Article

Being Different with Dignity: Buddhist Inclusiveness of Homosexuality

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Abstract: Stigmatising homosexual individuals damages their emotional health and quality of life. In particular, those with religious beliefs may additionally suffer from religious discordance due to their sexual preferences. This exploratory research investigates how Buddhists perceive homosexuality and how Buddhist lesbians, gays and bisexuals (LGBs) accept their sexual orientation. It adopts semi-structured Internet-based text and voice interviews with 11 participants, including homosexual Buddhists, Buddhist masters, and heterosexual Buddhists. The findings are analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis, with the aid of a computerised qualitative data-analysis package. Results reveal a compassionate culture towards this marginalised group, for which Buddhist LGBs cultivate self-acceptance through Buddhist teachings, such as the clarification of nature and manifestation, Buddhist equality, and proper interpretation of precepts. These teachings also encourage inclusiveness.

1. Introduction

Heterosexuality remains dominant in contemporary cultures (Valentine 1993; Phillips 2006), implying the fact that people with a sexual orientation other than this may agonise over low acceptance (Burgess 2005) and high social isolation (Takács 2004). Sexual orientation indicates an individual's sexual, physical, emotional, and romantic preference, desire, and behaviour (Frankowski and the Committee on Adolescence 2004). Gay and lesbian refer to people whose sexual attraction focuses on members of the same sex, while bisexual refers to attraction towards either the same or opposite sex (Institute of Medicine 2011; Moleiro and Pinto 2015), all of which are generally defined as homosexuality (or abbreviated LGB), pertaining not only to same-sex relationships (Peplau and Cochran 1990) but also to cognitive (for example, sexual identity) and psychological (sexual desire) concerns (Michaels and Lhomon 2006).

In the 19th century, Ulrichs first presented the theory of inborn homosexuality (Kennedy 1997), as possibly related to hormonal agents (Glass et al. 1940) an/or genetic influences (Burri et al. 2015), acting together with cultural effects (Lane 2006; Mireshghi and Matsumoto 2008), affirming that homosexuality is not a single factor (Muscarella et al. 2001). However, it was considered to be a psychiatric disorder (Goldberg 2001) that could be treated by psychotherapy (Mitchell 2002) and medical methods such as electric-shock aversion therapy (Smith et al. 2004) and behaviour modification, (Pradhan et al. 1982) in order to cause an individual to revert to heterosexuality. This pathological view was retained until the 1980s (Anderson and Holland 2015; Zijlstra 2014), after which followed the contribution of postmodern values (Caldwell 2010; Kim 2011): a paradigm shift from diagnostic dimension to a theory of normal variation (Drescher 2015) and natural expression of human sexuality (Canali et al. 2014).

Nevertheless, normalising homosexuality does not reduce misunderstandings among the public; homophobia creates social exclusion (Scott et al. 2004). Homophobia, coined by George

Weinberg in the late 1960s (Vaughn 2011), describes irrational fear and negative attitudes towards homosexuals, including resentment, hatred, prejudice, bias, harassment, intimidation, humiliation, hostility, and crime (Irwin 2007; Teliti 2015; Duncan and Hatzenbuehler 2014). It often results in school bullying (Lee 2014) and aggression (Bernat et al. 2001), which harms adolescents (van Wormer and McKinney 2003) and places them in disparate predicaments; for instance, substance abuse (Jordan 2000), social and affective isolation (Teixeira-Filho et al. 2011), homelessness (Keuroghlian et al. 2014), depression (McLaren et al. 2007), anxiety (Williams 2008), and even leading to suicide (Hatzenbuehler 2011). It also induces discrimination in the workplace (Ozeren 2014), through which homosexual employees endure labelling (Gates and Viggiani 2014), fewer occupational opportunities (Sears and Mallory 2014) and lower job satisfaction (Drydakis 2014). Furthermore, risks of HIV infection in this population (Carneiro et al. 2003) worsen such phobias, especially towards homosexually-active individuals (Bonell et al. 2000). As a result, poor representations invoke stigmatisation (Srivastava and Singh 2015; Whitehead et al. 2016) and inequality (Sumerau 2016). Inadequate training among healthcare providers creates health inequity (Dionne 2002) and lessens available healthcare for this vulnerable group (Logie et al. 2012).

