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Factors Influencing Commitment: The Bisexual Husband's Perspective in Malaysian Marital Relationships

Faktor Mempengaruhi Komitmen: Perspektif Suami Biseksual dalam Hubungan Perkahwinan di Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Commitment is crucial in a marriage to ensure the longevity of the connection. Marrying a bisexual guy or another non-heterosexual spouse might provide unique challenges, particularly in a conservative country such as Malaysia. In Malaysian society, strong socio-cultural and religious forces significantly impact the commitment of married bisexual men to stay in their marriage. Is it solely a matter of commitment? This study intends to investigate the intricate factors that impact the commitment level of bisexual husbands to their marital connection. The qualitative research approach conducted interviews with 15 bisexual husbands who are currently married in great detail. The study results indicated that love, children, desire for change, religious motivation, family, and community are elements that contribute to maintaining commitment in a marriage. The research aims to enhance awareness of the issues related to commitment in marriages with bisexual husbands, offering insights that could guide culturally sensitive interventions and support systems. This study aims to progress the discussion on various sexual identities inside committed partnerships, fostering inclusion and improving the well-being of persons dealing with these dynamics in Malaysia.

Keywords: commitment; bisexual married men; marital relationship; heterosexual marriage; perspective; Malaysia; sociology

ABSTRAK

Komitmen adalah penting dalam sesebuah perkahwinan untuk memastikan jangka hayat hubungan. Berkahwin dengan salah seorang pasangan bukan heteroseksual seperti lelaki biseksual, sudah pasti menimbulkan halangan yang berbeza terutamanya dalam negara konservatif seperti Malaysia. Dalam konteks masyarakat Malaysia yang mana pengaruh sosiobudaya dan agama yang kuat sudah pasti mempengaruhi komitmen lelaki biseksual yang sudah berkahwin untuk kekal dalam perkahwinan mereka. Namun adakah ia faktor komitmen semata-mata? Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka elemen kompleks yang mempengaruhi tahap komitmen suami biseksual terhadap hubungan perkahwinan. Kajian melalui metodologi penyelidikan kualitatif telah menemui seramai 15 orang suami biseksual yang masih dalam hubungan perkahwinan secara mendalam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa elemen kasih sayang, anak-anak, keinginan untuk berubah, motivasi agama, keluarga, dan komuniti adalah elemen yang menyumbang kepada mengekalkan komitmen dalam perkahwinan. Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kesedaran tentang isu berkaitan komitmen dalam perkahwinan dengan suami biseksual, menawarkan pandangan yang boleh membimbing campur tangan dan sistem sokongan yang sensitif budaya. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memajukan perbincangan mengenai pelbagai identiti seksual dalam perkongsian yang komited, memupuk keterangan dan meningkatkan kesejahteraan orang yang berhadapan dengan dinamik ini di Malaysia.

Kata kunci: komitmen; suami biseksual; hubungan perkahwinan; perkahwinan heteroseksual; pespektif; Malaysia, sosiologi

INTRODUCTION

Commitment is a foundational element that shapes the core of marital relationships, influencing their stability, resilience, and overall success (Stanley et al. 2019; Schoebi et al., 2012). In the context of marriage, commitment is a core element that includes emotional, psychological, and behavioral aspects (Amato & DeBoer, 2001). Traditional marriages entail a commitment to preserve the partnership despite challenges, creating loyalty, trust, and mutual support between partners. It typically appears as shared duties, transparent communication, and a readiness to address obstacles together (Schoebi et al., 2012).

The exploration of commitment factors within marital relationships is a complex and nuanced endeavor, particularly when considering the unique context of mixed-orientation marriage. A mixed orientation marriage involves partners with differing sexual orientations. A mixed orientation marriage typically involves one partner being bisexual, gay, or lesbian while the other is straight (Hanis Nabihah et al., 2018). Mixed-orientation marriages, where one spouse identifies as non-heterosexual, present a complex dynamic that can significantly impact the notion of commitment within the relationship.

Challenges in these relationships may arise from cultural stigma, potential misconceptions about sexual orientation, and the necessity for detailed communication regarding desires and boundaries. In the culturally rich landscape of Malaysia, where societal norms and expectations play a significant role in shaping relationships, understanding commitment becomes paramount. This importance is magnified when delving into the specific experiences of bisexual husbands. Malaysia's cultural landscape is characterized by a delicate interplay of tradition, religion, and modernity. Exploring commitment factors specific to bisexual husbands allows for a nuanced understanding of how cultural nuances impact the formation and sustenance of marital bonds in this demographic.

