Journal of School Psychology 98 (2023) 96–112

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of School Psychology

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jschpsyc

# Effects of identity disclosure on school victimization and long-term educational outcomes among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex students in China

Randolph C.H. Chan [a,*], Yiu Tung Suen [b]

[a] Department of Special Education and Counselling, The Education University of Hong Kong, Tai Po, Hong Kong
[b] Gender Studies Programme, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, Hong Kong

ARTICLE INFO

Editor: Craig A. Albers
Action Editor: Laura Pendergast

*Keywords:*
Identity disclosure
School victimization
Academic outcomes
School climate
Sexual and gender diversity education

ABSTRACT

This study examined identity disclosure among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) students in China and investigated the effects of coming out on school victimization as well as current academic performance and long-term educational outcomes. The study drew on a national sample of 9260 Chinese LGBTI students (age range = 12–42 years) and 9668 LGBTI individuals who were not in education (age range = 14–85 years). The results showed that LGBTI students were more likely to come out to their fellow students (61.4%) than to their teachers (42.4%). Approximately 40.2% of LGBTI students reported having encountered victimization in school, and they also were more likely to report school dropout and lower levels of educational attainment than those who did not experience school victimization. Transgender and gender nonconforming students and intersex students were particularly vulnerable to the experiences and adverse effects of school victimization. In addition, the findings indicated that although students who came out in school were more likely to experience school victimization, identity disclosure was related to better long-term educational outcomes. This study is one of the first to document the identity disclosure, victimization experiences, and school outcomes of LGBTI students in China. The results show that identity concealment may bring short-term benefits by protecting LGBTI students from school victimization but may be harmful to them in the longer run. To foster a supportive climate and a safe school environment, it is important to enact sexual and gender diversity education, inclusive school policies, and teacher training programs at different levels of schooling.

## 1. Introduction

Equal access to education is well recognized as a fundamental human right; however, not all people experience equal treatment in education, especially students who are considered to be sexual minorities or whose gender expression does not align with traditional gender norms (Espelage, 2016; Kosciw et al., 2016; Toomey et al., 2013). A growing body of literature has documented the educational experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people, showing that despite changing social attitudes and policies, the school climates in the United States and Europe are still generally unsupportive and hostile for sexual and gender minority

* Corresponding author at: Department of Special Education and Counselling, The Education University of Hong Kong, 10 Lo Ping Road, Tai Po, N. T., Hong Kong.
*E-mail addresses:* rchchan@eduhk.hk (R.C.H. Chan), suenyiutung@cuhk.edu.hk (Y.T. Suen).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2023.02.005
Received 6 July 2020; Received in revised form 31 March 2022; Accepted 28 February 2023
Available online 30 March 2023

students (Day et al., 2019; Myers et al., 2020). Compared with their cisgender (i.e., people whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth) and heterosexual counterparts, LGBTI students are at greater risk of experiencing school victimization, including verbal insults, having property stolen or damaged, physical violence, and sexual harassment (Chan, 2022; Diaz et al., 2010; Russell et al., 2014). Moyano and her colleague (Moyano & del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes, 2020) conducted a systematic review of 90 studies on homophobic bullying and found that non-heterosexual orientation was a risk factor for school victimization. Nevertheless, over 94% of their reviewed studies were conducted in the US and Europe, and none of the research was conducted in the Asian context (Moyano & del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes, 2020), where minority stress appears to be more invisible yet pervasive.

### 1.1. Risks and benefits of identity disclosure in educational settings

Coming out is an important part of identity development for sexual and gender minorities (Kosciw et al., 2015; Legate et al., 2012). Based on a social constructivist paradigm, D'Augelli (1994) proposed a model of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) identity development and identified six interactive processes, including (a) exiting a heterosexual identity, (b) developing a personal LGB identity status, (c) developing an LGB social identity, (d) becoming LGB offspring, (e) developing an LGB intimacy status, and (f) entering an LGB community. These identity processes operate independently and are shaped by personal subjectivities and actions (i.e., individual perception and understanding of sexual identity), interactive intimacies (i.e., personal relationships with family and peers), and sociohistorical connections (i.e., cultural values and norms). Influenced by the interaction with their immediate and wider social environment, LGB people may experience greater development in one process rather than another during different periods in their lifespan (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). For instance, depending on the context and timing, a person with a strong LGB identity may choose not to express their identity when entering a new setting.

Identifying and coming out as LGBTI in a hostile environment and culture can be difficult and traumatic as these individuals may be exposed to discrimination and victimization (Garvey & Rankin, 2015; Watson et al., 2015). The *minority stress model* proposes that LGBTI people experience distal and proximal stressors resulting from the social stigma attached to their sexual and gender minority status (Meyer, 2003). Kosciw et al. (2015) found that being out to school peers and staff was positively related to the experiences of stigma, prejudice, and discrimination. A nationwide study in the US found that 34% of sexual minority students reported bullying at school compared with 19% of heterosexual students (Kann et al., 2016). They reported experiencing violence, harassment, and rejection from teachers and fellow students based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). Longitudinally, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) has conducted a biennial national school climate survey in the US since 1999 to understand the school experiences of sexual minority students and found that hearing homophobic remarks was the most common form of victimization among Grade 6–12 students (Kosciw et al., 2016). As homophobia and transphobia are still prevalent in high school and college, LGBTI students rarely perceive their schools as safe spaces where they can be open about their SOGIESC.

Previous studies have suggested that school victimization is related to psychological maladjustment (Toomey et al., 2013), poor mental health (Poteat & Espelage, 2007), and low school connectedness (Diaz et al., 2010). Apart from psychosocial outcomes, school victimization has also been reported to impact academic performance and achievement (Burton et al., 2014). Kosciw et al. (2013) found that sexual and gender minority youth aged 13–18 years who experienced school victimization were more likely to report lower GPAs and more missed school days. Aragon et al. (2014) also showed that sexual and gender minority high school students were vulnerable to peer victimization, which predicted higher truancy, poorer grades, and lower academic aspirations. Conversely, Watson et al. (2015) found that not coming out at all was associated with better academic achievement and lower rates of harassment in school, suggesting that the hiding of their identity may protect LGBTI students from school victimization and enable them to secure social inclusion. Consequently, many LGBTI students are directly or indirectly discouraged from revealing or disclosing their identity (i.e., their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or intersex status) to shield themselves against the stigma and stereotypes attached to the identity (Garvey & Rankin, 2015).

Although identity concealment may bring immediate benefits by alleviating victimization experiences, it involves significant psychological costs (Cohen et al., 2016; Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). Earlier research noted that there appears to be a paradoxical relationship between identity concealment and wellness among sexual and gender minority people (Legate et al., 2012). Identity concealment may increase negative self-directed affect, which is harmful to emotional and mental health (Barreto et al., 2006; Huang & Chan, 2022). Concealment is also linked to poorer friendship quality in lesbian and gay adolescents (Baiocco et al., 2012). The *social penetration theory* postulates that self-disclosure is an essential step for establishing intimacy in interpersonal relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Relationship progression is characterized by a process of incremental increases in breadth and depth of self-disclosure (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Disclosing their sexual and/or gender identity may facilitate authentic self-expression and the building of supportive friendships, which are crucial to school engagement and completion (Kosciw et al., 2015). Nonetheless, this assertion may only be relevant to LGBTI students in an inclusive and supportive school environment (Watson et al., 2015). If the school climates are hostile and not accepting of sexual and gender minorities, visibility may be associated with risks and negative consequences, and coming out may become extremely unsafe and impossible. Therefore, coming out of the closet often requires a logical consideration of the potential costs and benefits of self-disclosure (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). It is reasonable to assume that students in a homophobic and LGBTI-unfriendly school environment are less likely to come out because disclosure may lead to victimization and may not guarantee support from teachers and fellow students.

### 1.2. Sexual and gender diversity within the education system in China

Homosexuality has long been viewed as a crime and a mental disorder in China. Same-sex sexual behavior was considered a form of *hooliganism*, as introduced in Article 160 of the Criminal Law in 1979 (Kong, 2016). Homosexuality was also listed by the Chinese Society of Psychiatry as a sexual disorder in the first edition of the Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders (CCMD) in 1978 because it was argued that there was a lack of biological or psychological evidence to support homosexuality as "absolutely normal" (Lee, 1996). It was not until 1997 that hooliganism was removed from the penal code and homosexuality was formally decriminalized. With the evolving understanding of homosexuality as a legitimate form of human sexuality across the world, homosexuality was no longer included in the third edition of the CCMD in 2001, although "ego-dystonic homosexuality" is still retained as a diagnostic category (Burki, 2017).

Despite growing discussion of homosexuality over the past decade, there continues to be silence within the classroom on sexual and gender diversity issues in China (Chan & Lam, 2023). Schools generally follow the national guidelines set by the Ministry of Education (2008), which approach sexuality education from a healthcare perspective, moralizing premarital sexual behavior and emphasizing HIV prevention (UNESCO and UNFPA, 2018). Although sexual victimization is discussed, it does not include SOGIESC as part of the curriculum at any level of education (Li et al., 2009; Song, 2015). The lack of coverage of SOGIESC is expressed in the Chinese idiom as "not encouraging, not discouraging, and not promoting" and signifies an official position of silence on LGBTI issues in China (Kwok, 2016; Mountford, 2010). This not only hinders students from accessing knowledge and resources on LGBTI issues, but also further invalidates and marginalizes sexual and gender minority students.

In addition, most teachers do not receive any professional training on sexual and gender diversity issues, either at the pre-service level or in-service level. A study on 151 middle school teachers in mainland China showed that one-third of them considered same-sex relationships as fundamentally wrong (UNESCO and UNFPA, 2018). Some teachers may hold conservative views about homosexuality, whereas others find it awkward and difficult to touch on sensitive topics such as SOGIE in class. This can be attributed to the lack of relevant training among teachers and the limited access to good quality teaching resources. The Gay and Lesbian Campus Association of China (2014) conducted a textual analysis of 90 health education textbooks and found that most of them tended to pathologize homosexuality and only one-fifth had accurate representations of LGBTI people.