Therefore, reactions on the part of homosexuals interrupt their outside and inside worlds. Some LGBs yield to heterophobia (Sánchez et al. 2009), a fear among homosexuals that makes them keep their distance from straight people (Provence et al. 2014). Their withdrawal from society not only increases homophobia, but even worse, causes them to undergo adverse self-evaluation (Russell and Bohan 2006), self-stigmatisation (Reyes et al. 2015), and self-disapproval in response to their sexual orientation in a homonegative environment (Campo-Arias et al. 2015). This results in internalising anti-homosexual stigma (Blais et al. 2014); namely internalised homophobia. Such low self-esteem (McKee 2000) is usually translated into a fear of coming out, regret about being homosexual, and moral self-condemnation (Flebus and Montano 2012), directly associated with mental illnesses such as depression (Frost and Meyer 2009) and suicidal ideation (Pereira and Rodrigues 2015). All these phobias threaten the well-being of homosexuals (Lorenzi et al. 2015; Ghorayeb and Dalgalarrondo 2010), as well as their life satisfaction (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al. 2015; King et al. 2003).

Religion is a source of both social homophobia and internalised homophobia (Barnes and Meyer 2012), producing interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts (Eguchi 2006). Comparatively, Western monotheisms (including Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, and Protestantism) show more rejection of homosexuality, whereas Eastern religions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism (Larson 2010), exhibit less rejection. Doctrinal homonegativity maintains moral intolerance within conservative religious groups (Doebler 2015; Kleponis and Fitzgibbons 2011). Although traditional denominations generally oppose sexual minorities, homoerotic-positive writings are to be found in the literature of Africa, America, Arabic, Britain, China, India, and the Middle East (Gugler 2011; Al-Samman 2008; Ekotto 2016; Aboul-Enein 2015; Ruan and Tsai 1987; Markley 2001; Thomas 2013). Some religious leaders and followers have begun to rethink their attitudes towards this victimised group (Ellwood and Alles 2007) as more and more people reassess the anti-liberal attitude of some religions.

One-fifth of those who are self-unclassified in their religious affiliation dislike religiosity due to teachings against sexual orientation (Lipka 2016). Similarly, 56% of those who leave Catholicism admit that their disagreement is with its tenets against homosexuality (Pew Research Centre 2009). The LGB community feels life-endangered through religious condemnation (Viau 2014) and dissonance from traditional family values. In contrast, open-minded ministry workers promote the eligibility of sexual minorities; for example, Gumbleton (2014). These liberal ministers acclaim that accepting sexual minorities embodies the authentic love of God (Delgado 2014), since all are God's children regardless of sexual preferences (Cozzens 2014). They reform lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ)-friendly churches (Manson 2014) and offer pastoral services to homosexual disciples (Williams 2001) and gay priests.

Some fundamental Christian organisations insist that the primary role of sexual intercourse is procreation (Boisvert 2007), and thus reject homosexuality (Kolodny 2007); that is especially true

among male conservative Protestants (Newman 2002). Many churches clearly reiterate their stances that homosexual relationships are sinful in accordance with the literal presentation in the Bible (Thumma 2007), and reaffirm the sanctity of marriage between men and women only (Byrd 2001). Progressive ministers argue that such rejection distorts God's created order (Hillerbrand 2004), and have begun to form queer inclusive leagues since the 1970s (Siker 2007).

Similar to Christianity, Judaism, especially Orthodox Judaism (Karesh and Hurvitz 2006), adheres to the Hebrew Bible and *halakhah* (Jewish religious law) as prohibiting homoeroticism (Sands 2007). Hence, the homosexual act, deemed abnormal, is disallowed, and seen as damaging to the Jewish ideal of marriage and family formation. As with the above-discussed religions, Jewish liberal theologians (Ariel 2007) have gradually begun to re-examine homosexual issues and spoken out against discrimination based on sexual orientation. LGB-inclusive events have begun to increase, highlighting a humanistic dimension among reformed Jewish priests.