Bisexuality, often subject to stigmatization, can pose unique challenges within a Malaysian cultural framework. Unraveling commitment factors within this context becomes a crucial step toward dismantling stigmas and fostering supportive environments for bisexual individuals in marital relationships (Kays et al., 2013; Hopwood et al., 2019). Bisexual husbands in Malaysia also may grapple with societal expectations that often adhere to heteronormative standards. Understanding commitment factors specific to this group sheds light on how individuals navigate the complexities of their dual sexual identity within the societal expectations of a traditional marriage.

Researching commitment factors specific to bisexual husbands contributes to the broader movement for inclusivity and diversity in relationship studies. It fosters a more comprehensive understanding of marital commitment that goes beyond conventional norms, promoting a richer and more representative discourse. The insights gained from this exploration inform the development of inclusive support systems, both within interpersonal relationships and broader societal structures. It facilitates the creation of environments that acknowledge and validate the diverse experiences of bisexual husbands in Malaysia.

DEFINITION OF BISEXUALITY

Bisexuality is considered the most contentious and least comprehended sexual orientation (Rullo et al., 2015). Bisexuality is a sexual orientation when an individual is sexually and romantically attracted to both males and females. Bisexuality can be viewed as a significant inclination towards

engaging in sexual activities in a non-traditional manner, often referred to as 'AC-DC' or 'Switch-hitter', indicating an individual who can switch between two directions (Anang Haris Himawan, 2007). Bisexuality typically exhibits fewer symptoms compared to heterosexuality and homosexuality. These two sexes can coexist in an individual who is in a heterosexual relationship while also engaging in a same-sex relationship (homosexual or lesbian). According to Robin & Hammer (2000), bisexual refers to an individual who experiences psychological, emotional, and sexual attraction to both men and women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Commitment to enduring marital partnerships in bisexual-heterosexual marriages is a multidimensional phenomenon driven by numerous circumstances. Studies indicate that the public approval of same-sex partnerships by the state, along with financial advantages and the commitment to a shared future, might have beneficial health outcomes (Carr & Springer, 2010). Bisexual men encounter significant issues in sustaining their marriages, especially in mixed-orientation marriages, which can result in anxiety and despair among gay and bisexual men (Hopwood et al., 2019). The legal and societal complexities of mixed-orientation marriages, together with the absence of legal recourse for heterosexual women, add added complications to the commitment in these relationships.

Religion and commitment intersect to influence marital satisfaction, emphasizing the need of comprehending how religious beliefs shape commitment in relationships (Zaheri et al., 2016). Furthermore, the obstacles encountered by bisexual husbands in Malaysia in sustaining their marriages highlight the necessity for government agencies to develop tactics to assist married bisexual men in overcoming their unique challenges, promoting more satisfying marital relationships (Dalin et al., 2023).

The rationales for maintaining a relationship are comparable to those observed in other couples, including the presence of a strong friendship, feelings of love, emotional connection, and commitment (Brownfain, 1985; Matteson, 1985; Buxton, 2001, 2004; Edser & Shea, 2002; Hernandez & Wilson, 2007). Several studies have contrasted the experiences of married gay guys to those of married bisexual males (Buxton, 2001, 2004; Edser & Shea, 2002; Malcolm, 2000, 2002). Research indicates that bisexual male/heterosexual female partners often have more fulfilling sexual relationships (Buxton 2001, 2004; Ross, 1971). Bisexual spouses cited love for their wives as the main reason for remaining in the relationship, whereas gay husbands identified support from friends as the most beneficial factor.

In Malaysia, societal norms and laws lead to mixed-orientation marriages being hidden as traditional heterosexual unions, showing the complex relationship between societal norms, laws, and personal experiences in such marriages (Dalin et al., 2023). Bisexual males encounter significant obstacle in sustaining their marriages, especially within mixed-orientation marriages, which can result in anxiety and depression among gay and bisexual men (Hopwood et al., 2019).