### 1.3. School experiences of LGBTI students in China

Given the lack of coverage of SOGIESC in the national curriculum, teacher training, and instructional resources, as well as the government's silence on LGBTI issues, heteronormativity and gender normativity are pervasive in Chinese educational settings, and students are often presumed to be heterosexual and pressured to conform to binary gender norms (Chan & Lam, 2023; Kosciw et al., 2015). Even with the heightened awareness of the LGBTI community in recent years, homosexuality is still a taboo topic for open discussion in school. This is evidenced in the study of Kwok (2016), who found that Chinese teachers continued to hold pathologizing attitudes toward non-heterosexuality and forced sexual minority students to receive sexual orientation conversion therapy, which contributed to these students feeling scared and humiliated of coming out in school. Previous research showed that Chinese sexual minority students were vulnerable to different forms of peer victimization in school, including being called offensive nicknames, verbally insulted, socially isolated, and physical threatened (Wei & Liu, 2015). Using nationally representative data, Huang et al. (2018) also found that sexual minority students were at a higher risk of school victimization than their heterosexual counterparts. Nevertheless, sexual prejudice and stigma come from not only peers and teachers, but also school authorities. For example, a student named Hu Siyi was recently expelled from a vocational school in China because of his speech on anti-LGBTI discrimination delivered at a school event (Liu, 2021).

Homosexuality is not only socially stigmatized, but also culturally unaccepted in Chinese societies. Same-sex relationships are often seen as a violation of Confucianism and appear as a threat to filial piety and the traditional family system (Chan & Huang, 2022; Kwok, 2016). This is well reflected by the traditional Chinese proverb, "There are three things which are unfilial, and to have no posterity is the greatest of them." As the current younger Chinese generation usually comes from one-child families, they do not have siblings to share the filial obligation of carrying on the family name and bloodline (Hesketh et al., 2005). Therefore, younger sexual minority individuals often face strong pressure from family and society, which causes them to hide their sexual orientation from others (Hu & Wang, 2013). Wei and Liu (2019) examined the school experiences of sexual and gender minority students aged 16–38 years in China and found that although most of the respondents were comfortable about their sexual orientation (66.1%), they were less likely to come out to their parents (27.3%) and teachers (24.4%) than their friends (93.1%) and schoolmates (78.5%).

Previous work has suggested that the 'coming out' model on sexual identity development may be less applicable to the Chinese context, where people are socialized to be less expressive about their sexual identity and prioritize the collective over the individual (Bie & Tang, 2016). In the Chinese context, sexual identity politics "is predicated upon individualism and confrontational politics where the right to one's body is of central cultural importance" (Chou, 2001, p. 28). Chou (2001) argued that in the Chinese culture, "nobody is a discrete, isolated being; rather everyone becomes a full person only in the context of family and social relationships" (p. 33). In this sense, identity disclosure is important not only because of the process of revealing a true self, but also because it can facilitate the building of an authentic and genuine relationship with significant others, including peers and friends in school. Nevertheless, no published studies have specifically examined the risks and benefits of coming out in Chinese educational settings. Little is known about how identity disclosure is related to victimization experiences and school outcomes among LGBTI students at different stages of education in China.

### 1.4. Aims of the present study

Drawing on the minority stress model and social penetration theory, this study presents a systematic investigation of the school experiences of LGBTI students in China to understand how identity disclosure was related to school victimization and academic outcomes. Specifically, the present study aimed to (a) describe the school experiences (i.e., perceived acceptance of sexual and gender minorities, identity disclosure, and school victimization) of LGBTI students at different educational levels, (b) examine how school experiences were associated with current academic performance and long-term educational outcomes, and (c) investigate the effect of sexual and gender diversity education on long-term educational outcomes. Particular attention was given to the school experiences and outcomes of LGBTI students with different identities and backgrounds, which allows us to contribute to an intersectional understanding of Chinese LGBTI students based on their membership in multiple identity groups (including sex assigned at birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ethnicity, education level, and urbanicity).

We hypothesized that perceptions of teachers' and fellow students' acceptance of sexual and gender minorities would be positively associated with identity disclosure and current academic performance as well as negatively associated with school victimization (Hypothesis 1). It was also hypothesized that identity disclosure would be positively associated with school victimization and current academic performance among LGBTI students (Hypothesis 2). In addition, we hypothesized that identity disclosure would be negatively associated with school dropout and positively associated with educational attainment among LGBTI individuals who were not in education (Hypothesis 3). It was hypothesized that school victimization would be negatively associated with current academic performance and long-term educational outcomes (i.e., school dropout and lower educational attainment; Hypothesis 4). Moreover, we hypothesized that having sexual and gender diversity education would be negatively associated with school dropout and positively associated with educational attainment (Hypothesis 5).

In addition, we proposed two mediation models that depict the association of school experiences with current academic performance (see Fig. 1) and long-term educational outcomes (see Fig. 2) among LGBTI students in China. As depicted in Fig. 1, the first model hypothesized that perceived school acceptance of sexual and gender minorities would be positively associated with identity disclosure, which, in turn, would be positively associated with school victimization and current academic performance. As shown in Fig. 2, the second model hypothesized that identity disclosure would be positively associated with school victimization, which, in turn, would be positively associated with school dropout and negatively associated with educational attainment. Finally, it was hypothesized that being exposed to sexual and gender diversity education would be negatively associated with school dropout and positively associated with educational attainment.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Sampling and procedure

The data for this study were obtained from a larger national study on Social Attitudes toward Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression in China conducted in 2015 (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). The study was described as an investigation of the lived experience of LGBTI individuals in China. Participants were recruited through LGBTI community organizations, social media, and educational institutions. Inclusion criteria were (1) being aged 12 years or above, (2) living in China at the time of the

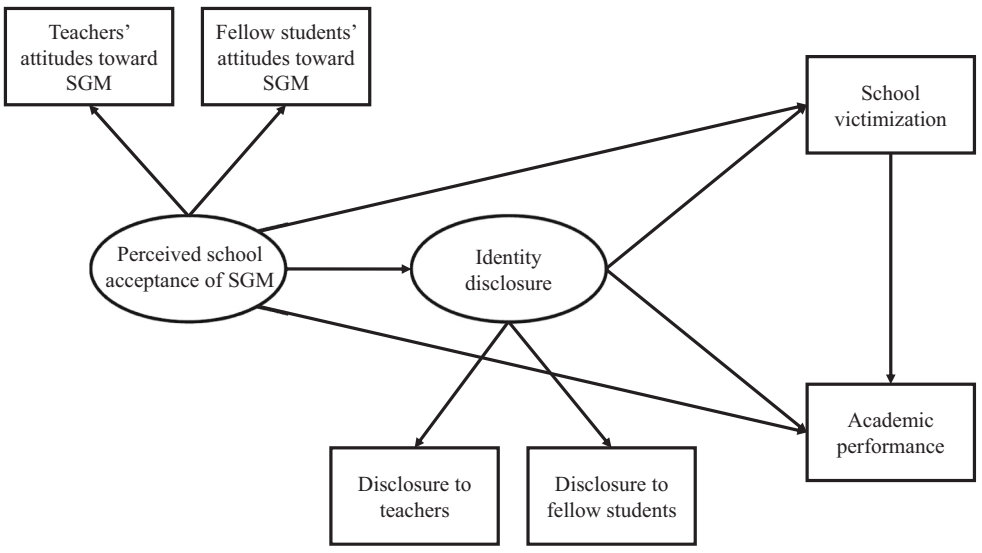


**Fig. 1.** Hypothesized mediation model of school experiences and current academic performance.
*Note.* SGM = sexual and gender minorities.

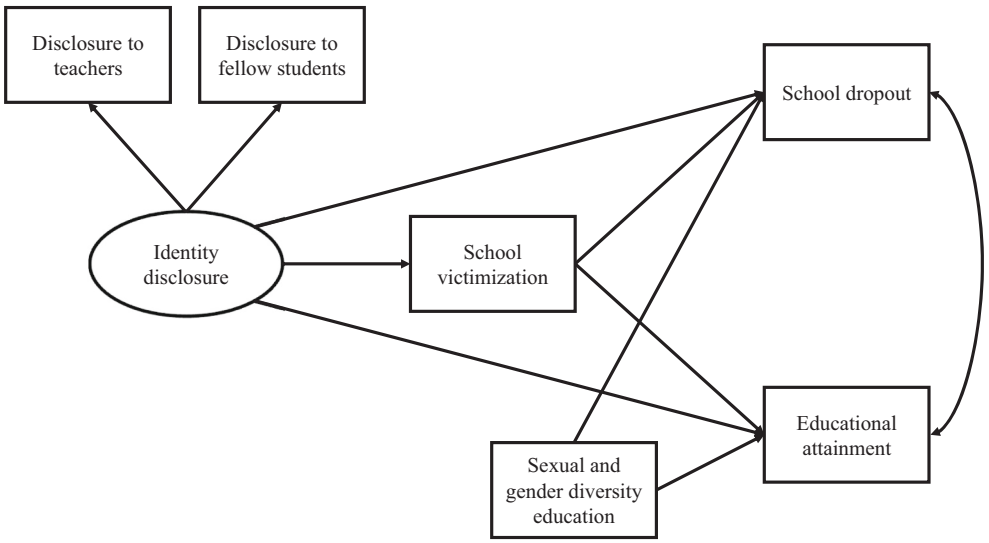


**Fig. 2.** Hypothesized mediation model of school experiences and long-term educational outcomes.

study, (3) studying or having studied in middle school or above, and (4a) being attracted to same-sex persons, (4b) having a gender identity and/or expression that is not consistent with the sex assigned at birth (i.e., transgender and gender nonconforming), and/or (4c) being born with an anatomy that cannot be classified as clearly male or female (i.e., intersex). The survey was conducted from August to October 2015. Participants who expressed interest in participating in the study were asked to provide consent before entering the study. They were assured that participation in the survey was voluntary and all the information would be kept

**Table 1**
Demographic characteristics of the participants.

| | LGBTI students ($N$ = 9260) | LGBTI individuals who were not in education ($N$ = 9668) |
|---|---|---|
| | $n$ (%) | $n$ (%) |
| Sex assigned at birth | | |
| Male | 6218 (66.2%) | 7071 (73.1%) |
| Female | 2989 (32.3%) | 2373 (24.5%) |
| Intersex | 143 (1.5%) | 224 (2.3%) |
| Sexual orientation | | |
| Heterosexual | 58 (0.6%) | 29 (0.3%) |
| Gay/Lesbian | 6421 (69.3%) | 7717 (79.8%) |
| Bisexual/Pansexual | 2234 (24.1%) | 1573 (16.3%) |
| Asexual/Questioning | 547 (5.9%) | 349 (3.6%) |
| Gender identity | | |
| Cisgender | 8645 (93.4%) | 8992 (93.0%) |
| Transgender and gender nonconforming | 615 (6.6%) | 676 (7.0%) |
| Age group | | |
| Below 18 | 1774 (19.2%) | 230 (2.4%) |
| 18–24 | 7099 (76.7%) | 4421 (45.7%) |
| 25–39 | 384 (4.1%) | 4675 (48.4%) |
| 40 or above | 3 (0.03%) | 342 (3.5%) |
| Ethnicity | | |
| Han Chinese | 8517 (92.0%) | 9012 (93.2%) |
| Ethnic minorities | 743 (8.0%) | 656 (6.8%) |
| Education level | | |
| Middle school | 177 (1.9%) | 831 (8.6%) |
| High school | 1507 (16.3%) | 921 (9.5%) |
| Vocational school | 438 (4.7%) | 1344 (13.9%) |
| College | 1352 (14.6%) | 2252 (23.3%) |
| Undergraduate | 5090 (55.0%) | 3722 (38.5%) |
| Postgraduate | 696 (7.5%) | 598 (6.2%) |
| Living area | | |
| City | 7493 (80.9%) | 7361 (76.1%) |
| Town | 1405 (15.2%) | 1785 (18.5%) |
| Village | 362 (3.9%) | 522 (5.4%) |

confidential. They could complete the survey either online or in person using a paper-and-pencil format. It took approximately 20–30 min to complete the survey.

