

Campus Bullying and Mental Health of Queer People in China

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Abstract. The survey aimed to investigate targeted bullying in public schools in inland China and to gain an overview of the negative school issues faced by LGBTQ+ students in schools. Campus bullying is a vicious negative behavior on campus, and today, it is also a huge hidden danger and problem affecting society and even adolescents' mental health. Additionally, studies have demonstrated that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students tend to experience more mental health challenges than their heterosexual and gender-conforming peers, with increased suicide attempts, lower self-esteem, and higher rates of depression. National studies have revealed that college students often possess negative and conservative views towards LGBT groups, leading to social stigma, discrimination, and violence for homosexuals, accompanied by varying degrees of emotional disorders, substance dependence, suicide, and other issues. LGBT students face a higher prevalence of homophobic bullying in schools compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Homophobia refers to a negative belief, attitude, stereotype, and behavior towards the LGBT community, which directly influences the bullying of LGBT students on campus, i.e., homophobic bullying. Bullying is a form of repeated aggression by powerful individuals against vulnerable individuals, affecting the physical and mental health of children and adolescents.

Keywords: Sexual minority students; School bullying; Queer people.

1. Introduction

The mental health status of students from sexual minorities is great concern. Sexual minorities, hereinafter referred to as LGBT, encompass individuals who are homosexually inclined, including gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and those who identify as transgender. Research indicates that LGBT students are more susceptible to mental health issues than their heterosexual and gender-conforming peers, with a higher propensity for suicide attempts, lower self-esteem, and higher instances of depression [1]. Domestic studies have discovered that college students generally hold negative and conservative attitudes towards LGBT groups, leading homosexuals to face social stigma, discrimination, and violence, along with varying degrees of emotional disorders, substance dependence, suicide, and other issues. LGBT students encounter more homophobic bullying in school than their heterosexual counterparts [2-4]. Homophobia, in the form of bullying, directly impacts the treatment of LGBT students on campus. Bullying, a type of repeated aggression by powerful individuals against vulnerable ones, can have detrimental effects on the physical and mental health of children and adolescents. China, with its large population base, should pay due attention to the physical and mental health issues of LGBT students who are bullied in schools. Over the past five years, there have been limited inquiries focusing on the bullying of the queer community in public schools and its impact on their physical and mental health. To ensure the healthy development of every queer student and gain a deeper understanding of the bullying of LGBT students in China and the mental health challenges they face, this survey aims to assess the current situation via online research, and discuss and analyze the relationship between campus bullying and the mental health of queer groups in the domestic cultural context. There is a lot of research on LGBTQ people in different regions of the world, but there is very little research on it in China, a country with a large population and the largest number of public schools, so there is a need for more research based on the experience of the queer community. The purpose of this survey is to improve and enrich the sample of queer groups who have encountered campus bullying in China, and to fill in and analyze the causes and rules of the occurrence under the negative influence of campus bullying. In order to reduce and avoid

the spread of such vicious behaviors on campus, we also conducted research on the queer community in China, and the vacant research fields and case studies were expanded in this investigation. The survey also laid the foundation for the study of sexual minorities in China. The objective of this survey is to better improve the educational resources and teach excellent students bullying to speculate.

2. Method

This is a cross-sectional survey with a subjects among public senior high school students in China. Related information was collected through a series of self-reported questionnaires. The association between variables was examined via a set of logistic regressions.

2.1. Subjects

The survey was distributed to high school students in public schools across the country in the form of electronic questionnaires. Among the survey samples, 12% were male and 88% were female. The total sample and data ranged from 16 to 31 years old, excluding the non-utilitarian reading samples, the survey population was concentrated between 16 and 18 years old.

