

Social Welfare Management and Development for Elderly LGBT in Thailand

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Abstract

The number of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) citizens in Thailand has continuously increased yet many of them do not receive comprehensive and adequate social welfare support for their basic needs. According to Chanwalee Srisukoh (MD) (2012; cited in Thai Health Foundation 2012) 6% of the Thai population or about 3.5 million people are identified as LGBT. LGBT citizens do not have access to basic and fundamental rights as heterosexuals. These include rights to purchase health insurance without special requests, such as the submission of blood test for HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, rights to official marriage, and to adopt children. These limitations are main barriers for LGBT to access social welfare related to their health and security in old age.

Social welfare providers in Thailand are concerned about the well-being and security of elderly LGBT. In collaboration with several NGOs pushing for LGBT rights in Thailand, they have drafted a new social welfare regulation. This regulation stipulates gender equality as critical concern in the provision and management of social welfare especially for elderly LGBT.

The paper evaluates and analyzes this regulation, through a disciplinary background on social work and social welfare management principle, and weighs its weaknesses and strengths in promoting and providing social welfare to LGBT in Thailand. Interviews with NGO staff promoting the rights of LGBT were conducted to gain more information on the pragmatic application of such regulation to relevant agencies. Several cases relating to regulation implementation are examined to better understand elderly LGBT's basic needs.

Key words: elderly LGBT, social welfare, gender equality, Thailand

Methods and Data Collection

This paper uses a number of reports and articles done by international organizations working on LGBT rights, LGBT movement and social welfare for elderly LGBT at national and international levels such as the Service and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Elders (SAGE) and the Alternative Media for SOGI Rights (SAPAAN). Reports and articles cited in this paper are updated and published from 2005 to 2014. Together with a review of literature, the author conducted in-depth interviews with key informants, such as LGBT activists, human rights activists, and professor of social work and social welfare management. Some information is from previous LGBT studies by the author. This combined are analyzed to examine the possibility and efficacy of social welfare development for elderly LGBT in Thailand.

Understandings of LGBT in Thailand

LGBT stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender and is used to describe

"... a person's sexual orientation and collectively include women and men who are predominantly or sometimes attracted to individuals of the same sex. The term transgender is independent of sexual orientation and describes those whose gender identity (their inner sense of being male or female) and/or gender expression (their behavior, clothing, haircut, voice and body characteristics) do not match the stereotypes associated with the gender assigned to them at birth—and who often live as members of the "opposite sex."" (MAP and SAGE 2010, 1)

The term LGBT is quite new to Thai society. In Thailand, "sexual diversity group" has been recently utilized to represent LGBT but this term is limited to academia and policy makers. Thais have informally used the term *katoey* for years to refer to a 'trans-woman' or male to female transgender person. *Katoey* refers to a male who seems to embody the characteristics of the opposite sex. In the vernacular, *katoey* are biological males who lived socially as women (Potiwan 2009). The term *lady boy* is *katoey*'s equivalent in English (Angloinfo 2014). Missouri Foundation for Health (Winter 2012) stated that "...In some studies, the terms "men who have sex with men" (MSM) and "women who have sex with women" (WSW) were found. These terms however, have been used for people who engage in same-sex sexual behavior, regardless of identity.. In certain cases such as those of sex workers, heterosexual people by identity may have same-sex sexual behavior. Hence, references to both MSM (men who have sex with men) and WSM (women who have sex with women) are excluded from this study.

Elderly LGBT in Thailand

Chanwalee Srisukoh (MD) (2012 cited in Thai Health Foundation 2012) estimates that 6% of Thai population or about 3.5 million people are identified LGBT. The Williams Institute in the US (2011; cited in MIH 2012) reported that 3.3% of women and 3.6% of men are identified as LGBT while 0.3% is transgender.