The study included two samples of LGBTI people in China. The first sample consisted of 9260 LGBTI students, which allowed us to investigate their school experiences and current academic performance. Two-thirds of the participants were assigned male at birth (66.2%), 32.3% were assigned female at birth, and 1.5% were intersex. Most participants identified as gay or lesbian (69.3%), 24.1% identified as bisexual or pansexual, and 5.9% indicated being either asexual or questioning sexual orientation. Most of the participants were cisgender (93.4%) and 6.6% indicated being transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC). They had a mean age of 19.68 years ($SD = 2.68$, range = 12–42). Approximately 92.0% of the participants were Han Chinese, with the remaining 8.0% of participants identifying as ethnic minorities. Most of the LGBTI students were studying at the undergraduate level (55.0%), followed by high school (16.3%), college (14.6%), postgraduate level (7.5%), vocational school (4.7%), and middle school (1.9%). Around 80.9% of LGBTI students lived in a city, 15.2% lived in a town, and 3.9% lived in a village.

To examine the association of school experiences with long-term educational outcomes, the present study also involved a sample of 9668 LGBTI individuals who were not currently enrolled in an educational setting. Most of them were assigned male at birth (73.1%), whereas 24.5% were assigned female at birth, and 2.3% were intersex. Most participants identified as gay or lesbian (79.8%), 16.3% identified as bisexual or pansexual, and 3.6% indicated being either asexual or questioning sexual orientation. Approximately 7% indicated being TGNC. They had a mean age of 25.80 years ($SD = 5.81$, range = 14–85). Most of the participants were Han Chinese (93.2%), whereas 6.8% reported being a member of an ethnic minority group. Around 8.6% indicated middle school as their highest level of education, 23.4% reported upper secondary education (i.e., high school or vocational school) as their highest degree attained, 61.8% had a college or undergraduate degree, and 6.2% reported having a postgraduate degree. Most of the participating LGBTI individuals lived in a city (76.1%), followed by a town (18.5%) and a village (5.4%). Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants.

### 2.2. Measures

The United Nations Development Programme (2016) survey included measures regarding school experiences and outcomes. Identity disclosure was measured by asking the participants whether they had disclosed their SOGIESC in school, with response options including (1) *not at all*, (2) *only to fellow students*, (3) *only to teachers*, (4) *to some teachers and fellow students*, and (5) *to everyone*. Responses were recoded into two variables (i.e., disclosure to teachers and disclosure to fellow students). Participants were asked whether they had encountered any victimization in school because of their SOGIESC from a list of 13 options. Sample items include "reminded by teachers/fellow students to watch your appearance or the ways in which you spoke or acted" and "verbally attacked by teachers/fellow students, including ridicule, mockery, name-calling, derision, abuse, insult, etc." Those who endorsed at least one of the 13 items were considered to have experienced school victimization.

LGBTI students in the education group were asked to evaluate their teachers' and fellow students' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities in their current education setting, using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) *completely unaccepting* to (5) *completely accepting*. They were also asked to assess their academic performance on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *very poor* to (5) *very good*.

LGBTI participants who were not engaged in an educational setting were asked to indicate whether they had graduated or dropped out of school. They were also asked whether they had received sexual and gender diversity education at any level of schooling (i.e., education on the diversity of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, with an emphasis on equal treatment for all).

### 2.3. Data analysis

To address the first research aims, descriptive analysis was conducted to examine the school acceptance (i.e., perception of teachers' and fellow students' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities) perceived by LGBTI students in different educational settings. Descriptive analysis was also used to characterize the prevalence of identity disclosure and school victimization. School victimization was a dichotomous variable that indicated whether LGBTI students had ever experienced school victimization because of their SOGIESC. Chi-square tests with Bonferroni's correction for multiple comparisons were conducted to determine the differences in perceived school acceptance of sexual and gender minorities, identity disclosure, and school victimization between LGBTI students at different stages of education. Logistic regression analyses were performed to examine the effects of demographics (i.e., sex assigned at birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age group, ethnicity, education level, and living area) as well as teachers' and fellow students' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities on identity disclosure and school victimization.

To address the second research aim, ordinal regression analysis was used to estimate the effects of teachers' and fellow students' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities, identity disclosure, and school victimization on academic performance, controlling for demographics. In addition, structural equation modeling was conducted to test the hypothesized relationships between school experiences and academic performance (see Fig. 1), controlling for demographics. Structural equation modeling allows us to analyze more complicated models and estimate the effects of school experience variables on school outcomes via multiple pathways. The model was estimated using the weighted least squares means and variance adjusted (WLSMV) estimation. The model fit was evaluated using the $\chi^2$ statistic and three other fit indices, including the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). We adhered to Hu and Bentler's (Hu & Bentler, 1999) recommendations in which CFI values of 0.90 indicate an acceptable fit and values of 0.95 or higher are indicative of a good fit, and RMSEA values of 0.06 or less and SRMR values approximating 0.08 or less are considered a close fit. The indirect effects of perceived

**Table 2**
School experiences of LGBTI students ($N = 9260$).

| | Entire sample ($N = 9260$) | Middle school ($n = 177$) | High school ($n = 1507$) | Vocational school ($n = 438$) | College ($n = 1352$) | Undergraduate ($n = 5090$) | Postgraduate ($n = 696$) | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* (%) | *n* (%) | *n* (%) | *n* (%) | *n* (%) | *n* (%) | *n* (%) | *p* |
| Teachers' attitudes toward SGM | | | | | | | | < 0.001* |
| Unaccepting/completely unaccepting | 1324 (14.5%) | 46 (26.1%) | 362 (24.3%) | 69 (16.6%) | 181 (14.1%) | 589 (11.7%) | 77 (11.2%) | |
| Not sure | 4666 (51.2%) | 96 (54.5%) | 788 (52.8%) | 228 (54.8%) | 707 (55.1%) | 2488 (49.2%) | 359 (52.2%) | |
| Accepting/completely accepting | 3118 (34.2%) | 34 (19.3%) | 342 (22.9%) | 119 (28.6%) | 396 (30.8%) | 1975 (39.1%) | 252 (36.6%) | |
| Fellow students' attitudes toward SGM | | | | | | | | < 0.001* |
| Unaccepting/completely unaccepting | 1469 (16.1%) | 33 (18.8%) | 292 (19.5%) | 83 (19.7%) | 228 (17.7%) | 744 (14.7%) | 89 (12.9%) | |
| Not sure | 1981 (24.1%) | 20 (11.4%) | 241 (16.1%) | 101 (24.0%) | 364 (28.3%) | 1089 (21.5%) | 166 (24.1%) | |
| Accepting/completely accepting | 5678 (62.2%) | 123 (69.9%) | 965 (64.4%) | 237 (56.3%) | 696 (54.0%) | 3224 (63.8%) | 433 (62.9%) | |
| Disclosure to teachers | 3922 (42.4%) | 60 (33.9%) | 613 (40.7%) | 162 (37.0%) | 502 (37.1%) | 2287 (44.9%) | 298 (42.8%) | < 0.001* |
| Disclosure to fellow students | 5684 (61.4%) | 129 (72.9%) | 993 (65.9%) | 263 (60.0%) | 726 (53.7%) | 3179 (62.5%) | 394 (56.6%) | < 0.001* |
| School victimization | 3726 (40.2%) | 64 (36.2%) | 643 (42.7%) | 186 (42.5%) | 577 (42.7%) | 1985 (39.0%) | 271 (38.9%) | 0.02 |
| 1. Reminded by teachers/fellow students to watch their appearance or the ways in which they spoke or acted | 1801 (19.4%) | 35 (19.8%) | 328 (21.8%) | 81 (18.5%) | 273 (20.2%) | 971 (19.1%) | 113 (16.2%) | 0.05 |
| 2. Verbally attacked by teachers/fellow students, including ridicule, mockery, name-calling, derision, abuse, insult, etc. | 2274 (24.6%) | 40 (22.6%) | 399 (26.5%) | 104 (23.7%) | 362 (26.8%) | 1203 (23.6%) | 166 (23.9%) | 0.09 |
| 3. Treated coldly or shunned by teachers/fellow students | 889 (9.6%) | 19 (10.7%) | 16 (10.7%) | 45 (10.3%) | 148 (10.9%) | 464 (9.1%) | 52 (7.5%) | 0.06 |
| 4. Sexual harassment (unpleasant, sexually suggestive speech or act, such as dirty jokes and physical touching) by teachers/fellow students | 629 (6.8%) | 18 (10.2%) | 107 (7.1%) | 34 (7.8%) | 98 (7.2%) | 332 (6.5%) | 40 (5.7%) | 0.28 |
| 5. Forced by teachers/fellow students to change the ways in which they dressed, spoke or acted | 422 (4.6%) | 9 (5.1%) | 76 (5.0%) | 24 (5.5%) | 70 (5.2%) | 214 (4.2%) | 29 (4.2%) | 0.46 |
| 6. Subject to physical violence by teachers/fellow students, including pushing, shoving, tripping, slapping, physical punishment, etc. | 224 (2.4%) | 6 (3.4%) | 36 (2.4%) | 11 (2.5%) | 30 (2.2%) | 118 (2.3%) | 23 (3.3%) | 0.63 |
| 7. Having parents called to school | 135 (1.5%) | 5 (2.8%) | 26 (1.7%) | 10 (2.3%) | 30 (2.2%) | 57 (1.1%) | 7 (1.0%) | 0.008 |
| 8. Denied access by teachers/fellow students to group events, student clubs, etc. | 127 (1.4%) | 3 (1.7%) | 23 (1.5%) | 9 (2.1%) | 27 (2.0%) | 56 (1.1%) | 9 (1.3%) | 0.13 |
| 9. Disqualified from receiving honors, such as Outstanding Student | 76 (0.8%) | 3 (1.7%) | 15 (1.0%) | 3 (0.7%) | 16 (1.2%) | 33 (0.6%) | 6 (0.9%) | 0.27 |
| 10. Disqualified from running for or being appointed student leader positions | 79 (0.9%) | 3 (1.7%) | 7 (0.5%) | 3 (0.7%) | 21 (1.6%) | 40 (0.8%) | 5 (0.7%) | 0.03 |
| 11. Disqualified from joining the Communist Youth League or the Communist Party | 58 (0.6%) | 2 (1.1%) | 7 (0.5%) | 4 (0.9%) | 12 (0.9%) | 26 (0.5%) | 7 (1.0%) | 0.30 |
| 12. Banned from the classroom | 16 (0.2%) | 1 (0.6%) | 5 (0.3%) | 0 (0.0%) | 4 (0.3%) | 5 (0.1%) | 1 (0.1%) | 0.19 |
| 13. Advised to transfer/drop out or expelled | 53 (0.6%) | 2 (1.1%) | 16 (1.1%) | 3 (0.7%) | 13 (1.0%) | 18 (0.4%) | 1 (0.1%) | 0.004 |

*Note*. SGM = sexual and gender minorities. Significant differences between groups are indicated by * ($p < .003$).

school acceptance on current academic performance were examined using the percentile bootstrap method with 5000 resamples. The indirect effects were considered significant if the 95% confidence intervals (CI) for the indirect effects did not include zero.

