Factors Affecting the Life Satisfaction of Gay Men under Hong Kong Chinese Culture & Ethics

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Abstract

Around 4-6% of Hong Kong's population identifies as LGBTQ. This translates to roughly 420,000 people aged 15 or above. Gay individuals have to face many challenges in their journey to self-acceptance. Social ethics/behavior, societal stigma, and discrimination can hinder their development of a positive identity, lead to internalised homophobia and negatively affect their life satisfaction. There are several general factors influence the life satisfaction of gay men in Hong Kong, considering the interplay of Chinese culture and ethics. This study investigates various factors, including parental acceptance, social support, family support on internalised homophobia and life satisfaction of gay men in Hong Kong. A cross-sectional quantitative study was conducted with a questionnaire developed for measuring various factors. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were confirmed by the Confirmatory Factor Analysis. A proposed model of the relationship between various factors was confirmed by the data with a Structural Equation Model (SEM).

Keywords: coming out, parental acceptance, family & friend support, internalized homophobia, life satisfaction, Hong Kong, culture & ethics, CFA/SEM

Introduction

Around 4-6% of Hong Kong's population is identified as LGBTQ+ (Board Diversity, 2024). This translates to roughly 420,000 people aged 15 years or above (Burns, 2023), with an estimate of over half the Gay population. Gay men face significant challenges, including family rejection and social discrimination, leading to internalized homophobia (Wong, Suen, Chan, et al., 2025). These factors negatively impact mental health and life satisfaction (Cheng, 2019; Kwok & Wu, 2015). Despite increasing global attention to LGBTQ+ issues, limited research has focused on gay men in Hong Kong, particularly regarding how family acceptance affects their well-being of gay men. This study aim to examine the relationships among social support, family acceptance, internalized homophobia, life satisfaction, and mental health to guide future research in this area (Rice, 2019; Kong, 2018). It also sought to shed light on promoting social equity and enhancing the well-being of sexual minority groups in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong society is increasingly shaped by traditional Chinese ethics and behavior following decolonization (Chu, 2017), along with the influence of Christianity (Kwok & Wu, 2015; Ho & Hu, 2016), upholding the norms of heterosexual marriage and traditional family structure. This cultural interplay and coexistence may induce implicit and explicit bias among parents and sexual minorities (Hubachek, Clark, & Pachankis, et al., 2023), eliciting lower parental acceptance of their children and their children's partners, as well as interanalized homophobia among gay men. Apart from family influence, social support also affects gay men's well-being, including their

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anxiety and depression symptoms (Pan, Zhao, Long, et. al., 2022). In Hong Kong, the stigma on gay men does not only exist among the general public, but also among health professionals and teachers (Kwok & Wu, 2015). Therefore, the prejudices to gay men are multi-dimensional from family, friends, the general public, and professions marginalize them from the mainstream, making them underpriviledged and exploited.

Minority stress theory (Brooks, 1981) accounts for diminished well-being and life satisfaction among sexual minorities. Sexual minorities in society are of lower status due to unique values, lower incomes, and discrimination from the public therefore, they experience more negative life events than the majority, resulting in chronic stress (Frost & Meyer, 2023). Invisible pressure (Meyer, 2015) affects life satisfaction and mental health. According to empirical studies, the sexual minorities are found in lower life satisfaction (Hung & Chan, 2022) and higher rates of mental health problems (Liu, Jiang, Chen, et al., 2018).

The label is not only for the sexual minority, but also for the gay men as intersectional, which implies that they are seen as someone alien to society at large. Research shows that gay men's social acceptance is lower than that of lesbian women in the region (Lau, Chong, & Choi, 2020). Gay men face discrimination in society, especially in the workplace, causing feeling of pressure, dissatisfaction (Cheng, 2019; Kwok & Wu, 2015), internalized homophobia (Wong, Suen, Chan, et al., 2025), and mental health issues (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2016).

Stigmatization in society can be explained by the formation of internalized homophobia (Allport, 1954). Prejudice and labelling, driven by cognitive resonance, in-group out-group dynamics, traditional values, and religious doctrine, are imposed by society, families, friends, and intimate partners through language, avoidance, and discrimination towards homosexuals. A systematic review of 152 peer-reviewed articles (Wong, Suen, Chan et al., 2025) indicated that LGBTQ+ individuals experience exclusion and discrimination across domains, such as education, economic well-being, family, health, politics, and personal security in Hong Kong. According to Allport's framework (1954), parental and social rejection in Hong Kong may lead to shame and denial among homosexuals, resulting in internalized homophobia.