Despite the occurrence of male homoerotism in Islamic literature (Rowson 2004), Muslim institutions strongly forbid male–male relationships, which represent a submissive role and passive sexual behaviour (Hammock 2009) that collide with their conventional masculinity (Kugle and Hunt 2012) and patriarchal family culture (Dunne 1998). In addition, Islam integrates religion into social life and legislation (*Shariah* law) (Sands 2007), strictly suppressing homosexuality in many Muslim countries (Semerdjian 2007) by cruel punishment and even the death sentence (Alasti 2006). Chronic abuse and horrific violence carried out by religious extremists are not rare (Simmons 2010). With the influence of Western culture (Dalacoura 2014), some Islamic scholars advocate for diversity in sexuality orientation (Goh 2014) and sexual liberation (Rahman 2014). Recent trends indicate that young gay Muslims interpret the Quran from a positive perspective (Eidhamar 2015), generating the emergence of homosexual movements in various forms in Islamic countries (Tolino 2014).

Differing from Hinduism, whose acceptance level varies from community to community (Vanita 2007), Buddhism tends towards higher tolerance of sexual minorities (Sweet 2007), reflecting its principles of equality, enlightenment, and compassion. In spite of its precept against sexual misconduct, there are no traces of anti-homosexuality (Sujato 2012) in Buddhist scriptures. Instead, Japanese literature contains descriptions of same-sex relationships between Buddhist monks and *chigo* (boys) (Childs 1980) within the monasteries (Faure 1998). Some Buddhist sects consider homosexual activity to be inappropriate behaviour (Wilson 2003); however, they seldom express homonegativity (Yip 2009) or demonstrate gender-bias within relationships (Irons 2008).

Stemming from Indian culture, Buddhism was developed by Siddhārtha Gautama (simply called the Buddha after his awakening) more than 2500 years ago. It reiterates the inevitability of suffering in life, and hence raises the teaching of four noble truths: the nature of distress, causes, ways of alleviation, and liberation. Suffering is created by greed, hatred, and ignorance. Greed is linked to desire: sexuality is one type of desire (Glassman 2004) regardless of gender-related sexuality; and thus, abasing desire to cease suffering (Thiselton 2002) becomes a basic measure for purification. Furthermore, ignorance of phenomenal reality increases affliction. The law of dependent origination explains the formation of phenomena, which details the interdependence of all beings—human and non-human—that exist from an aggregate of primary and supplementary conditions. Notwithstanding this, such existence is ever-changing, temporal, and uncertain, and presents itself in different forms. Gender is principally a matter of manifestation; and gender-inclusive intimacy is as normal as opposite-sex relationships in most Buddhist denominations.

In response to limited research on homosexuality from a Buddhist perspective, the objectives of this exploratory research are as follows: first, to investigate Buddhist attitudes towards homosexual persons; second, to explore the inner world of Buddhist LGBs; and lastly, to delve into Buddhist theories which sustain the above. The findings are expected to shed insight into how to view homosexuality, which will extend the horizon of an inclusive society.

2. Research Design

This qualitative research recruited informants through cold calls and referrals. The researcher sent an invitation letter to 33 Buddhist communities in the Asia Pacific region, Europe, and North America, and received 18 replies. Once they understood the objective and procedures of this project and the rights of participants following their initial contact, 12 participants returned their signed consent agreements. One of them afterwards withdrew, and in total 11 pseudonymous informants completed this study. The selection criteria were three-fold: first, they had to be over 18 years old; second, they were Buddhists; and third, they were comfortable with discussing sensitive topics.

A demographic survey was electronically sent to the participants, reporting Australian ($n = 1$), British ($n = 2$), Hong Kong Chinese ($n = 1$), Malay ($n = 6$), and Italian ($n = 1$) individuals, aged 25–64 years old, including homosexual Buddhists ($n = 4$), a bisexual Buddhist ($n = 1$), Buddhist masters ($n = 3$), and heterosexual Buddhists ($n = 3$). Notably, one participant declared that she was homosexual prior to becoming a Buddhist master. Their education levels covered college ($n = 3$), university ($n = 5$), masters degree ($n = 2$), and a doctor of philosophy ($n = 1$); and their occupations included educational institutions ($n = 3$), religious organisations ($n = 3$), business fields ($n = 4$), and retirement ($n = 1$). Their denominations comprised Theravāda ($n = 8$), Triratna Order ($n = 1$), and unspecified ($n = 2$).

