

# Workplace Stigma and Discrimination against LGBTs in Cambodia

*Hep Sreyleak*





## **Consortium of Development Studies in Southeast Asia (CDSSEA)**

### **Publication Series**

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The Consortium of Development Studies in Southeast Asia has drawn on primary postgraduate research undertaken for theses from the master's programs of Asian Institute of Technology's Master of Science in Gender and Development Studies (MGDS), Chiang Mai University's Master of Arts in Social Science (Development Studies) (MASS); and the Chulalongkorn University Master of Arts in International Development Studies (MAIDS). Scholarships for the students of CDSSEA has been generously provided by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada. With a diversity of academic approaches (gender studies, political science, social sciences), the individual works of this collection have in common a focus on the increasing interconnection and regionalization of the five mainland Southeast Asian countries (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam), and examine these exchanges and encounters within the context of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

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# Workplace Stigma and Discrimination against LGBTs in Cambodia

Hep Sreyleak



The Regional Center for Social Science  
and Sustainable Development  
**Chiang Mai University**

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## Series Foreword

The Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD) at Chiang Mai University has extended its publication program to include Master's dissertations from The Consortium of Development Studies in Southeast Asia (CDSSEA). The CDSSEA series covers mainland Southeast Asia: Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, and regionalization, development encounters and exchanges within the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

The CDSSEA program brings together resources and expertise from three of Thailand's leading institutions offering Master's degrees in development studies: Chiang Mai University's Master of Arts in Social Science (Development Studies) (MASS); Chulalongkorn University's Master of Arts in International Development Studies (MAIDS); and the Asian Institute of Technology's Master of Science in Gender and Development Studies (MGDS). Although the Consortium's program focuses on the relationship between development studies and social sciences, each of the programs has a different emphasis. The Chiang Mai degree focuses on social sciences and anthropological perspectives, with research interests in environmental and resource management, food security and local livelihoods, labour migration and trans-border issues, ethnicity and development, health, tourism, and agrarian transitions. Chulalongkorn's program concentrates on the political dimension of development, including democratization, human rights, conflict resolution, international and civil society development organizations, community development and globalization. The Asian Institute of Technology focuses on the relationships between gender and development—including women's rights, civil society, and gender dimensions of urbanization and industrialization.

The CDSSEA program has a practical dimension, building leadership capacity in mainland Southeast Asia's regional development, bringing together postgraduate students, encouraging debate, and promoting the rethinking of development alternatives in such areas as social equality, justice and participation, environmental and economic sustainability, and community development. In this regard, a major objective is to develop the knowledge and skills of development practitioners and to enhance the quality and effectiveness of policy-making and its implementation in the region.

The publications in this series—selected from the CDSSEA Master's program—are designed to express this diverse range of interests in development studies and regionalization, and to emphasize the relationships between empirical and theoretical research, policy-making and practice.

*Victor T. King*, Senior Editorial Adviser,  
Consortium of Development Studies in Southeast Asia series



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# Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CBO	Community Base Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICCPR	International of Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILGA	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
NEA	National Employment Agency
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NSPP	National Social Protection Policy
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
TM	Trans-man
TW	Trans-woman
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

## Glossary of Terms

<i>ah</i>	an informal prefix used before male names to denote a rude expression towards male homosexuals
<i>ah-daeng</i>	youngster
<i>ah-kteuy</i>	male homosexual
<i>kru pédé</i>	gay teacher
<i>kteuy</i>	a human being with half-male and half-female sex organs.
<i>mi</i>	an informal prefix used before female names to denote a rude expression towards female homosexuals
<i>mi-kteuy</i>	female homosexual
<i>nak kru</i>	female teacher

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*Hep Sreyleak*



## Chapter 1

# Introduction

This chapter presents the introduction of the research. There are seven sections including background information, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, rationale, conceptual framework and the final section is the scope and limitation of the research.

### Background Information

Homosexual people have existed in every society throughout history. Homosexual notions were present in Cambodia since before the Angkor period of history and up until the current day, this was proved by the description in social history and the existence of the written and spoken word *kteuy* in human society (Zhou, 1296)<sup>1</sup>. This perspective has also been argued that it was not an influence of globalization, in which people adapted and were nurtured to become gay people as this was also studied even amongst the minority ethnic tribes in the Eastern side of the country, there were several homosexuals. In the Buddhist Institute dictionary published by Chuon (1966), *kteuy* is a Khmer word that is defined as a human being with sex organs, half-male, half-female. Unfortunately, the dictionary does not elaborate further.

The word *kteuy* is commonly understood in many different ways depending on the social context and background. In the past, a *kteuy* was a sexually deficient individual. It referred to a man who appeared normal on the

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1 Gender variant persons since ancient times (1296); testimony from 1950s and Khmer Rouge era

outside, but whose sex organ was very small, implying his inability to perform sexually. In this case, a *kteuy* man is possessed by a female soul, while a *kteuy* woman has a male soul. Gays are known as men who behave softly and effeminately, which differs from a tough and male manner. In the present, the term defines wider characteristics of homosexual people of various types of gender, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) as it is more commonly known. Gender is socially constructed, which changes along with time and technology, thus the word transgender was given different definitions. Transgender refers to a broad term used to encompass all manifestations of crossing gender barriers. It includes all those who cross-dress or otherwise transgress gender norms. The Minnesota Human Rights Act included transgender people and defines them as “having or being perceived as having a self-image or identity not traditionally associated with one’s biological maleness or femaleness” (Davis, 2006).

There was a study on young people’s sexuality and behavior patterns in Cambodia, which was first done by Tarr & Aggleton, (1999) with the support of the former World Health Organization (WHO) Global Program on Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) (Ogden, 1994). His findings showed that out of 146 interviewed young men, over 20 admitted to having penetrative sex with another man. Some of those partners were described as *kteuy* or transgender women. There was no information of this between females. However, the notion of homosexual relationships or “third-sex” in Cambodian society was not a new phase, since modern Cambodian history of lesbians and gays goes back several decades. There was a case of a lesbian couple that lived together for more than three decades, stretching back to beyond the Khmer Rouge regime. After the regime ended, the commune chief refused to register them as spouses, but agreed to register them as siblings on official documents, and thus giving them the right to live together (Feder, 2013).

Recently, there has been a profound interest on human rights’ issues seen as an influential catalyst in improving human livelihood to gather everyone wholly involved in economic participation without being excluded on the bases of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). The absence of LGBT rights’ could possibly be because of the heterosexism of societal attitudes or issues which view them as minor, as a result human rights have been violated due to a person’s SOGI in a strongly held heterosexual notion. LGBTs suffered severe

human rights violations driven by stigma and discrimination in terms of being discriminated in a labor market, along with educational institutions, accessing public services, also being punished and cut off from their own family.

In some countries, LGBTs are victims of systematic discrimination which results in murder, punishment, rape and physical abuse. About 76 countries have a law that fully authorizes the persecution and criminalization of LGBTs, which leads them to be more vulnerable and at high risk. The systematic stigma and discrimination was explained by the presence of the large proportion of trans-women (TW) sex workers who contracted HIV/AIDS with epidemics at 2.6% in 2005 (Parker & Aggleton, 2003). Consequently, this was the result of being in hardship and of a low-skill level due to dropping out of school at a young age. Stigmatization from decent employment was all relatively caused by stigma and discrimination of LGBT people.

In 2011, the Human Rights Council had highlighted concerns of “deeply worrisome” violence and discrimination against individuals on the basis of their SOGI. Fundamentally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states in Article 1, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (United Nations General Assembly, 1948), providing the principle of international human rights law, equality and non-discrimination, enhancing LGBT’ rights as equal to other human beings.

Despite the disgusting behavior over LGBT people which often occurred, deeply rooted by social culture as well as norms (Stafford & Scott, 1986, p. 80), the situation was made even worse by a lack of a specific legal framework and lawful protection for discrimination within the work place against LGBTs. LGBT people were perceived as different and mistreated, becoming victims of wage inequity or disproportionate working conditions based on their SOGI. LGBTs suffered violations in the employment sphere by being discriminated by employers, work place internal policies and loopholes in the law and legal principles. Stigmatization processes exist within power inequalities, and stigma also creates them; the effect for those who are stigmatized is a contraction in economic, social, and political life-chances (Link & Phelan, 2001).

Having equality in employment and being free from discrimination regarding their sexual orientation and preferences was considered as factors

to live a life with equality and social justice. These would also have a better output response to the issue in terms of law enforcement and legal implementation which signify social development of a minority group that was treated without exclusion and enjoyed rights as equals.

## **Problem Statement**

Stigma and discrimination are seen as universal experiences for homosexual people. In most social institutions, the heterosexual majority considers homosexuals as a minority group in society and inferior in employment terms. Lesbians are often stereotyped as truck drivers, athletes, mechanics, and other male-dominated occupations while gay men are often stereotyped as hairdressers, florists, dancers, actors, secretaries, nurses, flight attendants, and other female-dominated occupations (Pope et al., 2004).

Gender-based violence can vary through patterns and the nature of employment. This can be seen amongst LGBTs, trans-men (TM) and TW groups who are faced with dress pressure, which is a common interpersonal discrimination within the public sector, more when compared to other sectors. Gender-based violence toward them can be socially accepted, taking gender conforming as a major homophobic consideration. This barrier could possibly be the root cause for other various forms of stigma and discrimination against them on the basis of their identity, which includes work benefits and opportunity.

There is a belief that heterosexuality provides superior opportunities more than homosexuality, in three major aspects, consisting of working conditions; treatment; and benefits. The negativity against LGBTs is usually centered on their gender, which creates barriers and reluctance in considering them for jobs connected to gender appropriateness and leadership influence. This minority group is discriminated at various stages of employment, at the beginning in the recruitment stage up to performing the job. It can be frequently heard that they are refused jobs or rejected for non-conforming or offered jobs with the condition to maintain the company reputation and values.

Bierema (2002) confirmed that LGBT people continued to face challenges in career development; they experience hostility, harassment, and have less access to promotional and developmental programs than heterosexuals. This could be seen in the recruitment process: most job announcements



disregard SOGI issues, in which some jobs required only men or women, so once LGBTs disclose their identity it makes them unqualified. At the interview stage, human resource officers may turn down or even cancel the shortlisted candidate for the interview if they saw cross-dressing as the LGBT's individual preference.

Private sectors may be more flexible in terms of dress style. Some allowed enough freedom for identity expression amongst LGBT minorities, despite their visibility which may have caused negative judgment and lowered their capability to work considering the high expectations of leadership traits and qualities. In this sense, the private sector is one environment that set a blurred line between interpersonal and formal types of discrimination. Similarly, within Civil Society Organization (CSO) settings, LGBTs may be accepted for a special quality that attracts the employer better than their gender problem. This concerns the quality of their work and another aspect could be the nature of the particular organization that focuses on their support for this marginalized group. Both formal and informal stigma and discrimination occurs across all sectors of employment, which means the issue had no relation with sectors, despite of social influence of an individuals' perspective about genders.

Significantly, once they got recruited for the job, stigma and discrimination from co-workers or supervisors still existed. Besides pressuring LGBTs emotionally through harassment, mistreatment, disrespect, poor working conditions, and lack of benefits, etc., stigma and discrimination based on their SOGI becomes the barrier for career advancement. Heterosexism<sup>2</sup> and homophobia<sup>3</sup> weigh down on the performance of LGBT people, whose sexual minority status puts a limit on them reaching their full potential and can limit an organization's performance.

Stigma and discrimination exacerbated poverty and vulnerability. As asserted by the National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) 2011-2015, men who had sex with men (MSM) and transgender women were an especially vulnerable group who were subjected to various forms of exclusion. Stigma and discrimination against LGBTs existed in many aspects of the society

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2 Heterosexism: an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship or community base on Herek (1992).

3 Homophobia: Fear and contempt of homosexuals, usually based on negative stereotypes of homosexuality.

including within the domestic sphere, educational institution, health institution, employment sphere and even from authorities. According to Salas (2012), the affects in employment was signified by unequal treatment and working conditions against LGBTs e.g., an employer could ignore LGBTs and reject training opportunities or promotions, alternatively give a promotion with certain conditions, i.e., the condition requires them to dress differently from their preferences.

These relative issues consequently translated into emotional deterioration both in short and long term perspectives. Within the short term, victims of discrimination may ordinarily be faced with rumors, offensive jokes, mistreated, disliked and other negative behaviors concerned with their gender. This produces an uncomfortable state for work relationships, which included social withdrawal, stress, depression and isolation in the work sphere. These impacts were commonly found in LGBTs, mainly in the types who were seen as visibly different from either a man or woman, or a failed to be naturally identified as a man or a woman by appearance and dress. Owing to this gender discrimination, the problem concerned with their current employment position and future professional opportunity may be highly stressed on their gender, rather than their ability since the company may take the ideal gender conforming person as criteria to be promoted, specifically at a professional level.

As aforementioned, LGBTs faced many struggles in the employment process due to their SOGI, therefore when they were offered jobs, maintaining their position was prioritized and this motivated life necessities, which required them to have strong personal coping strategies. The forms of stigma and discrimination that varied in severity produced both positive and negative responses from those who were victimized. For the positive side, stigma and discrimination at work motivated them to build their values and prove their usefulness amongst heterosexuals. However, for the negative side, stigma and discrimination only worsened their emotional condition and work performance. This was relatively characterized by an individual's self-motivation or intervention in keeping their stance in the workplace to de-stress and reduce pressure against stigma and discrimination, this could be a tangible and an intangible forms, e.g., going to entertainment places, playing sports, talking with friends, using drugs or commit suicide could be tangible strategies, whereas ignorance, crying or option-less agreement with others could be an intangible way.

## Research Questions

- What are the forms of stigma and discrimination LGBT individuals face in an employment context?
- How does stigma and discrimination impact on LGBT individuals in the context of employment and their life?
- What personal coping strategies against stigma and discrimination have LGBT individuals developed?

## Research Objectives

- A. To document forms of stigma and discrimination made against LGBT individuals within employment.
- B. To assess impacts of stigma and discrimination on LGBT individuals in the context of employment and on their lives.
- C. To identify the coping strategies that LGBT individuals have developed against stigma and discrimination at the workplace.

## Rationale

Stigma and discrimination for minority groups such as LGBT is a common issue in most societies. Discrimination against sex, race, religion, ethnicity, diseases, etc., is a generic issue that exists globally in many aspects of society and where the limitations usually focus on discrimination in the community and family.

There was research conducted by Davis & Miles (2012), which described MSM sex workers, who for the majority were young men, provided their services in the sex-industry under the cover of a massage business. The study was based on 50 male respondents in structured interviews in massage zones in both remote areas and central downtown. It explored the MSM sex worker's vulnerabilities including sexual exploitation, health problems, financial insecurity, violence, faith and future plans.

Salas & Sorn (2013), conducted a study on social exclusion amongst LGBTs in the community and family context based on a survey approach with 149 self-identifying LGBTs in some provinces of Cambodia. The study also

explored the impacts on their lives which were created by stigma and discrimination, and excluded them from the family safety net. It mainly highlighted issues concerned with their identity disclosure, which led to critical shock and negative reactions from their own family and community. The implications resulted in poverty and vulnerability due to gender-based violence.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) & United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2014) published an international report that provided an overview of LGBT rights in Cambodia. The report relates broadly to laws and policies, social and cultural attitudes, and religion; and more specifically to family affairs, education and schooling, work and employment, community and society, health including HIV, media including information communication technology (ICT) and the organizational capacity of LGBT organizations. Concerning employment, the report discussed employment contexts primarily focalized on job-rejection in relatively formal employment as a basis for discrimination, the findings showed LGBTs had limitations into particular types of jobs that had generated into various characteristics in an employment sphere.

The UNDP & USAID (2014) study had a special focus on the current day unreported phenomenon of gender-based violence against LGBTs regarding their identity in an employment environment within three sectors. This research study mainly documented issues descriptively and used an approach with quotes. Interpersonal forms were the major findings in this study compared to formal forms. It had contributed to the understanding of gender discrimination elimination by advocating for gender equality in society, respect for people's individuality, basic rights for self-expression and employment. In comparison to other research, this study brought more insight into limited informal violent forms, emotional and professional impacts consequently derived from gender within a formal economy, rather than focus on rights issues and violence within the informal economy. It explored more of the individual level concerning personal coping strategies at work reflecting a different context and response.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The stigma and discrimination problem was generally a negative view and the perspective of people toward a particular group based on specific qualities or conditions such as race, class, nationality, etc. Hebl, Foster, Mannix

& Dovidio (2002) defined formal stigma and discrimination as discrimination in hiring, promotion, access to resources, and resource distribution. It was this type of discrimination that in many states is illegal. Interpersonal discrimination is more subtle; it involves the non-verbal, para-verbal, and even some of the verbal behaviors that occur in social interactions (Hebl et al., 2002).

Similarly, interpersonal forms i.e., behavioral treatment was a sign of stigma and discrimination that can be characterized in negative verbal speech, gestures by staring, behavior, and harassment against LGBT around the working relationship. In employment, forms of stigma and discrimination were concentrated into three aspects, which primarily stressed on different opportunities offered, working conditions and benefits e.g., junior staff may disrespect a LGBT supervisor. They might also be neglected, not welcome or excluded from participating in any professional or social events in the workplace, leaving them isolated and disregarded. The working conditions aspect of stigma and discrimination captures the bias for providing equality in terms of opportunities for training or promotion, or a promotion with conditions which therefore leads to low productivity and poor performance, thus sets limited opportunities for career advancement.

Bias in behavior and treatment toward LGBTs, consequently generates job-dissatisfaction, depression, upset, anger, stress, self-denial and various emotional states that could relatively affect their psychological, emotional and social state. Studies related to mental health account for 30% of all work-related disability claims (Stephens & Joubert, 2001).

Psychological impact is an issue that leads an individual to change behavior and perception by negative influences either from an outside perspective or by their own perspective. Change in psychology results in being passive, isolated, depressed, anxious, talking alone and being withdrawn.

The emotional impact is part of the psychology of an individual; instead it can be noted by an expression of emotions including upset, crying, anger, satisfaction, regret. The psychological status reflects a person's optimistic and pessimistic belief. Emotion is connected with a temporary mood, an individual's personality and motivation factor (Emotions, n.d.). Emotion is a mirror that reflects how people feel. The emotional impact related to mental elements of tension is a product of harmful inner turmoil. A series of emotional harm can lead to a serious impairment in a person's cognitive thinking and make them

physically vulnerable. Human nature of negative feelings causes inner suffering and pain. Emotion is a social product similarly to gender, which is a social construct too. Based on Shouse (2005), affect is not a personal feeling. Feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social, and affects are pre-personal.

A social impact result in a poor quality of life for an individual, who lacks any social interaction with people, surrounded with low self-esteem, self-loathing, and lack of self-confidence and excludes oneself from socialization (Almeida, Johnson, Coliss, Molnar & Azrael, 2009). Another tangible negative product of stigma and discrimination could be undesirability in employment and career, e.g., absence, dismissal, no promotions, frequent job changes and a desire to leave jobs, these were namely professional impacts. Davison & Burke (2000) argued that gender-based discrimination in jobs concerning “femininity or masculinity” contributed to job gender stereotypes. What is more, this further includes gender-based selection in jobs not only considered a person’s biological sex, but how they were perceived as masculine or feminine (Davison & Burke, 2000). Owing to the job discrimination of homosexual people, according to Levine (1979), many talented and qualified gays were working in positions far beneath their capabilities and were under pressure to leave jobs.

Coping strategies for responding to stigma and discrimination are personal tactics for self-defense that is used for self-motivation or intervention in coping with difficulties from being victimized. The strategies are varied based on each individual’s case in terms of the forms of stigma, as well as the severity of stigma they experience in the workplace. For example, individual techniques in ignoring the stigma and discrimination they received in the workplace. Personal strategies can be solutions of self-help once they are discriminated in order to avoid conflict or emotional pressure, which could possibly be an individual’s response to protect themselves from those negative verbal words or behavior by colleagues and employers. In broader terms, this means their solutions are from self-motivation, sustaining a position in the workplace and keeping good relationships.

Figure 1 illustrates and outlines the issues and concepts for my study.

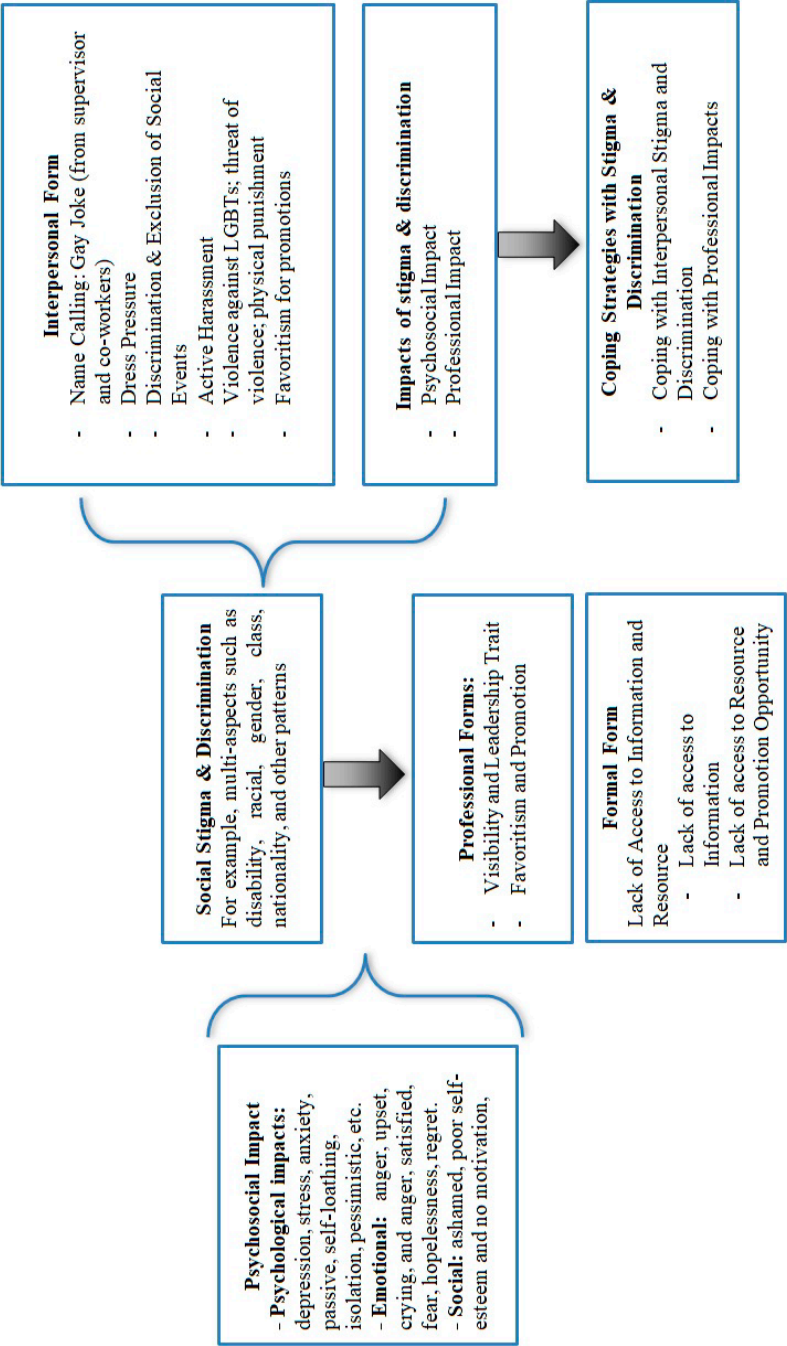


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: Author)

## Scope, Limitations and Difficulties

My study suffered from the constraints put upon it by the time factor. Thus, this study covered the issue of stigma and discrimination against LGBT people in the workplace over two major aspects of informal and formal forms. Informal types referred to interpersonal relationships between heterosexuals toward homosexuals concerning disrespectful behavior, cursing, neglect, verbal harassment and physical touch etc.

Coping strategies covered individuals' solutions for coping with stigma and discrimination which varied according to their own experiences. Despite formal forms represented by stigma and discrimination in people's professions in relation with their working condition, there was also variation of position level, training opportunity or promotion and wage or benefit based on a person's gender.

LGBT in this study refers to a self-confirmed individual who identifies themselves into one of these four types. This study concerns LGBTs who were engaged in three sectors of employment (Public, Private and Non-Government Organizations [NGOs]) and who had encountered or had experienced stigma and discrimination. Public sector work belongs to government institutions and is operated by government officials; this includes ministries, public schools and public health institutions etc.

Private sector includes business operations and transactions in formal economy with specific physical infrastructure such as companies, industries, and enterprise, which is operated by legal individuals as owners or private ownership that exclude self-employed, online businesses, home-based work or sex work for profit. CSOs in this study context adduce the NGOs and non-profitable operations aiming to improve society supporting government's development plan.

Professional sector covers work that requires special training, education, or skill (Professional, n.d.). Professional people are those who engage in work using his/her expertise gained over many years of experience characterized by technical and standardized expectations. This work includes doctors, officers, teachers, division officers, managing level officer, sale officers, and business developer within three sectors is public, private and CSO sectors.



This study was limited to two dimensions, psychosocial and professional types, which result from both informal and formal stigma and discrimination. Psychosocial impact is mainly an emotional state that reflect individual's behavior in reacting toward society and social interaction, developed through a range of moods including anger, depression, shame, disappointment, regret, stress, upset, isolation, embarrassment, all of which can be seen through verbal or visible facial expressions. Emotion is a product of psychosocial impact, which is something that might be understood, though it is difficult to put in solid definitions considering how a particular factor like SOGI translates into its contextual emotional term.

