79
		Group B (Satisfactory Level)	163	2.63	.68
		Group C (Above Satisfactory Level)	16	2.99	.67
3.	Being comfortable in the presence of sexual minorities	Group A (Below Satisfactory Level)	31	2.65	.71
		Group B (Satisfactory Level)	163	2.83	.60
		Group C (Above Satisfactory Level)	16	3.03	.73
4.	Giving equal rights to sexual minorities	Group A (Below Satisfactory Level)	31	3.56	.42
		Group B (Satisfactory Level)	163	3.46	.54
		Group C (Above Satisfactory Level)	16	3.65	.46

Scoring Direction: 1.00-2.00 = negative attitude 2.01-3.00 = moderately negative attitude
3.01-4.00 = moderately positive attitude 4.01-5.00 = positive attitude

To analyse and evaluate whether there was a significant difference in teachers' attitudes towards sexual minority students relating to knowledge, one-way ANOVA was used.

Table 12 One Way ANOVA Results Showing Teachers' Attitudes towards Sexual Minority Students relating to Knowledge

Variables		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Attitude towards Lesbian	Between Groups	2.77	2	1.38	3.37	.036*
	Within Groups	84.88	207	.41		
	Total	87.65	209			
Attitude towards Gay	Between Groups	3.07	2	1.53	3.19	.044*
	Within Groups	99.40	207	.48		
	Total	102.47	209			
Being comfortable in the presence of sexual minorities	Between Groups	1.57	2	.78	2.02	n.s
	Within Groups	80.24	207	.39		
	Total	81.81	209			
Giving equal rights to sexual minorities	Between Groups	.71	2	.35	1.31	n.s
	Within Groups	55.77	207	.27		
	Total	56.48	209			

* $p < .05$, ns = not significant

According to Table 12, there was significant difference in the area of attitude towards lesbian ($F(2,207) = 3.37, p < .05$) and in the area of attitude towards gay ($F(2,207) = 3.19, p < .05$) relating to knowledge.

Table 13 Tukey HSD Results Showing Significant Difference in Teachers' Attitudes towards Sexual Minority Students relating to Knowledge

Dependent Variables	Knowledge (I)	Knowledge (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	P
Attitude towards lesbian	Group A	Group C	-.47	.047*
Attitude towards Gay	Group A	Group C	-.54	.033*

Note: * $p < .05$

As shown in Table 13, Group A teachers were significantly different from Group C teachers in attitudes towards lesbians ($p < .05$). And there was also a significant difference between Group A teachers and Group C teachers in attitude towards gay ($p < .05$). It can be said that Group C teachers at above satisfactory level of knowledge have more positive attitudes with higher mean values towards lesbian and gay than Group A teachers at below satisfactory level of knowledge.

To investigate if there was a statistically significant association between teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual minorities, a correlation was computed. Table 14 shows Pearson correlation matrix result for the two variables.

Table 14 Pearson Correlation Matrix between Teachers' Knowledge and Attitudes towards Sexual Minority Students (N=210)

Variables	Knowledge	Attitude
Knowledge	1	.238**
Attitude	.238**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As shown in the Table 14, the direction of the correlation was positive, which means that the teachers who have more knowledgeable about sexual minorities tend to have more positive attitude towards sexual minorities students ($r = .24, p < 0.01$).

Findings from Qualitative Study

1. Responses to the Open-Ended Questions

When asking about *attending sensitization workshops and discussions or reading books, periodicals and journals in relating to sexual minority people and their attitudes*, some of the teachers ($n=80, 39\%$) responded that they had no chance to attend the sensitization workshops and didn't read the books concerning sexual minority people. ($n=90, 44\%$) of teachers responded that they read some books, journals and got information from social media. ($n=29, 14\%$) of the teachers attended courses about sexual minority people. Some of the teachers ($n=5, 3\%$) said that they didn't read books and journals and in relating to sexual minority people but they disliked LGBT people.

The participant teachers were asked about *their perception on sexual minority people*, some teachers ($n=35, 18\%$) responded LGBT were just human beings and it was normal. ($n=29, 15\%$) of the teachers said that they have some homosexual friends and these LGBT people were not mental disorders and should not discriminate them. ($n=36, 54\%$) of the teachers responded that sexual minorities broke down the natural laws and disliked them. Some of the teachers ($n=23, 16\%$) said that they felt bothered in dealing with sexual minorities because of their excessive behaviours.

