



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



## Self-Efficacy and Optimism: The Experience of Coming Out as Malaysian Gay Males

Lim L. Gin, Syasyila, K., Zhooriyati, S. M

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i5/13329>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i5/13329

**Received:** 17 March 2022, **Revised:** 20 April 2022, **Accepted:** 04 May 2022

**Published Online:** 22 May 2022

**In-Text Citation:** (Gin et al., 2022)

**To Cite this Article:** Gin, L. L., Syasyila, K., & Zhooriyati, S. M. (2022). Self-Efficacy and Optimism: The Experience of Coming Out as Malaysian Gay Males. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. 12(5), 1516 – 1531.

**Copyright:** © 2022 The Author(s)

Published by Human Resource Management Academic Research Society ([www.hrmars.com](http://www.hrmars.com))

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

**Vol. 12, No. 5, 2022, Pg. 1516 – 1531**

<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/IJARBSS>

JOURNAL HOMEPAGE

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at  
<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/publication-ethics>



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



[www.hrmars.com](http://www.hrmars.com)

ISSN: 2222-6990

## Self-Efficacy and Optimism: The Experience of Coming Out as Malaysian Gay Males

<sup>1</sup>Lim L. Gin, <sup>2</sup>Syasyila, K., and <sup>3</sup>Zhooriyati, S. M. (Corresponding Author)

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Science and Liberal Arts, UCSI University, <sup>3</sup>No. 1, Jalan Menara Gading, UCSI Heights (Taman Connaught), Cheras 56000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Email: [zhooriyati@ucsiuniversity.edu.my](mailto:zhooriyati@ucsiuniversity.edu.my)

### Abstract

**Background:** Disclosing sexual orientation by homosexual individuals often accompanies discrimination that reduces their psychological well-being. Malaysian gay males have poor optimism because homosexuality is not widely recognized in Malaysia and is prohibited under legislation.

**Purpose:** This research aims to explore the Malaysian gay males' self-efficacy and their state of optimism in coming out.

**Methods:** Due to the legal and social sanctions that exist in Malaysia, this study benefits from the qualitative research method. The concepts of transcendental phenomenology were chosen as the study's theoretical foundation. A total of 22 Malaysian gay males who identify as homosexual males and have come out were recruited based on the inclusion criteria with purposive and snowball sampling techniques for a semi-structured in-depth interview.

**Results:** Findings show that Malaysian gay males' self-efficacy in coming out is derived from normative social influence. The advocacy characteristics among them, in reality, serve as a center for effective altruism. Besides, the psychological resilience development of gay males influences their optimistic thinking about coming out. Although Malaysian gay males face discrimination from a toxic society, they remain optimistic and employ effective coping mechanisms.

**Conclusion:** With these research findings, intervention programs are developable for gay males who have a broken relationship with their parents due to their sexuality. There could be a revision of Malaysian law if the influencers or politicians acknowledge it above the well-executed protection by the non-government organizations (NGOs) to ascertain the rights of gay individuals.

**Keywords:** Self-efficacy, Optimism, Coming Out, Gay Males, Malaysia

### Background

For a long time, discrimination and stereotyping against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community have been a controversial and difficult matter (Zhooriyati & Intan, 2015). Discrimination against sexual minorities is common, and it may be influenced by religious and cultural beliefs. Furthermore, Malaysians have a strong

sense of gender roles, which leads people to glance at those who cross-dress. Death threats are likely to occur, particularly in conservative countries, frightening gay males and influencing their worldview. As a result, it is critical to investigate the mental health of gay men because they are not only psychologically affected, but their safety needs are also challenged. Thus far, gay males in Malaysia have been publicly harassed to the extent that the general public has witnessed it. Under these conditions, the psychological distress experienced by gay males will eventually lead to suicide as a result of mistreatment during their adolescent stage (Eisenberg et al., 2019) and childhood reminiscent (Hart et al., 2017). As a result, psychological distress would disrupt the family, causing a breach in the homosexual couple's love relationship. Gay males who are students are more likely to fail in their academics. Working gay males, on the other hand, would experience a reversal in career development. The satisfaction and well-being of gay men are mocked as a result of their unpleasant experiences. Hence, work and personal life are often seen as mutually incompatible realms of life that must be kept apart in order to live a stress-free life (Zhooriyati & Despois, 2022).

### **The Norms and Laws Associated with Gay Males Who are Coming Out**

Optimism is important for everyone as it promotes self-expression and facilitates disclosure, especially for gay men. Optimistic men can achieve a range of key events and milestones as a result of their well-thought-out professional objectives, including working at their ideal job. Unfortunately, there are LGBTQ glass ceilings in the workplace, with influential authorities in Western countries, let alone Asian countries, refusing to embrace this minority community (Aksoy et al., 2019).