Research has highlighted the importance of marriage as a symbol of commitment when compared to non-marital cohabitation, underscoring the impact of legal and societal acknowledgment of relationships on commitment (Haas & Whitton, 2015). The link between satisfaction and commitment varies among different types of married couples, showing the intricate nature of the connection between satisfaction and commitment in marriages (Givertz et al., 2009).

Based on the literature review above, various elements such as societal attitudes, legal restraints, religious beliefs, and individual experiences influence the commitment in long-lasting bisexual-heterosexual marriages. Comprehending these intricacies is essential for creating ways to bolster and improve the satisfaction of marriage partnerships in various settings.

METHOD

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The objective of the study was to investigate the factor influencing commitment among bisexual married men in marital relationship. This study employed a qualitative methodology to acquire data and information from married bisexual men. Given the focus of this study on bisexual perspectives and experience, a qualitative method was considered the most feasible option. One of the strengths of qualitative research lies in its ability to investigate complex phenomena by considering the perspectives of individuals within their own social contexts, resulting in a comprehensive and detailed outcome (Merriam, 2002). This method allows researchers to have flexibility in interrogating the informants.

A comprehensive interview was carried out with a total of 15 self-identified bisexual husbands who are married legally to their wives (shown in Table 1). However, in this context, they are still not disclosing their bisexuality to their wives and plan to stay married for long as feasible. The participants were chosen through a snowball sampling technique. Following the initial interview with the primary informant, the researcher proceeds to introduce supplementary informants for further interviews. In instances where individuals with the desired characteristics are scarce, researchers employ the approach described by Abedsaiedi (2015). In this methodology, the present research participants are responsible for identifying prospective new volunteers based on their own achievements. The process of sampling continues until the dataset has been completely populated.

Upon receiving expressions of interest from prospective participants, I promptly dispatched an informed consent form and a questionnaire to solicit their involvement in the study. The survey instrument was developed with the purpose of gathering essential demographic information, such as age and duration of the relationship, which is commonly documented in scholarly publications. Following the acquisition of the duly completed questionnaire and the signing of an informed consent letter, I proceeded to contact the participants through email in order to arrange the initial interview. The study's findings were examined utilizing a thematic approach, in which the author organized the outcomes of the interview sessions according to predetermined themes. Each topic was specifically crafted to directly tackle the research concerns. The data were presented in a descriptive and narrative manner.

It was vital to protect people who took part in this research (Glesne, 2006). The institutional standards encompass broad ethical issues, including the provision of an informed consent document to participants, which elucidates the objectives and particulars of the study as well as any potential risks and benefits associated with their involvement. Unforeseen occurrences might give rise to particularly challenging ethical dilemmas, thereby necessitating a constant awareness of the impact of one's actions, behavior, and judgments on the other people involved in this study. The issue pertaining to the secrecy of information and the protection of the informant's identity is similarly safeguarded and treated as a subject of confidentiality. The aim of this study was to provide a comprehensive analysis of the fundamental concepts, themes, and insights obtained, despite the participants' apparent comfort and willingness to provide information regarding their interpersonal connections.

TABLE 1: Demographics of the study informants

Informant	Age (Year)	Marriage (Year)	Number of Children
1	35	7	3
2	32	6	2
3	29	5	2
4	29	6	1
5	30	6	3
6	33	8	3
7	34	7	3
8	31	5	2
9	32	5	2
10	32	6	2
11	32	5	2
12	28	6	1
13	30	5	1
14	31	5	2
15	32	6	1

RESULTS

The findings from in-depth interviews regarding the question about the factors influencing bisexual husbands' desire to maintain commitment in marriage are presented in the data analysis organized by the following themes.

LOVE THEIR WIVES

The most factor cited by bisexual husbands in this study are loving their wives. This is similar to the study by Buxton (2000, 2004) where the bisexual spouses stated that their greatest motivation for remaining in the relationship was their love for their wives. Daly (2003) stated that love is the basis of family relationship, yet family theorists hesitate to use the term love. The freedom that bisexual individuals feel in choosing intimate partners based on emotional connection rather than gender is a significant internal factor (Dyar et al., 2017).

Even they experienced attractions to people of the same gender, love can bring a strong sense of commitment to their relationship especially when they in love relationship before marriage. The shared history provides a sense of continuity and stability. For example, Informant 1 and Informant 3, contemplating the end of the marriage may disrupt the narrative of their shared life, introducing uncertainty and upheaval. The desire for stability and the comfort derived from a familiar history contribute to the reluctance to consider separation.