The primary data source was that of individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews, mainly through Internet-based technology in both text and voice modes. Such remote interviews were able to accommodate a wide range of geographical coverage even while the researcher was working in Hong Kong. Moreover, it extensively cut costs and travel time, and provided participants with autonomy and private space when accounting for sensitive issues (Cheng 2017c). The participants chose their preferred means freely, choosing between email interview only ($n = 4$), Skype interview only ($n = 3$), combination of the two ($n = 3$), or face-to-face mode ($n = 1$), totalling 435 min of Skype communication.

The participants who underwent email interviews received an interview form that aligned with the transcription format. Voice interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed into a verbatim presentation. Data (including emails and transcriptions) were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis, with the assistance of a computerised qualitative data-analysis package to understand the lived experiences of the informants (Smith et al. 2009) and explore their views on homosexuality. Consequently, four super-ordinate themes were collated: Buddhist views on sexual minorities, coming out, intimate relationships, and mindfulness. This research analyses the first theme, with the remainder to be discussed in separate works.

In order to enhance its trustworthiness, this research adopted triangulation through member-checking and multiple data sources. The transcriptions were delivered to the participants for proofreading to ensure data accuracy, which significantly affected data analysis. This step was important, especially for some of the Skype interviews where poor voice quality was evident, due to technical obstacles (Cheng 2017c). Participants were also invited to comment on the draft of this manuscript to decrease data over-interpretation. This study also used supplementary data from blogs and information supplied by the participants, which comprised richer data. These triangulation methods enriched the credibility (validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity) of this project.

3. Results and Discussion

This section analyses the mentality of Buddhists towards same-sex relationships, including Buddhist LGBs, Buddhist masters, and heterosexual Buddhists. The findings depict how the informants perceive homosexuality, showing inclusiveness. This research subsequently discusses the interaction between self-acceptance of Buddhist homosexual individuals and social acceptance, and then discloses the Buddhist insights that direct their attitudes, finally propounding the implications.

3.1. Buddhist Inclusiveness of Homosexuality

Despite the fact that Buddhism is relatively open-minded towards homosexuality, some Buddhist monks and nuns continue to find it difficult to work with homosexual Buddhist followers. Jeremy (a gay Buddhist) witnessed a friend who felt stress when realised a particular monk condemned homosexuality. Bhante Dhammika (a Buddhist monk) recalled that a gay Buddhist committed suicide due to one monk's complaints against gay men. Feeling a bit uneasy when he saw same-sex intimate behaviour, Venerable Aku (a Buddhist monk) was willing to change himself and thanked homosexual Buddhist fellows for giving him the chance to understand them better.

In contrast, Bhante Dhammika specified that love between homosexual partners is as normal as that among heterosexual partners:

"Homosexuals are as capable of wanting and of feeling love and affection towards their partners as heterosexuals are, and where such states are present homosexual sex is as acceptable as heterosexual sex."

Based on the Buddhist perception of homosexual normality, Dave (a gay Buddhist) felt comfortable with his Buddhist friends, as they would not judge his sexual orientation. He saw no differences in his same-sex preferences. Similarly, Susan (a heterosexual Buddhist) accounted for her observation of non-judgemental support from the Buddhist community towards the homosexual group, presenting inclusiveness rather than mere tolerance, in the following way:

"I believe Buddhists' attitudes towards LGBT are acceptance and love. Love only happens when we see others as equals with understanding and acceptance. The word tolerance isn't even needed in this context. Support just comes naturally if one loves another, seeing it from a Buddhist perspective."

Josephine (a heterosexual Buddhist) added her Internet reading to that, and asserted the legitimacy of homosexual people and her positive manner towards them. She also pinpointed the significance of respect, and the avoidance of inadequate moral judgement:

"I've seen an email by a Buddhist saying LGBT [people] have no moral shame or fear of wrongdoing. Other Buddhists responded to this email [saying] that sexual orientation isn't the issue; rather, it's integrity and respect for each other."