The LGBTQ community in Malaysia, on the other hand, expressed a lack of confidence, owing to the fact that homosexuality is not commonly tolerated in Malaysia and is punished under Syariah law, particularly for Muslim citizens (Cheah & Singaravelu, 2017). The Syariah law ruled that the LGBTQ community attempts to have intercourse against the order of nature, and with a dual-track legal system, the Malaysian Islamic court would handle the LGBTQ matter for Muslim citizens. Non-Muslims of the LGBTQ community, however, who are caught in the act of sexual intercourse would have to face Civil Law. Also, since this research involve both Muslims and non-Muslim gay males in Malaysia, the Syariah law is used for Muslims, while Section 377 of the Malaysian Penal Code is explicitly employed for non-Muslims. These individuals eventually would not be able to live in dignity. In fact, they would be fearful of prosecution given that they are captured in the act of sexual activity. Consequently, this study is vital for every individual, including gay males, to have a high optimism to reveal their sexual orientation without the fear of being prejudiced.

### **Pattern of Social Relationship Influencing the Mental State of Gay Males**

Initial observations implied a link between optimism and gay males in the coming out since it is one of the essential parts of their lives (Dinwoodie et al., 2016). Gay males frequently have expectations about how their parents would react to the news of their sexual orientation in the future. Because of this, identity disclosure can be regarded as a dual process that can have either a positive or negative impact on the participants' level of optimism. (Chrisler, 2017). According to a published article by Roe (2017), supportive parents can develop the optimism of gay males, a claim that has been increasingly debatable in recent years. Gay males, on the other hand, are more likely to feel pessimistic about coming out due to familial pressure and the heteronormative socialization process (Newcomb et al., 2018).

There are also cases where gay males have hesitated to come out, claiming that they will be forced to marry women owing to social pressure (Zack & Ben-Ari, 2018). Circumstances as such take place when gay males are neglected due to the societal norms in Malaysia that fail to recognize the rights of gay males, and therefore, this study is determinant to explore their optimism.

With superiority on self-efficacy and optimism, coming out for gay males will boost their futuristic thoughts and urge them for freedom of expression. Gay males could have a regular life with their affective and cognitive enrichment. For instance, they could have a significant other or be hired as heterosexuals do. They believe that the external challenges they encountered have enabled them to embrace themselves and go forward in life. With the liberty that every individual acquires, people tend to be open-minded towards the LGBTQ community, to the point where a discrimination-free society for the minority group evolves.

### **Dysphoria of Gay Males in Daily Life**

The subject of gay males is considered a taboo topic in Malaysia (Gany & Subhi, 2018), and it has relatively few Malaysian contexts of literature to support related studies (Singaravelu & Cheah, 2020). The most compelling evidence, it happens because of the strict practice of Islamic law. In Malaysia, LGBTQ individuals gain no support whatsoever and become a target of social bullying to the point where they lose connection of their everyday lifestyle with ordinary individuals (Zhooriyati & Intan, 2015). This research has explored the perception of self-efficacy and optimism in coming out among Malaysian gay males. In Malaysia, it is permissible to speak openly about the taboo subject of gay males, with the goal of lessening the discrimination that they encounter. It was necessary to undertake this study because the law is capable of safeguarding innocent people, regardless of their color, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or physical or intellectual disability. This research has also provided further insight into the disclosure of homosexual males' sexual orientation in light of the fact that they have a different conceptualization of their sexual orientation than what the general public is led to believe.

### **Research Question and Research Objective**

The belief in the gay males' capacity to come out is left to question. The fundamental reasons, however, have received relatively less attention. Besides, optimism among Malaysian gay males is called into question. This research was designed with the following objectives: -

- To explore the self-efficacy of Malaysian gay males in coming out.
- To understand Malaysian gay males' perception of optimism in revealing their sexual orientation.

### **Method**

This section discusses the methodology of the research. A concrete approach of methods were applied in this study, as further discussed in the sub-topics of research design and method, participants and recruitment, data collection, research instrument, as well as data analysis.

### Study Design

Transcendental phenomenology's principles were chosen as the study's theoretical framework since it contains numerous guiding principles such as neoma, noetic, and epoche (Husserl, 2012). In this study, neoma holds the reason that transcendental phenomenology is used as the theoretical foundation to explore self-efficacy, optimism, and its intervention. Neoma does not see subjects as special creatures from a phenomenological standpoint, yet they are perceived as the subject of intention (Shahabi & Rassi, 2015). Therefore, it examines the backgrounds of gay males that emerge from a bias-free perspective in reflecting on their daily struggles like being discriminated against (Miller, 2019). The primary disposition of this study was to obtain their self-efficacy and optimism upon coming out.

For this study, a qualitative strategy is more effective than a quantitative one due to the legal and societal sanctions in Malaysia. Gay males in Malaysia may be challenging to identify, and therefore, qualitative study deems fit for this research to understand their opinion and experience in the coming out process. The stated research method typically focuses on exploring human behavior and standpoint, which are prone to differ among every other individual (Starks et al., 2017). Gay males are suitable to be studied under the qualitative research method, as it utilizes to gain underlying understandings of this group of people (Gabb & Allen, 2020).