The study facilitates a deeper understanding of how acceptance and support from parents, peers, and significant others (intimate partners) affect gay men's life satisfaction and mental well-being. It helps obtain inspiration for policy design and social work practice to enhance the social justice and well-being of sexual minorities in the context of existing workplace discrimination, traditional ethics, and behavior in Hong Kong.

LITERATURE REVIEW

General Factors and Considerations

Several general factors influence the life satisfaction of gay men in Hong Kong, considering the interplay between **Chinese culture and ethics**:

Social Acceptance and Discrimination

Despite the increasing acceptance of homosexuality in Hong Kong over the years, discrimination and stigma persist. Many LGBT individuals fear talking coming out to their families due to potential rejection or shame, which impacts their well-being. Suen & Wong (2017) discussed the lives of gay men in Hong Kong, whose sexuality and desire have been subject to social as well as legal control. It locates the emergence of homosexuality in Hong Kong from previous perceptions, social and legal deviance during the colonial period. They then provide a review of the dramatic changes in public attitudes towards homosexuality in Hong Kong, as documented by various surveys from 1995 to 2014. However, experiences of discrimination self-reported by gay men were still highly notable in the above period in different aspects of life with marked

evidence in the domains of education and employment. Gay men in Hong Kong face particular challenges in coming out to their families because of family biopolitics.

Cultural Values

Traditional Chinese values emphasize heterosexuality and family continuity, which can create challenges for gay men in terms of family acceptance and societal expectations. Wong & Tang (2004) adopted a cognitive–behavioral conceptual framework based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) understood the experiences and psychological distress of 187 Chinese gay men in Hong Kong. The results showed that participants' coming out experiences was characterized by same-sex sexual fantasy at teenage years, followed by awareness of homosexual tendency, same-sex sexual contact, self-identification and disclosure of homosexual orientation in young adulthood. Regarding the targets of disclosure, participants tended to disclose their sexual orientation to their gay friends first, followed by heterosexual friends, siblings, parents, and coworkers. This study also supports the extension of the TRA conceptual framework to Chinese society. The results showed that a low level of psychological distress in Chinese gay men was linked to their coming out experiences, which were in turn related to the TRA components of involvement and identification with gay communities and positive attitudes toward coming out.

Mental Health & Social Support

Gay men in Hong Kong may experience higher rates of depression and anxiety because of social oppression and discrimination. Social support, particularly from gay peers, is crucial for life satisfaction, and Lau & Choi (2020) discovered hostility, stigma, and discrimination against sexual minorities in Hong Kong. HEvolution is a community initiative founded in 2017 that aims to promote physical, mental, social, and spiritual health among gay men in Hong Kong. This study investigated the role of social demographics, mindfulness, self-kindness, and gay life-related variables in predicting overall well-being. T-tests, chi-square tests, correlation analyses, and hierarchical multiple regression were conducted to investigate the relationships between variables of interest. The results found that close relationships existed between mindfulness, self-compassion, gay life identity, and well-being in gay men. This suggests that the promotion of holistic health and mindfulness among gay men in Hong Kong can be beneficial to their psychological and overall well-being.

Coming Out

Openness to sexual orientation and positive attitudes toward coming out are linked to lower psychological distress and higher life satisfaction. Wong & Tang (2003) explored the associations between life satisfaction & personality traits, life events, and social support in 187 Chinese gay men in Hong Kong. In general, the participants were modestly satisfied with various aspects of their lives. Findings from a hierarchical regression analysis indicated that a high level of life satisfaction among Chinese gay men was related to weak borderline personality traits, disclosure of homosexual sexual orientation, and gay peer support. The results also showed no interaction effect between personality and psychosocial variables in life satisfaction. The limitations and implications of this study are also discussed.

Cultural Differences

Cultural differences between Chinese and Western societies influence the parental acceptance of a gay son's partner in Hong Kong, creating a unique dynamic. These can be summarized as follows.

Hybrid Cultural Context

East Meets West: Hong Kong has been a unique location that embodies Chinese traditional values toward sexuality, while also undergoing Westernization since 1842. This blend created a complex

environment for LGBTQ+ acceptance. Traditional Values: Despite Western influences, traditional Chinese values emphasize heterosexuality as the norm persists (Wikipedia, 2025).

Family Dynamics and Filial Piety

Traditional Chinese ethics and behavior emphasize filial piety, which can lead to pressure to conform to parental expectations, including marriage and having children. Strong family ties and the importance of "face" (social standing/reputation) mean that a child's sexual orientation can impact the entire family. Parents may worry about what relatives will think and whether they have failed in their duty to raise their child "well". The family space is often a contentious site for coming out, and living in confined spaces with family can make it difficult for LGBTQ+ individuals to express their gender identity without risking exposure or violence (Yeo & Chu, 2017).