Among the LGBTI individuals not in the education sample, we conducted descriptive statistics to understand the prevalence of LGBTI individuals who have dropped out of school. Logistic and ordinal regression analyses were used to examine the effects of identity disclosure and school victimization on school dropout and educational attainment, controlling for demographics (i.e., sex assigned at birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age group, and ethnicity). Before performing the ordinal regression, educational attainment was recoded into four levels, including lower secondary education, upper secondary education, college or undergraduate level, and postgraduate level. Structural equational modeling was performed to examine the hypothesized relationships between identity disclosure, school victimization, and long-term educational outcomes, controlling for demographics (see Fig. 2). Bootstrapping analysis was used to estimate the indirect effects of identity disclosure on long-term educational outcomes.

To address the third research aim, logistic and ordinal regression analyses were conducted to estimate the effect of sexual and gender diversity education on school dropout and educational attainment, controlling for demographic variables, identity disclosure, and school victimization. In addition, the effect of sexual and gender diversity education was examined using structural equation modeling (see Fig. 2). Descriptive and regression analyses were conducted with SPSS version 25.0, whereas structural equation modeling and path analysis were performed with Mplus version 8.6.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. School experiences of LGBTI students in China

#### 3.1.1. Perceived acceptance of sexual and gender minorities in school

Approximately half of the LGBTI students surveyed in China were unsure about their teachers' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities (51.2%). Around one-third of the participating LGBTI students indicated that their teachers had accepting or completely accepting attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities (34.2%), whereas 14.5% of respondents said their teachers' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities were unaccepting/completely unaccepting. Conversely, two-thirds of the responding LGBTI students perceived their fellow students' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities as accepting or completely accepting (62.2%). Only 16.1% of respondents indicated that their fellow students showed unaccepting or completely unaccepting attitudes toward LGBTI individuals. Table 2 describes respondents' perceptions of teachers' and fellow students' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities by education level.

The results of chi-square tests revealed that a significantly smaller proportion of teachers and fellow students in undergraduate and postgraduate educational settings showed negative attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities than those in other educational settings ($p < .001$). LGBTI students in middle and high schools were more likely to perceive their teachers as unaccepting of sexual and gender minorities than their counterparts ($p < .001$).

#### 3.1.2. Identity disclosure

LGBTI students were more likely to come out to their fellow students than to their teachers. More than half of LGBTI students (57.6%) did not disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex status to teachers, whereas 42.4% disclosed their identity to at least one or more teachers. Around 61.4% of the students revealed their sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex status to some of their fellow students, and 38.6% did not disclose their identity to their fellow students. The results of chi-square tests showed that LGBTI students in middle schools were more likely to come out to their fellow students, but they were least likely to disclose their identity to their teachers ($p < .001$).

Regression analyses were conducted to examine the effects of demographics as well as teachers' and fellow students' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities on disclosure to teachers and fellow students. As shown in Table 3, students assigned male at birth were less likely to be open about their sexual orientation and gender identity to their fellow students than those assigned female at birth ($p < .001$). Intersex students were also less likely to disclose their identity to their fellow students ($p = .01$). Gay and lesbian students were more likely to come out to their fellow students than their heterosexual counterparts ($p = .003$). Compared with cisgender students, TGNC students were more likely to disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity to their teachers ($p < .001$) and fellow students ($p < .001$).

There appeared to be age differences regarding LGBTI students' experiences of disclosing their identities in school. Sexual and gender minority students aged 18–24 years ($p = .008$) and 25 years or older ($p < .001$) were less likely to disclose their identity to their fellow students compared with those aged below 18 years. In addition, the results showed that Han Chinese students were less likely to come out to their fellow students than ethnic minority students ($p = .02$). LGBTI students who lived in a town or village were less likely to disclose their identity to their teachers (town: $p = .008$; village: $p < .001$) and fellow students (town: $p < .001$; village: $p < .001$) than those who lived in a city.

The results indicated that LGBTI students who perceived their teachers' attitudes as accepting or completely accepting of sexual and gender minorities were more likely to disclose their identity to teachers than those who perceived their teachers' attitudes as unaccepting or completely unaccepting ($p < .001$). In addition, LGBTI students who perceived their fellow students' attitudes as accepting or completely accepting of sexual and gender minorities were more likely to disclose their identity to fellow students than their counterparts ($p < .001$). These results provide support for Hypothesis 1.

**Table 3**
Effects of identity disclosure and school victimization on academic performance among LGBTI students.

| | Disclosure to teachers | | Disclosure to fellow students | | School victimization | | Academic performance | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AOR | 95% CI | AOR | 95% CI | AOR | 95% CI | Estimate (SE) | 95% CI |
| Sex assigned at birth | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 0.99 | [0.89, 1.10] | 0.48*** | [0.43, 0.54] | 1.96*** | [1.75, 2.19] | 0.01 (0.05) | [−0.09, 0.11] |
| Female | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Intersex | 0.86 | [0.59, 1.24] | 0.62* | [0.43, 0.90] | 2.15*** | [1.51, 3.08] | −0.74 (0.17)*** | [−1.07, −0.40] |
| Sexual orientation | | | | | | | | |
| Heterosexual | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Gay/Lesbian | 1.53 | [0.87, 2.70] | 2.46** | [1.35, 4.48] | 1.70 | [0.95, 3.03] | 0.52 (0.26) | [0.00, 1.04] |
| Bisexual/Pansexual | 1.20 | [0.68, 2.12] | 1.51 | [0.83, 2.75] | 1.32 | [0.74, 2.37] | 0.54 (0.27)* | [0.02, 1.06] |
| Asexual/Questioning | 0.93 | [0.52, 1.68] | 1.00 | [0.54, 1.86] | 1.23 | [0.67, 2.25] | 0.36 (0.27) | [−0.18, 0.90] |
| Gender identity | | | | | | | | |
| Cisgender | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Transgender and gender nonconforming | 1.39*** | [1.16, 1.67] | 1.59*** | [1.29, 1.96] | 1.71*** | [1.42, 2.04] | −0.11 (0.09) | [−0.28, 0.06] |
| Age group | | | | | | | | |
| Below 18 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| 18–24 | 0.93 | [0.78, 1.11] | 0.78** | [0.65, 0.94] | 1.00 | [0.84, 1.19] | −0.12 (0.08) | [−0.28, 0.04] |
| 25 or above | 0.49*** | [0.37, 0.65] | 0.37*** | [0.28, 0.49] | 1.01 | [0.77, 1.33] | 0.33 (0.13)* | [0.08, 0.58] |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | | | |
| Han Chinese | 0.98 | [0.84, 1.14] | 0.82* | [0.69, 0.97] | 0.99 | [0.84, 1.16] | 0.02 (0.07) | [−0.12, 0.17] |
| Ethnic minorities | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Education level | | | | | | | | |
| Lower secondary | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Upper secondary | 1.30 | [0.93, 1.82] | 0.82 | [0.57, 1.18] | 1.14 | [0.81, 1.59] | −0.67 (0.15)*** | [−0.97, −0.37] |
| Tertiary or above | 1.44 | [1.00, 2.07] | 0.74 | [0.50, 1.10] | 1.07 | [0.74, 1.54] | −0.37 (0.17)* | [−0.69, −0.04] |
| Living area | | | | | | | | |
| City | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Town | 0.84** | [0.74, 0.96] | 0.79*** | [0.69, 0.90] | 1.00 | [0.89, 1.14] | −0.44 (0.06)*** | [−0.56, −0.33] |
| Village | 0.61*** | [0.48, 0.77] | 0.59*** | [0.47, 0.75] | 1.02 | [0.81, 1.28] | −0.65 (0.11)*** | [−0.86, −0.44] |
| Teachers' attitudes toward SGM | | | | | | | | |
| Unaccepting/completely unaccepting | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Not sure | 1.12 | [0.98, 1.28] | 1.02 | [0.89, 1.16] | 0.60*** | [0.52, 0.68] | −0.18 (0.06)** | [−0.30, −0.06] |
| Accepting/completely accepting | 1.80*** | [1.56, 2.07] | 1.45*** | [1.25, 1.68] | 0.67*** | [0.58, 0.77] | 0.22 (0.07)** | [0.09, 0.35] |
| Fellow students' attitudes toward SGM | | | | | | | | |
| Unaccepting/completely unaccepting | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Not sure | 0.94 | [0.81, 1.10] | 1.10 | [0.95, 1.27] | 0.78** | [0.68, 0.90] | 0.08 (0.07) | [−0.05, 0.22] |
| Accepting/completely accepting | 1.60*** | [1.40, 1.81] | 2.91*** | [2.56, 3.31] | 0.63*** | [0.56, 0.72] | 0.26 (0.06)*** | [0.14, 0.38] |
| Disclosure to teachers | | | | | | | | |
| Not disclosed | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Disclosed | – | – | – | – | 1.21** | [1.07, 1.37] | 0.21 (0.06)*** | [0.10, 0.32] |
| Disclosure to fellow students | | | | | | | | |
| Not disclosed | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Disclosed | – | – | – | – | 1.30*** | [1.14, 1.48] | −0.08 (0.06) | [−0.19, 0.04] |
| School victimization | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | – | – | – | – | – | – | 0.06 (0.04) | [−0.03, 0.14] |
| No | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |

*Note.* SGM = sexual and gender minorities; AOR = adjusted odds ratio. The estimates in the output are given in units of ordered logits or ordered log odds. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

#### 3.1.3. School victimization

A substantial proportion of LGBTI students in China (40.2%) had been subjected to school victimization based on SOGIESC in educational settings. The three most common forms of school victimization included (a) verbal abuse (24.6%), (b) being reminded to watch their appearance or gender expression (19.4%), and (c) social isolation (9.6%). More extreme forms of school victimization were also reported (see Table 2) and inlcuded sexual harassment (6.8%), physical violence (2.4%), being asked to bring their parents to school to see the teachers (1.5%), being banned from group activities (1.4%), and being advised to transfer, drop out, or being expelled from school (0.6%). No significant differences in school victimization were found among LGBTI students at different levels of education (see Table 2).