### Participants and Locations

The study recruited 22 gay males from Kuala Lumpur and Selangor through the combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Before the potential participants were approached, an observation had taken place to identify particular behaviors, which signifies that they are gay males. It includes holding hands or affectionate hugs with another male. There was no set time to observe them, as every individual has a various perspective on public display affection. Following that, the participants were requested to suggest other potential participants among their acquaintances.

The participants were recruited based on the inclusion criteria such as cisgender men, self-identified as gay males, and have had an experience of coming out. Kuala Lumpur is known as the massive urban city in Malaysia, and it has a high rate of discrimination directed towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (Vijay et al., 2018). On the contrary, the state of Selangor is recognized as the amenable state in Malaysia to have research on the LGBTQ community (Ab Rahman et al., 2019). Therefore, Kuala Lumpur and Selangor were selected as sampling locations in this study. Table 1 portrays a further detailed conclusion of the demographic background of the participants.



**Table 1.** *Demographic Background of Participant*

Malaysian Gay Males' Characteristics	Number of Participants
Age	
21	10
22	2
23	3
24	4
25	2
Religion	
Islam	12
Buddhism	4
Hindu	2
Christian	4
Region	
Selangor	9
Kuala Lumpur	13
Coming out to parents	
Yes (with support)	6
Yes (without support)	4
No	12
Coming out to siblings	
Yes (with support)	12
Yes (without support)	3
No	7

### Procedure and Instruments

All of the participants in this study were recruited from Selangor and Kuala Lumpur using the purposive and snowball sampling technique. They were given an information sheet to assist them in comprehending the study and allowed to inquire about this research. Inform consent was given when participants agreed to contribute their perspectives to this study. Both the pilot test and the actual study was conducted in bilingual (i.e., English and Malay), as the interview question was approved by Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC). A 45-minute to an hour semi-structured in-depth interview was performed at a place that was entirely up to the participants' preferences, as long as it was secure and preserved their confidentiality.

To ensure data saturation has been met, researchers delved deeper into the subject of interest with the participants until there was nothing more to share. For example, it was done by inquiring, "Would you like to share anything more?" or "Do I need to know anything other than what I have asked you?" at the end of the interview. Also, the researchers used data source triangulation to establish credibility (Carter et al., 2014). Three researchers are involved in the study to provide multiple observations, particularly during the interview phase, and thus the codes and themes are developed. It signifies that investigator triangulation is employed, as this type of triangulation can provide confirmation as well as novel perspectives, broadening the scope of the study (Carter et al., 2014).

The Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) and Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R; Scheier et al., 1994) were adopted and restructured to qualitative interview questions. There was a translation into Bahasa Malaysia for the interview questions, and therefore it is presented in bilingual to ensure that the participants

understand the items entirely. The interview questions were reviewed by a professional before the actual data collection process, as it is for the principle of preserving its reliability and validity.

The interview questions were assessed by a field expert, who had been appointed to the position. Based on constructive comments, the questions were revised. As a result, the interview questions in this study were altered from high-reliability quantitative questionnaires. Once the interview questions were reviewed and amended according to the qualitative research expert, it was submitted to the review board for ethical approval. It was then yielded an acceptance by the IEC to initiate the pilot study and commence on actual data collection.

There were four sections for the interview questions. Section A concerns the demographic information of the participants. The sample interview question included "What is your religion?/*Apakah agama anda?*". Besides, the personal statement of the participants coming out was attainable from Section B. The sample question is "How did you identify your sexual orientation?/*Bagaimana anda mengenal pasti orientasi seksual anda?*". Section C and Section D highlighted the intervention that took place in coming out, which are self-efficacy and optimism, respectively. The sample interview question is "What are the strengths you use to achieve your goals in life?/*Apakah prinsip ketabahan yang anda gunakan untuk mencapai matlamat dalam hidup?*", and "What do you think your future will be like after coming out as a gay male?/*Apakah pendapat anda tentang masa depan anda setelah mendedahkan orientasi seksual sebagai lelaki gay?*", respectively.

### **Ethical Consideration**

It was necessary to obtain ethical clearance from the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) of UCSI University (Reference code: IEC-2020-FoSSLA-050). Before, during, and after the data collection, ethical considerations were strictly adhered. Before the study began, the participants signed a written consent form. Participants' confidentiality was maintained while misleading practices were avoided when the study was designed, and ethical issues were strictly followed.

### **Data Analysis**

The purpose of this study is to explore self-efficacy and optimism about coming out among Malaysian gay males. Therefore, the data from the interview sessions were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is since thematic analysis is guided by an overarching purpose, as evidenced by the developed research statement. The thematic analysis has six steps: (i) familiarizing yourself with your data, (ii) generating initial codes, (iii) searching for themes, (iv) reviewing themes, (v) defining and naming themes, and (vi) producing the report, to adhere.