“You know, I love her so much. From the beginning when I knew her in high school, until now, the feeling of love for her has never changed even a little. I enjoy spending time together, sharing experience and being my biggest support system. She is everything to me. I am happy and want to live forever with her”. (Informant 1)

“There is no reason for me to leave her. We have been together for about eleven years, and my feelings of love and affection for my wife are still the same. Even I’m bisexual, my love towards her never gone. Alhamdulillah’s, after all, so far, my married life still fine” (Informant 3)

Feeling loved and loving one's partner contributes significantly to overall life satisfaction (Londero-Santos et al., 2021). For participants who married without having a love-relationship with their wives like Informant 2 and Informant 6 acknowledged that they did not feel love till were married. They said that because of the wife’s attitude and personality, they felt love, which made them want to stay in their respective marriage. The informant’s reference is attitude towards love, communication style, emotional regulation, respect and trust and so on.

“it’s true when people say love after marriage is more beautiful. I admit that it was awkward at first after marriage because we didn’t know each other very well before. But after while we became close and felt love for my wife. She cares a lot about me, be a good listener and always cooks my favourite dishes. After a long time, my love to my her increased” (Informant 2)

“To be honest, I did not expect my relationship with my wife to be close after we got married. Yes, we didn’t even know each other before, but I am grateful because I was matched with a woman who has the characteristics of a good wife. Good at cooking, taking care of children and most importantly caring. That’s why I love and want to stay with her” (Informant 6)

Informant 2 and Informant 6's experiences demonstrate how positive attitudes, effective communication, emotional regulation, respect, trust, personality traits, positive interactions, shared values, and adaptability play a crucial role in fostering love within a marriage.

CARING FOR THEIR CHILDREN

The finding also found that children as a motivation for all the participants to stay commit in marriage. Most of the participant talked about responsibility of being parent especially a father often comes with a strong commitment to provide a stable and nurturing environment for their children. Goldberg, Kinkler, Richardson, and Downing (2012) conducted a study emphasized the problems of balancing parenthood with managing a bisexual identity, and how these men worked to establish a supportive and nurturing environment for their children despite these difficulties. Based on the interview, Informant 5 and Informant 8 said:

“I feel responsible for the children, especially since they are all so young. Whatever happens, I want them with me. I don't want them to grow up without a father, even if I is no longer alive. But, as long as they are alive, I want to look after them and see that they grow up properly” (Informant 5)

“Our joint obligation as parents promotes a feeling of togetherness despite the distinct dynamics we encounter. Our dedication to our children serves as a guiding principle that impacts our decisions, communication, and the overall strength of our marital relationship. The goal is to establish an environment where our children feel loved, welcomed, and nurtured, regardless of any complications in our connection” (Informant 8)

Informant 7 and Informant 9 mentioned want to provide his children with both parent’s presence and support, believing it’s in the children best interest. According to Tornello and Patterson (2018), when one parent misses, a child’s upbringing the child is likely to feel abandoned by the absent parent, and their introspection will be affected. The children will have difficulty with social adjustment, friendship, explicit behaviour problems such as misconduct and youth crime, mental health problems and wellness problems.

“The presence of both parents is essential for children's growth. As a child who has been without his father since the age of ten, I acknowledge that I have lost my life's passion. It's painful to watch your friends having dads at that time, and

the issue of fathers was quite delicate at the time. So, when I become a parent, I don't want my children to feel the same way I had before; instead, I want to look after them till everything is successful afterwards". (Informant 7)

"I consider about their emotional well-being. I know how divorce or separation could impact their children emotionally. I think as a parent, I feel responsible for them and want to prioritize my children's need and happiness over their own desires". (Informant 9)

Bisexual husbands as fathers' dedication to their marriages while raising children is based on parental responsibility, providing stability, emotional bonds with children, positive role modelling, a long-term family perspective, a sense of legacy, family unity, and the sacrifices and efforts put into parenting. These variables together create a strong motive to remain dedicated to the marriage for the benefit of the children.

STILL HOPING TO CHANGE

The belief that marriage can help them eliminate homosexuality also influenced all participants' desires to stay married. Individuals may feel substantial pressure to adhere to heterosexual standards due to societal and cultural conventions. Bisexuality may face stigma or discrimination in certain cultures or societies. Individuals may feel compelled to adhere to these rules and evade societal scrutiny.

