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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LGBT COMMUNITY IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

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Abstract

The LGBTQ community in East Asia takes a long time to fight for their right and freedom. People had to live in fear of the discrimination of society. The law for same-sex marriage in November 2015 was a revolution to act and encourage people to come out. People celebrated the day not only for their community but also for a more friendly and tolerant country. Nowadays, the media is taking an important role in changing public opinion. Reality shows and game shows are being graced with the presence of people who are transsexual, gay, or lesbian, having the experience to express themselves and fight for LGBT. This paper shows how the LGBTQ community has grown in East Asian countries. Additionally, it also compares other region's growth to measure how much the South East Asian region has to go. Different countries have experienced different events that have catapulted this growth.

Keywords: *LGBTQ in South East Asia, Vietnam LGBTQ policies, LGBTQ acceptance, LGBTQ laws, South East Asia social work.*

1. Vietnam

South East Asia cultural norms are the reasons that make the Asian LGBT community different from other countries. Discriminations are huge issues that they have to face in their daily life. It happens not only in Vietnam but also Pakistan, Malaysia, Philippines. Miss Hien Nga, an LGBT expert on International Children Relief, visited the US through International Leadership Program and stated: "LGBT people in Vietnam might have a fear of coming out or gender expression because of the society surrounding them. They are usually afraid of not being accepted, isolated, and the rare of them are afraid of being killed". Most people in this community in Vietnam struggle with the Vietnamese tradition and religion because they always care about what others think about them. It is not because they do not feel confident about themselves. The Vietnamese lifestyle from generations is like that; moreover, public opinion makes them lose their voice. Getting pressure caused by their family is an issue that people were having homosexuality struggle with, especially children or teenagers. According to the An Ninh Thu Do news, it was reported on August 2, 2015, that children became homeless because of family pressure, and roughly 15-40% are LBGT. Almost 73% of them got sexual harassment, and 10% were raped.

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A true story is about a boy named L, who, in Quang Binh city, left his home to go to Ho Chi Minh City five years ago because his parents did not accept his coming out. L told his story that his dad violated him lots of times when he was little because he is homosexual, and his mother thought the “female soul possessed him.” His friends made jokes about him like a weird person. The pressure from people around L made him unable to stand, so he decided to leave his town. Other homeless children abused L and took his money. After that, he met a man who asked him to have sex and pay him money. In some areas, many Vietnamese who are not educated about homosexuality live in the countryside. The story about L presents the life of many children having pressure from family and school. It is one of the reasons that HIV/AIDS happens to them. The education of LGBT has not been promoted in many areas far from the city, such as mountainous places, the countryside, or small towns. It is one of the reasons that HIV/AIDS happens to them.

LGBTQ community in Vietnam takes a long time to fight for their right and freedom. People had to live in fear of the discrimination of society. The law for same-sex marriage on November 2015 was a revolution to act up and encourage to come out. People celebrated the day not only for their community but also for a more friendly and tolerant country. Nowadays, the media is taking an important role in changing public opinion. Many people have LGBT real shows, and game shows about exploding with the presence of people who are transsexual, gay, or lesbian having the experience to express themselves and fight for LGBT. They emotionally support people who are a struggle or have a fear of coming out. Besides, the shows are an opportunity for LGBT people to share their stories, experience, and problems of coming out. The purpose is to educate genders, health, and psychology and help society get helpful knowledge about gender identities. These shows' names also declare their purpose, such as “Just love,” “Come Out,” etc. The shows play a huge role in changing people's minds in a positive way to support different gender identities.

The program “The Start of PFLG Vietnam,” organized by the Information Connecting and Sharing (ICS) team, support the activities and information on human right affecting LGBT. The organization provides the websites “Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)” and “Understanding Your Children.” According to the president of PFLAG, located in Vietnam, the program takes the action of sexual orientation and the right to happiness. It draws society's attention to the reality that matters to LGBT people’s lives. Particularly, some TV show invites parents whose children are gay, lesbian, or transsexual to share their experience and the process of accepting their children’s coming out.

Moreover, it is also a survey of how people think and react to homosexuality and gay people. Media getting involved with several topics of homosexuality has impacted social opinions effectively. The Vietnamese LGBT movement and the media are becoming visible speedily to create a community of gender identities.