2.2. Instrument

The questionnaire was localized and changed with reference to the Irish study Supporting LGBT Lives in 2009, in which the researcher of this study translated the four sections of basic information, campus experience, mental health and well-being, and social support network [5]. The basic information section includes age, education level, sexual orientation and gender identity. The entry for sexual orientation was, "How would you describe your sexual orientation?" (Homosexual, Heterosexual, Bisexual, Unsure, Other. Options in parentheses, below). The entry for gender identity was, "What was your sex at birth?" (male, female, other), "Do you know yourself as?" (male, female, other), "Do you identify as transgender?" (Yes, No). Transgender was determined by two conditions: 1 Inconsistency between biological sex and gender identity; and 2 Self-identification as transgender.

The school experience section included bullying experiences and ways of coping, school inclusion, and freedom of expression. The questionnaire inquired about students' encounters regarding these three topics with bullying: asking if they had experienced homophobic bullying at school.

2.3. Questionnaire Distribution and Recovery

Because of the privacy and sensitivity of the topic of this study, the author chose to use questionnaire star to carry out the survey. The author chose to use a questionnaire for the investigation. Questionnaire distribution channels include Weibo, WeChat, Tengxun-Q zone and other effective ways to protect the privacy of special groups. Queer students can fill out the questionnaires on their own free will, without interference and supervision, using computers or mobile phones, thus ensuring the reliability of the online survey data.

3. Result

3.1. Characteristics of Sample Population

Among the 135 total samples, 15 were male (11.11%), 119 were female (88.15%), of which 1 was not clear (0.74%), and 12 transgender people (8.89%) realized that their social gender was different from their biological gender in the total population data (see Figure 1). In the total sample data, 14 people were heterosexual (10.37%), 28 people were homosexual (20.74%), 40 people were bisexual (29.63%), 17 people were asexual (12.59%), 25 people were pansexual (18.52%), and 19 people were not clear about their orientation or their orientation changed (14.07%) (see Figure 2). There are 41 middle school students (30.37%), of whom 30 are in public high schools and 11 are in private or vocational schools. 67 college students (49.63%) left the campus, and 27 students (20%) left the campus. They ranged in age from 16 to 31, with a mean age of 19.77 (see Figure 3).