Thailand is often imagined as 'heaven' for of homosexuals, a place where they are readily accepted (Lefevre 2013). A number of LGBTs especially *katoey* (transgender/ MTF and gay), are well-known in the entertainment industry and many LGBT couples can be seen in city areas. These suggest a fair number of LGBT citizens in Thailand. The visibility of LGBT however, does not represent social acceptance. LGBT occupations are mostly limited to entertainment and design industries. The quote below from an entertainment industry worker affirms that LGBTs are often stereotyped as belonging to specific fields of work, their talents and capabilities thought limited to these arenas.

"...The entertainment industry accepts us with open arms because we poke fun at ourselves and make people laugh. But if we want to be taken seriously in a field like medicine, we are not afforded the same courtesy..." (Pramoj na Ayutthaya 2013; cited in ASTV 2013)

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Discrimination against LGBT persists in Thailand and further leads to crimes or violence resulting from homophobia¹, biphobia² and transphobia³. According to Sao-Sao-Ed⁴/ FOR SOGI project, about 6,000 cases of violence against LGBT had been reported from 1998 to 2012 in Thailand (The Fund for Global Human Rights 2012). Of course, there are unreported crimes and violence against LGBT.

"...My relative was beaten by her parents because they found that she was katoey..." (Opor interview, my translation, 14 January 2014)

Social stigma, sanction and discrimination are significant obstacles for LGBT in receiving appropriate services from public and private sectors. This condition worsens as LGBT ages and become part of society's elderly population.

In general, elderly people are those aged 60 and over (UNFPA 2008; TGRI and CPC 2011); while some sources categorizing elderly people aged 65 and over (MAP and SAGE 2010; Department of Health – MOPH 2014). Review of literature confirms that Thailand is an aging society. According to UNFPA (2008), more than one in four Thais is likely to be 60 or older in a few decades. Moreover, in just a little more than another decade, persons age 60 and older will exceed those under age 15 for the first time in Thailand's history NSO (2011; cited in TGRI and CPC 2011).

This shows the comparative proportion of elderly people in Thailand between 1960 and 2010. In 1960, the proportion of elderly people was 4.6% while in 2010; the proportion increased to 13.2%. International Labour Organization's 2008 report stated that the share of women in this aging population is greater than men. In 2025, the proportion of female elderly will be 55.4 while male older people will be 44.6 (UNFPA 2006; cited in ILO, 2008).

Older people naturally face various problems, such as financial incapacity, deteriorating health, loneliness, among others (Department of Health – MOPH, 2014). These problems can be eased if not solved by the collaboration of several sectors in society such as corporations, government agencies, healthcare institutes, and families (Centre for Gender Studies – Nareasuan University 2013). One of the instruments the public sector can utilize for serving elderly people is "social welfare".

¹ Homophobia is the hatred or fear of homosexuals - that is, lesbians and gay men - sometimes leading to acts of violence and expressions of hostility. (Anti Defamation League, 2001, <http://archive.adl.org/hate-patrol/homophobia.html> Retrieved 17 December 2013)

² Biphobia is a term used to describe the fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against bisexuality or LGBT people who are bisexual or perceived to be bisexual. (Bisexuality Wiki, <http://bisexuality.wikia.com/wiki/Biphobia> Retrieved 17 December 2013)

³ Transphobia is an irrational fear of, and/or hostility towards, people who are transgender or who otherwise transgress traditional gender norms. Because lesbians and gay men often transgress gender norms, it is often associated with homophobia. (Head T., 2014, <http://civilliberty.about.com/od/gendersexuality/g/transphobia.htm> Retrieved 17 December 2013)

⁴ Sao-Sao-Ed Founded in 2009, SSE works to address the social and cultural prejudices against sexual minorities that exist in Thai society and raises public awareness about the violence and discrimination that LGBT people face by documenting human rights violations and conducting rights trainings for the communities. (American Jewish World Service, 2014, http://ajws.org/where_we_work/asia/thailand/sao-sao-ed_sse.html Retrieved 17 December 2013)