Apart from these, the feelings of insiders agreed with their discernment, as illustrated through Dave's personal experience when he was warmly welcomed within the Buddhist community:

"My impression of Buddhists is largely formed of the particular [Buddhist] school I practise in, which is extremely open and accepting in the sense of not seeing any innate difference for someone practising who is LGBT, any more than a straight/heterosexual person . . . I have of course [benefited from] the usual widespread qualities of kindness, friendliness and acceptance of people within the Buddhist *saṅgha* [Buddhist monastic order in which the members are celibate and are officially ordained to provide religious services] in general."

The informants disclosed either the personal experience or observation that Buddhists always display unconditional respect, affinity, affirmation, and empathy towards this minority group.

3.2. Interplay between Social Acceptance and Self-Acceptance

A direct correlation exists between being accepted by others, psychological well-being (Baumgartner and Burns 2014), and quality of life (Knapp et al. 2015; Butler and Ciarrochi 2007). While Buddhists usually exhibit more understanding and acceptance towards LGBs, as articulated previously, Buddhist masters often demonstrate the attribute of loving-kindness and compassion towards this group. Mark (a bisexual Buddhist) appreciated his being accepted, saying "The monks

whom I learned from the most have all been very clear that there's nothing wrong at all with being LGBT." Such acceptance, especially from religious leaders, is prominent; therefore, Bhante Dhammika ascertained that "from a Buddhist point of view homosexuality isn't necessarily dirty, evil, or sinful . . . I always try to explain what the authentic Buddhist position is."

Self-acceptance is one of determinants in the enhancement of psychological wellness and creation of harmonious life (Garcia et al. 2014), resulting in better resilience in overcoming life adversity (Sagone and Caroli 2014). While many gays and lesbians struggle with their sexuality and are unable to be true to themselves, accepting themselves for what they are is crucial, a representation of self-compassion (Zhang and Chen 2016) for personal development (Greene and Britton 2015). Jessie (a lesbian Buddhist) proudly declared, "I'm a Buddhist and I'm gay." This frankness and non-self-rejection realises self-acceptance, increases self-worth (de Souza and Hutz 2016), and disregards how other people perceive them, helping to diminish self-victimisation. "They (LGBs) need to learn how to accept others who don't accept them," as Venerable Aku taught. He emphasised that conquering rejection and discrimination reflects self-confidence and self-esteem, which is a coping strategy for this underprivileged group (Cheng 2017b).

Likewise, a positive association between self-acceptance and social acceptance yields forgiveness (Sakiz and Sariçam 2015; Roxas et al. 2014), improving interpersonal relationships (Baker and McNulty 2011; Moll et al. 2015). This enriches the dynamics of intrapersonal and interpersonal connectedness, as expounded by Master Sandy (a celibate lesbian Buddhist nun), reflecting the connection between their inner and outer worlds:

> "The more I could learn to accept and understand myself, the more I could understand and feel more compassion for others and so feel more connected and less isolated. And also if I've been meeting maybe sometimes prejudices from others about my sexuality, I have more capacity to forgive and recognise that there may be some fear causing their attitude towards me. So I think it just gives me a lot more ways to understand the way human beings are relating to each other, for better or worse."

Self-compassion not only enhances happiness and emotional well-being (Zessin et al. 2015; Blutha and Blanton 2015; Finlay-Jones et al. 2015), but also strengthens compassion towards others, resulting in altruistic behaviour (DeSteno 2015); that is, "*bodhisattva* altruism" (Cheng 2017a, p. 95). Such Buddhist altruism yields both personal growth and social integration (Cheng 2015), which are critical to the LGB community (Yi and Phillips 2015).

3.3. Buddhist Insights

The cardinal Buddhist theory unveils the primacy of the mind: what one sees reflects one's mindset, which will translate into behaviour. Buddhist precepts, therefore, are designed to upgrade the quality of an individual's mind. Additionally, Buddhism clarifies the difference between essence and manifestation, consummating Buddhist equality. These construct the platform for this homosexual-friendly religion.