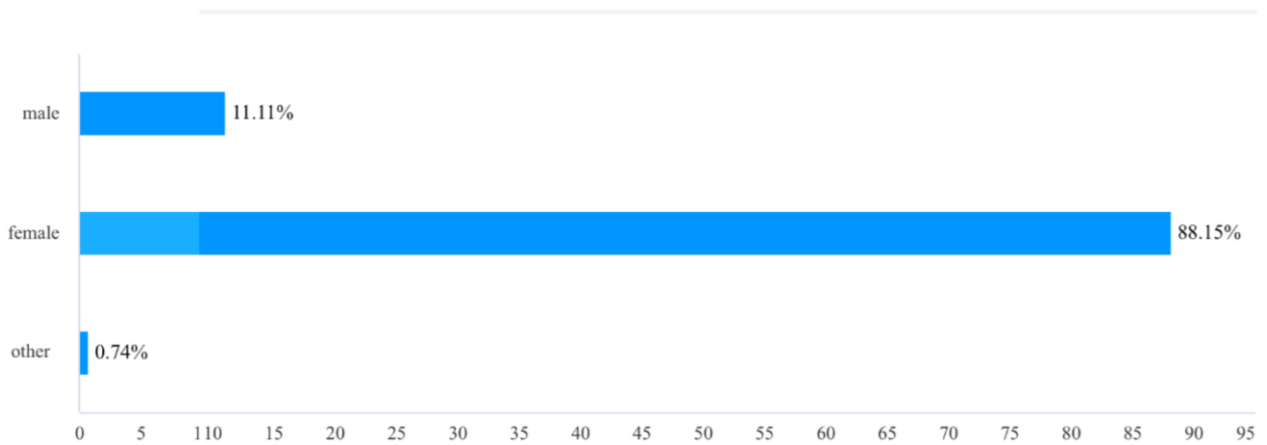


Figure 1. Gender distribution in the questionnaire

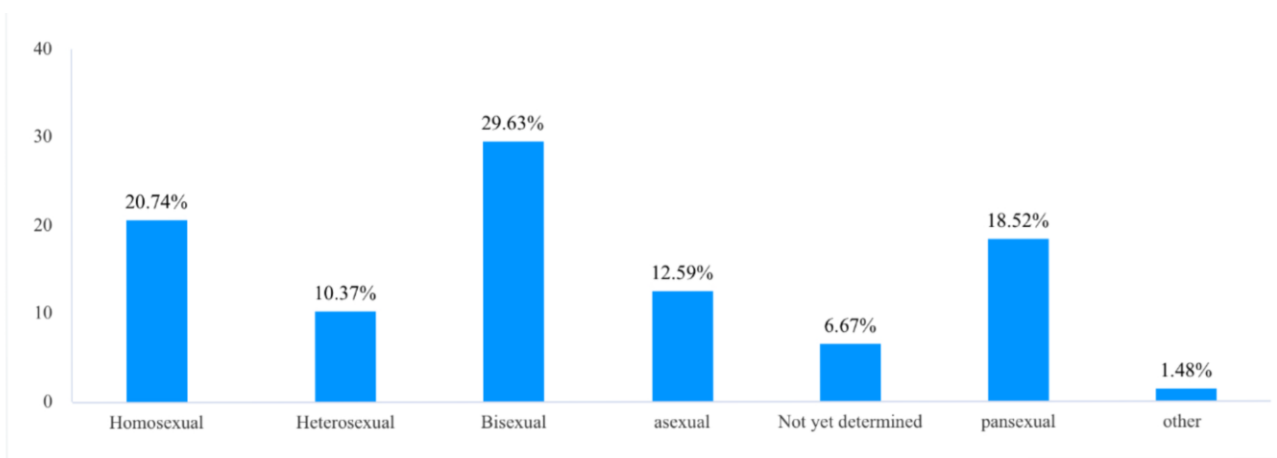


Figure 2. Distribution of neutral orientation in questionnaire

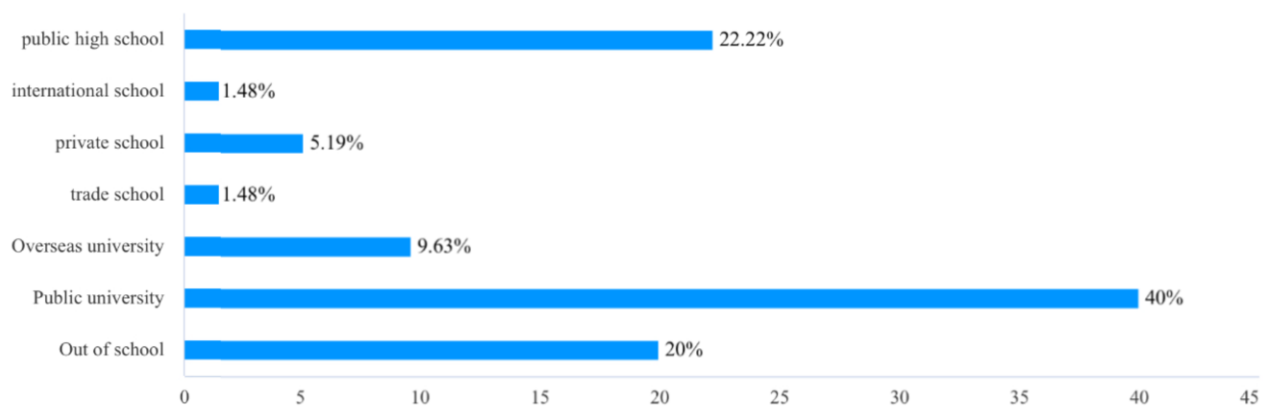


Figure 3. The current status (working or studying) distribution of the participants

3.2. The Current Situation of Students Being Bullied

Nearly half of the participants had experienced bullying in school, mainly involving verbal abuse and isolation. The frequency of bullying situations was mainly "sometimes" and "often."