Attitudes toward Homosexuality

Studies suggest that people in Hong Kong may accept homosexuality in general, but less so when it directly affects their families. While social acceptance has grown, Hong Kong does not recognize same-sex marriage, and strict reproductive laws make it difficult for same-sex couples to have children. Acceptance by Cohort: Older generations and those with strong religious beliefs may find it more difficult to accept homosexuality, whereas younger generations tend to be more flexible (Leung 2025).

Disclosure and Acceptance

Parental reactions to a child coming out range from total opposition to full acceptance, with silent tolerance being a common response. Coming out can challenge hetero-normative family life, forcing parents to acknowledge the "queer component" of their family. Both parents and gay sons may work to present an image that conforms to the "good homosexual," viewing homosexuality as inborn and not a choice (Wu & Luna, 2024).

Influence of Westernization

Hong Kong's westernization has led to an emphasis on liberalism, which champions diverse sexual orientations and rights. Despite this, social exclusion against LGBTQ+ individuals persists, possibly compounded by traditional Chinese values (HKFP 2012).

Challenges and Support

Many LGBTQ+ individuals in Hong Kong have not fully "come out" to their families because of fear of rejection, shame, or lack of acceptance. LGBTQ+ individuals may seek help and support from social media platforms rather than from family members. Various organizations offer support and work towards greater equality and acceptance.

Family Support & Acceptance

The concept of family acceptance originates from the framework of parenting styles proposed by Diana Baumrind (1967), which states that children raised by authoritative parents develop healthier than those raised by authoritarian parents. Gray & Steinberg (1999) proposed that parental acceptance compromise psychological and behavioral control over children. This concept is extended to the degree to which parents understand and support their children's homosexual identities and behaviors.

Higher levels of emotional support and acceptance from parents are associated with better life satisfaction and psychological status among homosexuals, such as reduced psychological distress and stress (Feinstein et al., 2014). A recent study emphasizes the relationship among parental acceptance to homosexual orientation, sexual identity, and self-esteem (Kibrik, Cohen, Stolowicz-Melman, et al., 2019). On the other hand, rejection of children's sexual orientation and gay & partner relationship may negatively impact their identity and self-esteem, contributing

to internalized homophobia (Kibrik, Cohen, Stolowicz-Melman, et al., 2019).

The effect of parental acceptance is prevalent and positively relates to their children's trust and confidence in romantic relationships (Carnelley, Hepper, Hicks, & et al., 2011). However, there is **lack of research** investigating parental acceptance of children's lovers, and how this affects children's cognition and life satisfaction. In Chinese ethics and behavior, parents love their child; therefore, they also accept their child's homosexual identity and even embrace their same-sex partner, inviting them to their home for a meal. This mentality is similar to an English idiom: "Love me, love my dog." To take the local context and cultural effects into consideration, this study will include items regarding this area and explore how it affects gay men's well-being.

Parental Acceptance of the Gay's Spouse

Research has indicated that parental acceptance significantly improves the well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals and their relationships. Studies have demonstrated that family support leads to positive outcomes, including higher self-esteem, improved mental and physical health, and decreased risk of mental health issues and suicidal behaviors (Ryan et.al, 2010).

Ryan et al. (2010) found that family acceptance predicts greater self-esteem, social support, and general health, while protecting against depression, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation and behaviors in LGBT adolescents. This study emphasized that family acceptance during adolescence is associated with positive mental and physical health in young adulthood.

The Family Acceptance Project has shown specific parental behaviors, such as advocating for their LGBTQ+ child, supporting their gender expression, protecting against mental health risks, and promoting well-being (Mills-Koonce et al., 2018).

Pew Research Center (2025) indicates that supportive families, including parents and extended families, significantly contribute to the well-being of same-sex couples and their children. The study also noted that positive relationships with parents can evolve over time, particularly after the couple has children (Minkin et.al, 2025).

Maslow Psychological Services (2025) In a recent study from The University of Texas at Austin, it was discovered that gay youth who had perceived parental social support had fewer depressive symptoms than those who did not (Minkin et.al, 2025).

These findings underscore the critical role of family acceptance in promoting the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals, suggesting that interventions aimed at increasing family support could significantly improve outcomes. In particular, under traditional Chinese cultural society, as in the case of Hong Kong, parental acceptance of the guy's partner is particularly important for the guy couple's living satisfaction.

Internalized Homophobia

Internalized homophobia (IH) refers to a person labeling him or her by applying a negative societal attitude to homosexuals (Meyer, 1995). A high degree of IH is associated with various mental health problems (Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010). Sexual minority groups often face prejudice, discrimination, and stigma in society via different negative experiences, which lead to IH, self-denial, and exclusion (Wong, Suen, Chan, et al., 2025).