According to the interview, one of the elements that encouraged their marriage was the desire to become a totally heterosexual man. And, even after several years of marriage, their desire to change persists, despite hurdles, particularly in terms of attractiveness to another man like Informant 4 said during the interview:

"I choose to marry because I have intention to change to normal guys. Early after marriage, I could hold back and control myself. But I could only hold it for eight months, then I looked for a partner outside. I've tried many different ways before this, but still can't forget that thing (sex with men)" (Informant 4)

The assertion "marriage cannot change a person's sexual orientation" was refuted by the majority of the participants in this study. According to the interviews, all the participants acknowledge to being bisexual who are more interested in women than men. In addition, their attraction to males was solely sexual. Furthermore, they stated that their attraction to males changed gradually throughout their marriage. However, they claimed that changing is not as easy as they expected, but they continue to attempt despite several obstacles. For example, Informant 7 said:

"As I said before, one of the reasons I want get married is because I want to change and become a normal guy, but guess what, I have already tried my best, but you know, it's not easy to change as hoped before I got married" (Informant 7)

Beliefs can affect the willingness to remain married, causing individuals to face emotional and relational difficulties related to authenticity, self-acceptance, and cultural expectations.

INTERNAL RELIGIOUS MOTIVATION

In a diverse nation like Malaysia, where religion plays a major role, the husband's religious teachings and views can affect how he deals with his sexual orientation inside their marriage. The overlap between bisexual and religious or spiritual identities, together with the varying attitudes

towards bisexuality across different sexual orientation and gender groups, can influence the dedication and encounters of a bisexual husband in his marriage.

Within the interview, majority of the Muslim's participants cited that they feel a deep religious obligation to honour and maintain marital vows as a way fulfilling their faith's teaching. Islam places a strong emphasis on the sanctity of marriage as a sacred of contract. Informant 10 mentioned about the bsense of duty and obligation. He belief can foster a sense of duty and obligation towards their spouse and family. They feel morally bound to fulfil these responsibilities, even if they are grappling with their sexual orientation. He said:

"For me, God has entrusted me to carry out my responsibilities as a husband, so, when I get married, of course, I expect rewards and pleasure from God".

Some of the participant like Informant 8 belief in redemption. He is believing in the possibility of redemption and atonement for perceived sins or transgressions. Decision to staying in marriage might be seen as a way to seek forgiveness and spiritual forgiveness even sometimes they still into men-sex-men activity. He mentioned that:

"God made human nature live in pairs. It is complementary to life from a physical and spiritual point of view. I believe, in Islam marriage is something sacred. The purpose of marriage is to maintain dignity and ensure the relationship is maintained" (Informant 8)

Informant 1 further responded that he regards marriage as a lifelong commitment that bought to endure forever. The significance of carrying out his right and obligation as a husband and parent in their marriage is mentioned below:

"I always remind myself that I want to get married so that it last forever. For me, marriage is a lifelong commitment. We marry someone and we hope our relationship lasts forever" (Informant 1)

Overall, the participants feel a strong religious duty to uphold and respect marital vows due to the Islamic belief that marriage is a holy agreement. Their dedication is consistent with the overarching Islamic principles on family, morality, loyalty, and the significance of carrying out religious obligations within the institution of marriage. The participants probably view their dedication to marriage as a fundamental aspect of their faith and a way to adhere to Islamic ideals.

UPHOLD FAMILY HONOUR

Majority of the informant cited that family honour also influenced them to stay commit in their marriage. Malaysian society had strong Eastern values, particularly in certain cultural contexts where family reputation, social standing, and collective identity are highly valued (New Straits Times, 2023). This concept is often prevalent in collectivist cultures where individual actions are closely tied to the reputation and status of the family as a whole.

Since there are arranged marriages by their family which is Informant 6, the decision to end a marriage might be viewed as a failure of the family's judgement and matchmaking process. He said he feel compelled to stay in the marriage to uphold the family's choice. Staying in the marriage might be seen as a way to avoid open conflict and protect the appearance of harmonious family. He mentioned:

"My wife is the daughter of my father's close friend. I need to stay because want to take care of the relationship between both parties. I don't want if I leave my wife, my father's relationship with his friends will be strained. So, because I respect my father, I have to take care of our relationship as well".