Social welfare in Thailand

Social welfare management is the "system of social service relating to prevention, problem solving, social security development and support for fulfilling basic needs of citizens which cover quality of life, education, health, accommodation, employment, income, recreation, justice, and general social services. Social welfare needs to be provided by the concern on human dignity, citizen rights and participation at all level of social welfare management." (MSDHS 2007, 2; *my translation*) According to this definition, it is ideal that everybody belonging to the state should be able to access the social welfare system. Actual situations however may differ greatly. Inadequate social welfare for the elderly people illustrates the ineffectiveness of its management in Thailand.

The Foundation of Thai Gerontology and Development Institute (TGRI) and College of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University (CPC) (2011) cited the social welfare system for elderly people as the least developed among social systems. Elderly people used to be included in the health care system in the early 1990's (MOPH and MSDHS, 2007; UNFPA 2008). In 2003, the government launched a campaign to support elderly people yet the growth of policy development is slower than the rise in the number of elderly people (TGRI and CPC 2011). Overall social welfare policy, families and children seems to be important factors, as informal caregivers or unpaid care by relatives and friends (Wiener n.d.; cited in WHO 2003) in long-term care, to support elderly people (Lääveri 2013). While corporations, such as insurance companies and commercial banks, increasingly provide insurance and saving campaigns targeting elderly people.

Challenge to social welfare accessibility for elderly LGBT

Besides problems faced by heterosexual elderly, elderly LGBT will encounter problems associated with gender later in life, for which they receive little or no support. Elderly LGBT's problems should be taken into account by social sectors especially the public sector. The following interview excerpts attest to this:

"...As far as I know, many LGBT have to be alone when they are old and their appearance is according to the biological sex...when you are young, you can be "katoey" or you are treated like "lady" but when you get old, you will be called "uncle", not "auntie" (Kath, interview 14 January 2014, my translation)

"...Social welfare policy in Thailand has been managed based on sex, not gender...it may be uncomfortable for elderly LGBT to fully participate in the social welfare activities... - translation mine" (Apinya, interview 15 January 2014)

"...If they (LGBT) can accept social welfare services that may be limited or unable to comprehensively fulfill their want, it will be fine but if they (LGBT) expect to access social welfare services for couple, they will certainly face problems..." (Kulpipit, interview 13 January 2014, my translation)

LGBT face several challenges with regard Thailand's constitutional law. According to the law, couples who want to adopt a child must be married and need to submit the document as proof of their status including marriage status (Haris and Hawryluk Attorneys at Law 2013).

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"...The law specifies like that with the objective to protect the rights of adopted child. Since adoptive parents are legally married, adopt child will automatically access rights as birth child of them..."

(Apinya, interview 15 January 2014, my translation)

Adoption, medical treatment and property management after partners or spouses pass away are critical issues LGBT encounter today. Outlined below are important concerns for LGBT, impacts resulting from which greatly affect their status and well-being in advance age.

Adoption

Most LGBT cannot have children themselves, adopting a child therefore should be a considerable pathway to have caregivers when they become old. In Thailand, caregivers in the family are considered significant support for elderly people. According to the report of MAP and SAGE (2010), elderly LGBT rely more on life partners, close friends, informal caregivers and other loved ones for caregiving and social support while relying less on family, siblings and in-laws. Many LGBT experience social stigma, sanction and discrimination from their origin family and this leads them to rely more on people who wholeheartedly accept them, such as partners and close friends. However, when LGBT become older, their spouses and close friends are old too. Adopting children who can later be caregiver support is a viable long term choice for LGBTs.

Medical treatment

LGBT face difficulty acquiring medical treatment. Like many countries, unwelcoming healthcare environment is a difficult situation LGBT experience. Healthcare environments are often inhospitable to LGBT families. Professional caregivers, including physicians, counselors and support staff, may be uninformed, hostile, discriminatory, or refuse to treat LGBT people and their families (MAP et al 2012).