Participants reported higher rates of depression and thoughts of suicide within the past year, and their average scores indicated poor mental health.

Seventy percent of the participants had come out to others, mainly to classmates, friends, and online partners.

Table 1. Frequency of bullying in school Data Statistics

| Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|--------|--------|-----------|-------|--------|
| 42.96% | 24.44% | 22.22% | 8.89% | 1.48% |

According to the Table 1, the frequency of bullying in school shows an uneven distribution trend among the respondents. Among them, 42.96 percent said they never experienced bullying, 24.44 percent said they rarely encountered it, 22.22 percent said they sometimes encountered it, 8.89 percent said they often encountered it, and 1.48 percent said they always encountered it. It can be seen that most people have not experienced bullying, but still a significant number of people have. More needs to be done to understand the specific circumstances of those who experience bullying so that measures can be taken to reduce the incidence of bullying.

For question, "Have you ever felt depressed in the past year?" most respondents reported feeling depressed sometimes or often, with an average score of 3.33, with a bias toward "sometimes" and "often. (see Figure 4)" This indicated that the respondents had experienced some degree of depression within the past year.

For question "Have you seriously considered suicide in the past year?" In this question, more than half of the respondents said they rarely or never seriously considered suicide, with an average score of 2.64, favoring the two options "rarely" and "sometimes. (see Figure 5)" Still, the survey revealed that a significant number of respondents said they had sometimes, very often, considered suicide

For question, "Have you attempted suicide in the past year?" The respondents' responses to this question were evenly distributed, with an average score of 2.99, with a preference for the two options of "rarely" and "sometimes (see Figure 6)". This means that suicidal ideation may have fluctuated in the past year, but overall a proportion of respondents still considered suicide often or very often.

When all three questions were taken together, the average score of 2.99 in the subtotal indicated that respondents had experienced varying degrees of depression and suicidal ideation within the past year. These results highlight the importance of paying attention to mental health issues in the queer community, especially in those who chose the option "always" or "often".

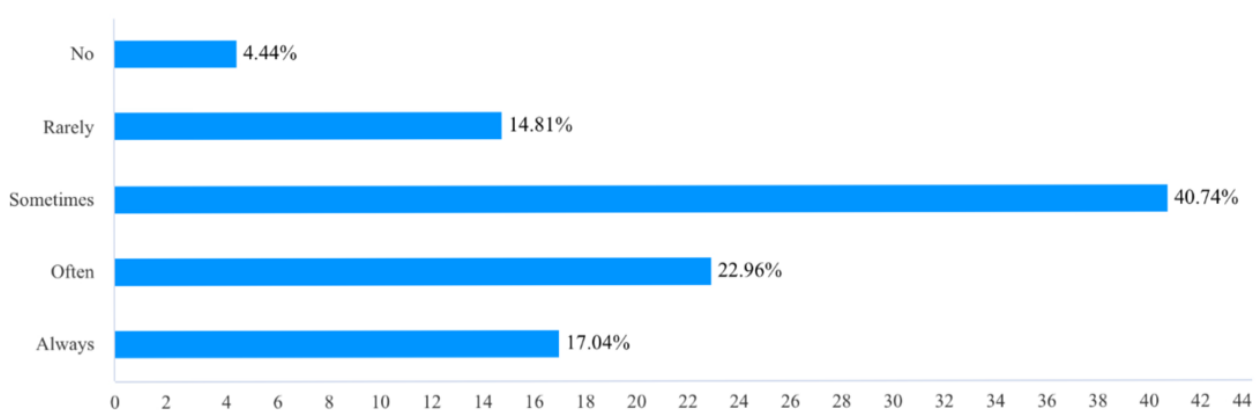


Figure 4. Distribution of responses to questions about "Have you ever felt disappsed in the past year?"