Viet LGBT community is changing their society to become more open and friendly. The development of the LGBT community is going along with the invoice of many projects and events that supports and sponsors children and people in Viet LGBT who need help. After 10 years since the ICS Center-Equal rights for LGBTQ people in Vietnam officially started to build a model of the center for the community in Ho Chi Minh City. It can be seen as a project that fully passionate ICS members

developed as an open and friendly community house with fair human rights values. In addition, Viet Pride 2016 event about the Human Right Campaign impressed the topic “Be Yourself. Love yourself” with the conference, short movies, and talk shows with PFLAG, which means Parents and Family of the LGBTQ Community, in August 2016 in over 35 towns and cities. More than 1,000 participants, including LGBT individuals, came out to show their support for this community in Vietnam. The information about same-sex marriage and LGBT health care was promoted to participants. It is the movement to promote sexual identities in the Vietnamese community.

Besides, Vietnamese LGBT people have proved that they can contribute to Vietnamese culture by going along with critical policies and bringing their voice to support the LGBT community to not only their country but also over the world. The first Miss International Queen was celebrated in Thailand in 2018 with the most popular transgender pageant with twenty-eight contestants worldwide. Miss Huong Giang from Vietnam was named Miss International Queen 2018. She brought pride to Vietnamese people with her country's culture and the civilization of LGBT in Vietnam. She is a twenty-seven-year-old singer, actor, and model with many talents present as Vietnamese transgender in particular and LGBT in general.

In Thailand, a talented Vietnamese girl decided to get her surgery done in 2011. In 2012, she participated in Vietnam Idol and reached the top 4. She got off to a very good start and received a lot of support from the community, which motivated her. She released her album in 2013 and achieved great success. The album is called “Thuy Ngan” (Mercury), which means the appearance may look fragile and weak, but the inside is intense and powerful, just like her personality. In 2014, she published her first autobiography about her views on sex, the transgender journey, and the difficulties she encountered on the road to success. Huong Giang helps a lot of poverty and children who need community help. She presents to LGBT both in the world and Vietnam society who have sweet hearts to help other people and encourages healthy homosexuality in the community by coming out and contributing to the society they live in. A lot of famous Vietnamese people come out and encourage gender expression. Many have brought their voices to reflect homophobia and fight for feminism.

Nowadays, a lot of passionate young people are contributing to the LGBT community. They come from many different places in the country; however, they have the same message: everyone should have their voice and decide how they want to be, particularly people in the LGBT community. Transgender, lesbians, and gays are the most common among Vietnamese people, so the media takes an important role in the development of gender identities and reflect homophobia positively. LGBT people do not hesitate to contribute to society and prove that LGBT rights should be acknowledged and treated with the fairness of human rights.

2. Singapore

Singapore currently has a division of thoughts related to LGBT. One end of the division is labeled as the pink dot. They advocate for LGBT rights, including their marital rights. On the other hand, there is the Pastor Lawrence Khongs movement. The movement is called the We Wear White Movement. The pink dot's movement is, but without proper knowledge of their rights, they end up being a movement directing their emotions toward their ideological opponents.

The Singapore Supreme Court's stance on the application of the 377a statute is mainly against homosexual relationships between adult males. The Supreme Court held that Section 377A of the

Singapore Criminal Code is a criminal relationship between men and does not violate Singapore's Articles 9 and 12. This article guarantees the right to life and individual liberty and ensures that everyone has equal protection before the law (Clarke, 2010). The applicant's lawyer argued that section 377A is an innate attribute of the blood type (Druzin, 2016), although the court ruled that "the term male must remain unchanged" with "no conclusion." The court also met different laws on homosexuality between men and women because gay men were "less common or considered to be the opposite of gay men." Finally, the court ruled that legal reform permits the transmission of same-sex sexuality as a question that Singapore raised to Parliament (Offord, 2013).

Human rights activists called for and promoted the repeal of article 377A, which was found to violate privacy, the right to life and personal liberty, and the last two were constitutionally protected. Previously, section 377A was discovered because it involved the arrest of private and mutually agreed sexual acts and "may" violate the protection of article 12. However, the court decided not to hear the case. Technical reasons in 2012, the court decided to go down.

In September 2018, after the Supreme Court abdicated the abolition of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, DJ Singaporeans filed a lawsuit admitting that Singapore's Section 377A "violated human dignity." Articles 377 and 377A are the same because they were implemented by the British Empire and caused hope in Singapore that discriminatory laws would also be broken. The Singapore High Court has not yet confirmed its date for reviewing Article 377A but has submitted it to the petitioner for his reasons on November 20. Diplomat Tommy Koh called on LGBT community members to challenge the law.