"...Some social welfare and healthcare providers don't understand how to properly treat LGBT patients...some may intentionally say something bad to LGBT and that causes LGBT avoid meeting social welfare and healthcare providers." (Apinya, interview 15 January 2014, my translation).

Like everybody else, LGBT may suffer worsening health conditions without appropriate medical attention. Besides negative reception from social welfare and healthcare providers, LGBT suffer from regulations in relation to making crucial medical decisions. Thai law stipulates only legally married spouses are allowed medical decisions. LGBT families encounter difficulty while their spouses go to hospitals and the permission of spouse is needed for important medical procedures.

"...They insisted her husband sign the medical release form. Her partner is a woman, but the nurses refused to acknowledge this..." (Anjana 2013; cited in Reuters, 21 August 2013)

Like most other people, elderly LGBT need to be increasingly admitted to hospitals like heterosexual people. This becomes a challenge when medical doctors are not allowed to provide proper medical treatment without permission from legal partners like husbands and wives in a heterosexual

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marriage. This becomes more pronounced when consent for certain medical procedures is required by law.

Another health related issue for elderly transgender is hormone use. Long-term hormone use could affect an aging body and impact on health in ways most health care providers do not know or understand (MAP and SAGE 2010). Little research is carried out on long-term hormone use and its effects in Thailand, for example. Due to obvious sexual orientation, transgenders face difficulty more than LGB and a number of them cannot access healthcare and health insurance.

"...Everybody knows you are transgender, you cannot hide it like LGB..." (Rena, interview 15 May 2012, my translation)

Property management

Same-sex couples will face challenges relating to ownership and property management; especially after their partners pass away. According to Thai law, only legally married couples are allowed property management. A testimony is the only way LGBT families can protect property owned by their spouses (Narmjak 2013). However, problems are graver when deaths are unexpected or caused by accident. Basically, parents and siblings will be managing the property of dead persons if they are single. LGBT families are not recognized by Thai law because they are identified as single in legal document. With such limitations from the law, it is difficult for LGBT to claim anything they used to share with spouses while alive. Without rights to property management, elderly LGBT will face problems related to living expense especially if they are unemployed and do not receive pension from the government to support cost of living. From an LGBT's perspective, challenges arising from adoption, medical treatment and property management can be solved if same-sex marriage law was approved.

"...I think same-sex marriage is the gateway for everything. Without same-sex marriage law, we cannot well access any social welfare policy... - translation mine" (Natch, interview 8 January 2014)

Same-sex marriage: A gateway to social welfare accessibility for LGBT

LGBTs are one of various social welfare beneficiaries (Social Welfare Management Fund 2007). However, social welfare projects focusing on LGBT are rare and cannot totally fulfill their special needs. Therefore, it becomes the duty of LGBT activists to implement social welfare activities toward the special needs of LGBT (Potiwan 2009). Mooney et al. (2009) cites that while social movements directly influence social policy at a global level, their roles in shaping social welfare are often neglected. Hence, LGBT activists might be able to implement a number of projects for LGBT but they cannot become policy or regulation without a well-designed and effective LGBT movement and media advocacy.

For decades, same sex marriage is considered an important tool for LGBT to access social welfare. Morris (2000; cited in Potiwan, 2009) stated that "...same-sex marriage is not recognized, and they (LGBT) are denied access to the spousal benefit accorded heterosexual couples, such as social welfare, insurance benefits and tax benefits...". Amy Sawitta Lefevre (2013) specifically mentions that same-sex couples are not recognized under Thai law and prevents them applying for joint bank