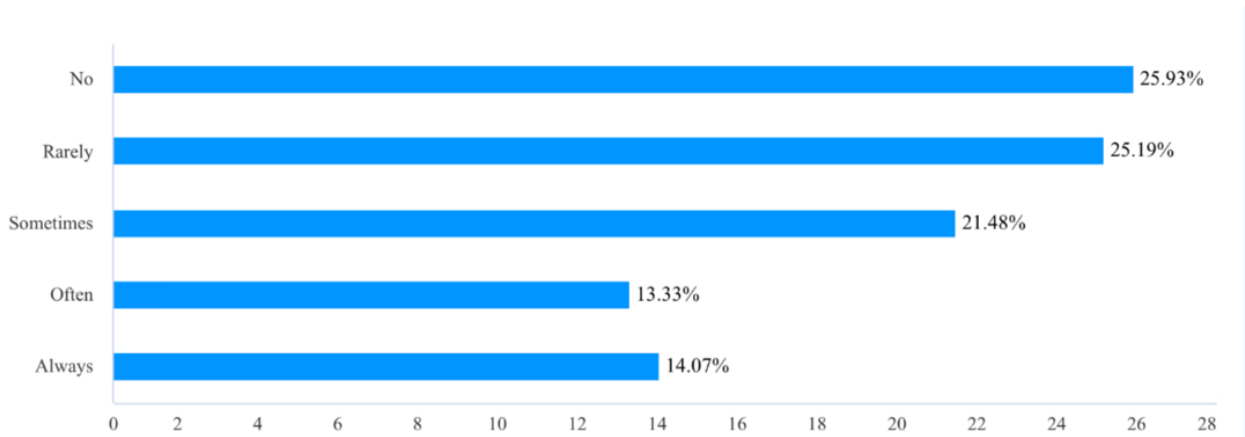


Figure 5. Distribution of responses to questions about "Have you seriously considered it suicide in the past year"

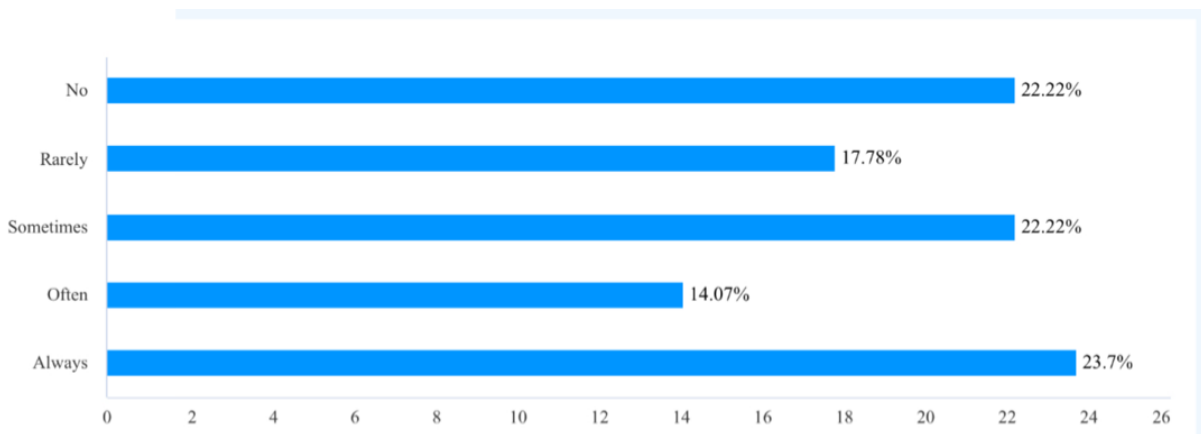


Figure 6. Distribution of responses to questions about "Have you attempted suicide in the past year?"

3.3. Treatment and Prospect of the Impact of Campus Bullying

After experiencing school bullying, nearly 60% of the respondents said that they had lost trust in their classmates and teachers, with the rate of those in the cool group choosing to lose trust in their students and teachers being nearly 10% higher than those in the non-cool group. This shows that school bullying has a profound effect on the interpersonal relationships of the victims, and such effects are more pronounced among the Cool Kids group.