Professional impacts anticipated difficulties in work performance as well as opportunity for employment advancement included lack of access to information or resources, bias in promotion opportunity or disqualification, job dismissal and frequent job changes. These are the bases for some obstacles concerning LGBT identity and sexuality on an individual's personal quality rather than their ability to work. Low career advancement or development due to stigma and discrimination is another indicator of the impact on the bases of their LGBT identity in employment. This is characterized as a lack of possibility or promotion opportunity for higher a position in employment based on individuals' outstanding performance or achievement, rather than other conditions or a basis in specific period of employment, typically a career development time spans starts from probation period (three months) to more than three years.

During the data collection process I encountered some implications in gathering related information from all respondents, particularly individual LGBTs due to the following reasons:

- The issue of the research topic content contained sensitive questions for most people who were reluctant in participating; sharing their experiences and personal problem in relation with their gender to others, building trust and ensuring confidentiality was be respected.
- Time constraints for interviews as each individual was engaged with his or her daily employment, a possible time for interview usually was in the evening after office hours or on the weekend.
- LGBT's limited understanding in contributing their time and willingness for social studies was frequently expressed by individuals' lack of attention

or not fully understanding the purpose of the interview and research; and who requested per diem e.g., transportation fees, incentives, gifts etc.

- Participating respondents who were already involved as an interviewee once with me, introduced their LGBT peers to be next interviewee, and this was a relationship network to get their attention and communication which was inevitable because of their peers.

## Chapter 2

# Literature Review

This chapter illustrates the literature review of the research. There are seven sections including the concept of stigma and discrimination, stigma and discrimination in the workplace, stigma and discrimination against LGBTs in the workplace, followed by stigma and discrimination as barrier for career advancement, LGBT coping strategies against stigma and discrimination, and lastly the final section covers discrimination and harassment policy in the workplace.

The term LGBT in this research refers to lesbians, gays/MSM (short hair) who identify as a man, who loves or had sex with men of the same masculinity trait, but not with a trans-woman or effeminate man. Lesbian are noticeably seen as women who love women of the same characteristic as herself or tomboys (another woman who dresses and adopts a male-role in love relationships), whereas bisexuals can be either a woman or a man who loves both sexes. Lastly, transgender consists of two types, one is TM and the other one is TW. Trans-man/man impute man/woman who identify gender through behavior or dress and appearance, they either go with or without sex-reassignment surgery to change their biological sex (whether a complete change or partial change). TM can be examined as a woman with short hair, chest binding, wears men's clothing and adopts the role of a male partner in love relationships with other women e.g., tomboy. However, TW are recognized as a man whether with artificial breasts or not, usually having long hair and dressing femininely.

## Concept of Stigma and Discrimination

Stigma and discrimination has been a universal experience for LGBTs at some point in their lives. The concept of stigma and discrimination has different explanations in different contexts depending on social, cultural and legal environment. Goffman (2009), defines stigma as “an attribute that links a person to an undesirable stereotype, leading other people to reduce the bearer from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one”, (p. 3). The experience of stigma and discrimination includes the exposure to negative attitudes, stereotypical behavior, structural and interpersonal experiences of unfair treatment, and violence perpetrated against persons who belong to minority social groups. Thus, stigma and discrimination were understood as every negative attributes shaped by or toward persons who were perceived as being different and being negatively valued in society. From Crocker & Major (1989), they defined stigma as an attribute or characteristic that conveys a social identity, which devalues in a particular context.

According to the definitions by Link & Phelan (2001), stigma is prejudicial attitudes and behaviors that view some people as less valuable than others because of some quality of who they are (e.g. their gender, race, belief, culture, sexual orientation, behavior, work, disease status or other characteristic). Discrimination expressed as laws, policies or practices disadvantage people because of who they are. Herek (1992) defined heterosexism as “an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship or community,” (p. 89).

Social stigma and discrimination is believed to be a typical social reality of marginalized persons, often experienced for more than one reason (Kessler, Mickelson & Williams, 1999), i.e., one may not only be discriminated due to their disease status, but also their sex and race. Stigma and discrimination can be fluid and flexible in characteristics according to time and social development, which Link & Phelan (2001), have argued that the functions of stigma and discrimination in society have varied throughout history. Stigmatization is believed to be part of the dynamic, which is couched in the language of disapproval (Brandt & Rozin, 1997; Gusfield, 1986). Traditionally, stigma may denote “unusual” conditions such as those with facial disfigurement, incurable disease, short stature and mental illness. In this sense, racism is a social process driven by exploited domination, whereas stigma tradition has been more

concerned with the process driven by enforcement of social norms and disease avoidance.

## **Forms of Stigma and Discrimination**

Forms of stigma are the behavior or practice of prejudiced perceptions held by others toward a particular marginalized group or individual on the basis of quality and nature. This can be seen through unequal treatment, excessive negative view on others, lack of social interaction, rejection, poor worth and it may also lead to harsh physical violence and verbal tones.

Gender discrimination involves labeling a person or group, specifically an employee negatively because of that person's gender. It is even also segregating behavior against someone unfavorably or less favorably because of his/her relationship with a discriminated person or group. Particularly, LGBTs include e.g., allegations of sexual harassment or other kinds of sex discrimination, such as adverse actions taken because of the person's non-conformance with sex-stereotypes.

The national labor law forbids various sorts of discrimination when it comes to any aspect of employment, including hiring, firing, pay, job assignments, promotions, layoff, training, fringe benefits, and any other term or condition of employment. Stigma and discrimination about working conditions covers negative perceptions or assumptions portrayed through behavior that treat gay people or LGBT differently based on their SOGI. This kind of stigma and discrimination explains the inequality or unequal access to opportunities at work for consideration of training or promotion due to one's sexual orientation rather than their potential, skill or capability. Several reports found that being part of the LGBT community negatively influences promotion, working conditions, salaries and career opportunities. Comparable educational backgrounds, qualifications and performance do not mean equal evaluation and career opportunities for LGBT people. The experience of discriminatory incidents differs between countries (Van Balen, Barry, Holzhacker, Villagomez & Wladasch, 2010).

With regard to benefits stigma and discrimination, this refers to the unfair share of benefits or unequal access to benefits, uneven benefit distribution or unavailability of the benefits provided to a particular group based on their

personal or group's quality, including their gender, religion, ethnicity and nationality etc. The benefits may vary based on other factors rather than an employee's qualifications or ability at work, which denotes in unjust treatment in proportion of benefits. For example, for the most part LGBT workers do not benefit from the same rights as heterosexual workers: time off to care for children; compensation for home-work transfer costs; time off to care for a partner with health problems or in the event of bereavement; entitlement to pension reversibility (the proportion of the pension transferred to the beneficiary's survivor); life insurance; training benefits for employees; and health insurance for employees and their families (Van Balen et al., 2010).

Stigma and discrimination treatment is concerned with bias in conduct or behavior toward a specific group due to their conditions or identity in unsupportive meaning or thinking. This was asserted that gay men face a unique kind of gender bias. Simoni (2001) observed, "heterosexual men have reported more negative attitudes toward gay men" (cited in Bowman, 2003, p.259-266).

Peoples' manners and relationship in the workplace often change in relation with the disclosure decision of lesbian and gays, i.e., after coming out, gay people may suffer insults and rejection by co-workers. The workplace environment may become unfit for LGBT individuals, which results in hampered job performance and job-dissatisfaction by overt harassment or subtle discrimination. Any consideration and value of LGBT persons in the workplace have been prejudged and undermined based upon their sexual orientations by work groups or the employer. This stigma and discrimination in insults is the negative behavior or manner including disrespect, neglect, harassment, insult etc. by people toward LGBT regarding their identity, which affects their relationship, emotion and more importantly work performance. According to the national reports, harassment in the forms of jokes, bullying, sexual harassment and threats, are generally the most frequent forms of discrimination, and is faced by approximately a quarter of LGBT people all over Europe (Van Balen et al., 2010).

Stigma and discrimination can have mixed dimensions of multiple aspects regardless of race, gender, class, nationality, and other patterns. The conservative gender norm of heterosexism tends to be a major source of exclusion and discrimination. Within the working environment stigma and

discrimination against LGBTs is commonplace and frequent. Based on data from the United States enforcement agencies, an estimate of approximately 82 complaints of sexual orientation or gender identity employment discrimination would be filed in Pennsylvania annually if the law were amended (Hasenbush & Mallory, 2013). LGBTs faced undocumented cases of stigma and discrimination worldwide in employment and in every society.

In many cases, social stigma and discrimination tends to be systematically driven. Under power relations of institutional structures, it was denoted that LGBTs suffered severe human rights violations driven by stigma and discrimination in terms of being discriminated in the labor market, educational institutions, accessibility to public services, and also were punished and cut off from their own family. In some countries, LGBT's are victims of murder, punishment, rape and physical abuse, all of which is a direct result from systematic discrimination. According to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), there are 72 countries that have criminal laws that are fully authorized to persecute and criminalize LGBTs, and this leads them to be more at risk and vulnerable (Erasing 76 Crimes, n.d.).

In some religious countries and regions, heterosexual norms and culture of stigmatization towards LGBTs puts homosexual people under pressure and they are undermined for being chaotic and in crises, this devalues human nature or social culture, i.e., in some Islamic countries such as Iran, there has been a death penalty execution under the Law of Lavat. In other circumstances, which might be pressured by western culture, sex reassignment is lawful, while same-sex behavior will be severely punished in Iran (Eshaghian, 2008). Frith (1996) argued that people were producers and consumers of culture at the same time. Instead, sexuality was seen as the production of diversity, variability and contingency. The socialization against homosexuality was recognized and accepted for the majority of people, this consequently results in approval of stigma and discrimination notions that narrow down LGBT people's freedom and sphere of self-identity expression. This not only limits their access and public representation along social institutions, but also their professions, where there has been documented unequal working conditions, opportunities and benefits.

The business dictionary defined social impact as "the effect of an activity on the social fabric of the community and well-being of the individuals and

families” (Social Impact, n.d.). In this research, social impact was an interdisciplinary element of psychosocial impact about LGBT’s gender issue, it was a form of stress production, that was habitually experienced by marginalized people in the workplace, e.g., LGBTs’ struggled with combinations of anger or irritability, anxiety, depression and self-stigmatization. Stigma impacted on people’s self-esteem because they internalized the feelings of shame and worthlessness that were associated with being stigmatized.

Besides, professional impact was related to social sexual behavior, which was one of the occupational stresses (Nelson & Burke, 2002). Regarding the gender of individuals at work, gender stigma and discrimination causes some sort of chronic stress, which affects their position. Many specific professional impacts, significantly related to having frequent rejections, social and work opportunity exclusions, victimization of unequal judgments and fair competition on the basis of gender, i.e., informal consideration over individual’s concerning their identity other than their capacity and qualification.

Providing stigma and discrimination was a systematic oppression, it resulted in struggles for employment amongst LGBT people because of exclusions that they suffered in their livelihood survival, social and economic circumstances. In the most recognized LGBT society or haven is Thailand, where it is seen as open for non-conforming gender identities. Despite this, it was still reported that stigma and discrimination were common aspects through all pattern of lives in society, they were perceived negatively from family, education, media, legal, government, economic and religious structures, institutions and establishments.

## **Employment**

Employment refers to all people employed in business operations and transactions in formal economy, regardless of full time or part time with organizational structures and physical infrastructure. These include companies, ministries, industries, enterprise, organizations etc., but exclude the self-employed, family helpers or online businesses or home-based workers. According to the business dictionary, in employment, there are two main actors; employer - an entity or individual who hires an employee; and the employee - an individual who works part or full-time under a contract of employment, whether oral or written, expressed or implied, and has recognized rights and duties (Employment [A], n.d.).



Employment is structured around several meanings in the Oxford dictionaries, this includes the “first definition – the state of having paid works; second - the action of giving work to someone; lastly - a person’s trade or profession” (Employment [B], n.d.). In another source employment is determined as “the act of employing, the state of being employed, the work, which one is engaged and even the activities to which one devotes time and effort.” (Employment [C], n.d.). An addition, the legal definition of employment is described as “the state of working for another under a contract of hire that provides that one’s services are subject to the other’s direction and control.” (Employment [D], n.d.).

## **Stigma and Discrimination in the Workplace**

Stigma and discrimination are fluid and flexible based upon context and the history of the society. Within the employment sphere, stigma and discrimination covers patterns in the form of disregard for particular groups of people in relation with their gender, religion, disability, marital status and health status, which is unlawful and against the labor law.

Discrimination has two basic forms; direct form is understood as a person who is treated less favorably, on the grounds of an individual’s differentness or personal qualities that differs from others or would be treated in the same or similar circumstances. Indirect form is discrimination that occurs when a requirement or condition is applied; which, although applied equally to all persons, is such that a considerably smaller proportion of people with their qualities can comply with it and it cannot be shown to be justified.

Stigma and discrimination are both a proximate and a distal cause of employment inequity for people with an unfavorable personal quality or condition, represented in one’s experience of direct discrimination because of prejudicial attitudes from employers and workmates and indirect discrimination owing to historical patterns of disadvantages, structural disincentives against competitive employment and generalized policy of neglect. These are the paraphrased discrimination definitions of the United Kingdom’s (UK) Acts of Parliament outlawing discrimination on grounds of sex (Sex Discrimination Act, 1975), race (Race Relations Act, 1976), and disability (Disability Discrimination Act, 1995).

As mentioned earlier, marginalized persons often experience far more than one reason of perceiving stigma and discrimination (Kessler et al., 1999). In Kanter's view (1977), both men and women are "trapped" in a set of organizational structures that perpetuate stereotypes and perpetuate the status quo of sexual inequality. For women, the reality of sexism makes tokenism a relatively minor factor in their lives, and policies that strive to eliminate tokenism without attacking sexism was bound to fail (Toren & Kraus, 1987).

Seifert (1973) found that "the process of disproving children's sex role stereo-type the male teacher may have to endure a bit more rejection from them than will a female teacher of comparable talent and temperament" (p. 169). This may be considered as one form of discrimination on the basis of one's gender toward both genders.

Gender is seen as one criterion in the recruitment process for employment, which people can suffer from because of their gender as women or men in general (Zimmer, 1986). However, stigma and discrimination grounded on many bases through the whole aspect of employment starting from recruitment until job performance, the stigma and discrimination brings differences in wages, work conditions, benefits and treatment etc. Another portrayal of stigma and discrimination of gender in the workplace known as "tokenism", whereas many of women's negative experience of jobs and in particular, their inability to achieve equality that has attributed to their token status - their low proportion in a workplace dominated by men (Kanter, 1977). Multiple forms of discrimination of more than one of these grounds are considered a base for discrimination.

For instance, discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, migrant status and sex discrimination becomes a barrier for people to access decent employment. People who experience discrimination on multiple grounds often find themselves in a vicious spiral of cumulative discrimination. Tokenism similarly to Simmel's (1950) "stranger" and Hughes (1945) "outsider" is someone who meets all of the formal requirements for entry into a group, but does not possess the "auxiliary characteristics" (especially race, sex and ethnicity) that are expected. One may be unsuited for a particular position or work environment not because of their competency or intelligence, but rather the external factors concerning "tokenism".

## Stigma and Discrimination against LGBTs in the Workplace

Workplace discrimination usually translates into stigma behavior, mistreatment, verbal harassment and rejection from jobs that offered unequal pay. “Discrimination” included everything from denial of promotions to being subjected to “hard stares” because of one’s sexual orientation (Levine & Leonard, 1984; Croteau & Lark, 1995). LGBTs may have encountered employment discrimination at some point in their life; these implications were driven by homosexual oriented identity in accessing labor market through various stages such as applying for jobs, job allocations, positions and different job benefits and incentives.

In other cases, gays were transferred to positions inconsistent with their qualifications. Economic incentives were varied on the basis of an employer’s understanding about the role of sexuality of individuals and rights, in line with their internal organizational policy (LGBT discrimination protection) in the workplace. Studies showed at the Washington State Pride event 43% of attendees reported experiencing employment discrimination (Badgett, Lau, Sears & Ho, 2007).

According to a survey reported by the William Institute, discrimination in the workplace was at 28.2%. Discrimination can be systematically violating rights of individuals covered up by traditional norms and people’s perspectives (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012). It could be seen that some groups of people with special sexual identities were excluded from employment just entirely on the basis of their sexual orientation, affecting their productive role in economic activities for decent jobs or labor market.

LGBT people face the greatest amount of challenges because of the decisions about identity management that they continually face (Button, 2004; House, 2004). Courts, individual judges, and legal scholars have repeatedly found that sexual orientation and gender identity are not related to a person’s ability to contribute to society, or in the workplace (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). Many cases showed discrimination against women in the workplace due to the social norms of subordinate positions, which accelerated their unequal access and violation. This issue proved the same in western countries, from the context that federal, state, and local administrative agencies and legislative bodies have acknowledged that LGBTs have faced widespread discrimination in employment. Discrimination and fear of discrimination can have negative effects on LGBT

employees in terms of wages, job opportunities, mental and physical health, productivity, and job satisfaction (Sears & Mallory, 2011).

### *Harassment and Abuse in the Workplace*

Many studies show that revealing self-identity in the workplace can be a risk. Taking the decision of being prejudged would mean they might suffer from discrimination, repeated verbal abuse, harassment, become the object of ridicule and negative jokes from their colleagues. It was confirmed by Badgett (1995), “in the workplace, how homophobic or heterosexist attitude affects a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender worker” (pp. 726-739). The critical state and emotional suffering depends on the age and context of coming out of the closet<sup>4</sup>, most people disclosed their identity at a young age, therefore many LGBTs indicated that primary school was one of the most traumatic periods of their lives. This is the first time many were exposed to the harsh realities of the outside world, where looking, acting, or feeling different often meant name-calling, being scolded, abused, harassed, disgusted, ridiculed, and at times affected their emotions and self-confidence by the hand of employer and colleague (Human Rights Watch, 2010). State’s response and obligation are compulsory upheld within international human rights principles to prevent violence and discrimination based on SOGI.

The workplace is categorized as the severest discrimination setting. It is where LGBTs received verbal abuse and other patterns of violence, primarily even opportunity for employment. Various forms of violence and discrimination are experienced from a LGBT’s life in the workplace, which violates human rights, LGBT rights and creates barriers for them to fulfill their rights to life and make better life choices. Disclosure of their identity is an uncomfortable decision and a risky option in relation to losing a job opportunity, discrimination and exclusion. Typically transgender people are frequently harassed because of their cross-dressing and their livelihood as entertainment workers. Workplace opportunities for LGBTs are too narrow as employers would not hire LGBT, and even if they are offered jobs, it is particularly low paid and a low position.

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4 “In the closet” refers to LGBT people who conceal their SOGI from the public.

### *Wage Inequity*

Traditional economic theory teaches that earning differentials amongst workers may be understood on the basis of individual differences in the amount of education and work experience. Worker's sexual orientation may have independent effects within the workplace and interactive effects with other socially and economically relevant characteristics, mainly gender, as well as how the awareness to the effects is relevant to those who work with LGBT individuals. Wage gap on the basis of individual SOGI is also a factor of discrimination against LGBTs regardless of their performance and capacity. The William Institute Census Data showed male homosexual couples in Pennsylvania, United States, earned less than males of opposite sex couples. Approximately, same-sex couples males earned about US\$37,916 each year, which is less than US\$48,706, 20% higher for males who were married to the opposite sex (Hasenbush & Mallory, 2013).

Men with same-sex partners earned lower wages due to the fact that they had a college degree compared to men who were married to partners of the opposite sex. This comparison supports the possibility that employers do not treat people from same-sex couples equally. A study by Mallory, Herman & Badgett (2011), published by the Williams Institute indicated that the wage gap for gay men was smaller in states that implemented non-discrimination laws, suggesting that such laws reduced discrimination against LGBT people. Women in same-sex couples earned less than married men as well. Women in same-sex couples in Pennsylvania earned an average of US\$35,474 per year (with a median of US\$29,000), which was more than women who were married to the opposite sex, whose earnings average US\$25,200 (with a median of US\$20,100).

Analyses of national data consistently found that men in same-sex couples and gay men earned 10-32% less than similarly qualified men who were married to opposite-sex partners, or men who identified as heterosexual according to Hasenbush & Mallory, (2013). Surveys of transgender people found that they have high rates of unemployment and very low earnings. Noted in multiple studies by Drydakis (2009 & 2011) in Greece about LGBT job success concerning access to the job market and wage gap in the labor market which gave a more precise result of that being homosexual affected their capacity in earning equal wage compare to non-gay people. "...gay men and lesbians face lower

occupational access and are offered lower entry wages” (2011, pp.2653-2665), while Drydakís estimated that “gay and bisexual men face a higher unemployment rate and receive lower monthly wages than their heterosexual counterparts” (2012, p. 3).

## **Stigma and Discrimination as Barrier for Career Advancement**

Career advancement is understood as an individual’s career succession or achievement in their strategic or tactical plan. It is characterized by an employee’s self-motivation and work performance effort in order to reach their path for development in their position within the workplace. However, career advancement is denoted into both tangible and intangible forms, this may not refer to only the betterment in position or hierarchy promotion, not to be included in training opportunity or even work experience as tangible forms, whereas wage or pay increase is tangible career advancement. The barrier and limitation to be in higher managerial positions for gay people is grounded to the facets of some criterions base upon individual’s potentials, labor market, structural theory and importantly homophobia or either heterosexism. The hidden identity of LGBT is the general belief that revealing their sexuality in the workplace would be a risky behavior of being an object for stigma and discrimination in many facets through career life.

The Netherlands is the only country with the highest percentage of LGBT people who are open about their sexual orientation at 74% at work or at school (Van Balen et al., 2010). This was proved as a true assumption in employment topics for LGBT, not only was private and public sectors where LGBT people were discriminated, but also even in some CSOs, which were seen as having better involvement with human rights and social justice even concerned with unexplained discrimination against LGBT employees. From 2009 to 2012, the national network of MSM and transgender persons did not have a single paid staff member who identified as MSM or transgender. Few of the NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) worked with MSM and transgender people, openly gay or transgender staff in management or supervisory positions. Most MSM and transgender people were at the lowest level in the organizational hierarchy as either volunteers or peer educators and facilitators (Salas, 2012). LGBT self-identified employees may experience struggles in employment and emotional security, as their identity would change their image and relationship in the employment sphere with either their

colleagues or particularly their employer at the management level. In terms of discrimination against LGBT staff for attending training programs, the bias selection of staff capacity building between LGBT and Non-LGBT status and promotion decisions may also favor more towards a non-LGBT employee.

A significant portion of the workforce would look down upon a workplace where co-workers make gay jokes around the water cooler; where transgender co-workers experience harassment from their colleagues; or where individuals are denied promotions simply because they are gay. Many problems were reported in terms of negative treatment of LGBT people by their employers, ranging from forced identity disclosure, cursed at for being LGBT, rejection and controlling behavior. The end results for LGBTs include running away, mental health issues, depression, and increased suicide ideation. This imbalance consideration toward LGBT staff may leave them in a constant position of unsatisfied work performance and low productivity, as stated that employees who do not feel valued or fear discrimination in the workplace experience a host of negative job attributes that adversely impact their job performance (Mallory & Sears, 2015).

In these regards, LGBT job promotion and expecting career advancement would be linked to some criterion of critical management approach other than an individual's SOGI that includes performance, achievement or their seniority within the current position.

## **LGBT's Coping Strategies against Stigma and Discrimination**

Being mistreated in employment and rejected lead them to be in a severe vulnerable state by being without dependency to sustain economic their condition and personal depression that translated into higher attempts of committing suicide. The Williams Institute showed that lifetime suicide attempts were less frequently reported by respondents who were in the workforce (37%) than those who were out of the workforce and not looking for work (46%) and those who were unemployed (50%) (Herman, Haas, & Rodgers, 2014). Balsam & Mohr (2007), stated that stigmatization was believed to be a universal feature for LGBT lives with variable levels of seriousness, which depends upon the context they were living in.

Discrimination is another element for decreasing LGBT people's self-esteem, confidence and job dissatisfaction due to being discriminated and

mistreated (Sanchez & Brock, 1996; Mays, Coleman & Jackson, 1996; Shields & Wheatley Price, 2002). If one were earning less money than their peers or colleagues, the expected reaction would be a range of emotions including anger, anxiety, and depression. Bartky (1977), Bowles & DuelliKlien (1983), and Dreifus (1973), all pointed towards an opposite prediction concerning the effects of personal discrimination as in Gamson's (1992) new social theories to a more relevant context:

Gather other colleagues who can share their common issue and interests (working condition, pay inequity and treatment) by document cases they faced and filed official complaints

Emotion evoked by a negative event appeared to have negative consequences whereas focusing on resolving the problem appeared to be beneficial which in turn can empower them.

“Avoidance coping strategies” theorized to be a coping mechanism that reduces the associated stress and anxiety.

Build up network of peer support to be more empowered, group consciousness theorists, the perception of personal discrimination provide with sense of social support and collective confrontation. (Foster, 2000).

## **Law and Legal Framework**

### ***Discrimination Rights***

The national law in the Kingdom of Cambodia does not criminalize homosexuality; LGBT still faced challenges, abuse and violence on the bases of their SOGI within the society they are in. For most LGBT people, disclosure about their gender and sexuality as gay means the end of their career or a rejection of job offers. This is caused by the absence of a specific legal framework in protecting LGBT people, which fails in all prohibition taking one's SOGI as basic element for discrimination. This flaw brings interrelated negative impacts for LGBT's lives and value in society in general, leading to worsened positions of being discriminated, exclusion and marginalization in a workplace's policy. Homosexuality is considered as an oddity in the society, which therefore does not attract any kind of aggressive state sanctioned or dogmatic reaction. At the same time they are overt with their identity in the workplace's interaction and often become victims for discrimination and abuse.