Regression analysis revealed that gender was a significant predictor of school victimization (see Table 3). Specifically, students assigned male at birth ($p < .001$) and intersex students ($p < .001$) were more likely to suffer from school victimization than students assigned female at birth. Around 46.9% of intersex students reported experiences of school victimization. Also, TGNC students ($p < .001$) were more likely to experience school victimization than cisgender students, as 47.3% of TGNC students indicated they had experienced some form of victimization in school.

Students who perceived their teachers' ($p < .001$) and fellow students' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities ($p < .001$) as accepting or completely accepting were less likely to experience school victimization than those who viewed their teachers' and fellow students' attitudes as unaccepting or completely unaccepting. The results also showed that LGBTI individuals who disclosed their identity to teachers ($p = .002$) and fellow students ($p < .001$) were more likely to experience different forms of school victimization than those who did not disclose their identity, which was consistent with Hypothesis 2.

### 3.2. Effects of school experiences on LGBTI individuals

#### 3.2.1. Effects of school climate, identity disclosure, and school victimization on current academic performance

More than half of the respondents (54.5%) self-assessed their academic performance to be good/very good, 39.3% said their performance was average, and 6.3% said their performance was poor/very poor. Specifically, regression analysis showed that compared with students assigned female at birth, intersex students were more likely to report poorer academic performance ($p < .001$). Compared with LGBTI students under the age of 18 years, those who were 25 years or older reported better academic performance ($p = .01$). LGBTI students in upper secondary education (i.e., high school and vocational school) ($p < .001$) and tertiary education (i.e., college, undergraduate, and postgraduate) ($p = .03$) were more likely to report poor academic performance than those in lower secondary education (i.e., middle school). LGBTI students who lived in a town ($p < .001$) and a village ($p < .001$) were also likely to show poorer academic results than those who lived in a city.

Students who perceived their teachers' ($p = .001$) and fellow students' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities ($p < .001$) as accepting or completely accepting were more likely to report better academic performance than those who viewed their teachers' and fellow students' attitudes as unaccepting or completely unaccepting. LGBTI students who disclosed their identity to teachers ($p < .001$) were more likely to report better self-assessed academic performance than those who did not disclose their identity. However, disclosure to fellow students ($p = .20$) and experience of school victimization ($p = .19$) was not significantly associated with academic performance.

#### 3.2.2. Mediation model of school experiences and current academic performance

The hypothesized model (see Fig. 1) had an acceptable model fit, $x^2$ (31) = 285.71, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.03, SRMR =

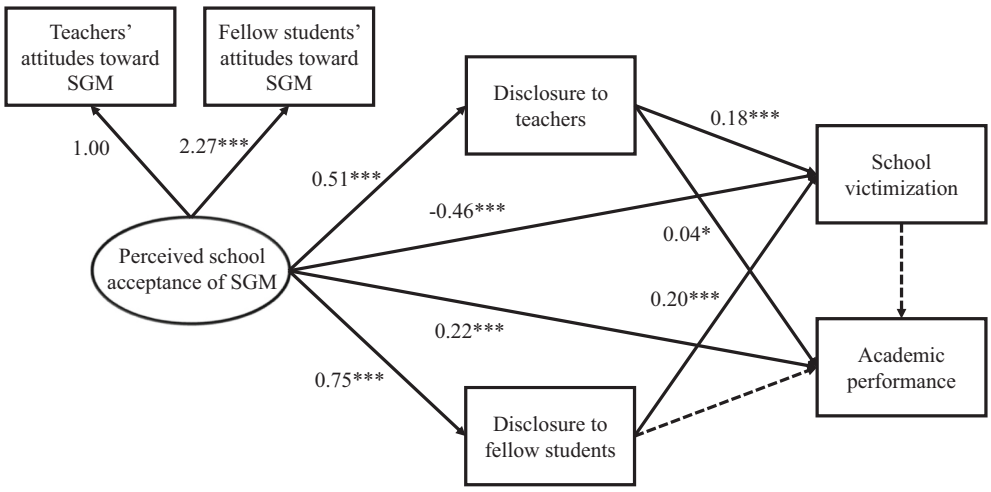


**Fig. 3.** Unstandardized path coefficients for the mediation model of school experiences and current academic performance.
*Note.* SGM = sexual and gender minorities. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

**Table 4**
Unstandardized and standardized path coefficients for the mediation model of school experiences and current academic performance.

| | Unstandardized | Standardized |
|---|---|---|
| | B (SE) | $\beta$ |
| Direct effects | | |
| Perceived school acceptance of SGM → Disclosure to teachers | 0.51 (0.04)*** | 0.32*** |
| Perceived school acceptance of SGM → Disclosure to fellow students | 0.75 (0.05)*** | 0.43*** |
| Perceived school acceptance of SGM → School victimization | −0.46 (0.05)*** | −0.28*** |
| Perceived school acceptance of SGM → Academic performance | 0.22 (0.04)*** | 0.14*** |
| Disclosure to teachers → School victimization | 0.18 (0.02)*** | 0.18*** |
| Disclosure to teachers → Academic performance | 0.04 (0.02)* | 0.04* |
| Disclosure to fellow students → School victimization | 0.20 (0.02)*** | 0.21*** |
| Disclosure to fellow students → Academic performance | −0.01 (0.02) | −0.01 |
| School victimization → Academic performance | 0.03 (0.02) | 0.03 |
| | Unstandardized | 95% CI |
| Indirect effects | | |
| Perceived school acceptance of SGM → Disclosure to teachers → Academic performance | 0.02 (0.01)* | 0.002, 0.04 |
| Perceived school acceptance of SGM → Disclosure to fellow students → Academic performance | −0.01 (0.01) | −0.03, 0.02 |
| Perceived school acceptance of SGM → School victimization → Academic performance | −0.01 (0.01) | −0.03, < 0.001 |
| Perceived school acceptance of SGM → Disclosure to teachers → School victimization → Academic performance | 0.003 (0.002) | < 0.001, 0.01 |
| Perceived school acceptance of SGM → Disclosure to fellow students → School victimization → Academic performance | 0.01 (0.003) | < 0.001, 0.01 |

*Note.* SGM = sexual and gender minorities. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

0.06. However, the results revealed that the observed variables of identity disclosure were not significantly loaded on their respective latent construct ($p > .05$), indicating that disclosure to teachers and disclosure to fellow students were different aspects of identity disclosure and were independent of each other. Thus, we refined the model by specifying disclosure to teachers and disclosure to fellow students as two observed variables (see Fig. 3). The model also showed an acceptable fit to the data, $x^2$ (17) = 292.12, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.085. Perceived school acceptance of sexual and gender minorities was positively related to disclosure to teachers (B = 0.51, $p < .001$) and disclosure to fellow students (B = 0.75, $p < .001$). Also, perceived school acceptance was negatively related to school victimization (B = −0.46, $p < .001$) and positively related to academic performance (B = 0.22, $p < .001$). Disclosure to teachers was positively related to school victimization (B = 0.18, $p < .001$) and academic performance (B = 0.04, $p = .03$). Disclosure to fellow students was positively related to school victimization (B = 0.20, $p < .001$) but not academic performance (B = −0.01, $p = .60$). School victimization was not significantly related to academic performance (B = 0.03, $p = .06$). Table 4 shows the unstandardized and standardized path coefficients of the model.

The indirect effects of perceived school acceptance of sexual and gender minorities on academic performance were examined using bootstrapping analysis. As shown in Table 4, we only found a significant indirect effect of perceived school acceptance of sexual and gender minorities on academic performance through disclosure to teachers, B = 0.02, 95% CI [0.002, 0.04].

### *3.2.3. Effects of identity disclosure and school victimization on long-term educational outcomes*

Around 13.3% of LGBTI individuals reported that they dropped out of, withdrew from, and/or did not complete school. Among these respondents, 37.8% dropped out of middle school, followed by high school (26.0%), vocational school (20.8%), college (7.7%), undergraduate studies (7.0%), and postgraduate studies (0.7%). As shown in Table 5, regression analyses indicated that participants assigned male at birth were more likely to report school dropout ($p < .001$) and lower levels of educational attainment ($p < .001$) than participants assigned female at birth. Additionally, intersex individuals were more likely to drop out of school ($p < .001$) and have lower levels of educational attainment ($p < .001$). Specifically, 26.3% of intersex individuals indicated that they dropped out of school, and the rate was more than double that of other sexual and gender minority individuals. In addition, TGNC individuals were more likely to drop out of school ($p < .001$) and report lower education levels ($p < .001$) than cisgender individuals. Among TGNC individuals, 21.2% reported having dropped out of school.

LGBTI individuals who disclosed their identity to fellow students ($p < .001$) but not teachers ($p = .50$) were less likely to experience school dropout. Those who came out to teachers ($p < .001$) and fellow students ($p < .001$) were more likely to have higher levels of educational attainment than their counterparts. The findings provide support for Hypothesis 3. The results also revealed that individuals who had encountered school victimization were more inclined to drop out of school ($p = .001$) and have lower levels of educational attainment ($p = .047$) than those who had not experienced school victimization, thus lending support for Hypothesis 4.