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loans even medical insurance. Globally, LGBT activists mobilized societies and policy makers to recognize their rights through approval and passing of the law that legalizes same-sex marriage. In the USA, for example, many states that allow same sex marriages do so resulting from court decisions. Massachusetts in 2004, Connecticut in 2008 and Iowa in 2009 were some such states. Most like the District of Columbia, Vermont and New Hampshire in 2009, New York in 2011, Maryland and Washington in 2012 acted on same-sex marriages through legislation. Others like the state of Maine adopted same-sex marriage through a public initiative (National Conference of State Legislatures 2014; Morris, n.d). In South Africa, gay marriage was first recognized in 2006 (NBC News 2006). Police Colonel Narat Sawettanan, Director-General, Rights and Liberty Protection Department, Ministry of Justice (2013; cited in Isara News Agency 2013) mentioned that

"...Recently, many countries passed same-sex marriage legislation, such as the Netherland, Belgium, and Spain. For Thailand, the approval of same-sex marriage legislation can enhance rights and liberty of people..."

However, no country in Asia approved same-sex marriage (Chaninat & Leeds Law Firm 2013) and same-sex union, same-sex couples are still sensitive issues in Thailand.

The misinterpretation of LGBT by Buddhist belief is one of considerable factors in the non-recognition of same-sex unions in Thailand. Many Thai Buddhists believe homosexuality is a punishment for sins committed in a past life (Lefevre 2013). Jackson (1993) mentioned that

"...While there are no legal or formal sanctions against homosexuality in Thailand, a wide range of cultural sanctions operate to stigmatize Thai homosexual men and women. These anti-homosexual sanctions are diffused throughout Thai Society rather than being focused in any clearly definable institution or set of homophobic practices, as has historically been the case in most Western societies..."

A 2012 survey indicates 58 percent of the Thai public still hold to the traditional belief that same-sex marriage is not natural and sets a bad example for children (Schearf 2013). According to the survey findings, Thais in general perceive LGBT and same-sex marriages and unions negatively. Although the issue of same-sex marriage is still debatable, a group of LGBT activists in Thailand proposed draft legislation on same-sex marriage to the parliament in 2012 with the objective of promoting acceptance of sexual differences and protecting the rights of same-sex couples equal to those of as heterosexual couples (Schearf 2013; Reuters 2013 cited in ASTV 2013). Besides social acceptance, the content of legislation itself is arguable as it cites "...the age of consent to 20 from 17 for homosexual couples. For heterosexuals, it is 17...the law would force transgenders to register their birth gender on their marriage certificate" (Lefevre 2013)

According to Wiratana Kalayasiri, an opposition lawmaker pushing for a new bill, a civil partnership law aiming at extending some of those same rights is in the works and can pass as soon as 2014 (Reuters 2013; cited in ASTV 2013). While writing this paper in January 2014, it is exciting to see if same-sex marriage legislation will be approved. The approval of the proposed law can lead to change in relevant legislation related to adoption, reproductive health, family law and social welfare provision system. For elderly LGBT couples, same-sex marriage law can assist them to survive like heterosexuals.

Discussion

The approval of same-sex marriage is under process without any guarantee for its eventual passing into law. However, social welfare providers⁵ should not merely await the law to push for rights. According to the Yogyakarta Principles (2008),

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. All human rights are universal, interdependent, indivisible and interrelated. Sexual orientation and gender identity are integral to every person's dignity and humanity and must not be the basis for discrimination or abuse."

Similar to the Yogyakarta Principles, Article 30 of the 2007 Constitution states

"All persons are equal before the law and shall enjoy equal protection under the law. Men and women shall enjoy equal rights. Unjust discrimination against a person on the grounds of the difference in origin, race, language, sex, age, physical or health condition, personal status, economic or social standing, religious belief, education, or Constitutional political views, shall not be permitted."

Although the constitution mentioned men and women, the ultimate goal of this article implies everyone including LGBT and In Social Welfare Promotion Act 2003 amended in 2007 (SAPAAN 2013) cites that LGBT are one of target groups to access social welfare services. Hence, it is the duty of social welfare providers to design and provide LGBT service which is suitable for them most, no matter whether same-sex marriage legislation is approved.