Parental Acceptance, Internalized Homophobia (IH), and Life Satisfaction

Parental acceptance and IH play an important role in the mental health of sexual minorities. IH is correlated with psychological distress such as anxiety and avoidance (Calvo, Cusinato, Meneghet, & Miscioscia, 2021) as well as various mental health problems (Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010) In addition, parental rejection causes suicidal intention, anxiety, and depression (Puckett, Woodward, Mereish, & Pantalone, 2015).

Puckett, Woodward, Mereish, & Pantalone (2015) find that IH acts as a mediator between parental rejection and mental health among LGBTQ+. One explanation is that IH affects both self-identity and well-being (Lau, Chong, & Choi, 2020). Robust self-identity can serve as a protective factor against the adverse effects of low parental acceptance. Studies in China and Chile (Wen & Zheng, 2019; Gómez, Cumsille, & Barrientos, 2021) further support this, demonstrating that IH is related to life satisfaction. A possible explanation is that IH elicits negative self-identity, which undermines overall life evaluation.

Social Support

Shumaker and Brownell (1984) defined social support as involving two people who exchange resources for the recipient's well-being. It could be emotional, tangible, informational, and appraisal support (Langford, Bowsher, Maloney, & Lillis, 1997), receiving from various people, including families, friends, and significant others (intimate partners) (Zimet et al., 1988; Yıldırım & Tanrıverdi, 2021). Social support is regarded as a protective factor of gay man's well-being that can alleviate stress, enhance mental health and well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985), and foster resilience (Bloom, Stewart, Johnston, et al., 2001).

Social Support and Mental Health

Social support primarily acts as a mediator among the various psychological factors. Calvo, Cusinato, Meneghet, & Miscioscia (2021) find that social support mediates the effect of attachment anxiety on IH. It also mediates the relationship between parental rejection and mental health (Puckett, Woodward, Mereish, & Pantalone, 2015), and between sexual orientation victimization and depression (Chen & Hung, 2021). In contrast, a survey conducted in China (Pan, Zhao, Long, et. al., 2022) highlighted its protective role, with a direct correlation between social support and depression among gay men.

Life Satisfaction & Cultural Influence

Life satisfaction is considered a cognitive component of subjective well-being (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999), which is an overall evaluation of one's quality (Pavot, & Diener, 1993). Similar to internalized homophobia, life satisfaction is closely related to mental health (Pavot & Diener, 2008). It could be influenced by both bottom-up (e.g., personality and environment) and top-down processes (e.g., cognitive judgment), which shape an individual's well-being (Pavot & Diener, 2008).

Cultural influences on sexual minorities vary across studies. A systematic review (Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010) finds no gender differences, cohort effects, or protective power will deter from publicizing one's own sexual orientation. However, a study of 367 gay men in China (Liu, Jiang, Chen, et al., 2018) discovered that the disclosure of sexual orientation to the public supports mental health, suggesting that the influence of traditional Chinese ethics and behavior matters. The responsibility of preserving the family bloodline and society norms on family structure is particularly diminishing the well-being of Chinese gay men living in Hong Kong.

In summary, previous studies have explored the interactions amongst parental acceptance, social support, IH, and life satisfaction in general and within the Chinese context. However, there is limited research regarding the society with mixed ethics and behavior of traditional Chinese with Christianity values, as in Hong Kong, particularly the effect of parental acceptance on children's intimate partners. In addition, the distinct contributions of different sources of social support, including family, friends, and significant others, to life satisfaction and IH have not yet been adequately differentiated. This study aims to address these gaps to enhance the understanding of these factors and inform social work interventions.

RESEARCH METHODS

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review, a theoretical framework is proposed for this study, as shown in **Figure-1**.
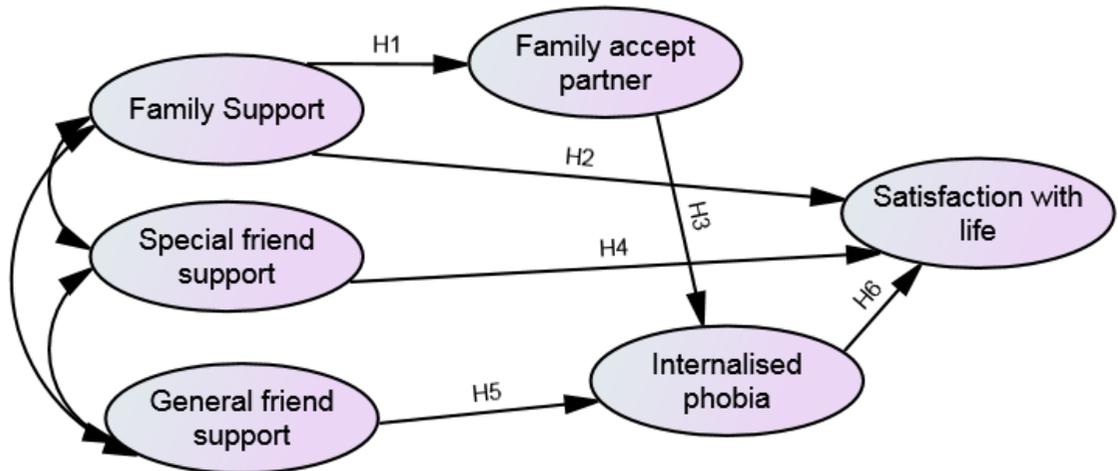
Figure-1: Theoretical Framework of this Study