When asking the participant teachers' opinions of *thinking that LGBT people should be equally treated as others*, some of the teachers ($n=6, 3\%$) said that LGBT people should not be equally treated as others because these people broke down the natural law. Most of the teachers ($n=192, 97\%$) replied that LGBT people should be equally treated as others and they should get equal rights.

The teachers were asked about *how they will create emotionally and physically safe environment for LGBT students*, most of the teachers ($n=108, 59\%$) responded that they would treat LGBT students without discrimination, prevent from bullying and harassment. The teachers ($n=37, 21\%$) said that they would gradually change LGBT students' clothing style and talk them to accept and live naturally. Some of the teachers ($n=32, 18\%$) said that they let LGBT students watch movies that can educate them and create collaborative work to involve all of the students.

2. Findings from Interview

Concerning *the teachers' knowledge about sexual minorities*, the teachers who had more positive attitude towards sexual minorities replied that they read some books, attended the course and knew from social media concerning homosexual people. Although some of the teachers didn't read books and journals, they assumed that a person become homosexual because of biological factors. The teachers who had less positive attitude towards sexual minority people responded that they didn't read books or journals. Some of the teachers who had less positive attitude said that they even read about homosexual people but they thought that homosexual people should live in line with the natural laws.

As regard with *the teachers' attitude towards sexual minorities*, most of the teachers who had more positive attitude viewed homosexual people as human beings and it was normal. The teachers who had less positive attitude towards sexual minorities felt bothered when they saw homosexual people and they thought that everyone should not break down the laws and principles.

As regard with *factors that contributed to teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities*, one of the teachers who had more positive attitude replied that she could understand the lives of

LGBT people because she has homosexual friends. The other two teachers who had more positive attitude replied that they became to accept and understand LGBT people' lives after they have attended the courses and have read books. The teachers who have less positive attitude towards sexual minorities said that they believed that everyone should obey the proper roles for men and women in society and of behaviour norms for men and women.

Summary of Research Findings

The main aim of this study is to investigate the teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual minority students and so, the findings of the quantitative and qualitative study will be shown in this section.

- As regard with levels of overall teachers' knowledge about sexual minorities, the participant teachers were found with different knowledge levels: the numbers of 16 (7.61%) teachers were at the above satisfactory level of knowledge, the numbers of 163 (77.47%) teachers were at the satisfactory level of knowledge and the numbers of 31 (14.62%) teachers were at the below satisfactory level of knowledge. Therefore, it can be interpreted that most of the teachers were at the satisfactory level of knowledge concerning sexual minorities.
- According to the result from the investigation into the participant teachers' knowledge level grouped by their age, the mean value of teachers who were the age of 31 to 40 years group was higher than other age groups. According to the ANOVA and Tukey HSD results, there was significant difference in teachers' knowledge between the age of (31-40 years) group and (41-50 years) group. So, it can be said that the teachers who were the age of 31 to 40 years group was more knowledgeable than the teachers who were the age of 41 to 50 years group.
- As the result of analysing the teachers' knowledge level concerning sexual minority students grouped by their qualification, the mean value of the teachers who were B.Ed./M.Ed. holders was higher than B.A./B.Sc./M.A./M.Sc. holders. According to the Independent Samples *t* Test result, there was significant difference in teachers' knowledge between these two groups and the teachers who got B.Ed./M.Ed. degree were more knowledgeable than the teachers who got B.A./B.Sc./M.A./M.Sc. degree concerning sexual minority students.
- As the result in investigating the teachers' knowledge level concerning sexual minority students grouped by their teaching service, no significant difference was found in teachers' knowledge among teaching service groups.
- Regarding with the result of teachers' knowledge level concerning sexual minority students grouped by their position, there was no significant difference in teachers' knowledge between groups.
- According to the results from the investigation of teachers' attitude towards sexual minorities, the mean values of teachers' attitude in lesbians, gay men, being comfortable in the presence of sexual minorities and giving equal rights to sexual minorities were 3.18, 2.63, 2.82 and 3.49 respectively. Moreover, the average mean value of teachers' attitudes towards sexual minority students was 3.00. So, it can be said that participant teachers have moderately negative attitude towards sexual minority students.
- As the result of analysing the teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities grouped by their age, younger teachers had more positive attitude with higher mean values than the older teachers. According to the ANOVA and Tukey HSD results, the age of ≤ 30 years group was significantly different from the age of 41-50 years group and the age of ≥ 51 years group in the area of attitude towards lesbian women. So, it can be concluded that the teachers who were

the age of ≤ 30 years group had more positive attitude towards lesbian than the teachers who were the age of 41-50 years group and ≥ 51 years group.