Along with the tumultuous history of LGBT rights in Singapore, we can reach a consensus that the main driving force behind change in both legislature and stance of governments is fueled by public perception and opinion (Foster, 1998). Drawing parallels to the abolishment of the slave trade and apartheid, the general shift towards a more open and understanding society is fundamentally supported by improved public understanding and perception of the groups in question. Especially in Singapore, a cultural hotspot with people from all parts of the world, it may seem difficult to change the stance on such a fundamental issue over the perception of LGBTs due to the varying religious and cultural stances of communities. Hence, there is an imperative need to improve the understanding of LGBT communities by the rest of the population so that, as a whole, we can shift towards being more understanding (Boidi, 2013) and made a concerted push for legislative change (Hocquenghem, 1993) that would make our society more fair and attribute equitable rights to LGBT members as well.

2.1.Role of Social Workers in LGBT Rights

Social workers play an integral role not only at the national level but also international level. Notably, they help individuals recognize their rights. They also collectively enable communities to claim their rights (Richen, 2014). Social workers may lobby for individual same-sex rights on their behalf. Social workers working towards LGBT community rights may advocate through prisoner reform or advocacy groups. Social workers may facilitate LGBT rights by enhancing social relations. Based on the social workers, training, the professionals may facilitate association between people individually or collectively. Social workers may facilitate LGBT rights through the elimination of social injustice. The professionals are committed to curbing social injustices such as oppression and

discrimination through coordinated efforts that comprise administration, advocacy, social education, political and social action, research, and evaluation (Chang & Dazols, 2015). Social workers in Singapore also play an important role in protecting abused or discriminated individuals, mainly by encouraging governments in countries against same-sex relationships to develop effective rules protecting marginalized individuals.

2.2. Specific Skills for LGBT advocates

The social work field has witnessed tremendous growth in the last few years. As a result, social workers have increased opportunities to enhance the lives of marginalized individuals. LGBT advocates require specific skills and actions to ensure that individuals are granted equal rights regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Firstly, social work advocates should develop effective communication skills. Notably, communication, communication comprises verbal and written correspondence with social work clients. For instance, social workers advocating for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights must effectively converse with elected officials to obtain required funding for public awareness programs and pass important LGBT policies. Effective communication makes social work advocates appear professional and clear and effectively address crises. Problem-solving is an important skill among social workers. One of the main objectives of social work advocates is to empower affected individuals. Social work professionals must help their clients work through challenges. Efficient problem-solving skills may enable social work advocates to find lasting solutions for marginalized individuals. Respect for diversity is also an important skill among social work advocates.

Often, social workers work with clients from diverse backgrounds (Adams et al., 2013). Although diversity may offer numerous challenges, it may also be a strength that social workers may utilize to address obstacles. Social work advocates with this skill may serve clients better and improve communities.

3. Comparison to other regions

Most Western nations have made great strides in affording this community of people the same civil rights as their heterosexual counterparts. For example, the United States of America has legalized gay marriage; this allows two people of the same sex to marry and live as a married couple, unlike in previous cases when these people were only allowed to enter into 'civil unions' which was meant only as a ritual and could not be claimed legally (Stein & Terkel 2014).

Another example of progress is the Gender Recognition Act that the U.K. passed in 2004; this allows for an individual that has undergone a sex change operation to legally claim their new gender and receive all new documentation (i.e., birth certificate, driver's license, etc.) (Gender Recognition Act 2004). Even with civilities in place, the LGBT community still constantly faces hardships in many countries. So the logic then follows that if life is so difficult for members of this community with legal rights, what must be the quality of life for those living in countries where their existence is considered sinful, offensive, and punishable by law?

3.1. United Arab Emirates

United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a prime example of a country that is oppressive and intolerant towards the LGBT community. The UAE has been consistently cited for human rights violations

against men, women, children, and foreigners (IFEX 2013). The country's laws and legislation are strongly based upon Sharia Law, which is defined as the laws belonging to the Islamic religion (Coulson 2014). These laws govern a wide variety of matters, including diet, prayer, and criminal behavior (Coulson 2014). Within the category of criminal behavior, LGBT people will find that they are condemned.

3.2.Laws & penal codes

Article 354 of the Federal Penal Code states, "Whoever commits rape on a female or sodomy with a male shall be punished by death" (UAE Laws 2012). It has generally been observed in recent years that LGBT people have not been sentenced to death but instead to jail time and possible deportation, depending on the status of the individual. Because the penal code is written in Arabic, there is some ambiguity about exactly what it means. Unfortunately, it leaves much to the discretion of the person translating the law. Below are some interpretations of the laws specific to two of the more popular emirates— Abu Dhabi and Dubai:

Article 80 of the Abu Dhabi Penal Code outlaws intercourse contrary to nature, and violations can lead to up to fourteen years in jail (UAE Laws 2012). This again leaves much to the discretion of the reader of this law as what is considered "natural," which may differ according to the country, religion, or culture the reader hails from.