Hypotheses

According to the literature review and the proposed theoretical framework, seven hypotheses were proposed in this study:

Hypothesis-1: Family support positively affects family acceptance of a gay person's partner.

Hypothesis-2: Family support positively affects life satisfaction of a gay person.

Hypothesis-3: Family acceptance of the partner of a gay person will reduce internalized phobia of a gay person.

Hypothesis-4: Support from a special friend (intimate partner) positively affects the life satisfaction of a gay person.

Hypothesis-5: Support from friends reduces the internalized phobia of a gay person.

Hypothesis-6: The internalized phobia of a gay person will negatively affect their life satisfaction of gay person.

Research Design

This cross-sectional survey study was conducted in Hong Kong. The survey was conducted through the online platforms Google Forms and Qualtrics to enhance accessibility and anonymity. local non-government organization (NGO), AIDS Concern, facilitated the distribution of the questionnaire link to reach the target group.

Participants and Sampling

This study targeted self-identified gays aged 18 years and above residing in Hong Kong. The design ensures that the sample is broadly inclusive, covering a wide range of experiences in different age groups. This study used purposive sampling with the support of AIDS Concerns to recruit participants. First, posters with QR codes were posted at popular LGBTQ+ venues. Second, AIDS Concern would assist in promotion, including distributing questionnaires through

social media, including Facebook and Instagram. In addition, AIDS Concern staff went out to relevant gay bars or nightclubs to invite participants to fill out the questionnaires.

Development of Questionnaires

The instruments has gone the following stages: 1. Reviewing the related literature and instruments that have already been developed; 2. Proposing constructs related to this study and defining the constructs to be measured; 3. Developing instruments according to the proposed construct and situation in Hong Kong and with reference to validated instruments used in other studies; 4. Seeking comments from some focused groups and professionals with relevant experience and expertise to refine the proposed instruments; 5. Collecting data to validate the instruments; and 6. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for validating the instruments and 7. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to investigate the relationships among the variables according to the proposed theoretical framework.

Measures

Family Support (the variable is referred to as "family support" hereafter)

Family support, a dimension of social support, is defined as support from the family through the sharing of emotions and actions to solve problems encountered. Four items were developed in Chinese according to the definition, literature review, and adapted from the validated questionnaire of the Multi-dimensional Perceived Social Support Scale. Two examples are: "我的家人確實盡力幫助我 (My family tries their best to support me)" and "我從家人那裡得到了我需要的情感幫助和支持 (I can receive emotional support from my family)".

Friend Support (the variable is referred to as "friend support" hereafter)

Friend support, a dimension of social support, is defined as support from friends in general through sharing emotions and actions to solve problems encountered. Four items were developed in Chinese according to the definition, literature review, and validated questionnaire of the Multi-dimensional Perceived Social Support Scale. Two examples are: "我的朋友確實盡力幫助我 (My family tries their best to support me)" and "我有朋友，可以跟我分享快樂和悲傷 (I have friends sharing my joy and sadness)".

Significant Other Support (the variable is referred to as "Significant Other Support" hereafter)

Significant Other Support, one dimension of social support, is defined as support from a significant friend through sharing emotions and actions to solve problems encountered. Four items were developed in Chinese according to the definition, literature review, and validated questionnaire of the Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale. Two examples are: "有一個特別的人，我可以與他分享快樂和悲傷 (A special person can share my joy and sadness)" and "我有一個特別的人，他能給我真正的安慰 (A special person can give me true comfort)".

Parental Acceptance (the variable is referred to as "Parental acceptance" hereafter)

Parental acceptance is defined as the parental acceptance of the sexual orientation of their children. Seven items were developed in Chinese according to the definition, literature review, and validated questionnaire of Parental Acceptance of Sexual Orientation Scale. Two examples are: "我的父母接受我的性取向 (My parents accept my sexual orientation)" and "當我的伴侶在場時，我的父母會與我的伴侶交談 (My parents talk to my companion)".