Health problem, loneliness, and economic crisis are common problems for elderly people in Thailand and many areas in the world. Social welfare providers need to collaborate with network and multidisciplinary teams to ensure elderly LGBT have access to public health insurance as heterosexuals do. To deal with loneliness and seeming withdrawal from social life, social welfare providers should firstly be aware of recent perception of elderly people by the young. According to the NSO (2011; cited in TGRI and CPC 2011) the prevalence of young people with good perception of elderly people was 62 and 57 in 2007. For 2011, the expected prevalence was 90. Given this, social welfare providers then cannot push for the responsibility of caregiving for aged people to teenagers, the proper training for young caregivers is necessary to educate them how to appropriately look after elderly people. In addition, social welfare providers need to find alternative support for elderly people who do not have children or caregivers. The services of elderly caregiving should be various and affordable for all elderly.

For elderly LGBT, it should be more appropriate if social welfare providers concern themselves with both general troubles happening to elderly people and special difficulties that only elderly LGBT will face. Some kinds of social welfare services provided may not well fulfill elderly LGBT. Apinya Wechayachai (interview 15 January 2014, my translation) shared the case of vocational training and elderly LGBT:

"... I found one elderly tomboy, she did not like needlework but she would love to be a carpenter..."

⁵ The scope of social welfare providers in this paper includes police officers, teachers and judges.

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While social welfare services and activities are limited by sex not gender, it cannot well fulfill elderly LGBT and they are often denied participation participating in these activities. Another kind of social welfare services that should be conducted more for elderly LGBT is a self-help group.⁶ In self-help groups, participants have a chance to share their story, experience and perception with other participants. For LGBT especially elderly LGBT, self-help groups can take them out of loneliness. However, a professional and skillful facilitator is required to assist the group discussion without any discriminatory action and speech. By participating in self-help groups, elderly LGBT will realize they are not alone and a number of elderly LGBT are ready to support and encourage them. Unfortunately, in Thailand, no self-help group for elderly LGBT can be found.

To adequately provide and design social welfare services for elderly LGBT, social welfare providers need to think out of the box, understandings of gender limited to only male and female should be eliminated. LGBT social welfare providers and social workers may be a good pathway to access real needs and wants of elderly LGBT; however, public social welfare centers including hospitals deny recruiting LGBT for the post of social welfare providers and social workers. Some centers require LGBT applicants to dress based on their biological sex. Such requests place LGBT in a difficult situation and some LGBT finally decide to apply for other jobs allowing them to wear what they want.

"...I used to apply for the post of social worker in one public hospital and people there asked me to wear like male officer, I could not make it. So, I decided to apply for the same post in another organization and fortunately, my supervisor well understood me and she allowed me to wear like a woman. However, I did not know what will happen to me if my supervisor rotates to other places; I don't know if new supervisor can understand me..."(Umm, interview 10 May 2012, my translation)

Social welfare centers then need to reform recruitment policies for LGBT. Since the perception of social welfare providers is conservative and limited to biological sex, they cannot find anyone who knows what elderly LGBT want most. Although professional social welfare providers and social workers received training and knowledge on how to work with clients of different backgrounds, they cannot understand LGBT as LGBT do. Working with clients who are elderly LGBT requires knowledge and understanding of both elderly and LGBT.

Opinions of LGBT social workers and social welfare providers are controversial. While one side supports the idea to recruit social workers and social welfare providers who are LGBT, another opposes due to the concept of equality. On the one hand, LGBT social workers and social welfare providers are supposed to design and provide better social welfare services for elderly LGBT. On the other, LGBT clients should be treated like heterosexuals because they are all human being. An interview with Apinya Wechayachai, associate professor at the Faculty of Social Administration, Thammasat University and President of Social Work Professional Council (SWPC), reveals the social welfare services provided to LGBT is still debatable,