3.3.1. Non-Violating Precepts

The five Buddhist precepts (abstinence from killing, theft, sexual misconduct, false speech, and drinking) prevent self-harm and harm to others (Ariyabuddhiphongs and Jaiwong 2010). Although Buddhism allows for the human need for intimacy, it disapproves of adultery and sexual misconduct, among which the intention is pivotal. Bhante Dhammika explained this as follows:

> "In the case of sexual behaviour, it's not what gender your partner is . . . but rather what your intention is. So I'd say if your intention is to give and share, please, and express love and affection, and there was mutual consent, then that action would be good because your intentions are good, or positive. I just couldn't see what would make that action immoral . . . If intentions were negative, that would be negative."

He repeated the Buddhist viewpoint clearly, saying,

"So homosexuality as such is neither positive nor negative, any more than heterosexuality is. What makes [it] one or the other is the intention behind the act. That's not my opinion. That's classical Buddhism."

Such assertion encourages Buddhist LGBs to combat their feelings of guilt and social anxiety more easily. Jessie resonated with this through her personal encounter:

"When I practise the precepts, I was never told of any contradictions between the precepts and my sexual orientation . . . Basically I think in Buddhism everything begins with the intention. Intention is the key point. It doesn't matter whether it's same sex or opposite sex."

Bhante Dhammika continued to emphasise the non violation of precepts,

"If two people [are] of the same gender or two people [are] of a different gender, their sexual actions are motivated by love and the desire to share, give comfort, or even have fun, that wouldn't necessarily be an immoral act . . . Buddhist ethics about sex are primarily concerned with the motives behind our sexual behaviour, rather than the gender of our partner."

Master Sandy summarised, saying, "The Buddha gave the five precepts, which include a precept about sexual misconduct. This is about skilful relationships, so if two people are in a committed loving relationship it is no problem, [whether] they're in a gay or straight relationship, as long as they're behaving skilfully towards the other person."

Proper understanding of religious rules is important for religious homosexual individuals to eliminate unnecessary agony. In Buddhism, masters willingly guide homosexual Buddhists to interpret the precepts correctly.

3.3.2. Buddhist Equality

Despite the trend in which the Buddhist theory of equality has been applied to the promotion of human rights (Bagde 2014), the deeper meaning of this principle refers to the nature of existence. According to the law of dependent origination, the existence of all beings is transient and impermanent, depending on conditions. For instance, an apple grows when there is a healthy seed, along with sufficient light, air, water, and soil; otherwise, it will prematurely die when one of the conditions is absent. This validly applies to human beings, who are a combination of materialistic body and spirituality, with vicissitudes. In this sense, people are equal and identical in nature, and will all experience stages of living, aging, sickness, and death. Furthermore, a core Buddhist idea affirms that the basic nature of the human mind is innocent and pure. People are all capable of becoming enlightened to be buddhas (Kurihara 2009; Payne 2015), regardless of gender, age, social class, and race.

In light of Buddhist equality, homosexuality is no better or no worse than heterosexuality, because neither same-sex or opposite-sex relationships are distinguishable, as long as the relationship is sincere, faithful, and mutually caring, as illuminated by Bhikkhunī Dadina (a Buddhist nun). Homosexual individuals are innately able to awaken and are not necessarily inferior to heterosexual people; that is, they are capable of emancipation. Thus, Buddhism can embrace this discriminated group.

3.3.3. Manifestation of Existence

Buddhist wisdom differentiates between essence and manifestation, discerning that all beings are equal in nature but present in various forms such as status, shape and colour. Sex and gender are phenomenal presentations or fluid forms imposed on the body, which can change. For example, Avalokiteśvara (a *bodhisattva* who has been enlightened in the path of becoming a buddha), as Cathy (a heterosexual Buddhist) addressed, occurs in both male and female representations in Buddhist scriptures (Yü 1997) to accommodate varying needs when helping people. Having developed gender

equality since early Buddhism (Kurihara 2015), Buddhists pay less heed to same-sex or opposite-sex intimacy, instead caring about heartfelt relationships. Bhikkhunī Dadina advised that one's partner be treated as a human being, regardless of sexual identification, in a devoted intimate relationship. Such openness leads Buddhists to tear down gender hindrances and accept homosexuality.

4. Implications

This study reveals methodological and practical implications: in the case of the former, the implications hint at future research directions, whereas the study also expands the practical perspectives of helping professionals (such as social workers, psychotherapists, and medical care workers).