In other words, the transcribing process is completely integrated with the analytic process. The perception of Malaysian homosexual males is competently represented in the initiation of the interview transcription, which includes the categorization of codes and topics. Only a few words (e.g., tetap bangga or kantoi) from the Malay language were used by the participants during the study's interview, which was conducted in bilingual with the approval of IEC. As a result, no concern was raised on whether or not the words were translated correctly because the researchers readily encoded the Malay words when transcribing the data.

After reviewing the raw data several times, the researchers put those transcriptions into a collective portion that consisted of various codes. The themes were then developed and placed in an orderly structure. There was a cross-checking procedure among the researchers to designate and define the highly refined theme to verify that it fits within the overall aim of the research. The report was ready to be drafted after that.

## **Findings**

This study aimed to explore the perception of self-efficacy and optimism in coming out among Malaysian gay males. The result of the study is divided into three main sections. It is regarding characteristics of the gay males, along with self-efficacy and optimism of the participants.

### **Self-efficacy**

The sub-topic of self-efficacy are the findings that stem from the participants. It comprises five main themes, whereby the result reflects the research questions. The themes are: (1) standardizing normative social influence, (2) general act of affirmation, (3) center for effective altruism, (4) venture to advocate, and (5) procure definitive enrichment.

Normative social influence enabled gay males to deal with unresolved matters due to the unfair treatment that has taken place and affected them. An enlightening experience of coming out is likely to be encountered by Malaysian gay males with the resiliency and resistance on top of a general act of affirmation. Malaysian gay males tend to hold the pride to view their bright future, displaying a caring approach and effective altruism. Besides, following gay males' efforts to enhance conventional Islamic law and promote same-sex marriage legislation in Malaysia, the community has united to support them. Therefore, definitive enrichment has profound significance for gay males, as it allows them to be efficacious about their coming out.

### ***Standardizing Normative Social Influence***

The normative social influence highlights the unresolved matters of a toxic society practicing unfair treatment. It would eventually decrease the perceived belief that gay males could produce a positive outcome in coming out. The participants have expressed how immensely important to live life fully despite the adverse occurrences because life can change at the tip of the fingertips.

P20: I do find life is really short... I find that death could happen anytime. Some people by choice but some people are not. If you are still alive, why can't you just do your stuff and try to do your best just push but not over the limit within your capability, love someone that you really do while there are still here because it's just one snatch and they could not be here.

The obstructive social standardization results in them carrying the worry of not being accepted by their kindred, comprising their parents and siblings. Gay males, in general, never failed to discover what brings self-efficacy that emulates satisfaction, as they are aware of using memorable experiences with gratitude attribution to restructure their life priorities.

### ***General Act of Affirmation***

Rationalizing coming out is meaningful for Malaysian gay males, who uphold warm relationships with their family members, as it provides them with a quick bounce-back capability of not hiding in their shell, for not having a sexual orientation desired by society. By



putting the frame of mind into practice, external validations will elevate their progression. Coming out, in reality, gives a reliving sense for Malaysian gay males. It would therefore leave an impactful meaning in terms of self-efficacy while putting themselves at ease.

P14: I need to be careful [with my words]. When they say, “you have someone?” I’m just like no no, yada yada I have to compress myself really deep down but after you come out, it’s just like another day, another people know about you and when you come out you get to know who really physically saying that they accept you, and who doesn’t...

### ***Centre for Effective Altruism***

Malaysian gay males utilize their altruistic characteristics to catalyze their self-efficacy, which eventually allows them to achieve self-actualization in coming out.

P17: So yeah it [self-awareness] has definitely helped me adapt myself because you know I have to pretend to not be gay in front of strangers, I have to adapt to awkward situations when people ask me “eh when are you gonna have a girlfriend” ummm yeah... I don’t change my behavior according to my surroundings... In the beginning, yeah I have denied about being gay.

### ***Venture to Advocate***

Giving back to society with the helping hand of the community support portrays as an act to foster the marginalized population. Under the course of advocating for LGBTQ rights, the participants expressed that every little effort put into bringing up the vulnerable community ought to be counted for the best, as it represents one being nationalistic to Malaysia. The example given by the participants involves being vocal about the Malaysian Adoption Act, Malaysian law, or Islamic law.

P04: I know they’ve been milestones or achievements where NGOs or movements like Sisters in Islam, Sisters for Justice, or Pelangi that have been able to challenge Syariah point... for me it’s quite outdated to use these laws because when we’re talking about it internationally, it’s against humans’ right’s standards so I’m a very vocal person when it comes to human rights issues...