- There was no significant difference in teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities between their qualification groups.
- There was no significant difference in teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities among their teaching service groups.
- According to their teaching position, there was no significant difference in teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities between groups.
- As results from the investigation into the participant teachers' attitudes towards sexual minority students grouped by their knowledge levels, ANOVA and Tukey HSD results indicated that Group A teachers at below satisfactory level of knowledge was significantly different from Group C teachers at above satisfactory level of knowledge in such areas of the attitude towards lesbian and attitude towards gay. Thus, it can be interpreted that Group C teachers at above satisfactory level of knowledge have more positive attitude with higher mean values towards gay men and lesbians than Group A teachers at below satisfactory level of knowledge.
- As result from the investigation into the relationship between the participant teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual minority students, it was found that there was a positive relationship between these two variables at ($r = .238, p < 0.01$). It can be concluded that the teachers who have more knowledgeable about sexual minorities tend to have more positive attitude towards sexual minorities.
- As the qualitative study, the responds to the open –ended questions and interview results were summarized. According to the open-ended questions, some of the teachers responded that they had no chance to attend the sensitization workshops and didn't read books concerning sexual minority people. And most of the teachers responded that they read some books, journals and knew information from social media and attended courses about sexual minority people. Some teachers said that they have some homosexual friends and these LGBT people were not mental disorders and should not discriminate them. Some of them responded that sexual minorities broke down the natural laws and they felt bothered in dealing with sexual minorities. The teachers were asked about how they will create emotionally and physically safe environment for LGBT students, most of the teachers responded that they would treat LGBT students without discrimination, prevent from bullying and harassment. In interview results, it can be concluded that the teachers who had more positive attitude towards sexual minorities became to accept and understand LGBT people' lives after they had attended the courses and read books. Being friendly with LGBT people make them accept and understand LGBT people more. The teachers who have less positive attitude towards sexual minorities said that they believed that everyone should obey the proper roles for men and women in society and of behaviour norms for men and women.

Discussion

The research finding pointed out that ($n = 31, 15\%$) of the teachers were at the below satisfactory level of knowledge with regard to sexual minorities. Therefore, teachers had better prepare to be more inclusive by joining professional development programs on diversity, cultural awareness and sensitivity. The findings revealed that the younger teachers were more knowledgeable with higher mean values than the older teachers relating to sexual minority students. According to qualitative results, the older teachers have no chance to attend the sensitization workshops but most of the younger teachers were attended the sensitization workshop

that was arranged by Colors Rainbow in Dawei Township. A teacher may have at least one student who is gay or lesbian in the classroom and therefore, teachers should have knowledge concerning sexual minorities. Liaw et al., (2008) mentioned that sharing knowledge is one of the important goals of an organization where all individuals' experiences and knowledge can be transferred as an organizational asset and maintained for future learning and creating new knowledge. Accordingly, the principals should offer the opportunities to the teachers who attended the sensitization workshops regarding with sexual minorities to share knowledge and experiences to their colleagues.

When examining the teachers' knowledge according to their qualification, it can be seen that the teachers who got B.Ed./M.Ed. degree were more knowledgeable concerning sexual minorities with higher mean values than those of the teachers who got B.A./B.Sc./M.A./M.Sc. degree. Based on the results of interview with the teachers who got B.Ed./M.Ed. degree, it was also found that most of the teachers knew about homosexuality. Interesting about sexual diversity and reading journals and books concerning sexual minorities might have played role in this result. Hurtado et al., (2012) contended that teachers need to know more about students and understand the nature of students' interactions in the classroom in order to create inclusive educational environments.

According to the results from the investigation of teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities, the findings showed that the teachers had more negative attitude towards gay men than lesbian women align with findings from Kite and Whitley (1996); Steffens and Buchner (2003) examined that both heterosexual men and women show a more positive view of lesbians than gay men. According to the qualitative results, the teachers who had less positive attitude felt annoyed in dealing with gay men because of their excessive behaviours. Therefore, homosexual men had better try to promote their manners to be a worthy person to be understood and accepted more by majority groups.