De jure versus de facto models illustrates the uncovered issue of gender against LGBT in society as a whole and in general. It has been repeatedly said by individual LGBTs that they experienced job rejections because of the way they dress (gender cross-dressing) and some problems regarding the cold treatment from co-workers and employers about the awareness of their identity during work performance. Therefore, discrimination exists and becomes a serious crime or problem. Anti-discrimination is imposed by law and everyone is equal under the law e.g., labor law, non-discriminatory act and gender-neutral policy put in place. Conversely, de facto LGBTs were treated differently as traditional gender culture disadvantaged homosexual people as minority group and abnormal, which accompanied with negative perspectives undermined their capacity in implementing work. Prejudice against the majority perspective about genders and social recognitions for being normal are unacceptable.

LGBT people frequently face exclusion, harassment and bullying in the workplace. Gay people were noticed to be bullied severely; often resulting in the desire to leave work after one opens up about his/her sexuality. It is unquestionable that LGBTs need to hide their identity in the workplace for fear of losing a job. To maintain their job is a survival source, so revealing self-identity is a relatively high risk decision that comes with critical shocks or other preparations. It is hard for them to keep their jobs after disclosing their identity. Challenges are doubled and it may often be reported that LGBT people usually get turned down for employment because of their appearance and behavior such as SOGI, although they have earned a university degree they work within low-paid jobs such as waiter/waitress or garment worker.

### ***Labor Rights***

There is no legal source and recognition for LGBT employees to be excluded in employment due to social discrimination, since SOGI is not a prohibited ground of discrimination under the Labor Law (Kong, 2012). Employers and colleagues can exercise discrimination with impunity, within the confines of the law. Discrimination against LGBT people in the workplace, or when trying to obtain employment, can be seen in a higher rate of unemployment. LGBT Cambodians, in particular transsexuals, often drift into the sex trade for the lack of other job alternatives.

In the following circumstances, dismissal is permissible: i) stealing, misappropriation, embezzlement; ii) fraudulent acts committed at the time of signing (presentation of false documentation) or during employment (sabotage, refusal to comply with the terms of the employment contract, divulging professional confidentiality); iii) serious infractions of disciplinary, safety, and health regulations; iv) threat, abusive language or assault against the employer or other workers; v) inciting other workers to commit serious offenses; and political propaganda, activities or demonstrations in the establishment. Besides these circumstances, Labor Law allows for discretionary expansion of the circumstances under this international labor law, the employer may dismiss a labor contract through its “other conduct” provision (Kong, 2012, p. 181).

Under this international labor law, there is no mention regarding people’s SOGI as a basis for not offering employment. The International Labor Law had stated clearly for “dismissal is permissible” for an employee regarding serious misconduct, but not over SOGI. Stigma and discrimination focuses the attention on the recipients of these behaviors, which lays the problem and consequences of different prescriptions for actions (Sayce 2000). Stigmatization is entirely contingent on access to social, economic, and political power that allows the identification of defiantness, the construction of stereotypes, the separation of labeled persons in distinct categories, and the full execution of disapproval, rejection, exclusion, and discrimination. Thus, we apply the term stigma when elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination co-occur in power situations that allow the component of stigma to unfold (Link & Phelan, 2001).

### *LGBTs’ Legal Identity*

Cambodian law is considered, as neutral law for LGBTs as there is no sanction or criminalization against them, neither any law protection for this minority. Marriage between same-sexes is possible under traditional norms (namely as party or wedding) and accepted in the society as the same as a heterosexual marriage. Though, under legal recognition, same-sex couples are not entitled to register as wife or husband, instead for some cases, they can be together as sibling or twins (Salas, & Sorn, 2013). Based on an interview with the Deputy Director of the National Employment Agency (NEA) in Cambodia, he stated that transgender people in Cambodia were also limited in their freedom of self-expression. People who identified themselves as a different

gender from their birth gender, e.g., people who still possess their anatomy of a woman or man, but expressed themselves as TM or TW based on their psychology and emotion. For those people who went onto transition using sex-reassignment surgery to fully change their birth gender into a different gender, still struggled for legal recognition of their gender status e.g., renew gender status on an identity card since Cambodia law obliges for birth identity only in legal perspectives.

In law, we discuss about their physical and their legal documents for identification, such as Identity Card or Birth Certificate because in our country, we don't have any law which stated that people could change their sex based on their current identity, the technology of sex-reassignment surgery is not available yet (Mr. Hak Hong interview, 29 July 2014).

An embedded gender norm criticizes and undermines lesbian relationships as difficult (e.g., two women together are weak), whereas two gay men staying together are less discriminated, as they are strong (Salas, & Sorn, 2013). Women are seen as an inferior gender and less valued in the society, TW (men with effeminate behavior) are usually victimized, hated and suffer verbal harassment from a heterosexual perspectives that portrays women as vulnerable and degrading.



## Chapter 3

# Research Methodology

This chapter shows the research design and methodology. There are five sections which consist of the following: type of research; research design and unit of analysis; the study area and selection criteria; data collection and research tools; data analysis and technique. Lastly, the ethical issues and challenges of respondent recruitment are mentioned at the end of this chapter.

### **Type of Research, Research Design and Unit of Analysis**

Descriptive information gathering was applied in this research about stigma and discrimination against LGBT's within employment set barriers for career advancement and lives.

This study carried out several techniques and methods to the maximize research questions and objectives. The case studies approach was implemented concerning LGBT discrimination issues in the workplace. It focused on the contemporary phenomena within a real life context to gather the insights of the issue and rich information for in-depth studies. Qualitative case studies were also used for research tasks and for analysis purposes regarding attitudes, behaviors and career advancement opportunity out of stigma and discrimination.

The unit of analysis of this research was an individual level of stigma and discrimination in the workplace.

## **Study Area, Tools Used, Selection Criteria and Sample Size**

### ***Study Area***

Phnom Penh's population consists of 1.3 million over a size of 678.46 square kilometers in nine districts. It is the commercial, political and cultural hub for the Kingdom of Cambodia, which is center of every business activity including many kinds of sector and organizations (Phnom Penh City: Facts, n.d.). People in Phnom Penh are employed in the various sectors of work and business operations into formal economy with specific physical infrastructure such as companies, ministries, industries, enterprise, organizations etc., which exclude self-employed, online businesses, home-based workers or sex workers. LGBTs are among employees and staff who actively work for employment industries, which will be selected purposely.

### ***Tools Used***

A question checklist was an essential tool to gather case information and for analyzing.

Semi-structured interviews were adapted to gather information and insight on issue from respondents.

### ***Selection Criteria and Sample Size***

Careful selection was applied and respondents were selected based on the following criteria:

- Self-identify LGBTs (disclosed status); who were engaged in employment within the three sectors: public, private and CSOs.
- Disclosed LGBTs who lived and worked in the Phnom Penh area.
- Those LGBTs who experienced stigma and discrimination in their workplace previously and currently via peer introduction.
- The workplace of an individual LGBT had to be within the three employment sectors of the study with an official name, nature of sector whether public, private or CSOs and importantly had to have a visible physical and managerial structure.

- A case that most commonly happens, which reflects the frequency of the issue for LGBTs used as a study confirmation.
- Sample Size consisted of 21 respondents with 9 lesbians, 3 gays/MSM, 1 bisexual, 4 TMs and 4 TWs respectively (refer to Table 3.1).

The selection for all of them was to assess stigma and discrimination in employment which they had experienced. All respondents under this research could be identified and granted interview from network introductions via NGOs and their peers. Number of or persons per sector: seven in public, 11 in private, three in CSOs (refer to Table 3.1).

	CSOs	Private	Public	Grand Total
Bisexual	0	1	0	1
Gay/MSM	0	1	2	3
Lesbian	0	7	2	9
TM	2	1	1	4
TW	1	1	2	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	3	11	7	21

**Table 3.1: Distribution of LGBTs by Sectors**  
(Source: Author, Field Interviews 2014)

## Data Collection and Research Tools

### *Primary data*

Interviews were important research techniques to gather information about the situation of stigmatization and discrimination in the workplace. Two types of interview techniques were used to gather information. First, a question checklist was prepared about the current situation of stigma and discrimination that LGBTs have faced (refer to Appendix 3.1); followed by in-depth interviews with individual LGBTs (refer to Appendix 3.2). Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with those who were engaged with LGBT's issues such as, colleagues, employers, members of the Labor department and human rights activists (refer to Appendices 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6, respectively). Semi-structured type of interviews allowed for flexibility to investigate issues with some guided questions to answer research questions and objectives.

It was reliable for friendly dialogue and to build a free environment to express feelings and opinions on the issues related to the topic. An in-depth interview included details amongst self-identified LGBTs selected for each case study analysis from those who experienced these issues in the workplace. This method enabled the deeper exploration into the issue with detailed perspectives.

Furthermore, structured interviews about LGBT issues in the workplace was granted by some companies, including garment factories, hotels and tourism, café, restaurants, perfume and cosmetics, who all currently recruit LGBTs as employees in their respective industries. They were selected purposely for seeking an answer in relation with different forms of stigma and discrimination that LGBTs faced, thus impacting their career development.

### *Key Informants Interview*

Semi-structured Interviews were made with key informants who were human rights activists from NGOs advocating the issue of LGBT's rights. In particular, advocating for the LGBT's position in society, stigma and discrimination experienced in relation with employment and existing law or policy. By doing this, using the information gathered allowed for data to be crosschecked between LGBTs and key informants for accuracy. In addition, six selected employers who recruited LGBT workers provided an overview of issues of them working and the situation of discrimination against LGBTs within their organization.

### *In-depth Interview*

Due to anonymity and confidentiality issues regarding an individual's privacy, the sampling method was purposely adapted via peers' network of individual LGBTs who were introduced to this research as respondents. In-depth interviews were formed in a conversation between myself and the target people to explore the respondent's point of view, feelings and perspectives.

21 selected LGBT individuals had agreed to the interviews in order to gather their individual perception and experience of stigma and discrimination in the workplace. From networking introduction via LGBT's friends, there were two ways of recruiting LGBTs. First, was via their heterosexual friends. Second, was from their LGBT peers who had already been interviewed. More specifically, open LGBTs were targeted for my case studies through a snowball method for stigma and discrimination experiences in relation with their career and lives.



Individual LGBT's coping strategies against stigma and discrimination were also elaborated on.

The case study selection was described in the following ways. Firstly, due to total number of small cases, purposive sampling was needed for relevant research investigation. Secondly, case selection was based on existing qualitative literature, which required in-depth familiarity of each case. Thirdly, case selection was conducted based on procedures, considering e.g., attraction, deviance, interests, eye catching, influence, similarities and differences. Most importantly, each case provided information to research objectives. Lastly, quantitative approaches were discussed to acquire information that could reasonably represent a large number of cases.

All the respondents' ages ranged from between 20-60 years old. This age group was known as the prime age for employment. This was ideal to seek out a diversity of issues from each individual's experience in relation with their work in a detailed aspect, including working conditions, treatment, benefits and career development, which were strongly influenced by identifying as LGBTs.

### *Secondary data*

Furthermore, I also utilized reading materials from multiple sources, such as the library, Internet articles, workshop reports, conference materials, NGO's documents, media, and international newspapers - both online and print publications. These various sources of information provided a much wider understanding of current issues about homosexual people; it is also acted as guidance for an improvement in stigma and discrimination reduction.

A summary overview of the data collection method is presented in Figure 2.

Research Questions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What forms of stigma and discrimination do LGBTs face in the workplace?</li> <li>• How does stigma and discrimination impact their career and life?</li> <li>• What personal coping strategies against stigma and discrimination have individual LGBT developed?</li> </ul>	
Total Number of Participants	
25 people (four Key Informants and 21 Respondents)	
Key Informants / Respondents	Techniques Used
Legal Officer/Expert or advocates from NGOs	Semi-Structured interview
Individual LGBTs	In-depth interview
Employers (Private, Public, CSOs etc.)	Semi-Structured interview
Key Information	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the general stigma and discrimination?</li> <li>• What are the law instruments and legal frameworks mentioned so far regarding LGBT's identity and discrimination in the workplace?</li> <li>• Life experiences of LGBT individuals concerned with stigma and discrimination in the workplace? (Treatment, working conditions and benefits, quality, career advancement, other forms: physical, verbal, violence at workplace)</li> <li>• What are the strategies and responses that LGBT individuals used and adapted against stigma and discrimination?</li> </ul>	
Operational Indicators	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioral forms include ignorance, rejection, lack of communication</li> <li>• Verbal forms, comment on dress style and appearance, name-calling, shouting and corrective advise</li> <li>• Physical forms in terms of physical touch</li> <li>• Number of years that LGBT individuals stayed in the same job (where they don't get promoted or conditions with promotions because of their identity)</li> </ul>	
Emotional Impact	Professional Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Stress</li> <li>• Self-loathing</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Fear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership quality</li> <li>• Lack of opportunity (lack of access to information &amp; resource)</li> <li>• Lack of self-confidence</li> <li>• Unfavorable person/s for most heterosexuals</li> </ul>
Positive and negative response against stigmatizers	
Stress and/or sadness released with activities (doing exercise, shopping, clubbing, and drinking) with people (supervisor, friends, siblings)	

**Figure 2: Data Collection Method** (Source: Author, Field Interviews, 2014)

## Data Analysis and Technique

My case studies were analyzed based on qualitative statements from field interviews and holistic descriptions concerned with experiences, perception and suggestions from victims of stigma and discrimination in the workplace. Qualitative statements and quoting methods were the most relevant approach in highlighting selected cases of high interest and frequent occurrence. A case study approach and cases protocol was applied based on the following criteria. Each case represents particular forms of common violence that LGBTs or specific groups experienced in the workplaces of public sectors, consisting of public agencies or government; private sectors included private companies and enterprises, and lastly CSOs or NGOs.

Data collection for the case analysis was based on key informants and individual LGBT interviews, selected from a network introduction approach through LGBT peers. Prior to the interviews, formal letters and contacts were made with all respondents. Structured interviews were conducted with key informants as well as selective interviews at sites (offices), whereas in-depth interviews were usually applied to LGBT individuals. In each case, interviewees were asked leading questions to explore issues in line with the research objectives:

- Briefing of personal and work profile of individual LGBTs
- Describe and make notes about forms of stigma and discrimination LGBT individuals experienced in the workplace
- The frequency of the types of stigma and discrimination they received and how they perceived those impacts
- Their workplace situation and treatment concerning relationship and benefits
- How do the impacts affect their work and personal life
- How did they cope with impacts they experienced?

Notes were taken during the interviews with a voice recorder (informed consent from interviewee prior to interview), flexible questions were also applied during interviews in order to relate the information with research objectives. Respondent's answers were categorized based on each research question from the question checklist (refer to Appendix 3.1) and field notes. Data was sorted and analyzed through content analysis and a descriptive method by using quotes. Data gathered from interviews was reviewed and reported in order to analyze content and their relevance based on the descriptive information collected. The qualitative statements were used to describe perceptions, opinions, experiences, emotions, difficulties, decisions and other feedback on stigma and discrimination in the workplace. Quantitative analysis was applied for descriptive statistics related to the profile of respondents.

Regardless of employment sector; LGBTs received impacts on different levels and different types. Amongst many cases it was found that respondents from private sectors, both emotional and professional impacts affected majorly on lesbian groups. The impacts typically reflected their emotional state; this included offensive jokes, anger, and cursing which was believed to be the less serious type, despite this, the most serious involved feelings of embarrassment, emotional exhaustion and powerlessness. In terms of professional quality, the impacts symbolized by stress at work, no concentration at work, frequent dismissal from work, bad job background, fear of finding jobs and job leave.

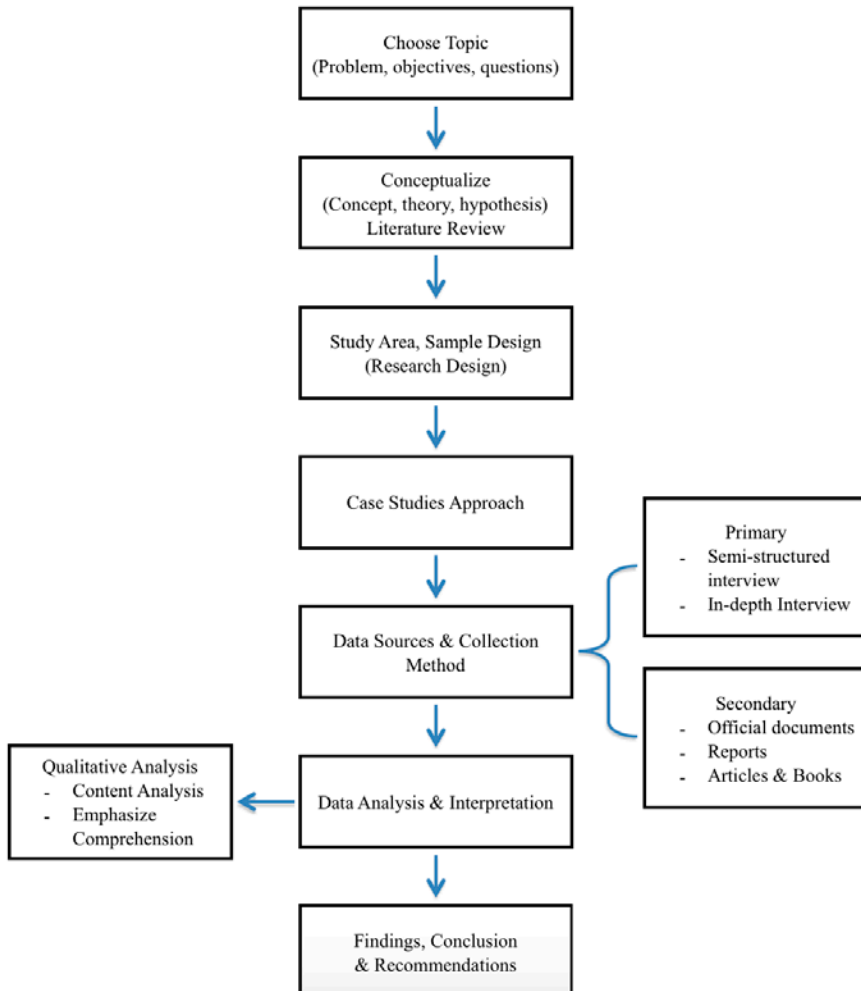
There were a couple of cases with gays where the impact seemed low. Within this group as far as they were aware they considered teasing or joking as some sort of friendliness instead taking it as a serious offense to make themselves upset. Similarly, a trans-woman who seemed not too concerned about the way people judged her, had little influence in her mind-set and work effectiveness.

Contrastingly, a trans-man expressed a more negative emotional state due to stigmatization including anger, isolation and low self-confidence in the workplace.

A total of four cases with trans-men and lesbians were a significant group that victimized impacts related mainly to their work effectiveness, disrespect from colleagues and junior staffs, low self-esteem, and annoying human environmental pressures.

For bisexuals it was confirmed that they had the least amount of stigma and discrimination because it was very unclear or not a visible to identify, although this expression still left some fear of being fully accepted as a bisexual. There was constant fear; people's awareness and disclosure of identity to heterosexual people were ordinarily inflicting inner pressure amongst themselves as psychosocial impact.

Figure 3 illustrates the overview of the research design framework for my study.



**Figure 3:** Research Design Framework (Source: Author, 2015)

## **Ethical Issues**

To protect the anonymity of respondents and people's privacy, all individual names used in this study are pseudonyms. Also, for any information written in this study, I had informed all sources about the clear explanation of purpose, use of personal stories and experiences by any individual persons were done with mutual agreement and consent from all informants and interviewees. These sources acknowledged that all of the information would be put into print or digital format.

Importantly, it was a requirement to ensure all the sensitive issues regarding the country's law and policy were followed, by not creating any problems or other political bias besides for the purpose of academic research.

## Chapter 4

# Profile of Study Area and Respondents

This chapter will discuss two main aspects of the key components in this study. First is the study area and second is the profile of respondents. The study area mainly consist of the sexual minorities in Cambodia, and the working environment of public, private and CSOs. Whereas the second part contains two sub-contents as well as the demographic and economic profile of respondents.

### Study Area

#### *Sexual Minorities in Cambodia*

Gender variation in Cambodian contexts existed in society back in historical times. Although social norms still have strong oppression against this particular gender, within social structure or institution, LGBTs rarely exist in good representations of high ranking positions. This minority is invisible in some parts of society and also not allowed in particular jobs. Gender norms which are tightly embedded symbolize the superior value of heterosexuals (an ideal male or female) in society. LGBTs are categorized as failed males or females whom frequently bring shame to the family and according to religious belief believed to be a sin caused by the previous life.

Violence and discrimination against LGBTs have reportedly occurred in many aspects of society including in educational institutions, family, authorities, health institutions and employment. Within schools, some forms

of violence translated into bullying from friends and teachers, pressured to dress in the proper gender conforming uniform, haircuts and even withdrawal of mobile phones (UNDP & USAID, 2014, p. 41). Within a family sphere, LGBT children were disowned from their family members; some parents may force them into marriage, move children abroad or from place to place to change their current gender (UNDP & USAID, 2014, p. 9).

Physical violence from police authorities toward TW sex workers along public parks includes beating, rape and fines of 30,000 Riels (about US\$20). Within healthcare institutions, LGBTs are very limited in general health services and sex-transition, additionally; healthcare providers usually express reluctance and curse toward LGBTs in providing services to them<sup>5</sup>. As a result of serious violence, dropping out of school, rape, unemployment, contracting HIV and drug abuse amongst LGBT victims are relatively high (UNDP & USAID, 2014, p. 54).

There is a paradoxical traditional narrative that seems to preclude that males were not at risk of abuse or exploitation (Frederick, 2010). In this sense, MSM and effeminate gays were abused less than lesbians or TM as men could better protect themselves compared to women who were more vulnerable.

There is an adage, which states that women are like clothes and males are like gold. It was observed that lesbians had more chances to get better employment than gays and TW as they usually stayed with their family, even during periods of critical shock which allowed them to pursue higher education and finish school properly. Previous studies showed 24% of transgender had been stopped from schools or work compared to 14% of lesbians (Salas & Sorn, 2013).

Homosexuality is considered an unacceptable notion, which was believed to be “against nature”. Both social norms and legal support do not cover LGBT issues. In this respect, LGBTs are not only un-protected specifically in a legal framework, but also violence and discrimination are ordinarily common from heterosexual extremists within society that foster inequalities that persist in the whole country. Anti-discrimination law, which includes gender does not specify entitlement details for LGBTs and provide all exceptions that they are able to enjoy like heterosexuals.

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5 Remarks from small group discussions during national dialogue



### ***Working Environment, Public, Private and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)***

The public sector is a major part of State's economy, which involves government's services for minimum public services. These public institutions vary by country, in Cambodia's context; public sector includes military, police, infrastructure such as roads, schools, hospital and temples. The public sector aims to serve all citizens equally, though it is preferably for poor people as it is usually free of charge and time consuming. Public sector is the parent sector of other sub-sectors in a country as well as the economy of a country (Public Sector, n.d.). In this study, four ministries were sampled; they were the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; the Ministry of Information; and the Ministry of Finance.

Private associates within organizations or industries, serve personal or corporate benefits. Private sectors are part of a free market economy and provide large support for economic growth. The private sector is understood as the citizen sector in some contexts with its special characteristic of profit organization and owned by legal individuals or investors.

CSOs in Cambodia's context is a NGO or non-profit organization, and is not controlled by the State, they can be a citizen-based group that functions independently from the RGC. NGOs, sometimes called Civil Societies, are organized on community, national and international levels to serve specific social or political purposes, and are naturally cooperative, rather than commercial. NGOs include those that support human rights, advocate for improved health or encourage political participation. According to the World Bank, there are two broad groups of NGOs; these are operational NGOs, which focus on development projects; and advocacy NGOs, which are organized to promote particular causes. Certain NGOs may fall under both categories simultaneously (Folger, n.d.).

Based on the Asian Development Bank [ADB] (2011), local and international CSOs continue to work closely with government policies and programs, particularly in the agriculture, education, and health sectors.

While the term "NGO" has various interpretations, it is generally accepted to include private organizations that operate without government control, and are non-profit, and non-criminal. Other definitions further clarify NGOs as associations that are non-religious and non-military.

Some NGOs rely primarily on volunteers, while others support and pay staff. As non-profits, NGOs rely on a variety of sources for funding, including membership dues, private donations, the sale of goods and services, and grants. Despite their independence from the government, in other countries, NGOs may rely on government funding. In Cambodia’s contexts, NGOs are usually operated and supported from foreign international organizations. Large NGOs may even have budgets in the millions or billions of dollars per project.

**Profile of Respondents**

This research was conducted through purposive sampling with 21 LGBT individual respondents; 13 were females and were eight males based on their birth identities. They came from diverse backgrounds, work experiences and sectors of employment. For example, former officials in the ministries of Cambodia, teachers in public schools, employees in private companies, sale and marketing persons, accountants, analysts, business developers, doctors, nurses, service providers in hospitality and tourism, and NGO staff.