### ***Procure Definitive Enrichment***

Gay males would walk through the journey of experiencing an adequate self-efficacy in their coming out, as long as they leave behind their insecurities caused by the displeasing subpar society. They tend to have the capabilities to organize and execute their coming out with the social engagement through the LGBTQ pride, as there is no reflection of stereotype and judgment by their behavior. The appropriate coping mechanism also can provide a life inclination for their future endeavors enabling a definitive enrichment of their daily routine.

P05: I thought it’s a very trivial issue it’s very small so what I would do is I will play the piano you know watch some funny shows on YouTube to really express my... vent out my emotions. Piano will let my thoughts go out.

### ***Optimism***

This sub-topic is divided into five main themes, whereby each of them acknowledges the results concerning the research questions from the interview with participants. It includes (1) enduring unfair treatment, (2) sensible coping mechanisms, (3) root causes of insecurity, (4) endowment of toxic society, and (5) psychological resiliency development.

Unfair treatment, such as encountering uncivilized individuals that prompt unfavorable remarks, may gradually leave gay males with a sense of social objection, giving them false hope of the future after coming out. Malaysian gay males can make good productivity in coming out if they have a healthy coping mechanism. Coming out, however, is frequently linked to negative future expectations due to a lack of public understanding about gay males, which diminishes their sense of security. The optimism of Malaysian gay males is largely undermined by external stigmatization and conditional expectations imposed by the toxic society. Although stereotypes persist, Malaysian gay males adapt to the hurdles by keeping an optimistic mind, which eventually leads to the development of resiliency.

### ***Enduring Unfair Treatment***

During the significant milestone of coming out, it is unfortunate when gay males stumble upon lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ), who use a harmful command of words to invalidate their members besides criticizing them for who they are.

P12: Sometimes I get discriminated from a clothing company where I applied a job because I'm HIV positive. They accepted me initially but rejected me when I was about to come in for work because they realize I was HIV positive. I wanted to report to MAC [Malaysian AIDS Council] and Malay Mail for discriminating HIV but after that, they called and apologized.

It especially is when one bumps into uncivilized individuals who physically misconduct and harass others, which incline to leave negative influences on the state of optimism for Malaysian gay males. It comes to show that they are consistently experiencing unfair treatment, including social objection.

### ***Sensible Coping Mechanism***

A coping mechanism typically aids an individual in building resiliency to face challenges. One of the effective methods of dealing with stress would be through being productive, which grants a healthy prospect of living. The participants have confessed to an inadequate way of adapting to stressful life events that will negatively impact them physically. When it comes to psychological context, the participants have been diagnosed with anxiety and depression while having an incompetent coping strategy.

P08: Very unhealthy, I drink a lot, I smoke a lot when I'm stressed about being harassed because I'm addicted to smoking it makes me calm, it helps me. Although sometimes I drink to the point where I start crying for no reason at all.

### ***Root Causes of Insecurity***

Every individual has a subliminal self, and pushing against it contributes to the gay males' feelings of insecurity. When gay males try to look appealing in terms of appearance to live up to the social norms of the LGBTQ community, it falls under the inevitable social circumstance.

P06: I go out with my family, I have to dress a certain way... they always see as like okay this is a gay son, some of us say "oh this family has a gay son" They don't want people to know that, so I dress the way that they want so that is a problem... insecure problem to me because it's society expectations on how LGBTQ people should dress.

Lack of awareness towards the LGBTQ community diminishes their state of optimism in coming out. The participants pointed out that self-suppression in dressing sense, emotional

threats accompanied by extreme stress, and denial of sexual orientation tend to lead them to be pessimistic in coming out.

### ***Endowment of Toxic Society***

The external stigmatization directed towards Malaysian gay males leaves an immediate impact on their state of optimism.

P11: I just hold hands with my boyfriend, but I have experienced some close-minded aunty saying “don’t do that in public” but not like they will report to police. Personally, public experience doesn’t affect me... it disappoints me...

Circumstances hold a bitter recollection, especially when participants look back at toxic memories they had in school. The participants clarified that the judgmental stare coming from conditional expectations by the external party and even their friend circle offend their feelings more than the actual physical harm. It is because the societal strain that derives from the gay community principles tends to be destructive.

### ***Psychological Resiliency Development***

Gay males view the future pessimistically to an extent where they experience constricted effect, as the unguarded situations provoked by the uncultivated individuals affect their mental state. The negative thinking and incompetent feelings are prone to drag their state of optimism down.

P19: I went to Titiwangsa for dinner and guys were catcalling me, walking very fast towards me. Two weeks ago, I was harassed on the LRT, people groped my arse, my friend in college try to touch me, he grabbed and pushed me even though I refused him.

Although they encompass a compassionate ground that allows them to have the flexibility to accommodate the unpleasant experience, it is indisputable that the disparities result from the societal standard is over the roof, which influences the psychological resiliency of gay males.