Internalized Homophobia (the variable is referred to as "Internalized Homophobia" hereafter)

Internalized Homophobia is defined as the internalization of societal stigma and negative

attitudes toward being a gay person. Six items were developed in Chinese according to the definition, literature review, and validated questionnaire of the Internalized Homophobia Scale. Two examples are: "有時候我希望我不是同性戀 (Sometimes I hope that I am not a gay)" and "我感覺身為同性戀對我來說是一個缺點 (Being a gay is a shortcoming)."

Life Satisfaction (the variable is referred to as "Satisfaction" hereafter)

Satisfaction is defined as a feeling of satisfaction with one's overall quality of life. Five items were developed in Chinese according to the literature reviewed, definition, and validated questionnaire of the Satisfaction with Life Scale. Two examples are: "我對生活感到滿意 (I am satisfied with my living" and "大致上，我目前的生活跟我理想的生活狀態相當接近 (My living is in general close to my ideal situation)".

Results & Analysis

A total of 107 completed questionnaires were obtained. After cleaning the data from incomplete responses, 78 cases were analyzed using SPSS version 28 and AMOS version 29.

Demographic Data

The demographic data are collected under: Age Distribution, Education Level, Employment Status, Relationship Status and Religious Belief as detailed in **Table-1** below.

Table-1: Demographic Characteristics of Gay Male Respondents in Hong Kong

Characteristics (N=107)	Percentage (%)
Age Distribution	
18–29 years	15.9
30–39 years	70.1
40–49 years	14.0
Education Level	
Advanced diploma/associate degree	22.4
Bachelor's degree	50.5
Master's degree	13.1
Employment Status	
Full-time	77.6
Part-time	1.9
Self-employed	9.3
Unemployed	3.7
Student	6.5
Retired	0.9
Relationship Status	
Single	36.4
In a relationship, not cohabiting	39.3
Cohabiting with a same-sex partner	21.5
Married	2.8
Religious Beliefs	
No religion	78.5
Christianity	13.0
Buddhism	5.6
Taoism	2.8

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

A measurement model of the six constructs, namely, family emotional support, family acceptance, friend support, significant friend support, internalized homophobia, and life satisfaction, was confirmed with acceptable goodness-of-fit indices (CFI= 0.911; IFI=0.912; RMSEA=0.076). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability of all the scales, measured using SPSS version 28, between 0.803 and 0.948. The correlation coefficients between the six constructs are significant at 0.01 level, ranging between -0.246 and 0.765. The above analyses show that the six constructs are distinct and have discriminant validity and reliability.

Means and t-test of the Six Constructs

The means of the six constructs and their deviations from the theoretical mean of **<4>** are reported in **Table-2**. There is no significant difference between the theoretical means for family support and family acceptance. The results imply that respondents perceived that they received a neutral response or a similar number of significant positive or negative responses from family. Friend support and significant friend support were significantly above the theoretical mean, implying that the respondents perceived very good support from friends and significant friends. The internalized homophobia (HI) s 2.089 (which is significantly lower than the theoretical mean of 4), implying that the respondents did not have a significant negative attitude toward their sexual orientation.

Table-2: Means and T-test of the six constructs (3 d. p.)

	Mean	Standard error	T value for comparison with the theoretical mean of <4>	Significance Two-sided p
Family Support	4.255	.148	1.720	Not significant
Friend Support	5.579	.126	12.570	<0.001
Significant Friend Support	5.308	.145	9.033	<0.001
Parental Acceptance	4.180	.169	1.065	Not significant
Internalised Homophobia	2.098	.090	-21.175	<0.001
Life Satisfaction	4.357	.138	2.591	0.050

ANOVA tests re used to examine whether there any significant differences due to age, education level, or relationship. The results show that there no significant differences among the different age groups, work status, and education levels. For different relationship comparisons, family acceptance, life satisfaction, and significant friend support were significantly higher for respondents living with partners than for those living with single respondents. There was no significant difference in internalized phobia among the groups according to age, education, relationship, and work status.

Structural Equation Model (SEM)

To test the validity of Hypotheses 1 to 7 of this study, a structural equation model was proposed according to the theoretical model for analysis using Amos Version 29. The goodness-of-fit indices of the SEM Model were good (CFI=0.911; IFI=0.912; RMSEA= 0.076), providing

support for the theoretical model. **Table-3** shows the standardized direct and total effects of the variables.