*Demographic Profile*

*Current Gender*

As shown in Table 4.1, the table illustrates the distribution of respondents by gender. The lesbian group was the dominant number for the total sample of respondents, which covered about 42%. TM and TW respondents had similar proportions of 19%. Gay/MSM stood at the third place with approximately 14%, and the lowest number was bisexual group which consisted of only 5% respectively. This might be due to their unidentified appearance of gender identity, thus it was hard to approach without disclosure of their sexuality.

Gender	No. of Respondents	%
TW	4	19.0%
Lesbian	9	42.9%
TM	4	19.0%
Gay/MSM	3	14.3%
Bisexual	1	4.8%
Total	21	100.0%

**Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Current Gender**  
*(Source: Author, field interviews, 2014)*

### Age

Table 4.2 divides age groups into four ordinal scales. The table illustrates the majority of the respondents were people aged between 20-25 years old at 33%. However, on average, all respondents were 33 years old. People aged between 25-30 years old and 30-35 years old were 19% respectively. This could be assumed that people were already equipped with general education and that most had graduated from university. This age range showed the active age that people were involved in the labor market. Middle aged LGBT people who were either 35 years old and above was the smallest age group during interviews, which accounted for only 10%.

Age Range	No. of Respondents	%
20-25	7	33%
25-30	4	19%
30-35	4	19%
35 and above	2	10%
Total	21	100%
Average Age	32.5	

**Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents by Average Age**  
(Source: Author, field interviews, 2014)

### Educational Level

Table 4.3 denotes a comparison of the LGBT's level of education. The lesbian group showed a high rate of having better education than the other four groups at 57%. All of them gained at least primary school education, and only two TM gained their highest education at primary school level. For both these elder TM, this educational level was still exceptionally high considering that from a young age they were exposed into the labor market to earn a moderate sum. This trend of positive levels of education provided enough chances for work opportunities even, in low-paid employment regardless of interpersonal stigma and discrimination of their gender. TM and TW had their highest educational level limited to highschool, this might be due to their gender and being forced to drop-out of school after coming out.

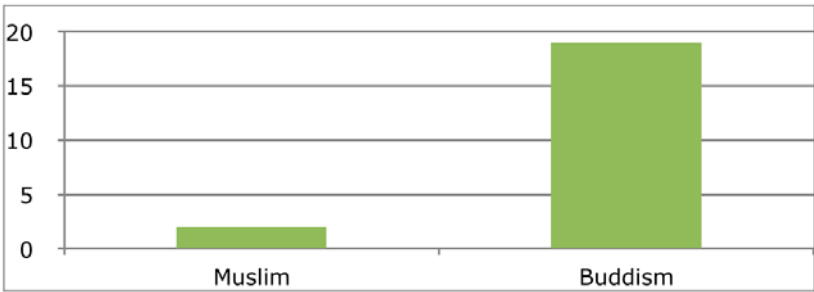
Gender	Primary Level	High School Level	Under-graduate Level	Graduate Level	Grand Total
Bisexual	0	0	1	0	1
Gay/MSM	0	0	2	1	3
Lesbian	0	1	8	0	9
TM	0	4	0	0	4
TW	2	1	1	0	4
Grand Total	2	6	12	1	21

**Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education**  
(Source: Author, Field Interviews 2014)

*Religion*

The dominant religion in Cambodia is Theravada Buddhism. This religion is relatively free of homophobia and trans-phobia, as it does not distinguish between heterosexuality and homosexuality in its precepts about sexual activity. Theravada Buddhism suggests that celibacy is a step towards enlightenment and that sexual behavior should be respectful, affectionate, and pleasurable. The influence of religion brings acceptance of LGBTs’ gender, which allows non-criminalization toward any homosexual notions in the legal society. This tolerance takes part in a loosened institutional pressure for LGBTs to some extent. However, stigma and discrimination in interpersonal forms is beyond the authority of Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC).

Table 4.4 shows that more than 90% of respondents were Buddhist; the rest were Muslim 8% (one gay/MSM and a TW).



**Table 4.4: Percentage of Respondents by Religion**  
(Source: Author, Field Interviews 2014)

### *Economic Aspects*

There is a strong correlation between the level of education and income level, regardless of the employment sector and work position people were exposed to. For LGBT people, the opportunity for both education and employment were quite narrow and limited. This is due to social stigma and discrimination that was usually driven by bullying which consequently led to high drop-out rates. In employment contexts, low education, lack of skills and deviant sexual identity were also the direct and indirect causes of job rejection or job loss and chronic poverty. Pragmatically, education levels result in their work position level as well as social status.

#### *Monthly Income level*

Amongst the 21 respondents, on average, LGBTs earned US\$336 in monthly wages, based on the following information gathered in table 4.5. The private sector provided higher wages compared with public and CSOs sectors. For the 21 respondents, people earned between US\$100-300 a month in all three sectors. This monthly income provided an average standard of living that they could survive on with enough education and skills.

Gender	CSOs	Private				Public	Grand Total
	100-300	100-300	1200-1500	300-600	900-1200	100-300	
Bisexual	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Gay/MSM	0	1	0	0	0	2	3
Lesbian	0	4	1	1	1	2	9
Trans-man	2	1	0	0	0	1	4
Trans-woman	1		0	1	0	2	4
Grand Total	3	6	1	3	1	7	21
Average: US\$336							

**Table 4.5: Distribution of Respondents by Monthly Income (Unit:USD \$)**  
(Source: Author, Field Interviews 2014)

#### *Type of Jobs*

There were three types of jobs that LGBTs worked in, as illustrated in table 4.6. Semi-skilled work required paying attention to details or protecting

against risks, but it does not include complex job duties. It does not require advanced training or education and typically work takes between three and six months to fully learn.

Skilled work required knowledge of judgment to make decisions and may have required measurements, calculations, readings, or estimations. It often required specific qualifications, such as educational degrees or professional training which usually required intellectual reasoning and problem-solving skills. It typically takes six months to a year or more to learn a skilled job.

Unskilled work involved simple tasks and does not usually require one to exercise judgment. It typically required only a month or less to learn. Most of the unskilled jobs required physical strength or coordination.

Table 4.6 highlights the different types of employment taken by LGBT genders. More than half of them worked in skilled types of employment, regardless of their sexuality and identity; skilled jobs were more consistent in nature with higher benefits and better conditions for those who were equipped with the required qualifications. Lesbians were the group with the highest employment opportunity. Both TM and TW were involved in skilled employment and worked more compared to unskilled and semi-skilled types. Remarkably, even within semi-skilled types, lesbians still had the higher number compares with other groups at 14%.

Gender	Semi-Skilled Jobs	Skilled Jobs	Unskilled Jobs	Grand Total
Bisexual	0	1	0	1
Gay/MSM	1	2	0	3
Lesbian	3	6	0	9
Trans-man	1	2	1	4
Trans-woman	1	2	1	4
Grand Total	6	13	2	21

**Table 4.6: Type of Jobs by Gender**  
(Source: Author, Field Interviews 2014)

*Sector of Employment*

Table 4.7 presents the sector of employment that each LGBT group was concentrated in. Interestingly, lesbians demonstrated a total of 42.9% in

employment, distributed in the private and public sector at 63.5% and 28.6% respectively, while none of them engaged in CSOs. Amongst all the respondents, the private sector attracted more people compared to other sectors. It was understood that the private sector was more tolerant or gave less pressure against LGBTs. As the working environment might put stress on people's capacity rather than their sexuality and personal affairs, also the private sector was more competitive in both capacity and benefits. The cost and benefit considerations were usually adapted to maximize productivity by giving enough freedom in the dress code and a choice for all staff to develop in their performance and motivate them to work.

Genders	CSOs	Private	Public	Grand Total
Bisexual	0	1	0	1
Gay/MSM	0	1	2	3
Lesbians	0	7	3	9
TM	2	1	1	4
TW	1	1	0	4
Grand Total	3	12	6	21

**Table 4.7: Distribution of Respondents by Sector of Employment**  
(Source: Author, Field Interviews 2014)

### *Employment Status*

Table 4.8 denotes employment status by gender. Full-time employment was three times higher than part-time. Lesbians were engaged in full-time work at 50%, which was the highest proportion for the group of respondents, this might be because gender norms for females was strictly respected in Cambodian society, thus, females had more chance to pursue higher education that allowed for them to have better opportunities in the labor market. Despite this, gay/MSM had a bigger percentage of those who worked part-time jobs; this probably might be related to high drop-out rates amongst gays, as they were more independent and left home at as a teenager. In addition to this, people were engaged less with part-time employment due to its nature of low-pay and less sustainability. Part-time jobs were usually a temporary lucrative income for those who had limited skills and low education without any specific specializations.

Gender	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
TW	3	1	4
Lesbian	8	1	9
TM	3	1	4
Gay/MSM	1	2	3
Bisexual	1	0	1
Total	16	5	21

**Table 4.8: Distribution of Respondents by Employment Status**  
*(Source: Author, Field Interviews 2014)*



## Chapter 5

# Forms of Stigma and Discrimination LGBTs Experience in the Workplace

### Introduction

The basis of stigma is comprised from the co-occurrence of labeling, stereotype, separation, and status segregation. Stigma consists of two forms, public stigma and self-stigma. Public stigma is seen from large social groups who endorse a stereotype toward a particular issue. Self-stigma refers to internalized public stigma, which results in a loss of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Goffman (2009) describes three types of stigmas: abominations of the body e.g. deformities; blemishes of individual character e.g. perceived as weak; and stigma against race. Discrimination further indicates that for stigmatization to occur, power must be exercised (Link & Phelan 2001).

Some forms of interpersonal stigma and discrimination against LGBTs in the workplace involved several significant measurements. Stigma and discrimination exist on firstly, varied interaction lengths between heterosexuals to homosexuals. Secondly, a more concrete measurement in terms of the number of word counts, types of words used and behavior in each communication, whether it carries some negative tones or word choice. Thirdly, it can be measured into perceptions concerning expression of interests; this includes friendliness, respect, ignorance or avoidance (Hebl et al., 2002).

Interpersonal stigma and discrimination were behaviors based on perspective complexity in relation with cultural perspectives, social context and socialization. They are perceived as attitude, treatment between people's interaction, which reproduces inequality of one or a particular minority group based on their specific characteristics, qualities or conditions in receiving equal share or value within a specific sphere or context, which also varied along with time and history.

Whereas formal stigma and discrimination against LGBTs was universal within three different stages of employment; job interview, job performance and job promotion. Not only were people's sexuality discriminated in direct forms that produced barriers in employment and opportunities, but also indirect discrimination such as competency, economic power and ages etc.

Formal stigma and discrimination were considered to have occurred less when compared to interpersonal/informal types as it primarily stressed on the pre-occupational stage, for instance, hiring opportunities, position level and benefits while job performance whether there were considerable inequality between heterosexual and homosexual employees having a connection with genders rather than focusing on their capability and ability to work.

Closing space for different kinds of gender held for stereotype thinking was about what people have to do regarding their sex. Despite their growing visibility, transgender and gender non-conforming people still faced danger in their daily lives for the sake of cultural oppression. "Trans-phobic" violent acts often flew under the radar because the dialogue about the "trans" population was often centered on an individual's physical transition, instead of the discrimination the person may have faced.

Stigma affects multiple domains of people's lives which has dramatic bearing on the distribution of life chances in employment. This chapter denoted five main sub-contents of the contemporary situation of discrimination against LGBTs. First, it discusses about stigma and discrimination in the workplace; followed by visibility and discrimination at work, intra-discrimination between LGBTs, recruitment and cost/benefit consideration; and lastly treatment, working conditions and work benefits for LGBTs.

## Forms of Stigma and Discriminations

The context of employment was one aspect which involved stigma and discrimination against LGBTs based on their SOGI. This issue concerned the interdependent relationship between the personality and behavior of gender perceptions of a stigmatizer; specifically toward LGBTs, which lead to harassment, bullying and pressure from people within organizations; and being without support from social actors and interventions. Hence, the skills required for jobs in the market and freedom of expression about their identity unquestionably caused a conflict in decisions. LGBT Cambodians do not feel comfortable about being open about their sexual orientation in the workplace. Some employers even discriminated against them by giving notification in the job vacancy announcement strictly limiting it to a woman or man. Some positions may not be considered and valid for gays with soft and effeminate manner to be a security guard, police, or cosmetic sale person etc. Thus, job opportunities due to discrimination and exclusion were already a barrier for LGBTs who have a different gender. There were two forms of stigma and discrimination in this research study. This section will cover both main forms found in employment.

### Interpersonal Form

Interpersonal forms of stigma and discrimination came in the forms of name calling; gay jokes; dress pressure; discrimination and exclusion of social event; active harassment; violence against LGBTs in terms of threat of violence; physical punishment and favoritism for promotions. Stigmatizers were supervisors, employers and co-workers. Interpersonal stigma and discrimination in the workplaces were raised by individual LGBTs.

#### *Name Calling*

Name-calling was reflected in some of the people who shouted slang in Khmer words that trumpet more or less discrimination toward homosexual people. However, the meaning of this message contended more toward negative sexual overtones or humiliated the receiver by how the person pronounced the stress on the words that can be heard. Essentially, relationships between people both sender and receiver of the message denoted clearly whether the content and intention of the message were an obvious stigma and discrimination. From

interviewed cases, not all respondents took all name-calling curses as discrimination, they had an awareness of the message from the sender's joking way of speech, but in actuality on a daily basis, discrimination never alters its definition for each individual. Yet, people who received the message could assess and consider whether or not it was serious or just friendliness.

All respondents who came out as LGBT usually experienced some anger or humiliation from co-workers both in joking and serious ways by pronouncing them as *mi-kteuy* or *ah-kteuy*. However, the word denoted has a more negative tone than positive one, even when it was expressed as a joke. Frequently, *mi* and *ah* is a negative prefix used before one's name for female and male respectively. However, if *ah* were used in front of a female's name, the meaning becomes more neutral than using *ah* with male and *mi* with female. In this case, people stress negatively on lesbians.

The discourse was understood as stigma and discrimination, derived from people of upper levels; mainly heterosexual people in an employment hierarchy toward those LGBT subordinate and lower levels. It highlighted two facet disadvantages of being in a low position and an oddity in gender identity. Two cases of LGBTs in the workplace received name-calling directly from their supervisor. This is illustrated in the following:

My experience before was from a supervisor, she supervises one section of the four main sections; they are water, mechanic items, oil and administration. She is the one responsible for sales division, which I am her subordinate. She is about 30 years old and is closed minded, she doesn't like me and shouted at me *ah-kteuy* publicly in front of others in a joking way in the company I am working. (Ms. Chanda interview, 26 September 2014).

As experienced above by a young lesbian who worked in a private company, name-calling from a middle aged female who was also the supervisor with stronger power relations (hierarchy) undermined Ms. Chanda at work in front of other co-workers.

A stigmatizer either from lower or upper positions denoted inferior values toward homosexuals of fully visible effeminate gay or muscular tomboy women to be a failed man or woman, which would play a part in affecting their

work quality or unable to fulfill jobs. An impolite tone was used that only attracted an aggressive tone back from victim respondent.

I received name-calling from others as *ah-kteuy* or “evil” sometimes. Some people claimed that “you are too soft like this, how can you work? Why don’t you be strong (masculine)?” I also have experienced a serious argument with my former supervisor. He was my director (foreigner), he asked me “are you male or female” I replied to him “I am female”, he said “then why you put male in your CV?” I replied back angrily “if they allow me to put, I will put it like that.” (Mr. Vireak interview, 20 October 2014).

The tones and words itself carried indignity and discredits the receiver, particularly if it was from a supervisor, it would become a barrier in good relationship between supervisors and subordinate. From this case of Mr. Vireak, name-calling affected their feelings and productivity at work.

In other aspects of the issue, LGBTs in employment may not be able to take stigma and discrimination as an offensive problem, due to the fact it would result in job loss once they argue with co-workers or specifically their supervisors. Others may take name-calling as minor or common issue as it was frequently heard and used against them. Whereas pressure of job-loss and seeking employment posed a more considerable threat compared to arguing with others about name-calling.

### *Gay Jokes*

A verbal expression specifies gays or homosexual people as topic for laughter by name-calling, teasing, mocking, ridicule and harassment etc., a joke which contains an offensive meaning. The level of seriousness of a gay joke can vary according to the relationship between sender of the message and tone used that implied the hurtful meaning of the joke. The word simply illustrates the negative meaning in playful behavior, though it has the intention for teasing and upsetting the receiver.

Usually, gay jokes derived from peer counterparts who interacted with them more often and their upper high-ranking people. The meaning of a joke usually depended on the word choice and stress of tone used. However, the

word itself carried negative meanings rather than positive, even in joking ways. For example, *ah-daeng*, the word expressed in negative form was a specific kind; a youngster referred to as people who are playful and not belong to a social group.

From women co-workers particularly, they usually question me in a way of suspecting me over my gender, they usually joke with me “I thought that new pharmacist is a man, instead it’s *kteuy!*” After joke, we still keep relationship. Nothing is serious. (Ms. Doung interview, 1 October 2014).

Embedded social stigma was determined as being homosexual, useless and a waste of life for not being able to fully form a heterosexual family. Traditionally, the majority believed that a heterosexual family was an ideal family formation, so being homosexual becomes a topic for harassment and jokes. For this case, being an object for jokes might not be serious, but in the long term it was also an influence for a person’s desire to leave their job. On a daily basis, people who were subject to harassment may not be in a good mood, thus productivity at work might drop. The issue was a personal problem rather than a structural or institutional influence, which could be reported in a serious case issue, but not for minor issues. LGBTs suffered from hate, prejudged negatively and immorally while they were with friends or outsiders. Generally, LGBTs avoid communication and being isolated, once they were in the middle of a heterosexual group.

Being homosexual was subject to ridicule, harassment and becomes a topic for joking around. In this sense, one may experience and receive multiple stigma and discrimination in the workplace from different actors. An individual’s dress-style usually became a subject of sexual assault or laughter in the office sphere; through sexual overtones in a joking manner was one of the challenges for LGBTs working in communication and leadership. Firstly, a person was still a determined as man or woman in people’s eyes, that was also one form of sexual identification and if she/he is in between, the discrimination doubled. In addition to this, promotion in the public sector was usually based upon protocol and being bold in appearances, but corruption and an informal relationship with a supervisor was a plus. The discriminated sources were same sex people who behaved in extremely negative ways; they did not value themselves, being playful without any attention on their future had side effects on their attitude.

### *Dress Pressure*

The dress style of LGBTs may also be considered as one form of sexual harassment. In a sense, people usually prejudice negatively on looks, from the way they put on make-up, hairstyle, or dress sense, being looked upon as queer, inappropriate, shocked and alienated etc., against the clothing choices LGBTs wear. These led to exclusions in socialization due to the fear of humiliation on non-conforming dress sense, avoidance and self-loathing. Heterosexual's comments on the way LGBTs dress were factors leading to excuses in participation in social events or special opportunities in the workplace.

Evidently, some LGBTs received indirect discrimination by not being invited to some social events from co-workers with a condition or were invited not whole heartedly. They were completely excluded from their co-workers' wedding, some also were requested to conform to a gender dress code, forced to wear either male or female clothes according to their biological sex. The pressure of clothing and negative compliments may have increased the need to wear their desired dress preferences and express themselves amongst heterosexuals or within a social group. One respondent stated that they experienced pressure in regards to dress style.

I dressed as a woman during the interview, after I worked for few weeks, I was requested by my supervisor to put on make-up and wear a short skirt. I am not sure this is discrimination or not, because maybe they noticed that I don't have make-up, so I replied, "Yes, I can." (Ms. Doung interview, 1 October 2014).

Some LGBTs may adjust themselves into employment circumstances for the job requirements and to save face of requester. For instance, a cross-dressing LGBT was requested to dress in the required uniform of the company according to their birth gender. While this was also pressure to conform, even when they want to express themselves in another preference, in order to fit into the crowd and the formality sphere, they submitted to the conforming dress without hesitation as they wanted to remain in their jobs. If not, they may have faced challenges to find another job due to social stigma and discrimination toward their appearance. Adjustment was a short-term strategy for the first employment in order to get work experience; it also gave some sense of security at work, and to be free from stigma and discrimination.

*Discrimination and Exclusion from Social Events*

Besides work interactions with co-workers and employers, either work related or not related, socialization with colleagues was inevitable. For special occasions like a wedding, party, or other events, some LGBTs may have experienced a reluctance in participating in the events as this situational norm required them to be align with the social conduct of conforming to traditional dress and gender dress codes. In this sense, both host and guest of the invitation renounce any certainty of having a LGBT present on the day. However, some LGBTs shared that they had their own freedom in dress and got invited from their co-workers, except there was a request for a specific dress, thus they chose not to join. This demonstrated that there was some exclusion in participating in social events. Dress choice was another discrimination issue for LGBTs at work, which made their co-worker, expresses their unwilling intentions. Three TM out of four experienced clothing pressure while they were invited for social events, such as weddings or special parties.

According to another interviewee, she confirmed that homosexual people were discriminated through physical appearance e.g., they faced reluctance and exclusion from joining in on social events due to their gender cross-dress style.

For some invitation of social events such as marriage or religious ceremony, LGBTs are invited in terms of work-relationship protocol, but not a real intention/welcome from host due to their cross-dressing style that might bring shame and affect the host's name for who had invited them. (Ms. Sao Sokly interview, 26 September 2014).

Dress choice was another stress added to LGBTs at work during special events, as either choice could follow their identity or follow their born gender would cause them inconvenience in joining the event. LGBTs willingly expressed themselves and wanted to be who they are in every part of the society. Hence, dress choice of their true identity made them feel free and more comfortable to fit in with society. Most heterosexual people hesitated having a LGBT on their special day as it would bring them shame and negative rumors by associating with this type of person. "I usually got invited from my friends or colleague to participate in some social events like ceremonies or wedding party, when they ask me to wear women's traditional clothes, and then I rejected and chose not to go" (Ms. Lida interview, 3 October 2014).



Frequently, clothing was a stressor and oppressor that excluded LGBTs from having socialization with people when they are asked to dress in something different from their personal preference. Social gender-conforming dress pressure and harassment about dress were usually questioned in both serious and non-serious ways. This pressure created a relative sense of reluctance e.g., a lesbian was more comfortable wearing a man's suit. In another example, their choice of selective clothing, can categorize them as different and inappropriate.

### *Active Harassment*

Active harassment was seen as a long-term and repeated occurrence that was associated with intentional or non-intentional behavior; a verbal expression that hurts or harms a person who was suspected or identified as homosexual. It could be seen through insults, threats, stares, curses, scolds, humiliation, touch etc. This harassment is defined as behavior that threatens or torments a person or group. It can be persistent or a one-off incident. It can come in the form of verbal abuse (written or spoken), intimidation, humiliation, exclusion, insults, threats, violence and physical harm.

These were factors, which caused a dilemma when their gender was disclosed in the workplace. Common forms were seen as hard to monitor, in terms of policy measurement as they became excluded from socialization in interpersonal interaction between people. The level began with verbal teasing in terms of clothing, appearance and sexuality in general, to physical harassment by unwanted touching that was considered a criminal offense.

### *Sexually based harassment*

Stigma and discrimination was usually derived from personal perceptions of an individual's life interaction. It was regardless of their religion, nationality or biological sex, incomes etc., other than an embedded rule of misconduct in traditional gender norms which were believed to be a main source of discrimination by heterosexuals toward homosexuals. In employment, basic levels of discriminations were different in relation with the positive attitude of a supervisor and a LGBT individual's capacity plus their positive attitude. It was expected that LGBTs usually worked harder and put more effort into their work in order to be recognized and compensate against people's negative perspective attached to them. However, no matter how tolerant the working

environment was, minor forms of stigma and discrimination still existed from co-workers, supervisors and employers. These included insults over one's appearance, re-naming or impolite claims and disrespect against LGBTs.

My direct supervisor is usually addicted to young woman. He verbally expressed his behavior by devaluing gay people saying that "I sleep with many women, but if it is different to sleep with people of half man or woman?" Regarding the promotion condition, most of the time skills and ability are not the basis but rather money under table (corruption) in public sector, it usually refers to those who know how to introduce women to male supervisors, be dishonest, exaggerate, political party oriented, jealous, oppress one another, selfish, benefits and position oriented etc., (Ms. Borey interview, 15 November 2014).

Harassment conceived mainly in verbal patterns denoted inferiority, disrespect and less value toward an individual who was assumed or believed to be homosexual. Being an object for sexual humiliation might be a serious determinant that fueled a desire to leave jobs. Everyone, not just LGBTs, have the ultimate goal of having the opportunity to compete in a standardized workplace. However for LGBTs the challenge is doubled due to the negative perceptions and social norms of superior heterosexuals which result in unfavorable conditions and different treatment toward gay people for their soft manner and sexual preferences amongst co-workers.

In the context of social discourse, LGBTs have experienced and endured endless harassment. All these factors also pressure them into obliging with and restricting their own freedoms. The fear of ignorance, disregard, and disrespect from co-workers and employers also affects their productivity and career growth. The cold behavior from colleagues who did not welcome LGBTs into their conversation gave the impression that LGBTs did not belong in the same social work group; or spread rumors around about an individual's sexuality.

Mostly, what I received from some colleagues were some positive advice that I am now old enough to have a committed relationship with any girl that I love and others asked "how do you do in bed with your partner?" It is not a serious question as it is true doubt. Some days I heard they talked about me

behind my back that “a person who is against nature is like that” she works in the admin section from the same department as me. (Ms. Khema interview, 10 November 2014).

Based on this embarrassing question, it was understood that LGBTs were treated as abnormal and unfavorable companions to be with amongst heterosexual peers in the workplace on the basis of their SOGI, which was unrelated to their work performance and capacity.