4.1. Methodological Implications

Although this research offers novel viewpoints on how Buddhists perceive homosexuality, either by personal experience or through Buddhist theories, its aim does not conclude generalisation with a small number of participants. It proposes that projects with a larger sample size be devised in order to collect substantial raw data. Nevertheless, this study inspires ideas for further exploration.

This research interviews Buddhists with diverse backgrounds, but lacks Buddhist scholars who might discuss the topic supported by doctrinal evidence. Moreover, it suggests augmenting potential informants with non-Buddhist sexual minority individuals who might demonstrate variances among homosexual individuals between these two groups in order to attain a fuller picture of the homosexual community.

Despite the fact that social desirability may hinder data quality, this study adopted Internet-based interview methods, which is able to provide more freedom of self-disclosure for informants and thus minimise methodological limitations to this qualitative inquiry. This encourages researchers to use this advanced technology in research projects.

4.2. Practical Implications

Those who are different in sexual orientation confront individual, familial, and societal hindrances (Miller 2012). This study encourages the concept of being different with dignity to boost self-acceptance and social acceptance as guided by Buddhist principles; pertaining to intimacy intention, Buddhist equality, essence versus manifestation, and compatibility of precepts (refer to Figure 1). It spotlights the farsightedness of Buddhism towards this victimised group and, equally as important, sheds light on how non-Buddhist LGBs can break through their self-loathing to improve life satisfaction.
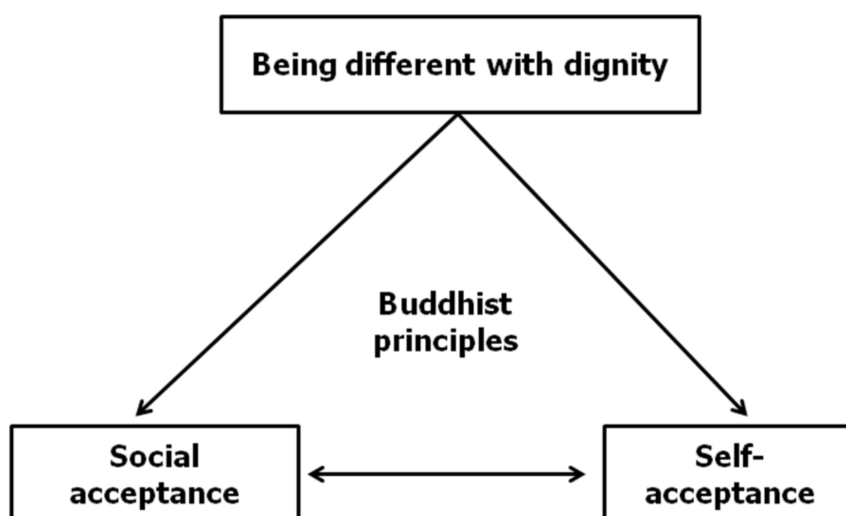

Figure 1. Buddhist wisdom towards homosexuality.

The increasing awareness of the need for health equity directed towards homosexual groups (Byne 2015) urges medical care workers to review health policies and service provision. It alleviates homophobia, heterophobia, and internalised homophobia, resulting in improvements in their psychological health (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al. 2014). This study proposes alternative views on how LGBs can prevail over the annoyances caused by their sexual orientation to accept themselves for what they are and gain better social integration. By making this disadvantaged minority visible in the community (Brotman et al. 2003), it also recommends health education for the public, as well as training programmes for health professionals to rethink authentic equality so that they can obviate their own irrational fears when serving homosexual clients.

5. Conclusions

This exploratory research analyses Buddhist inclusiveness towards the homosexual community. Buddhists respect and accept this minority group, while homosexual Buddhists demonstrate intrinsic resources for self-acceptance (self-compassion) with pride. Their homosexual-friendliness reflects Buddhist wisdom, including Buddhist equality, proper interpretation of precepts, and the identification of essence and manifestation. This argument not only provides alternative views on homosexuality so that LBGs can reassess their self-worth, but also hints at re-evaluating how to become psychologically healthy LGBs with the advent of self-acceptance and social acceptance.

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