

Toward a Sexuality and Gender affirming Campus: Effectiveness, Challenges, and Opportunities of Implementing Inclusive School Policies and Practices for Sexual and Gender Minority Students

While access to an equitable education is a basic human right, not all students receive equal treatment in education and have an equal chance for success. In particular, sexual and gender minority (SGM) students are at greater risk of school victimization and academic failure than cisgender heterosexual students. Accumulated research reveals that inclusive school policies and practices might play a critical role in fostering an lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT)-affirming campus climate and mitigating negative school experiences among SGM students. Nevertheless, such regulatory and protective mechanisms are often lacking in Asian countries such as China, where minority stress is pervasive and policy inaction is evident. Grounded in the structural stigma theory and minority stress model, the proposed study utilizes a concurrent mixed-methods design to examine the effectiveness, challenges, and opportunities of implementing inclusive school policies and practices in the Chinese educational context. Quantitative data collection will be conducted in 30 secondary schools in mainland China, with 3,660 students being recruited to complete a questionnaire on attitudes toward SGM, bullying behavior, peer victimization, and school outcomes. Multilevel modeling will be conducted to determine the effects of inclusive school policies and practices on LGBT-supportive attitudes and behaviors in general students as well as school outcomes in SGM students. Qualitative interviews will be conducted with 15 school administrators and teachers who will be recruited from the schools participating in the quantitative study. They will be asked about the experiences, barriers, and facilitators of introducing inclusive school policies and practices. Theoretically, the findings will identify the sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (SOGIE)-based disparities in school experiences and outcomes. Using multi-informant data, this study will determine whether, which, and how inclusive SOGIE-related school policies and practices can foster an LGBT-affirming campus climate and promote better school outcomes in SGM students. The results will also reveal the processes, challenges, and opportunities of implementing inclusive school policies and practices in Chinese educational settings. Practically, the findings will inform school leaders and teachers on their campus climate for sexual and gender diversity. Information gathered from this study will advise on policies and practices to build a sexuality and gender affirming campus and protect SGM students from SOGIE-related victimization. The findings will also be translated into practical recommendations to facilitate evidence-informed decision-making in policy formulation, curriculum development, teacher education, and mental health service provision, and ultimately promote wellness and justice for every student, regardless of their SOGIE.