⁶ Self-help groups, also known as mutual help, mutual aid, or support groups, are groups of people who provide mutual support for each other. In a self-help group, the members share a common problem, often a common disease or addiction. Their mutual goal is to help each other to deal with, if possible to heal or to recover from, this problem. (Kate S. Ahmadi - <http://psychcentral.com/lib/what-is-a-self-help-group/0001280>, retrieved 11 January 2014)

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"...Some think the service should be specifically designed for LGBT while some argue that it should be similar to that provided to heterosexuals; otherwise, LGBT may think they are differently treated and it can cause the issue of discrimination" (Apinya interview 15 January 2014, my translation)

Jhoke (interview 20 January 2014, my translation), a gay man from Bangkok says "...LGBT are human beings; so, I think they should be treated like others and in case of social workers, LGBT should be recruited to work in social work or social welfare centers but their responsibility should not be limited to LGBT but every clients including heterosexuals..."

Same-sex marriage is significant component in the protection of LGBT rights. Another matter as important as same-sex marriage legislation is the attitude of social welfare providers and social workers. Interview respondents all cite discrimination of varying degrees:

"...I never hide from anyone that I am gay but one day, I went to the hospital for blood test and noticed that the medical doctor who was quite young and nurses were not polite to me...they asked why did I not donate blood to the Thai Red Cross because then I would receive HIV blood test for free...I think it was a kind of discrimination..." (Jhoke, interview 20 January 2014, my translation)

"...many think we (transgender) are funny and try to play with us but actually, we can be happy and unhappy like others, we are not entertainers by nature..." (Kath, interview 22 May 2012)

"...We (transgender) experience a lot of discriminatory situations made by the police; I heard some experienced sexual harassment..." (Rena, interview 15 May 2012, my translation)

Mutual understanding and a welcoming attitude are essential for LGBTs receiving care from social workers. Sometimes social workers and social welfare providers may not acknowledge that their behaviors and language are forms of discrimination against LGBT clients. Questions for heterosexuals may not be appropriate for LGBT clients. In this case, LGBT should understand that what social welfare providers or social workers did to them is unintentional. To bring about the better understanding between LGBT clients and social workers, Non-Violent Communication (NVC) is recommended. The concept of NVC is created by Marshall B. Rosenberg (2003) Worrawan Kalyanamitra (2012) summarized the NVC concept;

"...It is a popular concept used for dispute mediation. Basically, NVC consists of four components: observation, feelings, needs, and requests. Based on NVC, people should connect with others by observation and then try to guess what their feeling and need are and what they will request for. Guessing means trying to predict how others will react or feel when persons say or act in certain ways. If a person says something rude, it is common that listeners will not appreciate what they hear and arguments can easily arise between speaker and listeners. Another dimension of guessing made by others is about requests - which will emerge after feeling. If persons understand that feedback from others is founded on certain reasons, they will deal with others carefully with reasonable and peaceful action. NVC is then an effective way to deal with arguments between people, such as intimate partners, friends or family members. By using NVC, LGBT

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clients and social workers are supposed to understand each other more and further prevent misinterpretation and misunderstanding..."

Although, recently, no "out of the box" social welfare services are provided for elderly LGBT, social workers and social welfare providers need to change their attitude at least, treating LGBT as heterosexual clients. With such attitude and peaceful communication, LGBT will have greater chances at discussing with social welfare providers the kind of services that will fulfill them most. Interviews show that LGBT clients have a specific notion of how care providers can be trained:

"...I think social workers should start working for LGBT while they are young...provide them guidance how to properly be with others and avoid conflicts relating to sexual differences..." (Jhoke, interview 20 January 2014, my translation)

Since society, supported by social workers and social welfare providers, see LGBT as needing access to human rights and human dignity like the rest of its members, social sanction, stigma and discrimination against LGBT will be reduced. Further, social welfare services provided LGBT will be expected to be more appropriate for them from youth to old age.