Harassment about dress and behavior were usually questioned in both serious and not serious ways. Verbal harassment toward individuals about their sexual performance was considered impolite or inappropriate. Even in conversations between heterosexuals these concerns violate of ethical issues and a respect of privacy for everybody, and not just for individual LGBTs. The negative behavior toward LGBTs was attached with their identity even without any wrong doing on their part, so compared to heterosexual co-workers they did not have fair or equal treatment.

### *Physical Touch*

Physical harassment involving unwanted or un-consensual touch were not experienced by LGBTs much, instead they received more verbal harassment. Most employers denoted this issue as sensitive, even though there was no mention in the policy, employees must be aware of this and without any statement to inform them, when there was a case like that, it was a criminal case, therefore victims can take it personally and sue the person who abused them in any circumstances. Remarkably, one gay who worked in a hotel experienced a minor touch on his cheeks from his co-workers, though he had stated it was not a serious problem for him, and in general it was considered a casual friendship behavior.

I got some touch on my cheek and chest from either my male or female co-workers. It is just simple; I don't mind that, it is not very often. But sometimes, I'm not in joking mood all the time. If I feel hurt I will stare at them. (Mr. Rotha interview, 17 October 2014).

In this case, Mr. Rotha frequently experienced physical touch from his co-workers and did not exclusively report it as a physical harassment to his supervisor or employer, although he had stated it was not a serious problem

for him. It was a conscious physical harassment and criminal issue to be considered, which would usually be noted in the company's rules. In this sense, it can be concluded that gays' voice was less influential within a heterosexual environment, since the issue was perceived as minor and of least concern even when the problem was already stated in the internal policy. This blatant disregard may be due to a lack of voice amongst gays, either their issue was frequently overlooked or fear of more stigmatization amongst their peers and co-workers may be perceived as un-friendly and closed-minded allowing for this continued so-called friendly way of expressing jokes.

### *Verbal Harassment*

Ms. Chanthou, a LGBT who works for the military force had experiences in following situation, "I received verbal harassment on stage and was forced to entertain a group during break time is visible abuse of my rights of being heavily pointed and appointed against my own will."

In this regard, the sector accepted her for her maleness expression in competing with males either in positions or qualification. However extra hard work and effort was also expected to reduce humiliation and work capacity, granted she instead received double punishment compared to what females (Non-LGBTs) were supposed to receive, that denoted her identity as different neither belonging to man nor woman.

This was an indirect discrimination that people may not talk about, though they were aware of what the majority considered about homosexuals was influenced by traditional gender norms in every sector of employment. Those that differed would be expected to have some attached characteristic that labeled them as inferior and vulnerable. The following was an experience of a gay/MSM teacher at a public school where he was humiliated verbally in the workplace.

By calling me *nak kru* in front of others, it can affect my profession as a "teacher", I know being a teacher of the arts sometimes requires me to be soft, so it also translates into gay manner, sometimes, I also feel upset. (Mr. Sopheakra interview, 19 October 2014).

Gender switching notions reflects the purpose of humiliation to make an individual LGBT disappointed based on this teasing tone. In this case, it can affect his profession at work and bring more shame, allowing for others to devalue him further for being homosexual, unaccepted in society, looked down upon and regarded as useless.

### *Violence against LGBTs*

The term “violence against LGBTs”, just like violence against heterosexuals means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to people, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (Council of Europe, 2007).

In Phnom Penh city, the LGBT’s rights violation and violence was higher than in other provinces in Cambodia. However, in those other provinces the discrimination was higher compared to the situation in Phnom Penh as stated by Ms. Alexis Lortez, an activist of LGBT rights.

There was limited information on how serious the situation was, and what were the conditions of LGBTs in the workplace. Most of them did not disclose themselves confidentially, especially for those with higher incomes or a high senior position. These were the people who were the most mysterious regarding the status of their sexuality, e.g., people may have faked their real identity, even married the opposite sex and form a family for the sake of their reputation in society and in the workplace.

Those who were in low or medium class position victimized stigma and discrimination more frequently. It resulted in a desire to leave work and caused emotional damage. The severity of discrimination varied which depended on patterns of employment between public and private. Within the private sector, the difference was taken further between national and international employers, though it was totally individualism inclusion for discrimination that had no relation with people’s nationality, their age or education. However, discrimination weighs on each person’s perspective which was influenced by his or her own views, understanding, open mindedness, social background and socialization etc. In Khmer contexts, an ideal gender norm of maleness in society should be overwhelmingly tough, hard and aggressive. For females should be expected that women be soft and femininely pretty.

Heterosexual behavior gave rise to violence against LGBT people for their failure to meet the dominant heterosexual's belief as ideal man or woman. Heterosexuals' treatment toward those with different actions and conduct against the normal masculine or feminine manners and general traditional gender norms tended to devalue a LGBT person; and associated non-maleness similar to women for being weak, compared to masculinity for being superior.

### *Threat of violence*

Threat of violence in this context refers to verbal threats to harm or hurt somebody physically for their wrong doing or misbehavior without a proper reason to make them feel insecure, fearful, shocked and uncomfortable. Threat of violence affected a person who received the message directly or indirectly to disrupt their psychological health and productivity at work. The following case was an example of a threat of violence made against an LGBT in the workplace.

I think it's people's personal problem not related to work because they hate gay people and they don't like me. Sometimes, they even said that "if I was prime minister, they would burn all *kteuy* to death" in front of me to tease me and make me angry. Some people claimed that "you are too soft like this, how can you work? Why don't you be strong (masculine)?" (Mr. Vireak interview, 20 October 2014).

A verbal threat of violence was an interpersonal type of stigma and discrimination. In this instance; verbal abuse was delivered by a co-worker of a familiar person in an organization. Interpersonal stigma and discrimination was solely a non-work issue, which happened to a gays or homosexuals on the basis of their gender that consequently resulted in an unfavorable conversation and severely impacts the receiver of the message both emotionally and professionally.

This message was denoted in the form of threat of violence against LGBTs as an expression of deep hate. It could be generally considered as personal issue rather than a work issue. Use of indirect verbal humiliation, for instance, a scorned tone of devaluing a LGBT's life was very serious when they implied a strong hate by suggesting to "burn all *kteuy*".

Threat of violence was relatively caused by the disliking attitude or perspective of message senders (either a co-worker or employer) toward LGBTs on the basis of their SOGI. This intensively signified hate, exclusion and rejection towards LGBTs and their presence in the same work place led to poor work communication and interpersonal pressure.

### *Physical Punishment*

Physical punishment was known as punishment that was imposed in particular employment contexts, e.g., within the military force. The aim was to reduce chances of repeated mistakes that may occur in the future. It could be seen through indirect violence, such as lifting heavy weights, push-ups, running around, hitting and many other forms that may hurt or injure someone after receiving such a punishment. A person who had experienced physical punishment may have become injured physically, but the emotional pain caused may last far longer. The following case was an example of physical punishment by a lesbian who worked as a soldier. She was victimized with physical punishment by both her supervisor and her co-workers.

Sometimes they use heavy and rude words that made me feel very angry, I didn't go to work, but being absent for four to five days will be punished by my supervisor as this is military rule. When I got back to work as normal, I had to receive some punishment that included carrying car tires and running around 3 rounds, then push-up for 30 times. For men this requires 50 times and woman 10 times. (Ms. Chanthou interview, 23 October 2014).

In Ms. Chanthou's case, she encountered severe physical violence on the basis of her gender and was victimized in several other forms. Not only was she humiliated both personally and publicly, but she also suffered physical violence that was considered as violence against LGBTs. For her case, she was a tomboy who looked tough and energetic, but she was born with a woman's anatomy and body structure.

Emotional violence also existed from her being name-called on stage to embarrass her status and issue heavy punishment, which gave increasing pressure for her to leave the job. The military's rule had clearly stated the different

types of punishment based on the type of mistake and gender. However, Ms. Chanthou was discriminated and left in an undefined gender type and so was ridiculed by her co-workers and supervisor.

The behavior changes before and after one's revealed identity usually brought shock amongst co-workers. The discrimination was in both direct and indirect forms established by an individual, even when she was already in a so-called male job or male oriented employment (military force). The sector still expected her to be a womanly employee, yet she was expected to work extra hard and received much tougher punishments in between male and female levels, an indirect physical violence. The workload and her identity mismatch between the particular gender of neither female nor male gave the sense that she was different, thus she did not belong to a particular recognized heterosexual gender (male or female). Again, this was exclusion and mistreatment of LGBTs within job gender segregation. As a result she was insulted verbally and humiliated publicly in her workplace, treating her differently officially across all levels in the whole military organization.

The employment that a person held did not have any connection with his/her identity. For example, Ms. Chanthou was engaged in a masculine gender job like the military, but she was still expected to behave and speak like a woman, dressed in a woman's uniform, even though she behaved in masculine way and preferred the male uniform.

### *Favoritism for Promotion and Opportunity*

Favoritism was a notion of giving special favors or treatment toward a particular individual and group. It is a state which leads to unequal treatment or unfair preferential treatment at the partial expense of another individual. The discretion brought about a result of incentives and altruism.

I receive equal wage and other benefits as other teachers too. I remember when I went to a province, someone called me about a training opportunity in Korea, but it was a missed call. I wonder if he is willing to select me to go, why not call me again. I was replaced by someone instead. I'm also not sure whether this was caused by my sexual orientation and gender identity or because I'm not submissive to the boss. My supervisor likes drinking, he sometimes calls me and other



teachers to drink outside, and I don't like doing that, I sometimes refused. Hence, he doesn't like me compared to others. Teaching schedule is usually fixed, because of special favors and also I am not really submissive to my supervisor. It also has connection with my personality that I don't like drinking and be with them most of the times. (Mr. Bonna interview, 4 November 2014).

In the case of a suspected gay or lesbian revealing themselves and admitting to being homosexual can lead to a significant difference in treatment in behavior from others who notice them. Within the same workplace context, those who knew Mr. Bonna's identity and those who did not, treated him in very different ways. Some people gave him the cold shoulder, which for some gay people they would react by behaving more obviously and open as a revenge response to challenge the discrimination or to tease.

For this gay man issue, the combination of SOGI and the factors of traditional norm in management could be a cause of difference in benefits and other opportunities. According to what Mr. Bonna's said, in the workplace, there were some friendly people and also haters around him. His own personality could also be a determinant that kept him away or made it seemed like he did not belong with the majority. Even though, his supervisor was not aware of his identity, but expected Mr. Bonna to be submissive and supportive of his opinion either in work or outside work. Mr. Bonna's had a different manner, which was unfavorable for his boss and also other male co-workers that expected him to hang out with them and drink beer.

The issue was relatively linked with this 'outside' factor rather than his real work performance and skills. It was an extra informal criterion to be considered into any opportunity besides money under table or relative networks within the public sector, which was also based upon the size of the opportunity or benefits. In Mr. Bonna's case, the benefits offered were suitable for him as he was a highly educated person and a hard working teacher. Yet, his personality of independence became the barrier to a better relationship with the boss and others at his workplace, with this in mind, he, himself had no idea whether it was because of his identity or personal behavior.

## **Formal Stigma and Discrimination**

Formal stigma and discrimination against LGBTs in employment denoted unequal treatment toward them in terms of work benefits. These benefits could be resources, information, opportunities for promotion and consideration for leadership or work effectiveness. To some extent, this type of stigma and discrimination was understood as a hidden factor of an indirect excuse to refuse LGBTs in their career development.

Discrimination from employers was relatively a general response from all of the respondent LGBTs, who each narrated a positive understanding when it was witnessed from their employers or supervisors. Along with a tolerant environment, negative behaviors amongst heterosexual staff toward LGBTs were uncontrolled and witnessed in the working environment. The mistreatment signs against LGBTs in the workplace included a lack of interest from co-workers, avoiding communication with LGBTs, not sharing information or jokes with LGBT peers etc.

### ***Lack of Access to Information***

Lack of access to information was a barrier of gender identity for LGBTs. It excluded them from being able to obtain information or be involved in workplace opportunities. Due to a relationship gap made by an invisible distance set between heterosexual co-workers and homosexuals, LGBTs were unable to fully anticipate equal treatment or provisions.

When people had any information (work or personal) to share, they don't want to share with gay people, instead they whisper around to others, in this sense it shows their discrimination of leaving us out as the outsider who is does not belong to the group. (Ms. Sopheap interview, 16 October 2014).

Behavior changes were also expected once people became fully aware of an individual gay/lesbian. The change in the work place could be from being less valued to becoming more interesting. For an employer who already accepted a gay/lesbian individual at work, usually, they not only recruited him/her about the behavior and dress style, but rather focused on their performance and effort instead.

Consequently, ignorance and exclusion of information sharing or less communication with LGBTs would lower work communication and affect the work relationship between employees. Exclusion from a group was common for most LGBTs at work. From most heterosexual peers' perspective, LGBTs did not belong with them even if they worked in the same department. From this aspect, unattended important information sharing with LGBTs may have led to a decreased opportunity at work or lower chances of promotion, since heterosexual people could access the information while LGBTs cannot.

For heterosexual co-workers, they usually generalized gay people as bad and judged them in negative ways. The indifference and ignorance caused by the presence of LGBTs in the workplace equally meant cutting their work potential and did not include them for career development.

### *Lack of Access to Resources and Opportunities*

Discrimination on the basis of poverty commonly exists in most societies. It is discrimination not only between heterosexuals, but also for LGBTs. For those LGBTs who came from a poor background and were considered odd, the discrimination doubled. The result of this translated into barriers to gain access to public services e.g., better education and healthcare were already pre-determined by their capital power.

Money determines what you should get or do. If they have money, they have power. When you have money you can buy justice, jobs and degrees, whatever things, you can buy healthcare etc., and this is a very dangerous understanding that is now a common understanding that shows us the abuse of weak human rights because of money, level of corruption and rights violations. Wherever you go to access services and you know you are supposed to have money, but if you don't have money, you're not going to get anything. (Ms. Alexis Lortez interview, 30 October 2014).

According to Ms. Alexis Lortez, LGBTs faced bigger challenges compared to heterosexuals not only because of their poverty, but also their gender. It was obvious the gender inequality in society still showed a wide gap between males and females, reflected by a wider and further bias for LGBTs compared to heterosexuals. For instance, lesbians frequently experienced violence and discrimination not only on the base of their gender, but on other features too. The discrimination against women might be seen as popularized, though once

it happened to lesbians; it was usually hidden and indirect. Transgenders or gays who were school drop-outs had the inability to gain access to healthcare and information, thus experienced social exclusion and heavier discrimination. This forced them into a more vulnerable state exposed to harm such as drug abuse, gang groups and sex work due to heavier discrimination and poverty. The following case was from an activist at a LGBT NGO.

From my working experience, gay and TW exacerbate the drop-out rate in high levels and results in more vulnerability. However, both major groups were actively involved in low-paid jobs in garment sectors, hospitality (restaurant and hotels), small private companies, sex-workers, and performers (e.g., KTV, make-up artist and media). (Ms. Phalla interview, 2 November 2014).

In other aspects, social norms against gender variant people were exclusive in the family sphere and the whole society. Women had a much stronger attachment to family compared to males; thus, lesbians had gained higher levels of education than gay or TW. In Cambodian contexts, fear of being outside the home was a factor to discourage women from staying on their own or with group, so in this sense they had more chances for education. Unlike gay people, who generally possessed a stronger sense of self-protection, made them stay safer by being outside of the home. This denoted some limited space between genders, particularly LGBTs to express themselves publicly and enjoy equal rights for more jobs options and treatment.

In this regard, effeminate gay or TW faced heavier discrimination due to their visibility of gender that stimulated isolation and exclusion. This promoted them into some gender job occupations with low-pay and limited decent job options, such as waiter/waitress, make-up parlor, masseurs, bartender, factories labor, sex workers etc.

The skills and capacity of staff regardless of their sexuality was still grounded for career development and growth, importantly this was the basis of anti-discrimination in employment. Considering social discourse of sexual norms, a person of suitable knowledge and capability may require further appropriateness of an ideal gender, but not if one was either in-between or homosexual. This was raised in reality with comparisons between those who

were 100% masculine or feminine in both appearance and manners were likely offered more priority than those of a homosexual status.

Table 5.1 summarizes the different interpersonal forms and formal forms of stigma and discrimination by category as experienced by LGBT respondents.

Interpersonal Forms		
Form of Violence (from)	Employer/Supervisor	Colleagues
Harassment/ Insult/ Verbal Pressure	<p>“There were some male staff who touched my subordinate (who was gay) on his chest and put their arms on his shoulders” (Ms. Sopheap interview, 16 October 2014).</p> <p>“My supervisor also knew this; he called me <i>kru pédé</i> and others call me <i>nak kru</i>” (Mr. Sopheaktra interview, 19 October 2014).</p>	<p>“Some female co-workers and people under my supervision hug me from behind sometimes” (Ms. Lida, interview, 3 October 2014).</p>
Ignore / Reject		<p>“After they saw my effeminate behavior, they stopped talking to me, it was from my other division and their position is also lower than mine” (Mr. Vireak interview, 20 October 2014).</p> <p>“A man who suspected and was aware about me refused to share room with me. So they usually talk less with me too” (Mr. Bonna interview, 4 November 2014).</p>

Interpersonal Forms		
Form of Violence (from)	Employer/Supervisor	Colleagues
Stigma & Prejudice	<p>“Some days I heard they talked about me behind my back that ‘a person who is against nature is like that’” (Ms. Khema interview, 10 November 2014).</p> <p>“At my workplace from people in different sections asked me ‘why I love same-sex, is there any future?’” (Ms. Lida, interview, 3 October 2014).</p>	<p>“Some people at my old and current workplace also claimed ‘What an arrogant <i>mi-kteuy</i>? How strong is <i>mi-kteuy</i>?’” (Ms. Borey interview, 15 November 2014).</p>
Corrective Advice	<p>“Usually people say in a way of corrective advice that I should change and should think of having children and a family.” (Ms. Monica interview, 21 November 2014)</p>	
Emotional Pressure	<p>“My supervisor likes drinking, he sometimes calls me and other teachers to drink outside, and I don’t like doing that, I sometimes refused. Hence, he doesn’t like me compared to others” (Mr. Bonna interview, 4 November 2014).</p> <p>“One supervisor who is under my employer repeatedly asked me to ‘change my dress and appearance’” (Ms. Chanda interview, 26 September 2014).</p>	

Interpersonal Forms		
Form of Violence (from)	Employer/Supervisor	Colleagues
Threat of Violence		“Sometimes, they even said that ‘if I was prime minister, they would burn all <i>kteuy</i> to death” (Mr. Vireak interview, 20 October 2014).
Informal Favor / Favoritism	“My supervisor likes drinking, he sometimes calls me and other teachers to drink outside, and I don’t like doing that, I sometimes refused. Hence, he doesn’t like me compared to others.” (Mr. Bonna interview, 4 November 2014).	

Formal Forms		
Form of Violence (from)	Employer/Supervisor	Colleagues
No promotion	“Only for those who know how to be submissive with supervisor, but for me, my supervisor doesn’t like me. So I don’t have this opportunity because I’m different like this” (Ms. Chanthou interview, 23 October 2014).	
Limited Opportunity / Training	“There are many heterosexual employees promoted, why choose to promote gay?” (Ms. Sopheap interview, 16 October 2014).	“Opportunity is provided by management’s decision, if manager likes a particular person, he will assign their name for training.” (Ms. Khema interview, 10 November 2014).

**Table 5.1: Summary of Interpersonal and Formal forms of Stigma and Discrimination against LGBTs** (Source: Author, Field Interviews 2014)

## Chapter Summary

Various forms of stigma and discrimination were experienced in the workplace at different levels. Types were interpersonal conflicts of interest concerned with gender norms and individuality. Professional impacts involved some sort of stigma and discrimination forms that brought bias in benefits and opportunities to partake in any activity. Stigma and discrimination were peoples' personal issue toward others, no matter how long or how much they were involved with society or work patterns they engaged in, but their own gender perspectives toward the LGBT minority still existed. The SOGI issue was almost invisible in employment aspects as it was not made fully aware of and not considered in most workplaces' policy or internal rules. Even in NGO sectors that tended to understand the value in humanity, such as rights, freedom and equality. Since LGBTs were a minor group that did not receive much concern from institutional levels, the factor of gender exclusion could also be derived from people's disregard for the issue and the discriminated victims were left vulnerable in seeking the right support from any particular responsible actor. LGBTs had very little and limited space to express themselves and also to be fully provided with employment opportunities in a non-discriminated working relationship spheres or proper benefits, whilst they had enough knowledge and skills their gay behaviors may have been too revealing.

The main source of discrimination was frequently found to not have been derived from employers. LGBTs were granted job offers for recognition of their capability rather than their sexuality and were treated the same as their peer co-workers who were equal in terms of benefits and opportunity in the workplace. Instead, they were stigmatized and discriminated directly and personally from their colleagues based on the individual's own opinions. Within the employment sphere, employers have obliged with all the correct conduct towards everybody with further protection for any serious cases that a LGBT employee may have received. Situations were usually solved by the human resources department, despite, not all employers interfering and being supportive with regard to the issue. It was undeniable that stigma and discrimination against LGBTs still exists in the workplace unless the victim was in high demand, very talented and showed potential to the employer or organization.



## Chapter 6

# Impact of Stigma and Discrimination

This chapter illustrates an important feature focused on a variety of impacts from stigma and discrimination against LGBTs in their lives and in the work place from what they experienced including emotional state and career. It also examines the different experiences of LGBTs in employment within three main sectors; this includes public sector consisting of government and public agencies; private sector, which are companies or private enterprises; and social sectors in the form of civil organizations or non-government organizations. Finally, the chapter will discuss the professional impacts, favoritism as well as positive discrimination toward LGBTs in employment.

Stigma and discrimination portray interests of social norms that interfere with LGBT's sexual orientation and dress behaviors. People contrastingly ignore LGBTs' value in education, position and capacity. Gender conforming becomes an oppression barrier in fighting for equality for LGBTs. Gender extremism is a critical cause for LGBTs to be rejected and misunderstood, they are either not recognized as natural and cannot be accepted morally.

Impact of stigma and discrimination engender some sets of related-impacts to an individual's socio-economic status, personality and visibility. Victimized individuals based on these characteristics influence change to individual's social position and psychosocial status. This multi-disciplinary term shows inter-related psychosocial impacts, which consist of emotional, psychological and social states within the impacted individual's environment. Impacts are a non-conscious intensity; impact is abstract because it cannot be

fully realized in description. Individual experienced emotional impacts include burnout, stress, anxiety, hopelessness, constant anger, being pessimistic and so forth.

## **Psychosocial Impact and Gender Visibility**

A psychological impact of gender segregation brought labeling that left people with a lack of social relation with others, specifically self-stigma and fear to engage with heterosexuals. The gender issue of homosexuals was a cognitive impact of an affected individual's psychologically e.g., constant negative thoughts, which led to silent expression and social exclusion.

Some outcomes signified depression, isolation, stress, disappointment, and pessimism and suicide were the severe results of psychosocial affects. Lisak (1994) claimed that in an analysis of sexual abuse, reports found that victims experienced common feelings of worthlessness, emptiness, and inferiority, which tended to worsen over time to become deeply ingrained negative identities.

Individuals victimized particular interpersonal stigma and discrimination against their gender e.g., they faced verbal harassment, negative prejudice or humiliation constantly at work about their physical appearance or dress style. These fostered negative views of the social environment included in social interaction and self-motivation, that consequently developed into indirect pressure in the forms of forced or being threatened to hide one's identity. Doing so could be a temporary approach, for instance, for lesbians or TM adjusting into an uncomfortable dress and wearing make-up, but this caused deep feelings of job dissatisfaction and eventually led up to resignation.

From my study there were a few cases of lesbians and a TM who expressed and shared their experiences of psychosocial impacts and the emotional effects from dress pressure at work regarding their stigmatized gender. In one example from a respondent "It made me embarrassed when I tried to get close to people, but they tried to avoid me" (Mr. Leakhena interview, 21 October 2014).

The visibility of homosexual behavior was revealed explicitly through physical appearance and dress style. This was compared within groups that some lesbians or TM's and TW's may have been victimized significantly more than gays/MSM or bisexual groups. The latter groups were particularly difficult

to separate from heterosexuals based on their clothing. There was no case of any gays/MSM being harassed directly through the way they dressed even without their soft gesture or homosexual behavior.

Visibility of LGBTs was a main categorical weakness that was noticed easily. Lesbians and TM who usually cross-dressed obviously proclaimed their emotional and exhausted feelings of being harassed, being made into an object of a joke and getting embarrassed about how people question their sexuality and gender using sexual overtones about the way they dress. Joking about their sexuality would mean a painful jokes and offensive jokes that made one feel uncomfortable in a heterosexual environment. They usually isolated themselves to avoid questions and verbal harassment. Visibility of their gender reflected LGBT's treatment in the workplace and their psychosocial state was affected by that.

Victimized persons of this particular form of pressure in the workplace suffered one or more psychological impacts in relation with their emotions. This was translated into multiple emotional states related to their socialization at work. In general, this was seen as a striking emotional experience with factors contributed by negative mental qualities including isolation and internalization of shame.

Within employment and society as a whole, LGBTs frequently experienced prejudgment and negative perceptions that provided self-embarrassment caused by exclusion from heterosexuals. The denoted psychosocial impacts interplayed over a person's life by lack of communication with others. Through this, LGBTs distanced themselves away from social relationships and isolated themselves from people, even within workplace sphere. Due to being in a crowd, social interactions became difficult and required strength of social acceptance and strength that allowed enough security of their gender to be free from all sorts of discrimination.