The findings in examining the teachers' attitudes towards sexual minorities according to their personal factors pointed out that the younger teachers have more positive attitudes towards lesbian women than the older teachers which supported findings from Avery et al., (2007); Andersen and Fetner (2008); William and Grayson (2018). According to open-ended and interview results with the younger teachers, they knew about homosexuality by reading books and attending the training and courses than the older teachers and they have homosexual friends. It is in line with what Maddux (1988) examined the homophobic attitudes of pre-service teachers, and found that the teachers who had personally known a LGBT individual exhibited a lesser degree of homophobia than subjects who had not. Thus, knowing about homosexuality and having interpersonal contact with LGBT people were the facts that the younger teachers have more positive attitude towards homosexual people.

When examining for why some of the older teachers have more negative attitude towards homosexual people, based on the results of interview with them, they believed that everyone should fulfil their gender role that they biologically belong to. According to Cardenas et al., (2012) and Wellman and McCoy (2014), gender role belief lead to more negative attitudes towards homosexuals. Accordingly, teachers need to be aware that their LGBT related attitudes can influence their behaviour, and these attitudes may serve as a foundation for supportive actions regarding LGBT students, or may contribute to a hostile school climate for these youths.

Moreover, the findings showed that Group A teachers at below satisfactory level of knowledge was significantly different from Group C teachers at above satisfactory level of knowledge concerning sexual minorities in such areas of attitude towards lesbian and gay. It can be interpreted that the teachers who were more knowledgeable about sexual minorities have more positive attitude towards sexual minorities. This result was similar with what Detenber et al.,

(2013); Hou et al., (2006) asserted that higher level of knowledge regarding LGBT was positively associated to positive attitudes towards LGBT. According to open-ended and interview results, the teachers who had more positive attitude said that before knowing about homosexual people, they disliked LGBT people. When they knew about homosexual people, they became to understand and accept sexual minority people more.

The findings also indicated that there was a positive relationship between the teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual minority people at ($r = .238, p < 0.01$). It can be said that the teachers who were more knowledgeable concerning homosexual people tend to have more positive attitude towards homosexual people. Therefore, it was needed to arrange and integrate knowledge about LGBT and sexual orientation and gender identification and expression (SOGIE) as one of the topics in sensitization workshop for teachers to increase positive attitude towards sexual minority people. According to quantitative and qualitative findings, most of the senior and junior teachers in Dawei Township have adequate knowledge concerned with sexual minority people. However, some of them still not have knowledge about homosexuality and still hold negative attitude towards homosexual people. Thus, education and training are needed to address problematic attitude that may negatively affect sexual minority students.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following facts are recommended to improve the teachers' knowledge and positive attitudes towards sexual minority students.

- Teachers should prepare to be more inclusive by attending professional development programs on diversity, cultural awareness and sensitivity.
- Teachers should have a deeper understanding of gender and sexual diversity.
- Teachers need to realize the importance of consideration of cultural and family backgrounds exists for the students they teach.
- Teachers need to be aware of their attitudes towards sexual minorities that may serve as a foundation for supportive actions or may contribute to a hostile school climate for sexual minority students.
- The principals should offer the opportunities to the teachers who attended the sensitization workshops regarding with sexual minorities to share knowledge and experiences to their colleagues.
- It is a need to arrange pre-service teacher education programs that have incorporated diversity-related topics into the curricula.
- It is necessary to integrate knowledge about LGBT and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identification and Expression (SOGIE) as one of the topics in sensitization workshop to decrease bad impacts of discrimination caused by different situations of children with different sexual orientation.
- Non-government organization such as Colors Rainbow should arrange the trainings that can educate sexual minorities to have good manners for improving public understanding and acceptance toward LGBT people.

Needs for Further Research

This study tried to investigate the senior and junior teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual minority students in Dawei Township. Therefore, further studies should be conducted in other townships, states or regions. In addition to examining the teachers' attitudes

towards sexual minority students, future research should also be investigated the issues and challenges faced by sexual minority students in their schools. Future studies should also be conducted to explore the conditions which teachers' negative attitudes lead to negative behaviours towards sexual minority students.

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