### **Discussion**

Coming out is associated with inferiority, as the unfair treatment arises from the toxic society tends to affect Malaysian gay males’ psychological well-being. With these unresolved matters, it will be a hurdle for them to perceive the ability to take accountability for their life tenacity before they experience a decline in their optimism. With the help of which, the process of seeking self-efficacy for gay males often involves negative experiences, as they endure traumatic life events before reaching their ultimate goal of coming out (Dawson et al., 2019). Fortunately, Malaysian gay males use self-efficacy and optimism as vital elements in their coming out to avoid psychological disturbance. It is especially when they have memorable experiences in coming out from their kindred who fully accepts them. It provides them with a sense of gratitude from the normative social influence.

Besides, affirmation is crucial for every individual since it acts as confirmation to ratify a genuine decision, and it implies the same for Malaysian gay males. When they are locked in to be fond of relationships, there will be an elevated progression concerning their coming out, which is frequently accompanied by discrimination directed at them when they reveal their sexual orientation. Haxhe and colleagues (2017) did, however, acknowledge that gay males from different continents have various experiences in adapting, which results in the influence of external circumstances such as their social support, which is also applicable in Malaysia.

Due to the external validation from peers, siblings, and even parents, the process of rationalizing a behavior of coming out, for instance, can be put into practice. Closeted gay males' mental health may be influenced by their situation. As a result, a well-executed demonstration would promote the building of courage in their favor. Malaysian gay males can leverage their sense of self-efficacy and positivity to help them come out. They achieve self-actualization through advocacy, as they try to develop for the better to reach altruism (Maksut et al., 2020; Wen et al., 2020).

Significantly, affirmation and attribution, which are notable in the condition of Malaysian gay males, are indeed beneficial to the practice of self-efficacy and optimism in their coming out. With affirmation, gay males can cultivate the fondness of relationships as an impression that elevates their progression in revealing their sexual orientation. Through advocating for others, they can bring up the marginalized community. Besides, they are inclined to gain community support and significantly make every effort for the best through LGBTQ pride. Although each of their moves is undefinable, there is always an outcome that teaches them a lesson. For example, Malaysian gay males are vocal about upholding same-sex marriage legalization (Singaravelu & Cheah, 2020) or even prompting amendments to the Islamic law (Muhammed & Amuda, 2018).

On the other hand, Malaysian gay males unexpectedly have shown a nationalistic nature towards their motherland. They expressed the common need to return to Malaysia as soon as they had a foreign same-sex marriage (Gany & Subhi, 2018). However, coming out accompanies displeasing events in a gay male's life, which originates from insecure feelings. Christiansen (2019) revealed that getting out of the closet is the beginning of unhappiness due to many unforeseen external factors. The reason is that coming out is frequently associated with sexual minority discrimination and suicide among gay males (Ferlatte et al., 2019). Malaysian gay males, on the positive side, practice adequate coping mechanisms because of their supportive social circle to deal with their stressors, even though some are unhealthy habits such as smoking, drinking, or gambling.

Fortunately, the social engagement of the LGBTQ pride that the gay males involve provides them with a definitive enrichment. On this ground, they attempt to use their self-efficacy to execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations in their future endeavors. One of the ultimate ventures that could arise is from LGBTQ parenting, as it is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, and intellectual development of a child (Messina & D'Amore, 2018; Shenkman et al., 2020). It can eventually generate self-efficacy of gay males, as they would have children of their own, through surrogacy or adoption solely because it gives them personal growth.

The unfair treatment, then again, tends to reduce optimism, especially for Malaysian gay males that stumble upon uncivilized individuals, who often make social objections towards gullible people. Being accustomed to the harmful command of words daily will ultimately diminish pragmatic anticipation of gay males towards the future. Gay males who are coming out, for the most part, accompanies physical misconduct. However, Western countries advocate for LGBTQ rights (Rodriguez, 2019). Through the compassionate ground that the gay males obtained, they certainly develop psychological resiliency. With high adaptability and fluidity, they can accommodate the misery that their coming out has brought.

Gay males, on the other hand, require a coping mechanism since they are under pressure to disclose their sexual orientation. In contrast to gay males in Western countries, gay males from Asian countries like Japan, Korea, and Malaysia appear to be impractical when

they come out (Muhammed & Amuda, 2018). As a result, to make a good performance in their coming out, gay males would employ adequate coping mechanisms to have a positive outlook on life by engaging in activities such as music composition and gardening. However, some Malaysian gay males are practically hopeless in their efforts to come out, to the point that they are unable to cope with the stress. They began drinking, hooking up, and finally committing suicide to escape the awful things they had encountered.

The social norm established by the general public certainly appears to make Malaysian gay males feel insecure to reveal their sexual orientation due to the lack of awareness in the LGBTQ society. Because of being obtrusive to others, Malaysian gay males experience having pessimistic thoughts that diminish their subjective well-being, as they hold the threshold called subliminal self. This objectionable outcome is frequently associated with irresistible social circumstances encountered by gay males.