Regardless of sector, visibility was a main source of stigma and discrimination. This was observed from lesbian and trans-men groups in particular who had stated that direct psychosocial impacts came from dress pressure. All of the nine lesbians and four TM described their pain and emotional suffering after they were embarrassed about their hairstyle and dress at work. Physical appearances of people were expected to follow their biological identity accordingly. In this sense lesbian and TM groups who possessed their

own unique visible style of masculine dress or kept short hair at work were usually victimized with verbal discrimination in comparison to bisexual and gay groups for their different and explicit visibility. Based on the TM's case by Mr. Leakhena, he faced similar depressed feelings related to his physical looks at work. In this regard, it was assumed that transgender types likely experienced remarkable psychosocial impacts compared to a non-visible groups e.g., bisexuals or gays. For some lesbians and TMs, they were mostly attracted to workplaces that had no clothing/uniform restriction rather than benefits or other conditions. The visibility of their identity was more important than the fear of being discriminated.

Bisexual people were seen as the most visually hidden group amongst the four types. Unless they disclosed their identity, there was no hint or suggestion through dress style or hair-do to indicate that this person was bisexual. In this sense, the bisexual group was assumed the safest and most convenient group who were possibly able to protect themselves from stigma and discrimination in their life or within the employment sphere using their unidentifiable gender. Colleagues and employers might not identify them from their dress behavior when these people consider their own privacy of sexual orientation as confidential. In this regard, amongst the LGBT community, bisexuals were the least discriminated having no obvious visible identifiable manner and appearance.

It is difficult to label bisexual people, I don't believe in that. But, for gay and lesbian, they are very visible to see. And it could be a bisexual by force in Cambodian context whether for family's sake or position at work, for instance a friend of mine; he was gay, but he got married with a woman and had a child. And another example, in the ministry I work with, some excellencies are lesbians, but they don't disclose it at the workplace. (Mr. Rottanak interviewed, 24 October 2014).

Contrastingly, gays/MSM that may not have been so visibly identified with cross-dressing compared to lesbians/TM, did experience different pressures which disturbed their mental state. Gays/MSM received humiliation and verbal harassment of having a gender that was against nature. From heterosexual perspectives this notion toward the homosexual men produced similar

tendencies related to the lack of concentration at work and isolated themselves from groups, specifically heterosexuals.

However, for two TW in the cases of Mr. Rottanak and Mr. Vireak, they were generally humiliated for being a failed-women by their male-like sounds, this became the topic for jokes, that created self-embarrassment, thus reduced work communication. This signified a separation and social distance in communications in a friendly way between people by gender. It was illustrated through discrimination by heterosexual co-workers who more or less had set their distance from their homosexual colleagues, besides the work relationship this appeared to be even worse outside the work sphere.

Gays were denoted with less visibility stigma and discrimination, but reversely this became a pressure on their freedom of expression through dress. Among my respondents there were five cases of gay/MSM that expressed their fear of being prejudged at work and felt more at risk from cursing and blame through dress, or if they kept long-hair. In one example, Mr. Rotha stated that “People were aware of my gay behavior through my gesture and walking, although I was not allowed to have long-hair at work, I wore a male uniform like other guys” (Mr. Rotha interview, 17 October 2014).

Being less visible in dress style was a factor linked to people’s position at work. In some circumstances, e.g., high school teachers Mr. Bonna and Mr. Sopheaktra, respondent’s work position conflicted with their physical appearance and were the main pressures in expressing their gender publicly. Therefore, clothing adjustment became an involuntary choice out of fear and embarrassment. There were four example cases of LGBTs’ struggle to adjust their public visibility in relation with their work. People from different sectors voiced their pressure for dress adjustment in the workplace in the following situations:

Example 1: “My boss said wearing womanly is not a good marketing for me, thus I should wear as man for my work.”  
(Mr. Vireak interview, 20 October 2014).

Example 2: “During some big social ceremonies arranged by my workplace, in which many high ranking officials were

present, I have to dress in women's traditional clothes, so I borrowed from my wife." (Ms. Neang interview, 17 November 2014).

Example 3: "this NGO helped me during my worse time as I left home, it is the only place that understands my problem. So, I worked here as a peers support officer for other LGBTs." (Ms. Leakhena interview, 21 October 2014).

Example 4: I've received many job rejections, and sometimes they even refused me for interview. Only this NGO hired me, I worked as volunteer and I received a small wage about US\$60 per month. Mostly, I instruct other target groups (sex worker MSM and TW) to prevent from HIV and Sexually Transmitted Disease. (Mr. Rottanak interview, 19 November 2014).

Dress pressure was less restricted and more flexible in private companies and CSOs compared to public workplaces, such as government agencies which tended to be more formalized with a dress code that aligns with conservative gender norms. In this sense, lesbians and TMs faced more psychosocial impacts directly linked to disgrace. Synthetically, either in public workplaces, private enterprises or CSOs, people would be stigmatized and discriminated on the same basis of their explicit dress style. Within private sectors, dress code tended to be more flexible with less consideration focused on gender, e.g., women in public sectors were usually expected to conform to womanly clothes, such as skirts, blouse or dresses. Some private companies only required staff to dress in their company uniform, although it might be adjustable according to their gender preference. Similarly, CSO sectors also allowed more adaptability on dress, which fostered their visibility higher in these areas, and without dress pressure it became an attractive work condition for LGBTs in this specific sector (refer to Table 4.7).

In the CSO sector, particularly work for humanitarian visions that were supposed to champion concerns about individual rights, believed in tolerating gender diversity. Among the respondents CSOs employed three LGBTs, which consisted of two TM and one TW respectively (refer to Table 3.1). Observations showed that TW and TMs in this study pressed out their visibility as trans-

people in the CSO sector the most, which worked objectively to empower LGBTs.

CSOs had a better tolerance toward TMs and TWs visibility, their capacity and qualification level. Transgenders were trained for tasks and worked effectively without any visibility type of discrimination. Considering their socio-economic background, they earned US\$100-US\$300 (refer to Table 4.5), two of them engaged in semi-skilled job types from their high-school level of education. While a TM worked in a skilled job in accordance to her bachelor degree level.

Undoubtedly, the sector's nature in supporting LGBTs was a positive reason that allowed their visibility to be presented. This was done without fear and any conditional pressure forced upon them for their physical expression towards their organizational goal; thus, a gender-neutral environment was established. In this sense, it was assumed that not all CSO or NGO sectors were all alike in terms of having gender discrimination, particularly discrimination against LGBTs. It was confirmed that most sectors still placed conditions on LGBT's visibility at work, along with their professional qualities and expectations to limit their expression of gender variance. For example, people in high-ranking positions usually must have a good awareness of expressing their gender as this played a vital role that affected their credibility and confidentiality as an ideal man or woman.

LGBTs faced stigma and discrimination when they did not conform to a standardized idea of man or woman with their physical appearance. The psychosocial impact had a connection with their visibility in the direct forms of sexual violence. Impacts from stigma and discrimination on the basis of gender involved how much people could be identified as "male or female". The higher the similarity of becoming a particular gender, the lower the discrimination would be.

An ascribed gender norm was deeply respected and highly regarded when it came to the ideal male or female. Extra credentials were given to people in social positions through their physical appearance. It was understood that interpersonal discrimination against gays concerning their physical visibility was lighter compared to lesbians. However, upon gender disclosure of being homosexual actually impacted all the group types.

## Professional Impacts

Professional impacts referred to effects that brought results of failure or undeveloped career goals interfered by stigma and discrimination. Based on their gender identity, for instance, their soft or masculine behavior and dress might have undermined their leadership. To be accepted as a professional, fear of disclosure and discrimination affected their good interpersonal relationship with co-workers.

Professional impact was potentially a workplace's discrimination outcome. It pressured LGBTs professionally and they broadly suffered in their positions, both in economic states and social development on the basis of their gender. The feature of professional impact could be seen as bias treatment and work opportunities between heterosexuals and homosexuals which were a direct or possible result of their gender. A behavior or written form of judgment toward LGBTs at work in term of revocation upon hiring, defining and assigning work, vocational training, advancement, promotion, remuneration, social benefits, discipline or termination of employment contract were considered on the basis of their identity. Social stigma and discrimination contributed to doubled economic violence against LGBTs who were the marginalize group, particularly when it was linked with their visibility, level of education and work position.

Interpersonal stigma and discrimination appeared to influence an individuals' work performance because verbal teasing, comments, rumors or direct conversation often hurt victims emotionally, which disturbed their concentration at work with feelings that they have not met the expected work performance. LGBTs expressed their experiences of fear from people's pre-judgments in the workplace as it affected their emotions. Consequently, it dramatically altered their productivity and performance at work as stated in the following example, "when you feel comfortable with yourself, it is a core factor to do everything for life-style and living. But when you can't even express yourself; stress comes and with fear; how could you focus on work?" (Mr. Vireak interview, 20 October 2014).

Lack of self-esteem and confidence were other frequent outcomes for stigmatized and discriminated LGBT victims in the workplace. It was consequently illustrated by insufficient reasons for unattainable promotion opportunities due to disturbance effects that a person received via interpersonal



discrimination. The lack of promotion was usually measured by the number of years that a LGBT stayed in the same position and other non-work factors that created challenges for them to advance their level in the workplace.

In contrast, people with full professionalism opportunities or promotions were believed to have had a good assessment of their work, and had good work relationships with colleagues and their supervisors. It was these acquired competencies, skills and personality traits that provoked a positive judgment. With this in mind, LGBTs usually faced a gender barrier and their appearances unfairly degraded their leadership qualities for the higher position, rather than being unqualified or not having enough capacity in their role and responsibility at work.

### *Visibility and Promotions*

It was agreed that people were expected to behave and seen in accordance to their position at work. The position at work symbolized an individual's social position that was respected and built up by great effort. Unequal treatment was one of the gender issues that not only were suffered by homosexuals, but also heterosexuals in terms of bias in job recruitment, job selection and promotion between a man and a woman. LGBTs faced twice the amount challenges to be accepted and to prove their capacity as they were categorized as an in-between gender or an unidentified gender.

Suppose women who dress like men and they work in a man's environment, they have to prove and work harder like a man, so that she takes it seriously like a man does. They have to prove that extra effort and work harder in the majority set, if you come from a marginalized group; you have to prove yourselves extra. (Ms. Alexis Lortez interview, 30 October 2014).

According to Ms. Alexis Lortez LGBTs was a perceptible minority group that was likely to be disqualified from being promoted due to discrimination on their visibility in dress style. They generally were pressured with conditions of adjusting their dress style for the job promotion offer.

LGBTs repeatedly announced that they expected growth in their jobs with equal treatment and friendly relationship with co-workers. They were not

fully confident that their sexuality was free from discrimination for their hard work. However, negative comments towards them were inevitable conditions of stress on their visibility that usually turned their hope away. In other cases, stigma and discrimination not only stressed on clothing, but also their visibility of soft gestures and behaviors that undermined one's quality at work. For instance, interpersonal stigma and discrimination by heterosexual co-workers as stated from by respondents in the following examples;

Example 1: "Even if I work hard like this, it drops to 50% because I think my manager will always claim that many heterosexual employees can be promoted, why choose to promote homosexuals?" (Ms. Sopheap, 16 October 2014).

Example 2: "A few subordinates do not pay respect to me as the upper level, they are not willing to do the work for me." (Mr. Vireak, 20 October 2014).

Example 3: "I was asked by my direct supervisor, before I am to be promoted as a secretary of the ministry, with that condition, I have to change my dress to a woman after I am promoted." (Ms. Neang interview, 17 November 2014).

TW's visibility was an extra barrier for this group to be considered for a higher position. This particular group encountered doubt about the quality of their work or being qualified at a supervisor level. The position might determine the gender visibility that person needed to conform to and respect. They were believed to be a role model and influence actor at work, particularly to influence their subordinates. Discrimination affected the quality of leadership, mainly related to one's gender visibility, and produced poor interpersonal relationships with co-workers and ineffective work due to personal issues between people.

Exclusion from the ideal supervisor level and struggles to get completed work tasks by subordinates were an anticipated result. Considering their lack of a leadership image, for most gays, TMs or TWs faced similar scenarios on the issue of promotion, and for them the struggles were derived by homophobic notions, regardless of what sector they belonged to or the education level they achieved. Frequently, it left them in a particular work position without

promotion or move to a more 'dress pressured' employment. For them, accepting the homophobic promotion meant rejecting themselves for who they really were.

Gender variance was generalized in homophobic myths as a social illness, HIV/AIDS transmitter, drug abuser or dealer, committing crimes, etc. In work contexts, they were believed to be unreliable, untrustworthy, biased and moody etc., all these negatively perceived flaws that were usually associated with LGBTs and often overlooked their potential and capability. Cambodian heterosexism usually undermined a failed man (gays or TWs) termed as "banana man" or "man loves rose" by its definition; being named in such a way meant they were a weak man that behaved with the mannerisms of mixed gender and were not able to fulfill their maleness traits that they were born with. Similarly, a failed woman (lesbians or TMs) were re-identified as "muscle woman" or "woman loves gun". This group was blamed as an anti-group that tried to avoid a woman's responsibility and was against a woman's nature of inferiority or household master.

Contrastingly, lesbians and gay/MSM groups in the private sector of employment were more accepted as they were considered on their competency and quality of work. In addition, it was observed that a person's position determined their visibility at work, as this reflected their effectiveness of their leadership and reputation as respective role models e.g., Ms. Neang's case - she was promoted to a high-ranking position as secretary of a ministry, thus clothing was a vital expression of her status and professional image in society.

Private sectors illustrated less formal stigma and discrimination when concerned with professional impacts. LGBTs within the private sphere were more tolerant and offered fair performance-based promotions with minimum gender consideration. Lesbians in the private sector reported that they were treated equally for promotion, and they confidently recited that their employers encouraged staff effort at work, with no attention on gender. This merely stressed on their hard-working ability and work effectiveness respectively, with the exception of one lesbian (Ms. Channa's case). Ms. Channa had a slightly different promotion; she was offered a salary increase instead of a promotion to a higher position compared to other heterosexual staff, which was also a positive case in a work promotion context.

### *Favoritism and Professional Impacts*

Favoritism was another informal barrier for LGBTs that left them in particular work positions without development. It was a situation of one having bias from a supervisor's favor or un-favor with someone, thus it created inequality for the chance to be in higher or better position in the workplace to what he/she was currently holding.

A supervisor's behavior differences toward people on the basis of their identity were solely a personal issue, and one could discriminate a particular gender without any reason. Favoritism in this study context was gender biased. At work, a person did not receive equal benefits or treatment from their supervisor or employer due to their gender status as LGBTs. This embedded sexual norm translated into different judgments. In most cases, favoritism was a culture for promotion, particularly in the public sector. Often, an individual who tended to have a good relationship with their supervisor, either at work or outside work, had a higher chance for a future promotion and further their career development with their work capacity.

Favoritism was an obvious stigmatizer's reaction against LGBTs on the basis of their gender. By ignoring their potential, whether for their seniority or work efforts, this exclusion limited them from access to better opportunities and benefits. Disclosure of themselves as ideal men or women by gender-conforming dress or behavior might reduce stereotypes and bring them increased promotional opportunities instead.

The combination of SOGI and the factors from traditional norms of management in this sense referred to submissive and supportive behaviors under a supervisor. This demonstrated a remarkable form of favoritism. Individuals' personalities were also a determinant that created the relationship position, for instance, the level of positive exposure from belonging to heterosexual majority (regardless of identity). The issue was relatively unlinked with work factors though it affected work performance and development. It was an extra informal criterion to be considered into any opportunity, besides money under table or relative networks within the public sector, which was also based upon the size of the opportunity or benefit. In addition to this special relationship, in terms of paying respect and being submissive to be a social companion, any issue of being outside a group or being odd resulted in discrimination.

Among 21 respondents, homosexuals experienced a promotional barrier in the public sector of employment. However, within the private sector, the gender issue was optional and had less criteria considerations. For example: “I remember when I went to a province, someone called me about a training opportunity in Korea, but it was a missed call. I wonder if he is willing to select me to go, why not call me again” (Mr. Bonna interview, 4 November 2014).

Promotions and opportunities basically took people’s ability and competency as ground; however, variety in promotional criteria was different according to each workplace’s policy. Some companies may have focused on personality qualities as a priority over ability and capacity, which could be improved or learnt. One’s nature and personality in leadership, motivation and communication, were considered useful in management, and was not easy to build. Thus, being LGBT or not were not criteria for managing people or earning a promotion.

However, the favoritism issue suffered by the LGBT group not only harmed their identity, but also their economic power. For instance, LGBTs who lacked financial power to bribe or to give special favors to their supervisor might have faced a double barrier, and gender would have been a core problem for not being promoted. In this context, special favors signify an informal relationship outside work in terms of socializing and sharing work information. It was usually a favor technique for benefits used as medium for building up trust. In the culture of collective power relations, it was an informal approach of work promotion, which could led to harm for long-term perspectives of choosing people without real judgment over their quality to work. Based on this observation, many workplaces concerned themselves mostly on people’s skills, capacity and work effectiveness, and did not focus on their appearance or sexual identity.

It was understood that promotion was usually linked to a higher position and better wages; these were motivation factors that every employee worked hard to achieve. For heterosexuals, conditions for promotion were assessed more through their work performance compared to homosexuals, from their gender, usually made an extra effort to prove their capability for promotion. Favoritism on the basis of gender was subjectively a heterosexuals’ perspective of denial and against the oddity of homosexuality or non-conforming gender dress within a formal sphere. For example, dress pressure was a tough condition

for LGBTs attached to their career advancement opportunity, even though one possessed a unique talent.

Interpersonal stigma and discrimination became an unbearable barrier regardless of the sector of employment. Ironically, promotion for homosexual staff or for LGBTs in employment contexts might have relations with factors other than performance, achievement, seniority and work effectiveness as the main assessment criteria, either through staff observations or performance appraisals, but employers prioritized on their gender instead.

Public sector was a high level social institution with formal paradigms that included rules, regulations, and structure of management and illustrations of physical appearances was expected. LGBT discrimination was also very high in this sector and their visibility severely restricted, and even worse, limited promotion based on one's gender aspect. There were five cases of diverse conditions for promotion, specifically imposed on LGBTs or homosexual groups in terms of the favoritism issue, e.g., bribes, tea money, table money, special favors and nepotism, networking. Favoritism occurred when one was denied by their supervisor who was the decision maker for promotion, and due to their personal dislike of their gender.

Example 1: "promotions basically depend on supervisor's recommendation to upper level, if supervisor does not like anyone, they cannot be promoted. For example, my supervisor does not like me." (Ms. Chantou interview, 23 October 2014).

Example 2: "people can ask for leave permission many times or without permission if they have good relationship with supervisor or manager." (Mr. Bonna interview, 4 November 2014).

Discrimination on promotion opportunities could also be based on multiple qualities of the individual, such as education; physical appearance, personality and sexuality have been illustrated through individual cases. Being homosexual was an extra source of discrimination amongst other criteria. The other negative condition of the limited level of education and working experience were just normality for everybody. In another hidden side, favoritism issues from a supervisor became a barrier due to gender difference, for instance,

being a cross-dresser, lack of friendliness or good relationship with supervisor. It was understood that the more formality people possessed, the better and more tactful there were in expressing themselves in a specific gender norm, essentially through dress style. Within a public sphere, though a TM's behavior already switched into a masculine work environment (military force), she still was expected to conform to their biological sex and was denied by upper levels.

Formal discrimination may have been experienced in moderate amounts compared to interpersonal forms that likely happened case by case, and basically upon one's personality and gender perspective. According to six sample employers and staff recruiters, LGBTs recruitment was not rejected or denied; although some requirements fundamentally focused on their uniform and cross-gender dressing. However, their homosexual behavior and personality did not receive pressure by employers, and more importantly it was an unidentified gender bias that lied within each individual. Favoritism in some circumstances could be a positive discrimination, as it prioritized particular jobs for specific groups.

I'm in the sales and marketing division with 10 people in this department, there are only three females, my two female colleagues are also lesbian, one of them dress like me and other one hides herself currently. I can sense this because we have the same behavior (ghost can see their peers). My employer is very kind and tolerant, and he even requests me to introduce some friends (lesbians) to work for him. (Ms. Monica interview, 21 November 2014).

In this case positive discrimination brought those marginalized lesbians some benefits to the company. As a sales person, they were offered full freedom of expressing themselves. The nature of the work as a sales person was flexible and for the extrovert types of people, thus people who were responsible for sales were much more mobilized than being in an office. Their dress style was adaptable while they were on duty and traditional gender roles were not taken seriously. Being lesbian seemed to be the beneficial marginalized criteria that the employer was looking for to reduce maternity cost and leave, this allowed the lesbians to engage more in full-time productive employment. Another aspect related to work benefits was the cost benefits balance of the company policy. Indirectly, in terms of the sales team, made up of 70% male and 30%

lesbians they were not likely to access or apply for benefits such as spouse and children benefits, and children's delivery, or maternity leave in which three months' salary was normally provided.

Hence, gender employment was an essential criterion for staff selection, which translated into job marginalization on a specific gender. Recruitment and selection strategies basically relied on the position requirements, and if the applicant met the criteria and qualifications, but also the cost/benefits considerations of hidden strategies, but these were confidential for most private organizations.

The private sector was more competitive in work advantages and benefits compared to most sectors, this allowed staff which included LGBTs to compete equally. However, some termination conditions between LGBT and Non-LGBT staff still displayed some bias in that homosexuality was attached with negative qualities and were highly likely to be taken as factor, in addition to a poor work performance appraisal. Because of high standards and better working conditions, it was also a factor that limited LGBTs to express their identity in an autonomous way and fear of discrimination exacerbated the situation to become more serious. Thus, those who were aware of this policy may have taken steps to avoid risk.

It was perceived that in the private sector and CSOs might have focused on people's capacity more than their appearance. Here favoritism was lower compared to public sectors, although it was merely a personal issue for each person. As aforementioned, the high-ranking position and professional quality of a person may encourage a person to adjust their visibility automatically. This was confirmed by most individual LGBTs who would rather change their dress choice on their own free will and free from external enforcement, so that there was not any pressure on them psychologically or emotionally.

## Chapter Summary

To be discriminated by others generated its consequences on their profession, leadership, management, work performance and productivity. Gender bias at work was denoted by the surrounding environment from employers and co-workers who fostered multiple negativities into their mindset. Importantly this had an effect on their positions and future employment



development at a particular level or gave less-options for their level based on their gender identity.

Interpersonal forms of verbal and sexually based stigma and discrimination were connected by jobs dissatisfaction; social exclusion and other forms of psychosocial states that led a victimized person to be in a more vulnerable state of self-loathing and lacked motivation. Though, the severity of the issue was connected with one's visibility and supervisor's perspective toward a homosexual subordinate based on the favoritism notion. The public sector showed a narrow opportunity for LGBTs to be tolerated and for them fully express themselves, particularly TMs and gays. Similarly, professional impact was quite highly connected to their visibility in public sectors, but it showed a safer realm from being stigmatized as their visibility was low. However, in the private sector; lesbians, gays and trans-genders received higher stigma and discrimination interpersonally due to their visibility, despite them being in better state of receiving work promotions with less gender favoritism barriers in comparison to public sectors.



## **Chapter 7**

# **Coping Strategies against Stigma and Discrimination**

This chapter describes the three levels of coping strategies against stigma and discrimination. Firstly, it examines individual coping strategies of interpersonal stigma and discrimination; secondly, it examines individual coping strategies of professional impact; and lastly, institutional coping strategies.

## **Individual Coping Strategies for Interpersonal Stigma & Discrimination**

Most of the respondents showed a positive reaction towards those who discriminated them. They used ways which included talking back and trying to explain, some respondents were patient and kept calm as a soft solution; hence, this made people tired of a one-sided argument with them regarding their sexuality. Some LGBTs were committed to develop their work capacity to fight existing discriminations and to eliminate double stigma that they usually experienced in the society. Staying positive and passive were major reactions when people discriminated LGBTs in the workplace as it reduced arguments and further misunderstanding. Others sought out a companion and supportive peers when they were surrounded by narrow-minded people and a shrinking space for their identity to be accepted.

In the following findings from individual LGBTs, there was a range of data varieties comparing groups, age5 gap, education and sector of employment. Coping strategies were usually adapted when an individual received some interpersonal stigma and discrimination, such as name-calling, prejudice, verbal threats or verbal harassment and exclusion from social events. LGBT individuals usually responded by keeping calm and passive, some even adopted challenging behavior, using humor to argue back in a more aggressive way.

### *Keep Calm and Passive*

An individual LGBT's personal coping strategy to stigma and discrimination were both positive and negative. A majority of respondents stated that they hid their anger instead of arguing back as it would only add more negative labels upon them. In addition to this, with the saving face culture, it was also in people's principle to keep the peace and maintain positive values.

Most of the time, being LGBT was a taboo. In general people did not even bother to take time to understand, and any explanation was not heard. Isolating oneself was probably a positive solution in order to keep out of arguments and pressure. "I just normally isolate myself from others..." (Mr. Bonna interview, 4 November 2014). However, isolation brought negative effects in the long-run as LGBTs could not express their feelings for a better solution. In this sense, being silent and hiding their sadness or anger were the options that made the situation worse.