In contrast to informant 2, keeping family honour is motivated by the family's standing and clout in the community. According to informant 2, he wanted to preserve the honour of his family since his father, a respected village called a 'imam' had a lot of sway with the community. He continued by saying that he feels compelled, and his decision is to avoid bringing perceived shame or dishonour to the family especially his father.

"As the child of a well-known family, I don't want to do anything that will harm their reputation." Furthermore, the image of the father, the village priest, must be such that people expect his children to conduct appropriately and in the manner of their father".

Ultimately, the choice to remain in an arranged marriage, even in the face of difficulties, may be driven by a commitment to family honour, cultural norms, loyalty to family authorities, conflict avoidance, cultural taboos, sacrificial values, and the preservation of a positive family reputation. These elements together add to the intricacy of decision-making in the context of arranged marriages.

AVOIDING SOCIAL STIGMA

Society frequently stigmatizes bisexuality²⁰ which can profoundly affect the lives of bisexual individuals, including their relationships and mental well-being. Studies indicate that bisexual individuals experience more stigma than their lesbian and homosexual counterparts (Balsam & Mohr, 2007). This stigma can impact their choices regarding revealing their sexual orientation, as well as their internalized stigma and emotional responses to being part of the sexual minority community (Herek et al., 2009).

In Malaysia, societal norms and expectations around marriage and family life can create pressure to conform to traditional standards. Individuals, including bisexual married men, fear being stigmatized or judged if they deviate from these expectations. Staying in a committed marriage may be seen as a way to maintain stability and social acceptance. This phenomenon is often driven by the fear of perceived discrimination and the desire to maintain heterosexual privilege (Matsick & Rubin, 2018).

"I'm paralyzed by the worry of how my wife, family, and even friends will react if they find out I am bisexual. The threat of prejudice is extremely real, and that fear has a direct impact on how open I can be about my identity."

"Bisexuality is widely misunderstood. The worry stems not just from discrimination, but also from dealing with misinformation. I'm worried that others may make assumptions or hold misconceptions about what it means to be a married bisexual man."

Another concern is the social humiliation of leaving or divorcing their spouse. Divorce is generally condemned among society, not just from a religious standpoint, but also from a cultural standpoint (Kadir, 2021). Divorce has been perceived negatively throughout history for a variety of cultural and familial reasons, frequently as a broken promise, a betrayal of one's commitment, irresponsible, or a breach of religious beliefs and community standards. During the interview, Informant 4 mentioned that:

"I'm worried about what people say later if I left or divorce my wife, especially the people closet to me. If there is a reasonable reason, maybe people can understand, but if it's like suddenly, people around you will surely blame the man as well" (Informant 4)

Informant 4's reference to the social embarrassment linked to divorce probably mirrors these wider societal beliefs. Fear of being perceived as irresponsible, a promise-breaker, or failing in commitments can strongly drive individuals to overcome issues in a marriage rather than risk the social repercussions of divorce.

DISCUSSION

This study examines the factors influencing the commitment of bisexual husbands to remain in their marriages. It suggests that these decisions are predominantly driven by internal motivations originating from within the individual rather than external factors related to the context in which they find themselves. Previous research has found that most bisexual-heterosexual couples cite internal motivations, such as strong friendships, love, emotional connections, and a commitment to their spouse and family, as reasons for staying in their marriages, regardless of their initial motivations for entering them (Brownfain, 1985; Matteson, 1985; Buxton, 2001, 2004; Edser & Shea, 2002; Hernandez & Wilson, 2007).

The prevalence of love being mentioned by the majority of participants is not unexpected. Buss et al. (2001) conducted a study that observed the increasing significance of love as a defining factor in a successful marriage. Previous research on bisexual-heterosexual couples, such as the study by Edser & Shea (2002), found that bisexual men were motivated to remain in their marriages due to their respect and love for their wives as friends. Over time, they developed a deeper love for their wives and desired to spend their lives together while also being mindful of their promises and commitments. In the present study, the vast majority of bisexual husbands expressed how their initial attraction and reasons for staying in the marriage revolved around love and emotional connection. A strong emotional bond and genuine love for their wives can serve as powerful motivators to navigate and sustain the marriage.

