

Supervisor's Evaluation of the Master's Thesis

Title: Understanding Institutional Support and Service Experiences of Lesbian and Gay Youth

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The thesis focuses on lesbian and gay young people as a group that often faces, due to the heteronormativity of society, various issues, which may bring a psychological burden to their lives and lead to a higher rate of depression, self-harm, alcohol or drug abuse or other problems. People usually self-identify as homosexual in their teens or early adolescence, at the age when they attend school institutions. As the school environment is often structured around normative concepts of gender and sexuality, it presents a space where the experienced problems may escalate. But young people may also seek in school refuge from the difficulties they experience at home. The role of schools in eliminating the impacts of heteronormativity is therefore crucial.

For this reason, I highly appreciate Liya's efforts to explore the experience of young people with institutional responses and support, the perceived gaps and possibly effective instruments. What I would also like to highlight is that she has decided to take a more demanding journey, as she focuses in her thesis on the Czech environment. Her interest in understanding the local situation required overcoming language barriers and investing additional work. It also required increased reflexivity concerning the limitations of her own position. She took on these tasks with great effort.

In the first chapters of her thesis, the author introduces the review of relevant literature and the conceptual framework of the thesis. She focuses on homophobia in the school context, its consequences, common barriers to seeking support and good institutional practices in this field. She also introduces some specifics of the situation of lesbians and gays in the Czech Republic and relevant research focusing specifically on the school context (research about homophobia in schools, public opinion on the integration of LGBT topics in curricula, etc.) and existing institutional support. This part is informative and presents a wide range of relevant sources. It is followed by a chapter describing the conceptual framework of the thesis (the concept of heteronormativity, sexual minority stress, identity formation, etc.). However, the structure of the introductory chapters in the current version of the text seems a bit unclear to me. For example, I do not fully understand the placement of chapters 1.1 Homophobia in schools and 2.3 Heteronormativity in schools in different chapters. Some topics in Chapter 2: Conceptual framework should, in my opinion, precede the topics in Chapter 1. In addition, the text sometimes lacks sufficient specificity and a more critical discussion of the presented sources.

With the aim to conduct a qualitative analysis, the author decided to collect her data through an online survey using primarily open-ended questions. To obtain enough material for the analysis of the experience with any institutional support or services, she focused on a broader age group of respondents (people from 16 to 25 years). The limits of this approach are well reflected in the thesis. I appreciate Liya's efforts in overcoming the technical problems in compiling the online questionnaire. It was necessary to master a number of things in a limited time, which she did skillfully.

The analysis itself offers several interesting points. For example, as shown by the author, it is not only the inactivity of schools that may be experienced as harmful, but also an unsolicited help that implicitly problematizes homosexuality and may cause stress. What I also consider to be a strong moment is the repeatedly expressed distrust of teachers. They are depicted not only as unhelpful but often also as part of the problem (due to their homophobic comments, for example). A more critical comment on this part as a whole is that as a reader, I would sometimes welcome a stronger contextualization of findings in existing studies or a presented theoretical framework. This would make the analytical part "thicker".

As the supervisor of the thesis, I appreciate the author's constant effort to improve the text, and at the same time, I welcome her attempts to provide practical recommendations. Despite several of the above-mentioned critical comments, **I recommend the thesis for the defence** and suggest evaluating it with **grade 2 (very good)**.

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