Meditation was a way to relieve stress and pressure. "I keep heat inside of me and I do meditation" (Mr. Sopheaktra interview, 19 October 2014). Based on his coping strategy, he placed all his anger and disappointment aside, no matter what people prejudged him for, either being gay or inappropriate. This solution could wash away psychosocial impacts that were derived from any verbal attack aimed at LGBTs on the basis of their gender. In his case, had he pretended not to hear and kept calm by not fighting back, he would have only brought more misunderstanding and negative effects on himself if he did.

Others coped with discrimination in a soft and silent way by continuing to do good deeds to get recognized for their nature and work capacity. Being passive was positive for some LGBTs in coping with others in the workplace, but this only reflected a bad image of them when the solution of walking away or crying alone was seen as a one-sided reaction.

Similarly, it was a “flight” attitude that LGBTs applied when avoiding an argument with whom discriminated them. The solution tended to be short of a sense of security for the individual. However, for a temporary response this was quite effective. Most of the time it was a useful technique applied and adapted on a daily basis which became a routine in the workplace.

I just ignore it because I value myself more, I think if they value themselves too they don't speak this way to me. Sometimes I hang out with friends after work and do exercise. This also helped me well and made me have more good friends. (Ms. Khema interview, 10 November 2014).

Keeping silent was one kind of personal strategy that supported the idea of not being involved in an argument. It also maintained “saving face”, particularly in the workplace, most LGBTs adopted this to avoid people viewing them with more negativity. To stay calm was a dreadful and painful experience, which translated into tears when an individual felt down and suffered stigma and discrimination at work.

As a result, some homogeneous behavior and responses were raised positively in “flight” strategies from LGBTs in the following characteristics. This special strategy may have caused temporary stress and emotional effects on LGBTs. They bore this for a time as it was a highly favorable alternative to extensive arguments and minimized self-embarrassment. The way to respond to stigma and discrimination was to leave the stigmatizer in a one-sided argument; therefore one does not need to take time to listen to any negativity against oneself. Flight strategy was also a temporary survival strategy response and allowed for adjustments in order to get offered jobs. An example of flight argument is to keep calm and forget about the emotional effects. For some LGBTs, it was a time consuming process to get people's sympathy, thus it was optimistic to keep doing good deeds to get recognition and acceptance. Significantly, this strategy was notably similar amongst every group regardless of gender.

Humiliation from one's sexuality was a sensitive and offensive issue. In this regard, people chose to step away from trouble by ignoring the issue; flight strategy was a favorable approach. Lesbians and TMs who played the role as men and usually identified themselves as men in homosexual relationships reacted to stigma and discrimination in a more feminine manner, rather than

aggressive and behaving in a masculine manner. It was repeatedly heard from gays/MSM and TWs who usually behaved and felt the opposite way from their birth gender; they usually responded with the stigma and discrimination in a non-violent way, more generally they were soft and pitiful. This identical behavior from a minority group also reflected their helplessness to advocate their self-expression of their own rights, and acceptance with their identity in society. Tolerance and understanding about gender diversity was limited to an individual's thinking.

In a very formal sphere like an office zone, work relationships between people were strictly professional. To some extent, unfamiliar people or acquaintances allowed victim LGBTs to apply a flight strategy since unknown people frequently misunderstood and lacked interaction.

### *Educating People and Challenging Prejudice*

Educating people and challenging prejudice as coping strategy was not only applied with interpersonal forms of stigma and discrimination between colleagues, but also with professional impact. By challenging their supervisor's reasons for unfair treatment or exclusion from promotions, individual LGBTs with strong negotiating personalities possessed the ability to respond to discrimination that people made towards them. In some circumstances, the use of strategic explanations and asking some challenging questions back at the discriminator gave individual LGBTs reason to voice their own rights for their gender and gain respect as equal human beings in society; basically, they referred to individual freedoms of self-expression and anti-discrimination notions. For example, "I am the same like you, if I ask you to change yourself/ dress to be like me, will you able to do so?" (Mr. Sok Song interview, 27 September 2014).

One of the challenges that respondents had when they coped with stigma and discrimination was that they did not put enough effort to adapt with struggles and the ability to work in a professional manner. They might have been prejudged due to their own behavior that disturbed and annoyed their heterosexual colleagues, thus this lowered their creditability at work. The response was to protect their rights to express their gender individuality, not to interfere with another's personal life or to cause social problems as believed in heterosexual mythology.

### *Using Humor*

The use of humor was used as a solution to make the situation normal. This also helped to maintain relationships at work. To take things too seriously would have only caused further trouble in relationships with co-workers. It required flexibility and use of humorous tones that were feasibly accepted by both parties. “Other male teachers called me to have sex in toilet in a joking way, for example “let’s have one” and I responded jokingly back “wait for me there” (Mr. Sopheaktra interview, 19 October 2014). The example provided by Mr. Sopheaktra also showed an obvious form of verbal harassment.

Even within a formal sphere such as a school environment there was verbal harassment toward gay/MSM. In spite of his homosexuality and his maleness appearance, it did not compensate for the humiliation nor did it uplift his reputation. Instead it brought higher levels of discrimination and shock to his gender. In this case, his response meant that he admitted to his identity when people were already aware of it, but the intention of his friendly reply with his colleague avoided any one-sided communication, and also made relationship better. Humor created a sense of friendly communication and made work relationships closer, thus Mr. Sopheaktra chose to use something positive rather than argue with them.

Smiling was also a good response and soft solution. “I usually smile instead of fighting back when I received discrimination” (Ms. Chanthou interview, 23 October 2014). For this case, explanations and fighting back were useless and only brought about negative deeds, smiling reduced any verbal violence. Verbal violence usually carried stigma tones, so smiling was important as it showed the sign of ending an argument. Smiling allowed for messages of non-violent reactions that would not cause more trouble or prejudice against LGBTs. Staying positive without responding to criticism was a tough task for most people. LGBTs experienced this issue more often, though they dealt with it using calm and non-violent manners, they often withstood some painful comments against their gender.

### *Arguing Back*

Some LGBTs believed that if they stayed silent it would have caused more negativity as it meant it allowed for heavier stigma and discrimination. Thus, arguing back was usually applied for those with a flexible and an aggressive

personality to respond against verbal attacks or prejudice based on their gender. Fast re-active and flexible LGBTs made prompt responses to confront stigma and discrimination, especially where they believed that a serious abuse of their privacy and life choice occurred. The response was derived from anger of being looked down upon and devalued. Not all LGBTs could bear the entire stigma and discrimination given toward them in every circumstance, thus they expressed their sense of self-identity by stating their rights against any inferior comments made on their gender, which may have been possibly interpreted as rude and uneducated. For example, “If people are rude with me, I will reply, it is my business” (Ms. Channa interview, 21 November 2014). Likewise in another example, a respondent argued that, “wherever there is violation, it has response too. I am not afraid to talk. I will fight back, but not in violent way” (Mr. Vireak interview, 20 October 2014).

Arguing back was popular amongst those with a strong LGBT identity. They protected their own beliefs and life freedoms. It usually involved rudeness or disrespectful behavior for both victims and stigmatizers. Besides an aggressive personality, the age matter was also a considerable criterion, as younger age groups were highly likely to have a fast reaction to protect their own identity. It involved a more aggressive attitude to fight for a social position as an equal human being and for equal rights, for instance to be accepted as a TW. However, arguing back from this aspect was a limited non-violent solution where verbal forms of communication were applied in negotiating individual reasons in order to gain people’s understanding and acceptance of their nature.

Both personality and age comprised an element that fostered aggressiveness of an individual. Some people may have had a tough personality since birth or by circumstance, and young people were usually regarded as not having in-depth critical intelligence. Interestingly, LGBTs dealt with interpersonal stigma and discrimination in a positive manner by not being involved in any physical violence issues.

Firstly, considering the remarkable difference in age groups, LGBTs in their early adulthood tended to put more sense of belonging in themselves, regardless of how frequent and serious the stigma and discrimination they received. The age-group between 20-25 years old adopted more aggressive manners by arguing back in comparison to those aged between 25-30 years old or above. About 28% of young adults expressed a strong sense of disclosure



of identity without fear, and they confidently shared this information in the statement extracts as follows:

“It is none of your business” (Ms. Channa interview, 21 November 2014).

“I do not know how to change I was born this way” (Ms. Chanthou interview, 23 October 2014).

“The lantern at one’s house brings light there” (Ms. Sopheap interview, 16 October 2014).

“I sometimes go to the club, hang out with friends, drinking, dancing, reading, watching movie and work out etc.” (Ms. Leakhena interview, 21 October 2014).

“People must value others as they want other do so to themselves too” (Mr. Rottanak interview, 19 November 2014).

People at this young age, an age regarded as a considerably critical age of self-realization and short expectations, were observed as having centered on their own identity more visibly and bravely. As a result, it brought both positive and negative outcomes for them in the employment sphere. For the negative side, their expressions by use of aggressive responses were perceived as rude and with ill-mannered behavior towards heterosexuals or stigmatizers, which translated into worsened relationships at work. Despite this, the positive effects were seen through their confidence in themselves, which freed their inner well-being from staying in the closet, and in the long-run, put less pressure on themselves which lead to better work productivity and work relationships.

In comparison, the older age group with people above 26 years old, they were seen to have deeper thoughts and higher adjustments to sustain a job. With reference to Table 4.2, the average age of all respondents was 32.5 years old. People above 25 years old seemed more mature in the way they behaved and spoke. The older age group also showed higher levels of patience compared to the younger group. Hence, they coped with stigma and discrimination in more polite and calm ways, this included reporting cases to a supervisor through

email, using the professional response of explaining reasons and individuality to stigmatizers.

In some cases, some people preferred challenging the issue, e.g., Mr. Vireak's point of view by talking back against a stigmatizer at his workplace was also active behavior rather than passive. "I never keep calm whenever I received discrimination toward me, wherever there is violation, it must have a response too", (Mr. Vireak interview, 20 October 2014). In another example "I do not like to spend time to explain things to people who do not know about me. So, I just normally keep silent." (Mr. Bonna interview, 4 November 2014).

Age did not determine one's maturity and ways to respond to issues. Instead maturity and non-aggressive behavior toward addressing a problem was a process that develops along with experience. However, people at an older age may have had more privileges and a longer term vision for their future, better than what younger groups' have, thus it allowed them to be more peaceful and passive when responding to a problem.

## Individual Ways of Coping with Psychosocial Impacts

The age gap also illustrated different levels of psychosocial impacts that LGBTs had endured according to their different age groups. Table 4.2 showed that the average age of the sampled LGBT interviewees were 32.5 years old. However, younger aged LGBTs at 20-25 years old, were the dominant group with 33% who had better psychosocial states and conditions. Compared to elder LGBTs aged at above 30-35 years old, were found to have isolated themselves from the crowd because of fear regarding stigma and discrimination. It was found that their emotional states became more vulnerable, and without social interaction they were unable to get their problems solved.

LGBTs in the younger age group socialized more than the elders. Younger LGBTs used socializing as positive medium to express their emotions and reduce the pessimistic perspectives that stated they were against nature. Younger LGBTs also engaged more in social media, mainly "Facebook". A popular Facebook page named (ប្រឹក្សាសិទ្ធិប្រាប់ & ភេទដូចគ្នា) "Legal Counseling & Same Sex" page had 11,566 members (at the time of writing), where approximately 20-25 LGBT youths were added to this page daily, (Legal Counseling & Same Sex, n.d.). Through this social network, they were able

to share their sadness and issues with friends who helped them to feel a sense of release, but most essentially they associated themselves to like-minded peers, and were able to find a space in which they belonged.

Seeking out a social support group was one of the coping strategies for LGBTs. By connecting themselves to like-minded peers with similar issues, LGBTs received help from an external source. Outside of the work place, their companions included friends or LGBT peers who were an important supporter or problem solver when they faced discrimination at work. In general, LGBTs may have been disliked from most people; fortunately, they had sense of belonging with a particular social group with like-minded people where they were able to express themselves and reveal their problem to each other without fear. However, some external support could have been another actor from their workplace too, since people naturally seek friends. Among their peers or close people, they shared their problems and sought out solutions in positive and better ways. An extrovert LGBT may have chosen to be friends when they had some personal distress and were depressed with their identity.

## **Individual Ways of Coping with Professional Impact**

### ***Working Hard***

Some respondents believed that stigma and discrimination against them at work could be reduced once their work was recognized as important for the organization. The value of their work would weigh over being disliked and the negative judgments by their heterosexual colleagues. In this sense, working hard to get their capacity recognized and perhaps get promoted to the higher level contributed to avoiding misconduct and disadvantages to their professional quality. LGBTs at work claimed that when they already had a weakness about others disliking them about their gender they did not have a commitment to work. This meant they just accepted the perception of the majority of heterosexual misconceptions and prejudgments against them as poor and wasteful human beings. Consequently, some LGBT's insisted to grow in their career regardless of gender; however, LGBTs were pressured harder which encouraged them to prove their capability when compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Therefore, working hard to obtain recognition for a well-paid and high position at work symbolized their importance, and it gave them

confidence in being themselves with their own identity in the workplace. This in turn allowed them to express themselves more confidently and gain acceptance in their professionalism.

In contrast, having a lack of professional qualities left LGBTs being valued less. In terms of their low level of education and exposure to low-paid jobs or low level positions, more feelings of hate grew and they felt a sense of helplessness, and in particular it placed all the blame on their gender. Their gender and limited education only allowed them to engage in low-paid or not so decent jobs e.g., sex-worker. It was obvious that professionalism in the workplace played a vital part that determined people's social position, frequently reflected by their current state in facing stigma and discrimination. In this sense, it was enough determination for LGBTs to prove themselves at work by working hard and behaving with good deeds, despite the fact that they faced some stigma from coping with the negative sides of their gender.

Some LGBT respondents had to believe in themselves and choose the right work environment. "For me, I believe in my ability, I have to find place that considers my capacity and not my beauty or appearance because I'm poor with that." (Ms. Khema interview, 10 November 2014). In this example, Ms. Khema's faith of having a high positioned job and better salary could overcome problems in relation with her identity. Within employment, people tended to focus on capacity and capability as core values for themselves, thus LGBTs believed in this. Not only did they show their full ability to work, they also felt there was no need to be fearful of stigma and discrimination anymore.

It was important for LGBTs to create a good impression in the work place. Regardless of their identity as homosexual or transgender, being tactful in dress style and behavior at work created a better impression in people's eyes. "I think a 'tomboy' is totally like man with short hair and tattoo, some people with very maleness and gangster like manners is targeted for discrimination the most. But, I'm not like that, I value myself and my profession" (Ms. Monica interview, 21 November 2014). From, this aspect, LGBTs thrived to build strong professional manners in reducing stigma and discrimination against them. By doing this it strengthened their professional capacity which meant advancing their rights to their own identity; it was a fundamental value to gain respect and equal treatment in the workplace.

### *Self-Employment*

Independence and self-sufficiency allowed individuals to fully achieve their goals and freedoms in their lives. Conforming to gender norms was expected in every workplace, even in a very gay friendly workplace. In some circumstances, the condition was attached with person's role and responsibility that were highly acquired. It was the ultimate desirable choice for LGBTs who usually felt victimized by discrimination that led to contriving pressure at work and trouble concerning their gender.

Economic power was one positive oppressor tool against stigma and discrimination. To have an independent lifestyle they did not need to adjust themselves to be employed, e.g., dress style and emotional pressure where they were not be treated as equals to heterosexuals. Due to negativity in the workplace against LGBTs, it became more desirable to earn income in a pressure-free lifestyle as a way to symbolize the success of an ideal person. With strong economic sufficiency and independence, LGBTs advocated against society's misconceptions by enjoying living independently in their LGBT life-style without the approval of either social norms or legal protection. Living in a comfortable life for most LGBTs required freedom from stigma and discrimination. An additional prioritized goal was that their gender status would be approved and recognized legally.

On top of that, people who had potential and were able to be independent proved their way of life within society. To rely on themselves enabled independent decision-making regarding life choices and family formation, such as an individual's secured ability to be free from hierarchical pressure, from a dependent person or their own family, as well as other external pressures. Because of the desire to express themselves, LGBTs wished to run their own business and lived their private life without any interference from any co-workers or employer's opinion about their SOGI. For LGBTs, their expectations about their jobs was low for promotion or sustainability, thus it highly motivated them to become self-employed as this would not pressure them financially and economically.

Having the independent stance without receiving any pressure in the workplace was a homogenous goal for all LGBT respondents. They believed stigma and discrimination against them in the workplace still existed, particularly in interpersonal forms. Individuality was their aim and to escape

from prejudice and dependency by following a workplace's policy concerned with dress and behavior.

## **Institutional Responses to Stigma and Discrimination**

### ***Government Implementation against Stigma and Discrimination***

LGBT was not a new phenomenon in Cambodian contexts (Khmer Rouge era), however within recent decades, there has been an increasing interest and special focus on this minority group's social issues and violence made against them. Significantly, gender-based violence was a responsive model to empower gender equality from the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). According to "Neary Rottanak IV (2014-2018)", a long-term strategic plan aimed to promote gender equality using various mechanisms, with the creation of this gender awareness program, it was intended to follow minorities in relation with gender equality and the rights of vulnerable groups, this includes, in particular women and girls, lesbians and TM (MoWA, 2014).

The International of Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966), a multilateral treaty, affirms the right to privacy (article 17), security (article 9), freedom of expression (article 19), and freedom of assembly (article 21). These rights entail the freedom to lead an intimate life peacefully; the freedom to express oneself, including one's gender identity, through clothes or comportment; and the freedom to move and meet in public without fear of harassment or assault. The state must protect people in exercising these rights. Persecuting or harassing people for exercising these freedoms must be prevented where possible and punished where it occurs. Cambodian citizens and foreigners who work in Cambodia are subject to the regulations of Labor Code (Ministry of Social, Labor and Veterans Affairs, 1997).

Public tolerance of LGBTs had existed in Cambodian society, long before any official law had been made. As claimed by the former King on 20 February 2004, the Cambodian King's father, Norodom Sihanouk had delivered a speech stating "...single sex weddings should be allowed in Cambodia too" ("Cambodian king backs gay marriage", 2004).

Ironically, same-sex marriage was prohibited under Cambodian laws. There was no law to protect members of the LGBT community in Cambodia

in terms of marriage or family law. In this regard, this group still struggled and suffered exacerbated discrimination to access some provisions and marriage benefits, which were limited to heterosexuals only. Under the Cambodian Employment Law, it highlighted a section of anti-discrimination strictly against race, color, sex, creed, religion, political opinion, birth, and social origin, membership of workers' union or the exercise of union activities in employment (Kong, 2012).

Formal stigma and discrimination against LGBTs was comparatively less serious than interpersonal forms. Both emotional and professional impacts were socially driven and an individual's perspective on gender diversity carried both negative and positive waves in their messages.

### *Workplace Implementation against Stigma and Discrimination*

Despite the neutral law of Cambodia, employment law played an essential role for including LGBTs under the general entitlement of all employees with an integrated organizational policy. An organizations' response to the LGBT issue may have been similar for heterosexuals for some forms of stigma and discrimination, such as physical touch, work-related effectiveness between colleagues or subordinate and supervisor's interpersonal work relationship issues or personal issues. There were generic policies and formal conduct within workplace institutions concerned with policies against discrimination and sexual harassment, forced labor, verbal harassment, dress code, personal appearance, ethics, conduct and substance abuse.

Within policy coverage in a work sphere, LGBTs were protected to some degree whenever they faced problems related to the issue of their gender that affected their work performance. It was considered an effective strategy for problem solving. It was argued that most LGBTs were encouraged to work and received interpersonal stigma and discrimination that impacted their work and work relationships. Concerning their gender which should not be connected to their work, LGBTs approached their supervisor or upper level senior to get the issue identified and solved. As shown in the following example by a respondent, "I usually responded back in a professional way by writing an email to the human resources department because I value myself and I love my profession" (Mr. Vireak interview, 20 October 2014).

In Mr. Vireak's context, the professional manner used to deal with interpersonal stigma and discrimination was the best alternative. He believed to solve the issue by the up-down hierarchy was more effective than a quick response in an aggressive manner, which would have only lowered his value and brought more impact on his work. With regards to concerns of some personal issues between him and his co-workers with relation to his gender, it might have also further interfered with work communication. A quick and personal aggressive response would have possibly reduced his professional value and status. His solution was to approach an authorized-mediator, for instance, the human resources manager who could solve the problem for him. By reporting to his supervisor, it also allowed time for behavior correction and gave his supervisor time to investigate the case. Therefore a responsive action and solution took place in the workplace based on the company's policy, which was mainly anti-discrimination on gender. Mr. Vireak's case in the private sector represented an ideal workplace's positive response to gays, lesbians and trans-genders' discrimination.

## Chapter Summary

Various coping strategies from multiple sources were involved in responding to both interpersonal and formal discrimination. It included victimized individuals and workplace's responses. Individual's provided diverse responses in both active and passive behaviors; however, those responses carried negative and positive psychosocial effects to individuals. For the positive effects, it was seen by individual psychological states of expressing their identity explicitly without fear, which brought about side effects to their inner state. Even though it reduced their professional impacts they had better emotional health compared to those who were passive and received internal pressure. In addition to that, some institutional coping methods were also established in line with the national level's principle of anti-discrimination against people on any basis, including that of gender. The MoWA initiated a strategic plan of inclusion regarding the LGBT issue; this was a positive step forward to foster better arrangements for them in other aspects of society, and more importantly in employment across various sectors.



## Chapter 8

# Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter discusses three main themes which are summary of findings; discussion and conclusion; and, recommendations.

### Summary of Findings

#### *Forms of Stigma and Discrimination*

Stigma and discrimination was a common issue for LGBTs that they all faced at some point in their lives. LGBTs experienced two main forms of stigma and discrimination, interpersonal and formal forms in employment sectors that included private, public and CSOs. Interpersonal forms consisted of harassment in verbal forms and also physical forms; verbal harassment was seen as insults, criticism, ridicule, jokes, prejudgments, and corrective advice. Besides this, there was also bias in behavior toward homosexuals in terms of ignorance, rejection, threat of violence and emotional pressure.

Interpersonal forms occurred more in the workplace compared to formal forms. Stigmatizers were actors from various levels of a work relationship, it included people from upper levels (supervisor) and peers (same level co-worker), where the issue tended to be a personal perspective than a structurally driven one. Formal forms included bias in recruitment, promotion, job opportunities and training, or unsupportive or unsolved LGBT's problems.

The level and severity of discrimination was linked with dress visibility through gender transitions of LGBTs, and how much they could transform themselves to be more like the gender they identified themselves to be. The higher similarity to becoming a particular gender may decrease the level of discrimination due to the expectations or illustrations of an ascribed gender, either male or female was embedded in people's views. Stigma and discrimination were described as great and powerful toward those who were observed to be in-between of what was recognized as the physical standard of a "male or female".

### *Impact of Stigma and Discrimination*

Verbal violence and exclusions of LGBTs' status in employment concerned both work relationships and benefits. Two negative aftermaths resulted from stigma and discrimination that were emotional; psychosocial and professional impacts. Both formal and interpersonal stigma and discrimination usually affected LGBT victims emotionally and professionally. Psychosocial impacts denoted in fear of stigma and discrimination, isolation, self-denial, embarrassment and self-guilt and hopelessness. Professional impacts consisted of denial on the basis of their gender by refusing them access to opportunities and promotions from visibility and favoritism perspectives.

The impacts of discrimination were varied and similar in terms of both emotional and psychosocial outcomes, especially for those who came out with an explicit identity and visibility. Visibility related discrimination was through explicit physical appearances in dress style, voice or gestures and behavior (for TMs and TWs). Lesbians received more impacts compared to gays with double gender identity discrimination. Firstly, being a woman implied they were the inferior gender, thus given less priority and access to resources in society. Secondly, being lesbian meant they were even less of a priority and were classified as an unaccepted gender or a failed gender. In general, this meant that they were rejected as neither an ideal gender category for a male nor a female.

### *Coping Strategies*

LGBT's coping strategies against stigma and discrimination comprised of avoidance, also known as "flight". These were strategies used where a victim remained silent and ignored by others, thus suffering from dislike aimed toward

them. Another strategy was educating people and challenging prejudice by explaining their reason and stance, which persuaded people not to stigmatize or to discriminate. In other examples, LGBTs sought out external support through reported cases by email or approached supportive actors to solve the problem. Humor was used as a strategy to reduce seriousness and build friendly relationships with others. Some people preferred to keep calm and passive, as they did not want to be judged and perceived in more negative ways. In other cases, some LGBTs argued back with “fight” strategies used against the stigmatizer due to aggressiveness and seriousness of most situations.

## Discussions and Conclusion

This study discussed three sectors of employment where stigma and discrimination existed against LGBTs. Homogenous characteristics in interpersonal forms of stigma were related mostly to verbal harassment of their visibility and clothing pressure. The issue was rather an interpersonal aspect that varied based on individual victims and the stigmatizer’s personality; this was unlikely to be a structural imposed factor. Stigma and discrimination concerned with LGBTs struggles and problems within job performance in relation to either social participation or interaction at work had limited their communication and opportunities compared to heterosexuals.

This research has also not explored violence concerned with recruitment rejection, though it has added insight into diverse forms of social and professional exclusion and how it affected LGBTs. Whether or not LGBTs were accepted into most employment depended on their capacity and skills. Though not every job welcomed LGBTs, specifically in highly professional levels where a person could not openly disclose their identity or visibly behave in the way they would do normally.