Truancy and feeling powerless to fight back were also more common effects, with 36.67% and 61.67% of respondents choosing these options respectively. This reflects the fact that bullying in schools may cause victims to resist the school environment and feel unable to respond effectively to bullying behavior.

Relatively few respondents chose the options of dropping out of school (10%) and seeking school counseling (16.67%). Withdrawing from school may be due to the victim's despair about the school environment, while seeking school counseling may be due to the victim's unwillingness or lack of knowledge about how to seek help.

Receiving support from others was relatively low at 30%. This may indicate that victims have difficulty in seeking support or they feel that those around them are unable to understand or help them.

4. Discussion

Bullying is a serious problem: nearly half of the participants had experienced bullying in school, indicating that LGBTQ+ people face greater pressure and unfair treatment on campus.

Mental health is of concern: Participants had higher average scores on the mental health scale and showed higher levels of depression and suicidal tendencies, which should be of concern to schools and society.

High willingness to come out but limited support network: Although 70% of participants had come out, their support network was mainly focused on classmates, friends, and online partners, with relatively little support from schools and families.

Strengthen anti-bullying education in schools: Schools should strengthen the prevention and intervention of bullying in schools, provide psychological counseling and support, and ensure that every student can learn in a safe and respectful environment.

Focus on the mental health of the LGBTQ+ community: Schools and society should provide more mental health services and resources, especially for the special needs of the LGBTQ+ community, to reduce their psychological stress.

Enhance family and community support: Families and communities should provide more understanding and support to LGBTQ+ people, reduce their feelings of isolation, and help them build broader social support networks.

This study found that the bullying suffered by queer students was significantly positively correlated with their depression and suicidal thoughts, and significantly negatively correlated with subjective well-being, self-esteem and social support. Students with uncertain sexual orientation experienced the least amount of bullying in school, and there was no significant correlation between bullying and mental health. This result is inconsistent with the results of previous studies on LGBTQ middle school students, which may be related to differences in culture, research methods, sample sources, sample size and sample composition

To summarize, bullying in schools has negative impacts on victims' psychology, learning and interpersonal relationships in many ways. In order to effectively deal with these problems, schools and the society should provide more support and assistance, such as strengthening mental health education, setting up anti-bullying mechanisms, and providing psychological counseling services, etc., so as to help the victims get out of the predicament and restore their health. There is also a need to step up publicity and education on school bullying, and to raise society's awareness of and attention to school bullying [6].

5. Conclusion

The total score of bullying suffered by queer students was significantly positively correlated with their depressive mood and suicidal thoughts, and significantly negatively correlated with subjective well-being, self-esteem and social support. For queer students, bullying is positively correlated with depression and suicidal thoughts, and negatively correlated with subjective well-being, self-esteem and social support. The bullying of bisexual students was positively correlated with their suicidal thoughts and negatively correlated with their subjective well-being. There was no correlation between bullying experienced by students with uncertain sexual orientation and their mental health

This study found that bullying is positively correlated with queer students' negative depression and suicidal thoughts, and negatively correlated with their subjective well-being, which is consistent with previous research results. The survey data showed that bullying was positively associated with suicidal thoughts for students in public high schools, regardless of their status. Public high schools had the highest queer student-related index of any group surveyed. The highest negative correlation was found between bullying and subjective well-being of college students.

The author believe that this study needs to be verified by a larger, more representative sample. The sample data for this survey is limited. The survey was unevenly distributed among age groups. In future studies, it is hoped that researchers can issue questionnaires on a wider range of queer platforms across the country to ensure the size of the sample and the reliability of the final conclusions .It is hoped that more and more researchers can pay attention to the mental health problems of lgbtq students in China, and more and more educators can devote themselves to improving the ways to deal with the vicious campus bullying cases of lgbt students in China.

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