In that manner, the parents tend to cultivate gay males' state of optimism in coming out (Newcomb et al., 2018; Roe, 2017). It would perhaps cause a double-edged sword effect because nearly half of adolescence experience an unpleasant relationship with their parents whenever it comes down to the discussion of homosexuality. Thereupon, the unguarded condition in coming out caused a spike in suicidal cases among gay males, and it often is accompanied by a constricted effect. Quinn and colleagues (2019) stipulated that gay males must establish a better strategy to stimulate optimistic thinking throughout their coming out to maintain their psychological well-being.

## Conclusions

Toxic society, comparatively, has always been a prime factor influencing the state of optimism for gay males in Malaysia. The ordinary population holds a community principle that forces gay males to perform a particular act, such as prohibiting them from revealing their sexual orientation by coming out. The gay community also helps its members develop societal strength by establishing conditional expectations. Given that they fail in doing so, external stigmatization would transpire, and it mainly comes from the ordinary community. The findings, therefore, support a revision of the law concerning LGBTQ matters to protect Malaysian gay males' safety, as they are a minority group in this country.

However, there is a curiosity that the general public has, and they are prone to utter it in a discriminatory sense towards gay males in terms of hate speech, as expressed by most of the participants. They further explained that the remarks of uncivilized individuals would eventually affect the psychological well-being of gay males in Malaysia. For this judgment, a reasonable approach to tackle this issue is implementable through individuals. The influencers and politicians can be vocal on sensible subjects like legalizing same-sex marriage and same-sex union in Malaysia. Unless governments establish regulations for their citizens, no changes will occur towards those who are discriminative towards the gay community. The mutual understanding among the society and the gay males will be able to rebuild, provided that it executes successfully. With that, the gay males earn their respect all over again.

## References

- Ab Rahman, A., Ab Ghani, N. F. A., Zakaria, M. A., & Yeap, M. J. M. F. (2019). Program pemulihan lesbian, gay, biseksual dan transgender (LGBT): Bahagian pemulihan Riqab, Majlis Agama Islam Selangor (MAIS) [Rehabilitation program for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT): Riqab's rehabilitation section, Majlis



- Agama Islam Selangor (MAIS)]. *Perdana: International Journal of Academic Research*, 6(2), 26–34.
- Aksoy, C. G., Carpenter, C. S., Frank, J., & Huffman, M. L. (2019). Gay glass ceilings: Sexual orientation and workplace authority in the UK. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 159, 167–180. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2019.01.013>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(5), 545–547. <https://doi.org/10.1188/14.onf.545-547>
- Cheah, W. H., & Singaravelu, H. (2017). The coming-out process of gay and lesbian individuals from Islamic Malaysia: Communication strategies and motivations. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 46(5), 401–423. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2017.1362460>
- Chrisler, A. J. (2017). Understanding parent reactions to coming out as lesbian, gay, or bisexual: A theoretical framework. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 9(2), 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12194>
- Christiansen, J. (2019). *The repetition of the coming out process in daily life* [Master's thesis, Texas State University]. Texas Digital Library. <https://digital.library.txstate.edu/handle/10877/8006>
- Dawson, E. L., Mendoza, M. C. B., Gaul, Z., Jeffries IV, W. L., Sutton, M. Y., & Wilson, P. A. (2019). Resilience, condom use self-efficacy, internalized homophobia, and condomless anal sex among black men who have sex with men, New York City. *PLOS ONE*, 14(4), Article e0215455. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0215455>
- Dinwoodie, R., Greenhill, B., & Cookson, A. (2016). 'Them two things are what collide together': Understanding the sexual identity experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people labelled with intellectual disability. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 33(1), 3–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12252>
- Eisenberg, M. E., Gower, A. L., Rider, G. N., McMorris, B. J., & Coleman, E. (2019). At the intersection of sexual orientation and gender identity: Variations in emotional distress and bullying experience in a large population-based sample of U.S. adolescents. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 16(3), 235–254. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2019.1567435>
- Ferlatte, O., Oliffe, J. L., Salway, T., & Knight, R. (2019). Stigma in the bereavement experiences of gay men who have lost a partner to suicide. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 21(11), 1273–1289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2018.1556344>
- Gabb, J., & Allen, K. R. (2020). Qualitative research on LGBTQ-parent families. In A. Goldberg & K. Allen (Eds.), *LGBTQ-parent families* (pp. 471–489). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35610-1\\_28](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35610-1_28)
- Gany, M. Y. D., & Subhi, N. (2018). Religious and sexual identity conflict among same-sex attracted Muslim men: A conceptual differences of life experience between western and Muslim majority countries. *Jurnal Psikologi Malaysia*, 32(4), 133–149. <http://spaj.ukm.my/ppppm/jpm/article/view/430>
- Hart, T. A., Noor, S. W., Vernon, J. R. G., Kidwai, A., Roberts, K., Myers, T., & Calzavara, L. (2017). Childhood maltreatment, bullying victimization, and psychological distress among gay and bisexual men. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 55(4-5), 604–616. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1401972>