The findings brought to light details of LGBT’s personal issues and visibility-sector based descriptive impacts. In employment, interpersonal stigma and discrimination against them was an indirect influence of gender stereotypes, which caused different treatment towards them. Verbal violence and various forms of active harassment regarding name-calling, humiliation over clothing; appearance and make-up; ignorance; and exclusion from social events were all forms of discrimination between co-workers, constructed by deep-seated social norms. Reluctance in communication and behavior of secrecy were some forms

of direct discrimination based on the individual's gender identity which lowered their chance to access resources and equal treatment.

One major finding showed that a pressure-free environment and personal freedoms were prioritized the most as these were attractive attributes that LGBTs sought when engaged in a particular employment. It was believed that LGBTs usually responded in a positive way to challenge discrimination and that this relatively affected them both mentally and emotionally. Although some forms of discrimination was seen as less serious, but more or less, their feelings were affected indirectly and this also harmed their productivity in job performance, thus it lowered their opportunity for promotion and other benefits. In another aspect of this was job position e.g., high-ranking position or management level for a person at work was an important determinant for a person to adjust their visibility to suit their professional quality, in turn it limited their gender expression to become less visible.

Little analysis was made on the legal aspect or policy of each workplace, so this could be a study area for the future. However, educational factors and professionalism gave autonomy to ethical conduct where people should have an awareness of individualism, but this was beyond management's control in a sense that forcing friendliness against their will was not abided to.

Most people were committed to build up their professionalism as they had strong sense of belonging and confidence in their identity. They believed their higher capacity could reduce discrimination and that self-employment widened their independence and freedom of expression.

In the broader aspect concerned with discrimination against LGBT's, employment was currently overlooked by labor law and civil law (marriage law). Besides the issue of a basic salary, inequality was presented between heterosexuals and homosexuals in terms of spousal benefits, spousal healthcare and child education. For LGBTs, a relationship with their partner was not officially recognized under employment law and they were not entitled to any resources or provisions. Hence, spousal or children's benefits were not applicable for gay people, even if they were in a long-term relationship with their partner. Since their partner was not considered a spouse, they were still regarded as single. The relationship of parents and child required legal approval as well, where the adopted child may be rejected as the beneficiary. Nothing in the employer guideline would ever apply to that, the employer would just

follow this logic, most employers want to save cost in applying the legal recognition of same-sex people and their children's responsibility, including entitlement for maternity benefits. In short, only employees in legally recognized relationships (between the opposite sexes) were given entitlement of available benefits, this formal exclusion left LGBTs in an inferior position.

Similarly, other studies showed that stigma and discrimination about gender were socially and culturally constructed within employment, work and social interaction combined. Basically personal factors determined the level and forms of stigma and discrimination instead. This perspective had played a role of how socialization shaped LGBTs within both formal and informal spheres.

It was hard to make certain that LGBTs were treated equally in all employment sectors without identifying themselves as objects of harassment or made fun of by co-workers. The pressure of being ridiculed and the object of discrimination could have possibly discouraged motivation and this would have affected their productivity and relationships at work.

Consequently, discrimination at work translated into economic and emotional pressure. The desire to leave a job was another consequence that resulted from high levels of discrimination and derived from interpersonal homophobic issues. There was reason to believe that SOGI discrimination and poverty had a connection. LGBTs concerned with personal hate or homophobic behavior either from co-workers or the employer lowered a LGBT's productivity and also limited any opportunity for career growth. In exchange they had to adapt themselves to maintain their work position or leave work to be openly and proudly themselves.

Having a secret identity in order to be offered jobs only created internal conflict. LGBTs suffered in the long-term and were in unstable emotional states with unidentified work-pressures. Throughout this study, LGBTs with highly qualified professions or recognized positions in society were the most hidden group. They were unwilling to reveal their status for the purpose of the interview as well as to their colleagues and to the public. It confirmed that the fear of stigma and discrimination was not comparable to the risks involved when compared to their effort taken to build up their career. Fear of harassment and prejudice were just unexplainable embedded gender norms that were merely accepted by LGBTs.

Legally, under the law in Cambodia, everyone is equal. People are supposed to receive equal treatment in working conditions and work benefits. The discrimination in the workplace was a personal issue based on the context of employment or employers; the LGBT issue was subject to an individual's perspective rather than institutional or policy concern. Currently what exists in Cambodian law specifically covers males and females only, and gender is a social and psychological outcome. The law basically obliges on biological determinants, regardless of whatever role people play or how they identify themselves.

To sum up, LGBTs in Cambodian contexts were seen as neutral. Typically, with the exception of employment there were some conditions that applied, i.e., not being too visible as a non-conforming gender, would be regarded as a failed male or female. As a whole, same-sex people were able to express themselves freely in society including in some workplaces without the fear of being criminalized. For example, if compared to other corners of the world, particularly in Islamic countries, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, capital punishment is valid for those of homosexual behavior.

LGBTs in employment encountered some stigma and discrimination more in interpersonal forms. These were hard to identify and control. Overall, formal stigma and discrimination tended to happen in lesser cases in the formal sphere like workplaces compared to the interpersonal types. However, the issues against homosexual groups were usually based on an individual's perspective about gender rather than institutionally imposed.

Experienced impacts that LGBTs faced varied according to the context of seriousness and the LGBT's own personality. Some LGBTs with a strong emotional well-being may have found impacts as routine and solved them in positive ways. Instead, other LGBTs with a younger age and less determination may have suffered from depression, isolation and hopelessness, frequent job changes and exposure to low-paid jobs were usually their options.

Personal coping strategies of LGBTs were linked with people's age, working environment, and experience. In terms of the number of years that they received stigma and discrimination after they disclosed their sexuality; the severity of the discrimination forms of people tended to respond in positive ways rather than negative. This was because employment was the essence of an individual's life. The way they coped with issue also reflected their position

level and professionalism at work. People with a higher education and better position associated themselves more with adjustment and determination for building up capacity as a long-term strategy to challenge stigma and discrimination.

Individuals were stigmatized and discriminated on the basis of both their gender and quality of work. A blurred line between their sexuality or professional quality. Some LGBTs also showed their doubts of whether they were not promoted because of their gender or capacity; others believed it was because of their sexuality. Confronting stigma needed to be achieved by taking a multi-dimensional approach; this included valuing gender diversity and reduced impacts of stigma and discrimination for individuals and the workplace environment.

## **Recommendations**

### *Reduce Stigma and Discrimination by Individual Approach*

For effectiveness in responding to stigma and discrimination, LGBTs should unionize. To organize workers to become members of a trade union would provide a supportive network within employment contexts; this can include providing training, technical skills and consultation service. It would be a helpful structure for collective negotiation, ensure their protection in employment and reduce the impacts of exclusion in employment toward psychosocial and economical outcomes.

Confrontation for equal treatment in employment should be integrated into an organization's policy dialogue. More specifically it should be applied to CSOs or social enterprise organizations initiatives for their humanitarian efforts and social development. Freedom of expression and individuality concerning physical appearance and dress style should be a basic human right for everyone. However to align with an organization's policy accordingly it is also a LGBT employee's obligation, thus LGBT individuals should also respect formality and value their position, regardless of what levels they are in and be responsible for any misconduct other than policy statements.

The extent of tolerance of homosexuality is linked to a collective understanding of morality and virtuousness. Discrimination and harassment

in all forms should not be ignored and considered as personal issue, but instead integrate the issue that affects people's profession and organization's reputation.

### *Reduce Stigma and Discrimination by Workplace Approach*

The dress code at some workplaces including the private sector and NGOs were a good example that should be adapted in other sectors as well, e.g., public sector. It does not need to be too flexible, but it should be according to individual's preference of particular gender in either casual clothing or uniform type of clothing where the choice should be allowed based on an individual's gender identity. Providing this releases pressure for all staff and increases their productivity when they are satisfied with their right to express themselves. It is also important to note that regarding gender they are not rejected or violated in the workplace.

The study showed that employers or clothing restriction-free organizations attracted more potential human capital. These included LGBTs who worked with enough flexibility in adjustment to work environment and were a good example of a gay friendly environment that also develops a positive reputation for most organizations.

Furthermore, gender discrimination was masked and rationalized by widely held presumptions of same-sex minority inferiority. The more of the gap that can be explained by human capital differences, the easier it became to assert that labor markets function in a non-discriminatory manner; any remaining gender inequality in employment outcomes must be due to differences between LGBT and Non-LGBT or between men and women that arose outside the labor market.

### *Recommendation for Reducing Professional Impacts*

Favoritism should be removed. Exclusion from promotion should not be related to one's physical visibility and gender preference in all employment sectors under the international law of employment and labor for staff dismissal or disqualification.

Gender diversity orientation should be openly communicated and recognized in the workplace for staff affairs and capacity building purposes. Thus, everyone should be aware of interpersonal stigma and discrimination about gender and how gender-based violence toward an individual is offensive and abusive.



Prior to the passage, gender-typing in employment was blatant, which prevented and protected civil rights legislation. The findings provided a vivid illustration of the openness and visibility of the extent that discrimination and revealed the severity of rights violation, particularly rights to employment. Employers also showed some attributes in behavior change, which was considered as positive discrimination after one disclosed and negotiated their gender issue at work, this should become role model in other sectors.

### ***Recommendation for Coping Strategies***

As LGBT employees, they are challenging an extra barrier concerning personal issues related to their gender. In this sense, either their gender or work has influenced their position at work; distinctly those with the most visible appearances were TMs and TWs. It was suggested to them to be in a positive attitude and adapt to the company's code of conduct as ideal employee and through formal a medium to respond to issues in professional way.

It was found that hidden gender status of employees or suspected LGBTs had also experienced psychosocial impacts. It may have included a lack of concentration and fear of discrimination within themselves, for instance, some bisexuals and gays. It was highly encouraged for them to open up about their status and confront others regarding equal treatment at work, either from their employer or colleagues.

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## Appendix 1.1: Key Informants

Note: All individual names used in this study are pseudonyms.

Key Informants	Name Identity	Job Details	Interview Date
K1	Mr. Hak Hong	Deputy Director - NEA	29-Jul-2014
K2	Ms. Sao Sokly	works as a Human Resources manager	26-Sep-2014
K3	Mr. Sok Song	LGBT Activist	27-Sep-2014
K4	Ms. Alexis Lortez	LGBT NGO	30-Oct-2014

## Appendix 1.2: Respondents

**Note:** All individual names used in this study are pseudonyms.

Interviewee	Name	Job Details	Interview Date
Interviewee 1	Ms. Chanda	works in a private company	26-Sep-2014
Interviewee 2	Mr. Chay Pov	works in an NGO	28-Sep-2014
Interviewee 3	Mr. Mom Ly	works in the public sector	28-Sep-2014
Interviewee 4	Ms. Chan Dy	works in a private company	29-Sep-2014
Interviewee 5	Ms. Doung	works as a Pharmacist	01-Oct-2014
Interviewee 6	Ms. Lida	works for a private company	03-Oct-2014
Interviewee 7	Ms. Sopheap	Human resources officer in a garment factory	16-Oct-2014
Interviewee 8	Mr. Rotha	Concierge officer in a hotel	17-Oct-2014
Interviewee 9	Mr. Sopheakra	Teacher in a public school	19-Oct-2014
Interviewee 10	Mr. Vireak	works in a private company	20-Oct-2014
Interviewee 11	Mr. Leakhena	works at a NGO	21-Oct-2014
Interviewee 12	Ms. Chanthou	Female Military Force	23-Oct-2014
Interviewee 13	Ms. Phalla	works in a NGO	02-Nov-2014
Interviewee 14	Mr. Bonna	works in the public sector	04-Nov-2014
Interviewee 15	Ms. Khema	works in a private company	10-Nov-2014
Interviewee 16	Ms. Rothana	Human resources manager in a hotel	12-Nov-2014
Interviewee 17	Ms. Borey	works in a private company	15-Nov-2014
Interviewee 18	Ms. Neang	works for the Ministry.	17-Nov-2014
Interviewee 19	Mr. Rottanak,	works for a NGO that supports MSM group; a peer educator/outreach worker.	19-Nov-2014
Interviewee 20	Ms. Monica	works for a private company	21-Nov-2014
Interviewee 21	Ms. Channa,	works as a graphic designer for a private company	21-Nov-2014



## **Appendix 2.1: Equal Rights to Employment**

(English Translation)

The provisions, which are fully expressed by The Labor and Employment Law in 1997 chapter 1, section 2:

Article 12, no employer shall consider on the account of race, color, sex, creed, religion, political opinion, birth, social origin, membership of workers' union or the exercise of union activities; hiring, to be determined and in order to make a decision on vocational training, education level, promotion, remuneration, social benefits grants, discipline or termination of an employment contract.

## **Appendix 2.2: Equal Rights to Employment**

(English Translation)

The summary of labor and employment's rights under the Cambodian Constitution in 1993 article 36 of the constitution ensures equal rights to employment without sexual discrimination as follows:

Khmer citizens of either sex shall have the right to choose any employment according to their ability and to the needs of the society: Khmer citizens of either sex shall receive equal pay for equal work.

### **Appendix 3.1 Checklist for Interviews**

General Information of Participants:

Name

Age

Current Gender

Educational Level

Marital Status

Place and Position of Occupation

Living Situation

Monthly Income

Place of Birth

Married (or) Partnered

Women– Partner’s Occupation and Monthly Income

Duration of Marriage/Relationship

Number of Children

Family Size (Members)

### Appendix 3.2 Questions For LGBT individuals (in-depth interview)

Private Sector ☐Public Sector ☐SCOs ☐Others ☐

#### A. Occupation information

- What do you do at work (position)?
- How is your job?
- How long have you been working here?
- Do you like your job?

#### B. Work relationships and discrimination

- How is your relationship with co-workers? with an employer?
- Are people aware of your gender identity?
- How are they aware of your identity?
- What does the word stigma mean to you?
- What does the word discrimination mean to you?
- Have you ever experienced discrimination in the workplace?
- From whom do you receive this?
- How were you treated at workplace?
- From whom you receive this?
- How do you know that you're disliked?
- How do you know that you were treated different?
- Why do you think it is a stigma/discrimination?

#### C. Forms of stigma and discrimination

- Do you receive any different work condition or benefits compared to your colleagues?
- Are there any differences you notice in the workplace between you and co-workers?

- Are you aware of any inequality between you and your colleagues?
- What types of frequent discrimination (treatment) have you ever received from colleagues or supervisors or employers? Example:
  - ☐ insults,
  - ☐ name-calling,
  - ☐ not being served and ignored (tea or coffee),
  - ☐ not being allowed to enter the facility,
  - ☐ being looked at with disdain by others.
  - ☐ harassment or unwanted touch etc.
  - ☐ others
- Reaction after disclosure of identity, Example:
  - ☐ stop talking
  - ☐ sexual harassment
  - ☐ verbal harassment
  - ☐ fired
  - ☐ insulted/blamed
  - ☐ corrective advise
  - ☐ reduce salary
  - ☐ not promoted
  - ☐ lack of interest
  - ☐ training participation
  - ☐ others
- Do you have any harassment policy in your workplace?
- Do you always have a good relationship with colleagues?
- Do all of them get along with you?
- Who discriminated you more often; colleagues or employers or others?

- Is there an Internal Policy in the workplace concerning dress code/uniform?
- Are you aware of employment equality?
- Is there any regulation with a positive difference for LGBT employees?
- What are the benefits in company policies for staff that you cannot receive?
- What are the promotion policy/staff capacity development policies?
- What are the working conditions in your workplace? Example:
  - ☐ working hours
  - ☐ replacement time
  - ☐ over time
  - ☐ sick leave
  - ☐ union (negotiator)
  - ☐ others
- What are the considerations based on to get benefits? Example:
  - performance based
  - seniority based (experience)
  - achievement based
- Have you seen any difference in benefits between you & your peers/colleagues (LGBT and Non-LGBT peers)? Example:
  - ☐ Spouse Benefits
  - ☐ Child benefits
  - ☐ Health Insurance/protection
  - ☐ Retirement
  - ☐ Damage pay
  - ☐ Seniority
  - ☐ Others

D. Career Advancement

- How long have you been in (same) this position?
- Do/don't you like this position?
- Do you know you if got promoted or don't get promoted?
- i. Position
- Do you get promoted to higher position?
- Why do/don't you get promoted?
- How do you know that you don't get it is because you are gay/lesbian?
- ii. Opportunity
- Have you ever been invited for any training to be promoted into higher position?
- Why do/don't you get the opportunity?
- How do you know that you don't get it is because you are gay/lesbian?
- iii. Wage increase
- Have you ever got a wage/salary increase?
- Why do/don't you get the opportunity?
- How do you know that you don't get it is because you are gay/lesbian?

E. LGBT perspectives in the workplace

- What do you like about your workplace?
- What you don't like about it?
- What do you expect from your job currently?
- Why (don't) you get promoted?
- Do you have any hope or motivation in working here? Why? Why not?
- How do you think about stigma and discrimination affects your career in the future?

## F. Coping Strategies

- How do you suffer from those conditions and discrimination?
- What are your personal solutions to cope with or help yourself when you perceive stigma and are discriminated against?
- How do you solve the problem? It is effective?
- How do you deal with situations of current of stigma and discrimination issues?
- Do you think Stigma Discrimination affects your job productivity and performance?
- How do you think about stigma and discrimination affect people's life in the future?
- What will you do to solve it in the future?
- What are your suggestions for an employer or workplace?
- How do you respond when you were discriminated in the workplace?

### Appendix 3.3 Questions for Non-LGBT/Colleague (Semi-Structured Interview)

Private Sector ☐ Public Sector ☐ SCOs ☐ Others ☐

Behavior/Perception/Treatment toward LGBTs

- Can you please describe how you feel/act when you see LGBT people in general or in the workplace?
- How does everyone feel to work with LGBTs in your workplace?

A. How do you feel when you work with LGBT colleague? For example:

- ☐ Weird/strange
- ☐ dislike
- ☐ hate
- ☐ uncomfortable
- ☐ scared
- ☐ tolerant/normal
- ☐ others.....

B. How is your reaction/impression toward LGBT in general? For example:

- ☐ stop talking
- ☐ sexual harassment
- ☐ verbal harassment
- ☐ fired
- ☐ insult/blame
- ☐ corrective advise
- ☐ reduce salary
- ☐ not promoted
- ☐ lack of interest
- ☐ training participation



☐ others.....

- Do you have any difficulties to communicate with them at work? No/ Yes, why or why not?
- Do you have any difficulties to work with them at work? No/Yes, why or why not?
- Why do you like/dislike LGBTs? Why or why not?

#### C. Benefits Equity

- Is your LGBT co-worker able to work/receive work benefits the same as you?
- What are the benefits you receive, but they don't receive? (Example spouse/children benefits)
- Does your LGBT colleague get promoted at work? Why or why not?

#### D. Working conditions

- Do you know why they got promoted?
- Is this condition applied to other people the same? Why or why not?
- Is there any requirement for LGBTs in the workplace?

#### E. Career Advancement

- Do you think LGBT people should be treated equally as Non-LGBTs in terms of treatment, working condition & benefits? Why or why not?
- Do they get promoted because of their capacity or performance? Other?
- Do you think this related/not related to their SOGI? Why or why not?
- What do you think if they don't get promoted because of their SOGI?
- Do you think this is fair or unfair? Why or why not?
- What do you think about their position in the workplace?

#### F. Coping Strategies

- What do they do when they are discriminated at workplace?
- What can be done to support LGBTs at work?
- If you were LGBT, what would you do?

### Appendix 3.4 Questions for Employers (Semi-Structured Interview)

Private Sector ☐ Public Sector ☐ SCOs ☐ Others ☐

- How many staff in your organization?
- Is there any code of conduct at your workplace related to dress code or gender? Or anything mentioned in job announcement?
- What is your first impression when you meet LGBT people once you interview them?
- How do you feel when you work with LGBT people?
- How do you consider LGBT in the workplace? Do you have any internal policies include/specified LGBT group?
- Do you have any harassment policy in the workplace? Can you please briefly describe that? (is it between only opposite sex or also include same-sex)
- How many of them are there in this workplace? How many total staff? What position does he/she work?
- Do they receive the same benefits as heterosexual people?
- What are the same benefits (salary, welfare or any insurance protection) they receive like heterosexual colleagues?
- Do they get promoted to a higher position based on their performance?
- What are the policies at your workplace?
- What is the promotion policy/staff capacity development policy you have at your organization? Example:
  - ☐ training regularly
  - ☐ performance based assessment
  - ☐ outstanding achievement
- Are there any policy regarding anti-discrimination in workplace? Can you please briefly describe that policy?

- What is your first reaction once you know your staff or colleague is LGBT?

- Why do you react with that particular behavior?

A. Reaction after disclosure:

- What is your opinion about LGBT people or working with LGBT people?
- Do you find yourself with any problem working with LGBT people?
- Discrimination at workplace related to identity/status, Example:
  - ☐ job loss
  - ☐ forced LGBT or SOGI disclosure
  - ☐ exclusion in the workplace

B. Stigma related issue:

- Denial of employment
  - job termination, denial of promotions or employment opportunities,
  - decisions to disclose one's SOGI status to people in the workplace,
  - and the reactions of employers and co-workers to the disclosure of one's SOGI status.
  - invisible within company policies
- Do you think they affect the job productivity?
- How do you think stigma and discrimination affects people's life in the long term?
- How do you respond to working with LGBT people?
- Is there any policy regarding anti-discrimination?
- Is there any policy regarding sexual harassment? Does it cover harassment between same sex or different sexes?

### Appendix 3.5 Questions for Labor Department (Semi-Structured Interview)

Private Sector ☐ Public Sector ☐ SCOs ☐ Others ☐

#### A. Law/Regulation/Protection

- What do you think about SOGI issue in Cambodia?
- Is there any new law/rule including SOGI issue?
- What does your employment law or regulation say about stigma and discrimination?
- How do you consider LGBT in the workplace? Do you have any internal policies include/specified LGBT group?
- Do you have any harassment policy at workplace? Can you please briefly describe that? (is it between only opposite sex or also include same-sex)

#### B. Situation in Employment

- How is their situation in employment?
- What position are they generally involved with?
- Do they receive the same benefits as heterosexual people?
- Are they treated the same as heterosexual people?
- What are the same benefits (salary, welfare or any insurance protection) they receive like heterosexual colleague in law and regulation?
- What are the policies or law mention currently about sexual orientation in the workplace?
- Do you think LGBT people should be treated equally as Non-LGBTs in terms of treatment, working condition & benefits? Why or why not?
- What can you understand about the term treatment in employment?
- What can you understand about the term working condition in employment?
- What can you understand about the term benefits in employment?

- Is there any policy regarding anti-discrimination in the workplace? Can you please briefly describe that policy?
- Is there any case that LGBTs are discriminated in the workplace related to identity/status, can you please briefly describe this. Example:
  - ☐ job loss
  - ☐ forced LGBT of SOGI disclosure
  - ☐ exclusion in the workplace
  - ☐ not promoted/low-paid/positions
  - ☐ other
- How about stigma related cases, can you please briefly describe this
  - ☐ Denial of employment
  - ☐ job termination, denial of promotions or employment opportunities,
  - ☐ decisions to disclose one's SOGI status to people in the workplace, and the reactions of employers and co-workers to the disclosure of one's SOGI status.
  - ☐ invisible within company policies
- Do you think these affect the job productivity?
- How do you think stigma and discrimination affects people's life?
- How do you respond to working with LGBT people?
- Is there any policy regarding anti-discrimination?
- Is there any policy regarding sexual harassment? Does it cover harassment between same sex or different sexes?

### C. Solution/Strategies

- What can be done to support or response to stigma and discrimination?

### **Appendix 3.6 Questions for Expert/Human Rights Activists (Semi-Structured Interview)**

Private Sector ☐ Public Sector ☐ SCOs ☐ Others ☐

- What is the situation of human rights in general?
- What is the situation of LGBT's rights in general?
- What is the number of LGBTs in Phnom Penh?
- What are the activities that your organization works with LGBT?
- Have you ever heard about stigma and discrimination against LGBT in the workplace?
- How can you classify the level of discrimination?
- What type of stigma and discrimination most commonly occurs in the workplace?
- What type of stigma and discrimination is considered as most serious?
- What are the forms of stigma and discrimination in the workplace that LGBT experience?
- How can you describe the LGBT employment situation?
- What do you think about your roles in stigma and discrimination issue against LGBT in the workplace?
- Is sexual harassment toward LGBT a serious consideration made recently?
- How do you think this discrimination affects them?
- What are the solutions to deal with issue for LGBT individuals?
- What are the solutions to deal with LGBT issue for organizations/ companies?
- What are the suggestions/limitations to improve LGBT's rights?
- What are the achievements for protecting LGBT's right so far?



# Workplace Stigma and Discrimination against LGBTs in Cambodia

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*Hep Sreyleak*

LGBT minorities in Cambodia have had limited rights in expressing their gender identity in the workplace. Various forms of stigma and discrimination have been made against them and they have suffered from violence, including sexual harassment, emotional violence and economic violence. This research was based on a sample of respondents who were self-identified lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender who had already experienced and currently experienced stigma and discrimination concerning their gender at work.

This study explored the diversity of experiences regarding stigma and discrimination across different sectors and how individuals coped with issues they faced in the workplace. Discrimination in the workplace against LGBTs was largely influenced by social and cultural attitudes between people in society. The issue impacted on LGBTs emotionally, which resulted in the deterioration of both their life and profession.

LGBTs strived to adapt with some personal strategies in coping with stigma and discrimination. Some showed they minimized impacts and advanced LGBT rights in employment. Overall, a gender neutral working environment should be encouraged providing equality for all.



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