Table-3: Standardised Direct Effect (DE) and Total Effect (TE) between Constructs

	Family support		*Significant friend support*		*General friend support*		*Parental acceptance*		*Internalised homophobia*	
	D E	*T E*	*DE*	*TE*	*DE*	*TE*	*DE*	*TE*	*DE*	*TE*
Parental acceptance	.675*	.675*								
Internalized homophobia	n/s	-.171*	n/s	n/s	-.374*	-.374*	-.263*	-.263*		
Life satisfaction	.308*	.353*	.360*	.293*	n/s	n/s	n/s	.249*	-.257*	-.257*

*p<0.001; ns=not significant

Relationships between Variables

Table-3 reveals a significant direct and total effect of .675 for family support on parental acceptance. These findings support **Hypothesis-1**, which states that family support positively affects parental acceptance of a gay person.

Family support for gay men's partners has a significant total effect of 0.249 on S*atisfaction*. This result supports **Hypothesis-2**, which states that family support positively affects the life satisfaction of a gay person.

Family support had a significant total effect of -0.171 on *Internalised phobia*. This result supports **Hypothesis-3**, which states that family acceptance of the partner of a gay person will reduce the internalized phobia of a gay person.

Support from a special friend had a significant direct effect and total effect of .360 and .293, respectively, on *Satisfaction*. This result supports **Hypothesis-4**, which states that support from a special friend positively affects the life satisfaction of a gay person.

Support from friends had a significant direct effect and a total effect of -0.374 on *Internalised phobia*. This result supports **Hypothesis-5**, which states that support from friends reduce the internalized phobia of a gay person.

Internalised phobia has a significant direct effect and a total effect of -0.257 on *Satisfaction*. This result supports **Hypothesis-6**, which states that the internalized phobia of a gay person will negatively affect their life satisfaction of gay person.

A model is proposed based on the results shown in **Figure-2**.
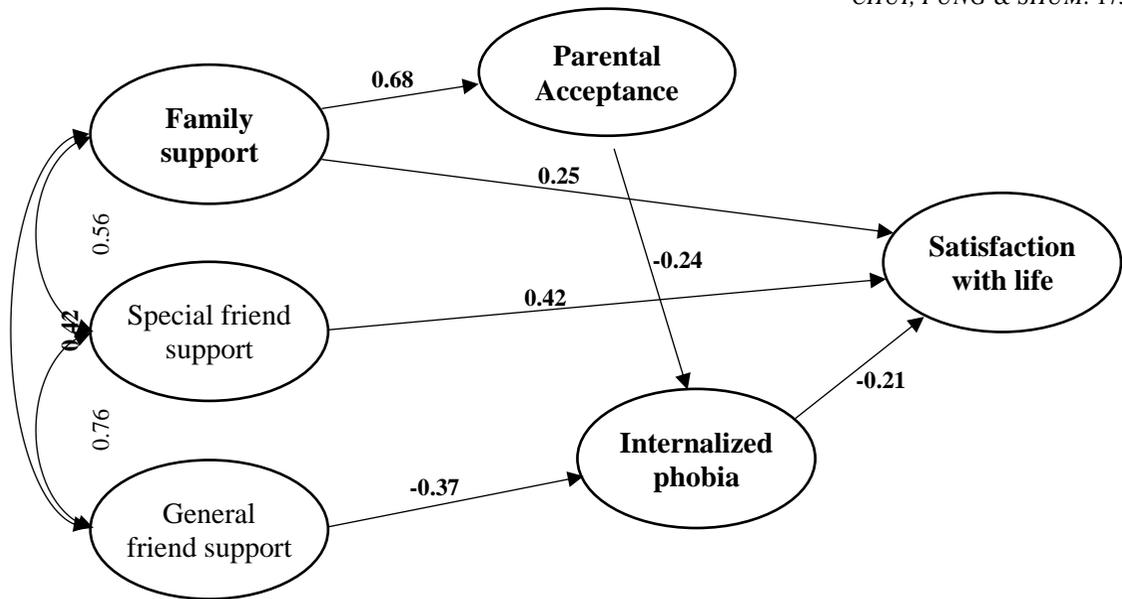
Figure-2: Proposed model of social support, family acceptance to partner, internalized homophobia, and satisfaction with life under Hong Kong Chinese ethnic ethics & behavior

Discussion

The questionnaire was found to have validity and reliability by CFA. Hence, it can be used for future research.

As measured by the questionnaire, the mean internalized homophobia (IH) of the respondents was 2.098, significantly lower than the expected value. This result may be explained by cultural shifts, public awareness, and advances in legal rights and protection of minority groups with different sex orientations in Hong Kong. Attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals are gradually changing in Hong Kong, particularly among the younger generations, leading to greater acceptance. However, the mean parental acceptance and family support did not differ from the theoretical mean. Comparing to the previous study (Puckett, Woodward, Mereish, & Pantalone, 2015) which the father negative response is significantly below the theoretical mean (73.8/160), the environment for the homosexuals in Hong Kong remain unfavorable. This implies that the implicit bias is still at a notable level, even though public bias is reduced.