Dubai, a popular tourist attraction, inevitably has an increasing number of tourists who are homosexual; regardless of the tourist's home country laws, such tourists will be punished if caught actively engaging in sexual activity. Article 177 of the Dubai Penal Code forbids consensual sodomy and is punishable with up to ten years in jail (UAE Laws 2012). To combat the influence of outside cultures and homosexuality, Dubai media frequently illustrates LGBT people as being of foreign origins and associates homosexuality with disease and crime (see Note below). As a direct result of the legal and social rejection of homosexuality, LGBT communities have little to no support. It is difficult and dangerous to attempt to have LGBT organizations and social activities.

3.3.Future of LGBT in UAE

On September 26, 2014, UAE was one of several nations that voted against the United Nations Human Rights Council resolution that prevented LGBT violence and discrimination (Human Rights Council 2014). This is a country with leaders that have spoken against homosexuality and are unwilling to change their stance on the matter. Islamic courts run parallel to civil and criminal courts in the UAE, meaning religion plays a significant role in how the country is run. In a country with numerous human rights violations against all manner of people, it is difficult to expect that LGBT people will be given any kind of serious consideration or rights (IFEX 2013). What a country is willing to do for its citizen speaks volumes to what the quality of life will be like in the future. The UAE has not reached a level of tolerance as many of the western nations have, so it logically follows that LGBT rights are not quite on the horizon just yet.

4. Effect on the Family Unit

Both families only seek the best for the child, whether it be educational or simply to grow up to become independent. Yet many believe that the way homosexuals parent raise their child can lead

them to a turmoil. An empirical study by the American Academy of Pediatrics found that, like straight men, gay men have a similar paternal role. Both want to provide an appropriate recreation, encourage self-independence, and deal with the general problems of being a parent (Perrin, 2002, p. 342). The same study found that gay fathers are stricter on disciplinary guidelines, place a greater emphasis on the advancement of cognitive skills, and are more involved in the child's activities (Perrin, 2002, p. 342). Lesbian mothers also have the same parenting styles and face difficulties as heterosexual mothers.

Two decades of research by the American Academy of Pediatrics have found that both types of mothers have congruent results when dealing with self-esteem, psychological adjustment, and attitudes toward child rearing and report a similar maternal interest (Perrin, 2002, p. 342). The research done by the Academy of Pediatrics has shown that there is more likeness in parenting style than there are differences. The parental age, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity are more likely to rear differences in parenting styles than sexual orientation (Montero, 2014, p. 323). Whether a gay or lesbian couple raises their child in a “different” way should not impede them not to take a child into their home since there are various ways to raise and teach children to ensure harmonious development.

Children of homosexual couples do not develop any more differently than children of “traditional” families. Many are worried that children of gays or lesbians are more likely to grow confused about their gender or sexual orientation. Studies have failed to show disparities between the gender identity of children in both traditional and nontraditional families. In an extensive study done by Green and his colleagues in the 1980s, they interviewed fifty offspring of divorced heterosexual mothers and lesbian mothers. They found no disparities in what they liked. Both children of homosexual and heterosexual parents reported liking the same toys, games, television characters, and television shows (Patterson, 2009, p. 30). Another study found no distinction in the gender role behavior of a child raised by a straight family and the other by a gay or lesbian one (Patterson, 2009, p. 30). Children reared by homosexual parents are not any more prone to be gay or lesbian. It is more likely that the offspring of a heterosexual couple experiments with someone of the same sex. The children of a heterosexual couple were reported to be slightly more likely to be with someone of their same-sex compared to those children of homosexual parents (Perrin, 2002, p. 342). Being gay or lesbian or having gender troubles is no longer considered a mental disorder by the American Psychological Association; therefore, this should not even be a reason for a child not to enter a home where they will be accepted by a doting couple who have no risk of raising a child in a disadvantage to that of a straight couple.

When it comes to social workers and helping out LGBT couples adopting, it should be treated as any other adoption case. Social workers help by providing adoptive parents and children with information about adoption options, information about financial and legal issues and resources, names of reputable adoption agencies and professionals, services for families who have children with special emotional, behavioral, medical, and educational needs, and search and reunion counseling, support, and technical assistance. Social workers are there to help couples get the best information they can. If a social worker doesn't feel comfortable helping out two dads or two moms, the social worker should have someone else help the couple instead. It's important to choose the social worker career wisely. If

a person has a personal issue with the duties of that certain field, they shouldn't put themselves in that situation.

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