### *3.2.4. Mediation model of school experiences and long-term educational outcomes*

The hypothesized model (see Fig. 2) showed a good fit to the data, $x^2$ (15) = 288.38, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.04. Like the previous model, the results showed that the observed variables of identity disclosure were not significantly loaded on their respective latent construct ($p > .05$), which suggested that disclosure to teachers and disclosure to fellow students were

**Table 5**
Effects of identity disclosure and school victimization on school dropout and educational attainment among LGBTI individuals who were not in education.

| | School dropout | | Educational attainment | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AOR | 95% CI | Estimate (SE) | 95% CI |
| Sex assigned at birth | | | | |
| Male | 1.85*** | [1.54, 2.23] | −0.66 (0.06)*** | [−0.77, −0.54] |
| Female | – | – | – | – |
| Intersex | 2.66*** | [1.83, 3.86] | −1.30 (0.14)*** | [−1.58, −1.03] |
| Sexual orientation | | | | |
| Heterosexual | – | – | – | – |
| Gay/Lesbian | 0.59 | [0.25, 1.39] | −0.39 (0.38) | [−1.13, 0.34] |
| Bisexual/Pansexual | 0.53 | [0.22, 1.28] | −0.14 (0.38) | [−0.88, 0.60] |
| Asexual/Questioning | 0.72 | [0.29, 1.79] | −0.36 (0.39) | [−1.12, 0.41] |
| Gender identity | | | | |
| Cisgender | – | – | – | – |
| Transgender and gender nonconforming | 1.99*** | [1.58, 2.49] | −0.95 (0.08)*** | [−1.11, −0.78] |
| Age group (years) | | | | |
| Below 18 | – | – | – | – |
| 18–24 | 0.13*** | [0.10, 0.18] | 1.91 (0.13)*** | [1.66, 2.18] |
| 25–39 | 0.04*** | [0.03, 0.05] | 3.25 (0.14)*** | [2.98, 3.52] |
| 40 or above | 0.04*** | [0.02, 0.06] | 2.72 (0.17)*** | [2.38, 3.05] |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| Han Chinese | 1.07 | [0.83, 1.37] | −0.14 (0.09) | [−0.31, 0.03] |
| Ethnic minorities | – | – | – | – |
| Disclosure to teachers | | | | |
| Not disclosed | – | – | – | – |
| Disclosed | 0.92 | [0.71, 1.18] | 0.29 (0.08)*** | [0.14, 0.44] |
| Disclosure to fellow students | | | | |
| Not disclosed | – | – | – | – |
| Disclosed | 0.50*** | [0.40, 0.62] | 0.80 (0.07)*** | [0.66, 0.94] |
| School victimization | | | | |
| Yes | 1.25** | [1.10, 1.42] | −0.09 (0.04)* | [−0.17, −0.001] |
| No | – | – | – | – |
| Sexual and gender diversity education | | | | |
| Yes | 0.75* | [0.59, 0.95] | 0.37 (0.08)*** | [0.22, 0.52] |
| Not sure | 1.62*** | [1.35, 1.95] | −0.39 (0.07)*** | [−0.53, −0.25] |
| No | – | – | – | – |

*Note*. AOR = adjusted odds ratio. The estimates in the output are given in units of ordered logits or ordered log odds. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

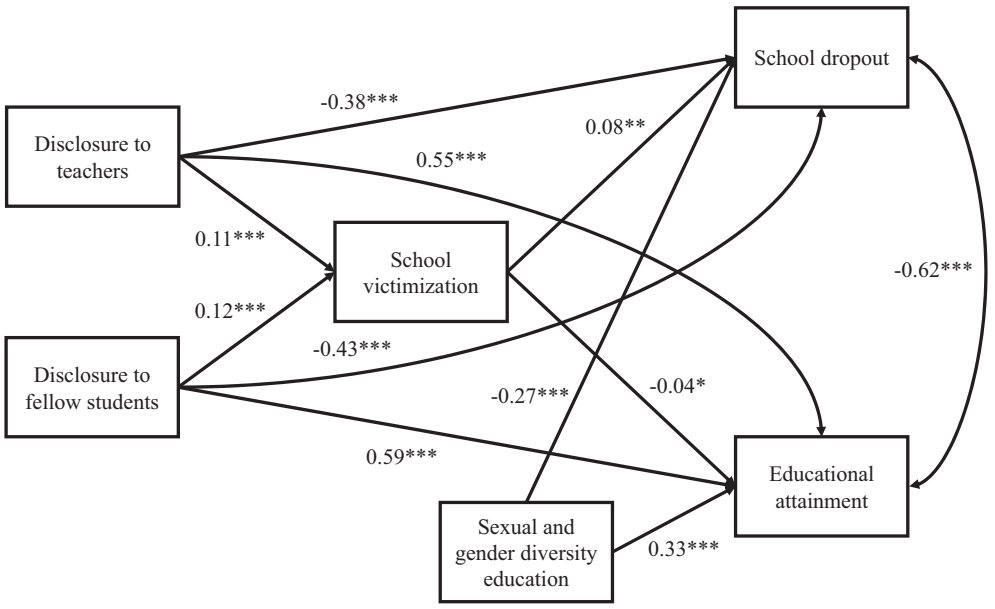


**Fig. 4.** Unstandardized path coefficients for the mediation model of school experiences and long-term educational outcomes.
*Note*. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

**Table 6**
Unstandardized and standardized path coefficients for the mediation model of school experiences and long-term educational outcomes.

| | Unstandardized | Standardized |
|---|---|---|
| | B (SE) | $\beta$ |
| Direct effects | | |
| Disclosure to teachers → School victimization | 0.11 (0.03)*** | 0.05*** |
| Disclosure to teachers → School dropout | −0.38 (0.05)*** | −0.14*** |
| Disclosure to teachers → Educational attainment | 0.55 (0.03)*** | 0.20*** |
| Disclosure to fellow students → School victimization | 0.12 (0.03)*** | 0.05*** |
| Disclosure to fellow students → School dropout | −0.43 (0.04)*** | −0.18*** |
| Disclosure to fellow students → Educational attainment | 0.59 (0.03)*** | 0.24*** |
| School victimization → School dropout | 0.08 (0.02)** | 0.07** |
| School victimization → Educational attainment | −0.04 (0.02)* | −0.03* |
| Sexual and gender diversity education → School dropout | −0.27 (0.06)*** | −0.07*** |
| Sexual and gender diversity education → Educational attainment | 0.33 (0.04)*** | 0.08*** |
| School dropout ↔ Educational attainment | −0.62 (0.02)*** | −0.62*** |
| | Unstandardized | 95% CI |
| Indirect effects | | |
| Disclosure to teachers → School victimization → School dropout | 0.01 (0.004)* | 0.003, 0.02 |
| Disclosure to teachers → School victimization → Educational attainment | −0.004 (0.002) | −0.01, −0.001 |
| Disclosure to fellow students → School victimization → School dropout | 0.01 (0.003)* | 0.003, 0.02 |
| Disclosure to fellow students → School victimization → Educational attainment | −0.004 (0.002) | −0.01, −0.001 |

*Note.* * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

independent of each other. Therefore, we revised the model by specifying disclosure to teachers and disclosure to fellow students as two observed variables (see Fig. 4). The model showed a good fit to the data, $x^2$ (4) = 87.53, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.07. Disclosure to teachers (B = 0.11, $p < .001$) and disclosure to fellow students (B = 0.12, $p < .001$) were positively related to school victimization. Identity disclosure was negatively related to school dropout (teachers: B = −0.38, $p < .001$; fellow students: B = −0.43, $p < .001$), with those who came out to their teachers and fellow students being less likely to experience school dropout. In addition, identity disclosure was positively related to educational attainment (teachers: B = 0.55, $p < .001$; fellow students: B = 0.59, $p < .001$), with those who disclosed their identity having higher levels of educational attainment. School victimization was positively related to school dropout (B = 0.08, $p = .001$) and negatively related to educational attainment (B = −0.04, $p = .02$). Table 6 shows the unstandardized and standardized path coefficients of the model.

The indirect effects of identity disclosure on school dropout and educational attainment were examined. As shown in Table 6, there were significant indirect effects of disclosure to teachers on school dropout (B = 0.01, 95% CI [0.003, 0.02]) and educational attainment (B = −0.004, 95% CI [−0.01, −0.001]) through school victimization. The indirect effects of disclosure to fellow students on school dropout (B = 0.01, 95% CI [0.003, 0.02]) and educational attainment (B = −0.004, 95% CI [−0.01, −0.001]) through school victimization were also significant.

### 3.3. Effects of sexual and gender diversity education on long-term educational outcomes

Around 8.9% of LGBTI individuals indicated that they received sexual and gender diversity education in school, 9.5% were not sure, and 81.6% said that they did not receive sexual and gender diversity education. Respondents who received sexual and gender diversity education were less likely to drop out of school ($p = .02$) and reported higher levels of educational attainment ($p < .001$) than those who did not receive sexual and gender diversity education. The effect of sexual and gender diversity education was also examined using structural equation modeling. Results indicated that sexual and gender diversity education was negatively related to school dropout (B = −0.27, $p < .001$) and positively related to educational attainment (B = 0.33, $p < .001$). The results show support for Hypothesis 5.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Effects of identity disclosure on school victimization and academic outcomes

The present study is one of the first to examine the school experiences and outcomes of LGBTI students in China. Drawing on a national sample of Chinese LGBTI students ($N = 9260$) and LGBTI individuals ($N = 9668$), this study examined the associations of identity disclosure with school victimization and academic outcomes. The findings suggest that coming out in Chinese educational settings may bring short-term harm to LGBTI individuals but may be beneficial in the longer term (Kosciw et al., 2015). Specifically, our results showed that LGBTI students who disclosed their identity were more likely to experience different forms of school victimization, which is consistent with the proposition of the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003) that indicates that identifying and coming out as LGBTI in a hostile environment can be risky as doing so may lead to an increase in exposure to distal minority stress, including prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. Nevertheless, our findings showed that those who came out were less likely to

have experienced school dropout, and they also reported higher levels of educational attainment than their counterparts. This seeming paradox is theoretically interesting. We argue that although identity concealment may lead to less school victimization in the short term and is often used as a coping strategy aimed at avoiding intimidation and harassment, it carries significant intrapersonal and interpersonal costs in the long run (Barreto et al., 2006; Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). As pointed out by Smart and Wegner (1999), concealing a stigmatized identity is a mentally demanding task that requires considerable input of cognitive resources. In accordance with the social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), hiding one's identity not only compromises the sense of authenticity, but also hinders the development of intimate relationships with peers (Russell et al., 2014). Therefore, this may partially explain why LGBTI individuals who came out to their fellow students were less likely to experience school dropout and attained higher levels of educational attainment than their counterparts. Also, it is plausible that as LGBTI individuals are aware of the hostile environment they face in school and beyond, they may be putting more effort into attaining better education outcomes to achieve socioeconomic success to buffer themselves from victimization.