- Haxhe, S., Cerezo, A., Bergfeld, J., & Walloch, J. C. (2017). Siblings and the coming-out process: A comparative case study. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 65(4), 407–426. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1321349>
- Husserl, E. (2012). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203120330>
- Maksut, J. L., Eaton, L. A., Driver, R., Knowles, C. M., & Watson, R. J. (2020). Factors associated with awareness and use of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) among Black men who have sex with men with a recent STI diagnosis. *Behavioral Medicine*, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08964289.2019.1692776>
- Messina, R., & D'Amore, S. (2018). Adoption by lesbians and gay men in Europe: Challenges and barriers on the journey to adoption. *Adoption Quarterly*, 21(2), 59–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926755.2018.1427641>
- Miller, W. L. Jr. (2019). Experiences of stigma and spirituality of older black men living with HIV. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 46(3), 427–438. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2019.1582451>
- Muhammed, A. A., & Amuda, Y. J. (2018). LGBT: An evaluation of Shariah provisions and the laws of Malaysia and Nigeria. *Global Journal Al-Thaqafah (GJAT)*, 8(1), 15–29.
- Newcomb, M. E., Feinstein, B. A., Matson, M., Macapagal, K., & Mustanski, B. (2018). “I have no idea what’s going on out there”: Parents’ perspectives on promoting sexual health in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adolescents. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 15(2), 111–122. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-018-0326-0>
- Quinn, K., Bowleg, L., & Dickson-Gomez, J. (2019). “The fear of being Black plus the fear of being gay”: The effects of intersectional stigma on PrEP use among young Black gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. *Social Science & Medicine*, 232, 86–93. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.04.042>
- Rodriguez, J. A. (2019). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer media: Key narratives, future directions. *Sociology Compass*, 13(4), Article e12675. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12675>
- Roe, S. (2017). “Family support would have been like amazing”: LGBTQ youth experiences with parental and family support. *The Family Journal*, 25(1), 55–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480716679651>
- Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W. (1994). Distinguishing optimism from neuroticism (and trait anxiety, self-mastery, and self-esteem): A reevaluation of the life orientation test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67(6), 1063–1078. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.6.1063>
- Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). Generalized self-efficacy scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston (Eds.), *Measures in health psychology: A user’s portfolio. Causal and control beliefs* (pp. 35–37). NFER-Nelson.
- Shahabi, Z., & Rassi, F. (2015). Husserl’s phenomenology and two terms of noema and noesis. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 53, 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.18052/www.scipress.com/ILSHS.53.29>
- Shenkman, G., Siboni, O., Tasker, F., & Costa, P. A. (2020). Pathways to fatherhood: Psychological well-being among Israeli gay fathers through surrogacy, gay fathers through previous heterosexual relationships, and heterosexual fathers. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00091>

- Singaravelu, H., & Cheah, W. H. (2020). Being gay and lesbian in Malaysia. In N. Nakamura & C. H. Logie (Eds.), *LGBTQ mental health: International perspectives and experiences* (pp. 121–135). American Psychological Association.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000159-009>
- Starks, T. J., Pawson, M., Stephenson, R., Sullivan, P., & Parsons, J. T. (2017). Dyadic qualitative analysis of condom use scripts among emerging adult gay male couples. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 44(3), 269–280.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623x.2017.1359713>
- Vijay, A., Earnshaw, V. A., Tee, Y. C., Pillai, V., White Hughto, J. M., Clark, K., Kamarulzaman, A., Altice, F. L., & Wickersham, J. A. (2018). Factors associated with medical doctors' intentions to discriminate against transgender patients in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. *LGBT Health*, 5(1), 61–68. <https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2017.0092>
- Wen, J., Yeh, T.-P., Xie, H., Yu, X., Tang, J., & Chen, Y. (2020). Resilience, self-esteem, self-efficacy, social support, depression and ART adherence among people living with HIV in Sichuan, China. *AIDS Care*, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540121.2020.1828800>
- Zack, E., & Ben-Ari, A. (2018). “Men are for sex and women are for marriage”: On the duality in the lives of Jewish religious gay men married to women. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 15(4), 395–413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428x.2018.1506374>
- Zhooriyati, S. M., & Despois, D. Y. (2022). Spillover-crossover effects of work-life conflict among married academicians in private university. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 30(1), 139–157. <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.30.1.08>
- Zhooriyati, S. M., & Intan, H. M. H. (2015). Hubungan interpersonal golongan ‘pengkid’ di Malaysia [Interpersonal relationships of “pengkid” in Malaysia]. *Jurnal Pembangunan Sosial*, 18, 97–116. <https://doi.org/10.32890/jps.18.2015.11524>