Lastly, collaboration with LGBT activists and human rights activists is recommended to mobilize campaigns and services for LGBT. Social workers and social welfare providers are mainly practitioners whose voices may not be as legible as those of activists.

"...although LGBT is slightly different in terms of sexual orientation, but activists working on LGBT issues need to work together in order to inform the society what LGBT community wants to receive as part of society...LGBT celebrities should be included to participate in the mobilization as well..." (Apinya, interview 15 January 2014, my translation)

Unfortunately, in Thailand, although there are a number of LGBT celebrities, many of them do not insist or propose to attend the activities for improving LGBT rights. If LGBT celebrities join the LGBT's rights campaigns, they will gain more attention from the society and media which can further become impulsion of legislative approval for LGBT.

Scope and limitations of current research

Elderly LGBT is rare to find in Thailand and many of them stay alone while becoming old. Talking with elderly LGBT about their well-being in advance age of life may be inappropriate unless the author or researcher previously has a positive relationship with them. Information directly provided by elderly LGBT is not presented in this paper. Getting more information from elderly LGBT can enhance the effectiveness of social welfare development for elderly LGBT.

Another limitation is lack of information on elderly LGBT, statistic data and situational analysis provided in this paper is from USA or other countries. Although elderly LGBT all over the world face similar problems, ones living in different areas may suffer from special problems regarding to culture, religion and social value. Therefore, with national research and study on elderly LGBT in Thailand, the recent situation of elderly LGBT will be clearer and policy makers will better know how to more comprehensively fulfill elderly LGBT.

Conclusion

In Thailand, same-sex marriage legislation is recently proposed by LGBT activists and human rights activists. The approval of same-sex marriage can be a powerful starting point for amendment in relevant laws, such as the Family Law and Adoption Law. However, the legislation may not be approved in the near future due to several factors, e.g. conservative parliament members and policy makers, religious (Buddhism) misinterpretation, lack of participation from LGBT celebrities and political instability. If social welfare providers and social workers have positive attitude toward LGBT and treat them like other clients, LGBT's rights can be more promoted and protected.

As stipulated in the 2007 Constitution, all human being needs to be fairly served without discrimination against different identities and backgrounds; therefore, social workers and social welfare providers can find a chance to design services for LGBT. Particularly, for elderly LGBT, social workers and social welfare providers need to be more creative on activity and service implementation. Some activities can be conducted informally by social workers and social welfare providers, no need to wait for formal orders from the original affiliation. Together with public social welfare provided to all, the creative social welfare and services, for example, self-help group, vocational trainings matching with their sexual identity, and trained and skillful caregivers, can be offered to elderly LGBT while waiting for the approval of same-sex marriage legislation and amendment of pertinent laws.

Abbreviations:

CPC:	College of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University
ILO:	International Labour Organization
LGBT:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MAP:	Movement Advancement Project
MIH:	Missouri Foundation for Health
MOPH:	Ministry of Public Health
MSDHS:	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
MSM:	Men who have sex with men
MTF:	Male to Female (transgender person)
NSO:	National Statistical Office
NVC:	Non-Violent Communication
SAGE:	Service and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Elders
SOGI:	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities

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TGRI: Foundation of Thai Gerontology and Development Institute
UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund
WSW: Women who have sex with women

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Apinya Wechayachai, associate professor at the Faculty of Social Administration, Thammasat University and President of Social Work Professional Council (SWPC), 15 January 2014

Jhoke (pseudonym), gay, interview 20 January 2014

Kath (pseudonym), transgender – MTF, LGBT activist, interview 14 January 2014

Kulpipit Wongseangchundr, Senior Program Officer, Department of Program Quality, Raks Thai Foundation, interview 13 January 2014

Natch (pseudonym), gay, interview 8 January 2014

Opor (pseudonym), gay, 14 January 2014

Rena (pseudonym), transgender – MTF, LGBT activist, interview 15 May 2012

Umm (pseudonym), transgender – MTF, interview 10 May 2012