In addition to receiving rewards, a significant proportion of the participants identified various barriers that contributed to the preservation of their marriages. The most frequently mentioned barrier, as reported by the majority of participants, is the decision to remain in the marriage for the well-being of their children. This choice is primarily motivated by the strong emotional bond that children form with their parents, particularly in the case of marriages involving individuals who identify as bisexual. Furthermore, children tend to flourish in stable and consistent environments, and remaining in a marriage can offer a sense of stability and routine that positively impacts their emotional and psychological growth. (Buxton, 2001).

The study revealed that religious motivations were frequently cited by bisexual husbands. This finding indicates that despite their bisexuality, these individuals prioritize their religious obligations in order to maintain their relationships with their wives. Additionally, the study demonstrated that these husbands possess a genuine awareness of the expectations placed upon them as spouses and fathers, and they willingly accept the corresponding responsibilities. Similar to heterosexual individuals, bisexual husbands exhibit a wide range of perspectives and approaches to their roles within a marriage as parents. The qualities associated with being a good husband and father, such as effective communication, emotional support, shared responsibilities, and the cultivation of a loving and nurturing environment for their spouse and children, are not contingent upon sexual orientation. Instead, their upbringing, values, beliefs, and level of relationship effort all have an impact on them.

The present study acknowledges the existence of retention factors that differ from previous research and can be attributed to the prevailing conservative cultural and religious norms in Malaysia, a predominantly Muslim country. These norms may contribute to the limited acceptance of bisexuality, potentially resulting in societal pressures to conform to heterosexual marriage.

Within the context of this study, it is observed that bisexual husbands express a desire to remain in their respective marriages as a means to conceal their homosexual inclinations, which persist in extramarital encounters. These individuals, who primarily seek sexual fulfillment without establishing genuine emotional connections with their same-sex partners, maintain the belief that their homosexual tendencies can be eradicated through marriage.

In Western scholarly literature, the term "outside support" is commonly used to denote the encouragement provided by friends, family members, counselors, or therapists to mixed-orientation couples. It has been observed that online support groups play a crucial role in assisting such couples, as they offer a platform for seeking guidance, support, encouragement, and a sense of community from individuals and couples facing similar circumstances. However, within the scope of this study, it is emphasized that bisexual husbands are expected to remain in their marriages in order to uphold the family's integrity and avoid societal stigmatization, which often portrays them as unreliable individuals or husbands who abandon their wives and children without apparent justification.

In comparison, a smaller proportion of husbands identifying as bisexual, in relation to their spouses, reported encountering challenges that complicated their marital relationships. Their inclination towards engaging in homosexual activities was indicative of underlying emotions and internal conflicts they experienced as they grappled with the tension between these desires and their commitment to maintaining enduring marriages. However, the availability of support networks and resources for LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly those identifying as bisexual, in Malaysia is limited due to cultural and legal constraints. Consequently, bisexual husbands may encounter difficulties in accessing the necessary expertise to navigate and resolve their internal struggles.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the decision of a bisexual husband to stay committed in a marriage is primarily influenced by a complex interplay of personal values, emotional bonds, cultural factors and familial expectations. Despite experiencing ongoing attraction towards men, individuals often have a significant inclination to remain committed to their marital relationship. Nevertheless, the endeavor of upholding one's sexual identity remains arduous, necessitating an ongoing effort, even if individuals are compelled to conceal their authentic orientation. Despite encountering significant challenges, the positive impacts of enhancing factors on the likelihood of a lasting marriage for bisexual husbands are disproportionately inclined towards the attainment of their goals.

It is desirable for governmental bodies responsible for supporting families, such as the Department of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development, to develop initiatives that assist individuals in non-heterosexual partnerships in Malaysia in navigating their unique challenges. By doing so, these agencies can contribute to the improvement of marital relationships by fostering understanding and ensuring the longevity and contentment of such unions. Furthermore, it is important for society to cultivate a more inclusive and accepting environment that acknowledges and respects diverse sexual orientations.

This study examines the experiences of bisexual males who are married to heterosexual women, representing a recent contribution to the existing body of research in this area. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within these marriages, it is recommended that future studies include the perspectives of both spouses. It is imperative for future researchers, particularly in the field of social science, to further investigate these matters, as it can enhance

understanding, contribute to existing knowledge, and inform strategies for addressing similar occurrences in the future.

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