One distinctive finding is that the effects of family support, friend support, and significant other support (intimate partner) on IH and life satisfaction vary. Family and friend support are related to IH, but no significant other (intimate partner) support. One possible explanation is that stigmatization effect illustrates how the bias labeling affects an individual to internalize the negative attitude from a society, instead of an intimated partner who is not regarded as "social. However, the results highlight the critical role of friendships in the lives of gay people. Supportive friends can provide emotional validation and acceptance, which are essential in combating feelings of shame or self-hatred, helping individuals internalize a more positive self-image and reduce negative feelings associated with their sexual orientation.

Family support was found to have positive effects on parental acceptance of intimate partners and the life satisfaction of the gay person. The positive effect of family support on parental acceptance suggests that when families are supportive, they are more likely to accept their

partners. Encouragement and understanding can foster a more inclusive environment, mitigate the negative impacts of social stigma, and enhance the life satisfaction and well-being of gay persons. The results call for more education programs and public awareness of the importance of family support to enhance the quality of life of gay persons.

On the other hand, family and significant other support (intimate partner) are correlated to life satisfaction, but not the friend support. Life satisfaction is defined as how a person subjectively evaluates their state as a whole (Pivot, & Diner, 1993). It is possible that the gay men value the family and significant other support (intimate partner) to their happiness, but they do not think friend support is an important component in their lives. Regarded as an international city in Hong Kong, certain level of individualism might affect the way of evolution among gay men.

Internalized homophobia had a significant direct effect and a total effect of -0.257 on satisfaction. This means that as internalized phobia increases, life satisfaction tends to decrease. A value of -0.257 indicates a moderately negative relationship. This implies that internalized phobia is a considerable factor influencing the overall life satisfaction of individuals experiencing it. A significant direct effect implies that the relationship is not mediated by other variables, and internalized phobia directly contributes to lower life satisfaction without the influence of external factors.

Conclusion

The findings highlight that parental acceptance of gay men's partners and social support generally impact IH and life satisfaction, consistent with global research (see Paragraph 2.3). Hong Kong's cultural uniqueness with Confucian family values and post-1997 individualism and Christianity provides a lens for gay men to evaluate the relevance of different social support networks, such as family, friends, and significant others (intimate partners), in enhancing their well-being. With a significant population of 5% LGBTQ (around 420,000), over half of them are gays (around 220,000), and the results of this research will have a significant impact on their acceptance, in particular by the parents of their respective partners.

Under a unique environment with a combination of different culture, ethics and behavior in Hong Kong, this study explores the relationship between parental support, parental acceptance of a gay man's partner, and IH, which has rarely been mentioned in previous studies. Other factors, such as the openness of parents, composition of the family members, the characteristics of the gay man and his partner, and expanding it to lesbians and other LGBTQs are possible directions for future studies, especially among societies with mixed ethics and behavior, such as Macao, Singapore, and Amsterdam.

Over the past two decades, the Equal Opportunities Commission has initiated policy changes to reduce labelling and bias against minorities in Hong Kong society. These efforts were considered to achieve greater social acceptance with high friend support rates (5.579/7). Recently, the right to same-sex marriage has been recognized and ruled by the Court of Final (Ho, 2023; Leung, 2024). The next step to further approach justice is to initiate the legislation process of the Homosexual Rights Act. Advances in legal rights and protection for LGBTQ+ individuals may contribute to a more positive self-image and reduce internalized stigma. Education and awareness initiatives can help combat stereotypes and promote acceptance, thereby influencing how individuals perceive their identities.

To foster a harmonious society and promote social equity, social work practices can address implicit prejudice and strengthen family acceptance and support, thereby improving the mental health and life satisfaction.

Limitations

This research was conducted in Hong Kong, focusing on the culture, ethics and behavior of Chinese ethnic gay individuals as participants. These findings may not apply to other regions with distinct cultural contexts. While this study proposes a causal model supported by cross-sectional data, the results merely indicate compatibility with the model. Longitudinal studies are required to confirm this proposed causal relationship.

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Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The study was conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (1975, revised in 2013). According to point 23 of this declaration, approval must be obtained from the local Ethical Committee or Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting the research, ensuring that the study adheres to both national and international guidelines. More information can be found in.

https://www.mdpi.com/ethics#_bookmark9

Ethical approval was granted by the Research and Ethics Committee of Gratia Christian College, and the details are listed below. Written informed consent was obtained from all the respondents and recorded. Nevertheless, this research did not involve any tests on human bodies.

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