### 4.2. School experiences of LGBTI students in China

Based on our findings, it was evident that Chinese LGBTI students experienced a rather challenging time in school. Only one-third of the respondents indicated that their teachers showed positive attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities, and the situation was particularly worrisome in middle and high school settings. Nevertheless, slightly more respondents reported that their fellow students had accepting attitudes toward sexual and gender minority students, which accounted for more than half of the respondents in most of the educational settings. This may explain why LGBTI students were more willing to come out to their fellow students (61.4%) than to their teachers (42.4%), which was consistent with the coming out pattern found in previous research (Wei & Liu, 2019). Although other students may consider teachers and fellow students as a source of support, LGBTI students in China may live in fear of how they may be perceived as a member of sexual and gender minorities, given that many felt their teachers' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities were not accepting. School climate matters to LGBTI students as they are likely to experience less victimization and show better academic performance in an inclusive school environment (Chan, 2022).

Many LGBTI students also found it difficult to be open about their SOGIESC in Chinese educational settings. One-third of LGBTI students indicated that they did not disclose their identity at all in school. This means that when LGBTI individuals were in an educational setting, they had to put effort into concealing their SOGIESC rather than focusing entirely on their studies. At the same time, this makes it difficult for LGBTI individuals to build authentic relationships with fellow students and teachers. As shown in earlier studies (e.g., Cohen et al., 2016; Huang & Chan, 2022), concealing one's sexual orientation adds to the stress and anxiety that students experience in school, which may severely impact their mental health.

In addition, it is worth noting that 40.2% of LGBTI students in China reported having been subjected to school victimization based on SOGIESC. The three most common types of victimization against LGBTI students were verbal abuse, being reminded to watch their appearance or gender expression, and social isolation. Around 6.8% also reported experiences of sexual harassment and 2.4% reported having been subjected to physical violence. The findings corroborated earlier studies in the US and Europe (Moyano & del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes, 2020) that showed that verbal abuse was the most common form of victimization in school. Consistent with the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003) and previous research conducted in Western societies (Aragon et al., 2014; Burki, 2017; Kosciw et al., 2015), our retrospective findings from LGBTI individuals in China indicated that those who encountered school victimization were more likely to drop out of school and have lower levels of educational attainment, which may be because the school was unsafe for LGBTI students who were open about their identity, thus compelling them to drop out of school as a way out. It also translated into correspondingly lower rates of school completion and lower levels of academic achievement among those who experienced school victimization. Nevertheless, potential risk factors other than school climate and victimization, such as achievement motivation, mental health, and family resources, should also be acknowledged and examined in future research.

The findings contribute to the understanding of LGBTI students' experiences of education in China, which are a subgroup of students whose experiences have been largely overlooked. Although "No Child Left Behind" is the basic principle of education embedded in Chinese Confucianism, which emphasizes equal opportunities for every student, the lived experiences of LGBTI students tell a somewhat different story. Our findings add to the growing empirical evidence on educational inequality in China (Epstein, 2018; Mountford, 2010; Wei & Liu, 2015). The results also echo previous findings that LGBTI individuals in China continue to experience difficulties in coming out and are often exposed to negative treatment in other settings, such as employment and health care (Suen et al., 2020; Suen & Chan, 2020). Education holds an important place in the Chinese culture, and traditional nuanced understanding of virtue and personhood, as well as the relationship between self and society (Epstein, 2018). In a society where education is heavily valued, the exclusion experienced by LGBTI students warrants urgent attention.

### 4.3. An intersectional analysis of school experiences and outcomes of LGBTI students in China

Our study fills a critical research gap and extends previous work on sexual minority students in China by including TGNC and intersex students in our investigation. There has been a very limited amount of research conducted on TGNC and intersex students and not much is known about their school experiences (Chan, 2022; Wei & Liu, 2019). Our results indicated that TGNC and intersex students were not only at elevated risk of school victimization, but also more prone to the adverse effects of school victimization on long-term educational outcomes as compared to other sexual minority students. The findings were consistent with the results of a recent meta-analysis by Myers et al. (2020), who showed that transgender students had a significantly higher risk of school victimization. Specifically, nearly half of the TGNC and intersex students had experienced some form of school victimization. Additionally,

more than one-fifth of participating TGNC and intersex individuals in China dropped out of school. As the experiences and identities of TGNC and intersex individuals are less commonly known than lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals, their needs are often neglected in educational contexts, thereby often resulting in peer rejection and discrimination.

The lives of TGNC and intersex individuals in China have gained increased research attention in recent years (UNDP, 2018); however, most studies have been carried out from medical and public health perspectives (Burki, 2017; Song, 2015). This study highlights the experiences of TGNC and intersex individuals in education, and further research should continue to explore the difficulties they face in diverse settings in China. Such research is especially needed as TGNC individuals face many barriers to gaining legal gender recognition in China (UNDP, 2018).

Taking an intersectional perspective, this study also found that some subpopulations within the LGBTI community were more vulnerable to negative school experiences and outcomes. The results indicated that those who were assigned male at birth were more likely to report SOGIESC-related victimization and drop out of school, resulting in lower levels of educational attainment. The results could be attributed to gendered expectations embedded in Chinese culture, in which men are assumed to have a greater obligation to bring honor to the family through educational and career success and to continue the family name through heterosexual marriage (Chan & Huang, 2022). When transgressing gender norms, sexual minority boys and men are more likely to be seen as a threat to traditional hegemonic masculinity than sexual minority girls and women. Therefore, those who were assigned male at birth had a higher risk of being subject to victimization by teachers and peers in school, which might then lead to school disengagement and dropout.

### 4.4. Practical implications

The results of the present study have important implications for school policy and practice. To counteract SOGIESC-based school victimization, it is important to implement non-discrimination and inclusive policies in schools, which is an essential step to protect the inalienable human right of LGBTI students to be free from bullying, violence, and victimization (Day et al., 2019). Training and non-discrimination awareness-raising should be conducted with staff members at all levels in schools (e.g., school administrators, teachers, counselors, school psychologists, other support staff), so that they are fully informed of the rights of LGBTI students and are equipped with the ability to respond to incidents of homophobic bullying and peer victimization (Payne & Smith, 2011). The Chinese Ministry of Education should develop codes of conduct and institutionalize anti-discrimination policies in different educational settings. Without nationwide regulation and legislation, schools will continue to face institutional barriers in devising and implementing non-discrimination school policies and practices. In addition, the Ministry of Education should proactively review the content of textbooks in China that may contain inaccurate and harmful depictions of diverse genders and sexualities. The national guidelines set by the Ministry of Education (2008), which approach sexuality education from a healthcare perspective, should be updated and expanded to include SOGIESC at all levels of education.

As shown in the present study, sexual and gender diversity education may have a promising effect on long-term educational outcomes of LGBTI students (Fisher et al., 2008) as it can raise awareness of personal biases and societal prejudice against LGBTI individuals, which can increase acceptance of sexual and gender diversity in school environments. Additionally, diversity education may reduce the internalization of sexual stigma among LGBTI students, which benefits their academic functioning and aspirations. To develop culturally sensitive education programs, teachers and instructors should be fully aware of how Chinese traditional beliefs and values may impact students' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities and be prepared to resolve their culture-specific concerns and dilemmas (e.g., fulfilling filial piety, carrying on the family line) openly in training (Kwok, 2016; Payne & Smith, 2011).

For TGNC and intersex students, it is necessary to develop safe and affirming school environments by offering gender-neutral bathrooms and creating a gender-inclusive classroom (Singh, 2013). Teachers and school staff should also address TGNC and intersex students with the name and gender pronouns that the students prefer. Resources are needed to facilitate student learning about gender nonconformity and intersex variations as part of sexual and gender diversity education. As TGNC and intersex students are susceptible and vulnerable to the adverse effects of victimization, school administration should take the lead in providing protection and support for these students, including institutionalizing the establishment of LGBTI resource centers and queer alliances and providing gender-affirmative mental health care and counseling services (Heck et al., 2011).

### 4.5. Limitations

Although this study provides important insights into the school experiences of LGBTI students in China, several limitations should be noted. First, the present study used cross-sectional data, which do not allow us to determine the directionality of the relationships between perceived school acceptance, identity disclosure, school victimization, and academic performance among LGBTI students. For the second sample, which included LGBTI individuals who were not involved in education at the time of the survey, their retrospective reports of school victimization and identity disclosure may have been subject to recall bias. Longitudinal research is necessary to determine whether identity concealment and earlier exposure to school victimization by teachers and fellow students would contribute to academic disengagement, school dropout, and lower educational attainment in later life. Second, although this study consisted of a sizable sample of LGBTI students and individuals in China, it is a nonprobability sample, and thus the results might not be generalizable to all Chinese LGBTI students. Third, despite the results showing that school victimization may be a risk factor for school dropout and lower educational attainment, other potential factors, such as socioeconomic status and health status at the time of education, were not measured and taken into consideration. Future work could also separately measure victimization experiences by peers and teachers to better understand the patterns of school victimization in Chinese educational settings. Fourth, given the coverage of the survey, we

were unable to examine multiple aspects of school environments, including emotional support from teachers and fellow students, availability of school-based resources, and school attendance and truancy. Future research is needed to fully understand the school experiences and outcomes of LGBTI individuals in China. Fifth, some of the variables (i.e., identity disclosure and academic performance) were measured using single-item indicators that may have questionable reliability and may not have adequately captured the breadth of the construct. Further studies are warranted to replicate the current results using psychometrically sound measures.

## 5. Conclusions

The present study examined and documented the effects of identity disclosure on victimization experiences and school outcomes among LGBTI students in China. The findings showed that although identity concealment may provide immediate benefits by protecting LGBTI students from school victimization, it may be harmful to them in the long run, leading to a greater likelihood of school dropout and lower educational attainment. Chinese LGBTI students had a rather challenging time in school, with 40% experiencing SOGIESC-related victimization by peers and teachers. TGNC and intersex students were even more vulnerable to the experiences and adverse impacts of school victimization than other sexual minority students. Our results also highlight the significance of sexual and gender diversity education, which may foster a supportive educational climate and a safe school environment for LGBTI students. To reduce and prevent school victimization, inclusive school policies and teacher training programs at different levels of schooling would appear to be essential in China.

## Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest related to this study.

## Acknowledgements

The research was partially supported by the General Research Fund of the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong (Project Number: 18605420).

## References

Altman, I., & Taylor, D. A. (1973). *Social penetration: The development of interpersonal relationships* (pp. 8–212). Holt: Rinehart & Winston.

Aragon, S. R., Poteat, V. P., Espelage, D. L., & Koenig, B. W. (2014). The influence of peer victimization on educational outcomes for LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ high school students. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 11*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2014.840761.

Baiocco, R., Laghi, F., Di Pomponio, I., & Nigito, C. S. (2012). Self-disclosure to the best friend: Friendship quality and internalized sexual stigma in Italian lesbian and gay adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence, 35*(2), 381–387. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2011.08.002.

Barreto, M., Ellemers, N., & Banal, S. (2006). Working under cover: Performance-related self-confidence among members of contextually devalued groups who try to pass. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 36*(3), 337–352. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.314.

Bie, B., & Tang, L. (2016). Chinese gay men's coming out narratives: Connecting social relationship to co-cultural theory. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication, 9*(4), 351–367. https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2016.1142602.

Bilodeau, B. L., & Renn, K. A. (2005). Analysis of LGBT identity development models and implications for practice. *New Directions for Student Services, 2005*(111), 25–39. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.171.

Burki, T. (2017). Health and rights challenges for China's LGBT community. *The Lancet, 389*(10076), 1286. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)30837-1.

Burton, C. M., Marshal, M. P., & Chisolm, D. J. (2014). School absenteeism and mental health among sexual minority youth and heterosexual youth. *Journal of School Psychology, 52*(1), 37–47. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2013.12.001.

Chan, R. C. H. (2022). Gender nonconformity, peer victimization, and internalizing problems among youth: Differential moderating effects of school climate by sex assigned at birth. *Psychology of Violence, 12*(5), 347–360. https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000441.

Chan, R. C. H., & Huang, Y.-T. (2022). A typology of intergenerational relationships between Taiwanese gay and bisexual men and their parents: Negotiating outness and co-residence in Chinese families. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy, 19*, 295–307. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-021-00542-5.

Chan, R. C. H., & Lam, M. S. (2023). Contextual influence of school-level gender role attitudes and sexual prejudice on allyship, bullying, and internalized homonegativity. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-022-01731-0.

Chou, W.-S. (2001). Homosexuality and the cultural politics of *Tongzhi* in Chinese societies. *Journal of Homosexuality, 40*(3–4), 27–46. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v40n03_03.

Cohen, J. M., Blasey, C., Barr Taylor, C., Weiss, B. J., & Newman, M. G. (2016). Anxiety and related disorders and concealment in sexual minority young adults. *Behavior Therapy, 47*(1), 91–101. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2015.09.006.

D'Augelli, A. R. (1994). Identity development and sexual orientation: Toward a model of lesbian, gay, and bisexual development. In E. J. Trickett, R. J. Watts, & D. Birman (Eds.), *Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context* (pp. 312–333). Jossey-Bass/Wiley.

Day, J. K., Ioverno, S., & Russell, S. T. (2019). Safe and supportive schools for LGBT youth: Addressing educational inequities through inclusive policies and practices. *Journal of School Psychology, 74*, 29–43. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.05.007.

Diaz, E. M., Kosciw, J. G., & Greytak, E. A. (2010). School connectedness for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth: In-school victimization and institutional supports. *The Prevention Researcher, 17*(3), 15–18.

Epstein, I. (2018). *Chinese education: Problems, policies, and prospects*. Routledge.

Espelage, D. L. (2016). Sexual orientation and gender identity in schools: A call for more research in school psychology—No more excuses. *Journal of School Psychology, 54*, 5–8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2015.11.002.

Fisher, E. S., Komosa-Hawkins, K., Saldana, E., Thomas, G. M., Hsiao, C., Rauld, M., & Miller, D. (2008). Promoting school success for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning students: Primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention and intervention strategies. *The California School Psychologist, 13*(1), 79–91. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03340944.

Garvey, J. C., & Rankin, S. R. (2015). The influence of campus experiences on the level of outness among trans-spectrum and queer-spectrum students. *Journal of Homosexuality, 62*(3), 374–393. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2014.977113.

Gay and Lesbian Campus Association of China. (2014). Homosexuality contents in Chinese university textbooks: Errors, stigmatization, and impact. *Gay and Lesbian Campus Association of China*. https://max.book118.com/html/2017/0611/113596772.shtm.

Heck, N. C., Flentje, A., & Cochran, B. N. (2011). Offsetting risks: High school gay-straight alliances and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth. *School Psychology Quarterly, 26*(2), 161–174. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023226.

Hesketh, T., Lu, L., & Xing, Z. W. (2005). The effect of China's one-child family policy after 25 years. *New England Journal of Medicine, 353*(11), 1171–1176. https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMhpr051833.

Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 6*(1), 1–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118.

Hu, X., & Wang, Y. (2013). LGB identity among young Chinese: The influence of traditional culture. *Journal of Homosexuality, 60*(5), 667–684. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2013.773815.

Huang, Y., Li, P., Lai, Z., Jia, X., Xiao, D., Wang, T., Guo, L., & Lu, C. (2018). Association between sexual minority status and suicidal behavior among Chinese adolescents: A moderated mediation model. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 239*, 85–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2018.07.004.

Huang, Y.-T., & Chan, R. C. H. (2022). Effects of sexual orientation concealment on well-being among sexual minorities: How and when does concealment hurt? *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 69*(5), 630–641. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000623.

Kann, L., Olsen, E. O., McManus, T., Harris, W. A., Shanklin, S. L., Flint, K. H., Queen, B., Lowry, R., Chyen, D., Whittle, L., Thornton, J., Lim, C., Yamakawa, Y., Brener, N., & Zaza, S. (2016). Sexual identity, sex of sexual contacts, and health-related behaviors among students in grades 9–12—United States and selected sites, 2015. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Surveillance Summaries, 65*(9), 1–202.

Kong, T. S. K. (2016). The sexual in Chinese sociology: Homosexuality studies in contemporary China. *The Sociological Review, 64*(3), 495–514. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12372.

Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Giga, N. M., Villenas, C., & Danischewski, D. J. (2016). The 2015 national school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools. *Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED574808.

Kosciw, J. G., Palmer, N. A., & Kull, R. M. (2015). Reflecting resiliency: Openness about sexual orientation and/or gender identity and its relationship to well-being and educational outcomes for LGBT students. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 55*(1–2), 167–178. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-014-9642-6.

Kosciw, J. G., Palmer, N. A., Kull, R. M., & Greytak, E. A. (2013). The effect of negative school climate on academic outcomes for LGBT youth and the role of in-school supports. *Journal of School Violence, 12*(1), 45–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2012.732546.

Kwok, D. K. (2016). School experience of Chinese sexual minority students in Hong Kong. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 13*(4), 378–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2016.1202803.

Lee, S. (1996). Cultures in psychiatric nosology: The CCMD-2-R and international classification of mental disorders. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry, 20*(4), 421–472. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00117087.

Legate, N., Ryan, R. M., & Weinstein, N. (2012). Is coming out always a "good thing"? Exploring the relations of autonomy support, outness, and wellness for lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 3*(2), 145–152. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550611411929.

Li, L., King, M. E., & Winter, S. (2009). Sexuality education in China: The conflict between reality and ideology. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 29*(4), 469–480. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188790903309066.

Liu, J. (2021, February 1). Student 'forced to drop out' after anti-discrimination speech. *Times Higher Education.* https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/student-forced-drop-out-after-anti-discrimination-speech.

Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin, 129*(5), 674–697. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.674.

Ministry of Education. (2008). *Jiaoyubu guanyu yinfa zhongxiaoxue jiankang jiaoyu zhidao gangyao de tongzhi [reflections on the guidelines for health education in primary and secondary schools]*. Ministry of Education. http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/62/info1230271712680162.htm.

Mountford, T. (2010). *The legal status and position of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the People's Republic of China*. International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission.

Moyano, N., & del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes, M. (2020). Homophobic bullying at schools: A systematic review of research, prevalence, school-related predictors and consequences. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 53*, Article 101441. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2020.101441.

Myers, W., Turanovic, J. J., Lloyd, K. M., & Pratt, T. C. (2020). The victimization of LGBTQ students at school: A meta-analysis. *Journal of School Violence, 19*(4), 421–432. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2020.1725530.

Newheiser, A.-K., & Barreto, M. (2014). Hidden costs of hiding stigma: Ironic interpersonal consequences of concealing a stigmatized identity in social interactions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 52*, 58–70. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2014.01.002.

Payne, E. C., & Smith, M. (2011). The reduction of stigma in schools: A new professional development model for empowering educators to support LGBTQ students. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 8*(2), 174–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2011.563183.

Poteat, V. P., & Espelage, D. L. (2007). Predicting psychosocial consequences of homophobic victimization in middle school students. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 27*(2), 175–191. https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431606294839.

Russell, S. T., Everett, B. G., Rosario, M., & Birkett, M. (2014). Indicators of victimization and sexual orientation among adolescents: Analyses from youth risk behavior surveys. *American Journal of Public Health, 104*(2), 255–261. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301493.

Singh, A. A. (2013). Transgender and intersex students: Supporting resilience and empowerment. In E. S. Fisher, & J. Chiasson (Eds.), *Creating safe and supportive learning environments: A guide for working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth and families* (pp. 57–72). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Smart, L., & Wegner, D. M. (1999). Covering up what can't be seen: Concealable stigma and mental control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77*(3), 474–486. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.77.3.474.

Song, Y. (2015). The sexuality education and attitudes of college students in China. *Health Education, 115*(1), 93–104. https://doi.org/10.1108/HE-01-2014-0002.

Suen, Y., & Chan, R. C. H. (2020). A nationwide cross-sectional study of 15,611 lesbian, gay and bisexual people in China: Disclosure of sexual orientation and experiences of negative treatment in health care. *International Journal for Equity in Health, 19*(1), 46. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-020-1151-7.

Suen, Y., Chan, R. C. H., & Badgett, M. V. L. (2020). The experiences of sexual and gender minorities in employment: Evidence from a large-scale survey of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in China. *The China Quarterly, 245*, 142–164. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741020000429.

Toomey, R. B., Ryan, C., Diaz, R. M., Card, N. A., & Russell, S. T. (2013). Gender-nonconforming lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth: School victimization and young adult psychosocial adjustment. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 1*(S), 71–80. https://doi.org/10.1037/2329-0382.1.S.71.

UNDP. (2018). *Legal gender recognition in China: A legal and policy review*. United Nations Development Programme. https://www.cn.undp.org/content/china/en/home/library/democratic_governance/legal-gender-recognition-in-china–a-legal-and-policy-review-.html.

UNESCO & UNFPA. (2018). *Implementation of sexuality education in middle schools in China*. UNESCO & UNFPA. https://china.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Implementation%20of%20CSE%20in%20middle%20schools%20report_final_eng.pdf.

Watson, R. J., Wheldon, C. W., & Russell, S. T. (2015). How does sexual identity disclosure impact school experiences? *Journal of LGBT Youth, 12*(4), 385–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2015.1077764.

Wei, C., & Liu, W. (2015). The association between school bullying and mental health of sexual minority students. *Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology, 23*(4), 701–705.

Wei, C., & Liu, W. (2019). Coming out in mainland China: A national survey of LGBTQ students. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 16*(2), 192–219. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2019.1565795.