

Original Research Article

Sexual Minorities - Men who have Sex with Men¹, Transgender² and Lesbian³ Women in Côte d'Ivoire: Between Life Paths and Hesitations in the Process of Constructing Gender Identity

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Abstract: The construction and acceptance of the identity or sexual orientation of sexual minorities by society and the individual are realities that are constantly in crisis. This reality is all the more perceptible in societies where minorities are strongly discriminated against as a result of certain social considerations. In Côte d'Ivoire, the legal vacuum on the issue of sexual minorities leaves them prey to practices that are sometimes demeaning to certain members of the community. This article provides an insight into the lives of some of Côte d'Ivoire's sexual minorities (MSM, TG and Lesbian) and the hesitations that mark the construction of their gender identity. Based on a qualitative approach with four (04) leaders of the LGBTQ+ community on the one hand, and referring to social identity theory on the other, it emerges that the construction process is discontinuous or disjointed due to hesitations created by internal and external factors. Internally, the individual's decisions or choices help to create hesitations or set up these situations. From an external point of view, the family or social context and certain discriminatory behaviours with regard to the sexual orientation of individuals have a strong influence on the acceptance and definition of a gender identity within this category of the population.

Keywords: Sexual minority, identity, hesitations, construction.

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INTRODUCTION

The wave of homosexual movements around the world in recent decades has highlighted this reality in the dynamics of societies. These movements have increased the visibility of LGT (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender) sexual minorities to a great extent in the countries of the North and to a lesser extent in the countries of the South. Indeed, the African landscape is showing notable progress on the issue of human rights in relation to this category of the population, but there is still some resistance here and there to the recognition of LGTs. Despite the removal of homosexuality from the list of mental disorders by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1971, this sexual orientation is fiercely opposed by some African countries and communities because, as Giami (1999), quoted by Poyraz S and Olry L (2016), points out, heterosexuality appears to be the most widespread and dominant form of sexual activity in the social world. Like most African countries, Côte d'Ivoire's population includes sexual minorities (MS).

It should be noted that in Côte d'Ivoire, the legal arsenal remains silent on the question of sexual minorities, and this de facto exposes this category of the population to all sorts of discriminatory behaviour and marginalisation. This situation is due to the fact that these sexual minorities carry a stigma that is socially disqualifying because it differs from the usual norms in terms of sexuality (Goffman, 1975). This legal vacuum exposes sexual minorities to abuse, social rejection and homophobia. In reality, this hostile reaction from part of Ivorian society towards LGTs creates a problem of socialisation or integration for these people in the community in general, where heterosexuality is the norm in terms of sexuality. This behaviour confirms Yep's (2003) definitional approach to heterosexuality when he says that "it is an ideological system that denies, denigrates and stigmatises all non-heterosexual forms, behaviours and communities associated with them". Society's reaction to the gender identity of these people and the hegemonic discourse of heterosexuality sometimes puts LGTs in a confused situation regarding

the acceptance and construction of their gender identity in an LGBT+phobic society.

Faced with this situation, an essential question emerges, namely: how are the different articulations in the process of constructing the gender identity of LGT minorities in Côte d'Ivoire structured? In order to shed light on this reality, whose manifestations are many and varied, we will carry out this investigation by exploring the life paths of certain leaders (04 people) of sexual minorities in order to understand the factors that explain this discontinuous or disjointed construction of gender identity by determining the factors internal and external to the individual that contribute to the acceptance or concealment of gender identity. As part of an explanatory and theoretical approach, our aim in presenting this article is to use a qualitative study, based on social identity theory, to understand the life paths of LGTs in the process of constructing and accepting their gender identity, which is marked by hesitation and doubt influenced by a number of contexts and social interactions.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative study with a comprehensive aim, the research methodology on the life course and hesitations in the process of constructing the identity of sexual minorities was built around three (03) essential phases, namely data collection, data processing and information analysis. In the social sciences, several techniques are used to collect data, including observation, interviews and focus groups. In the context of this study, interviews were used in general, and semi-structured interviews in particular, to gather data on the life course and the various articulations (phases in the construction of identity) and hesitations in the process of constructing the identity of gays, lesbians and transgendered people. In order to take into account certain social realities of the people concerned by the study, a guide was sent out to enable observations to be made. This guide was amended by the target groups via a pre-test of previously known leaders of sexual minorities. This process helped to improve the information-gathering tool.

Respondents were recruited using the snowball technique. This consisted of recruiting a leader, in charge of an identity-based organisation, with connections within the various target groups. The leader was asked to invite one person from each type of target population for this study. The same instructions were also recommended to each individual in order to eventually build up our sample. From this process we

built up a base of seventeen (17) people to interview, distributed as follows Eleven (11) MSM, Five (05) TG and Two (02) LB. Of these, only 04 people actually agreed to take part in the survey, namely: 02 MSM, 01 FSW and 01 LB.

Data processing

Following the example of the data collection methodology, three (03) steps were taken in processing the data: transcription, data analysis and drawing up a summary table of the data collected. Transcription consisted of translating the participants' audio accounts into raw text. After this stage, the second involved processing the texts by grouping them into themes and extracting verbatims. It began with a review of the 04 transcribed documents. This work made it possible to identify, on the basis of the relevance of the answers given to the questions, two (02) MSM, one (01) TG and one (01) LB, i.e. four (04) audio files used. The rest of the process then continued on this basis. The themes that emerged from the 04 verbatims were grouped together on the basis of the transcripts. This produced a summary of the data. From these different categories, we produced a summary table of the data collected by theme. This was used to analyse the data in order to produce relevant information for analysis.

Data analysis

This is the third phase of the methodology. It is based on the work carried out previously. The analysis of the information has the merit of producing information related to the research question. To do this, the content of the verbatims from the semi-structured interviews is analysed. Thus, the analysis will have established the truth that the process of constructing gender identity is not a linear path. It is not a natural given. This construction is impacted by both endogenous and exogenous factors.

RESULTS

The results of our study will be structured in three main parts, including the process of discovering the gender identity of the individual LGT; the influence of the social context on the construction of gender; and the relationship between social perception and practice on the sexual orientation of the LGT identified.

Discovering the gender identity of lgt *Socio-demographic profile of LGTs*

Characteristics such as function, level of education, gender identity and the age at which the identity is perceived are the aspects that this section will focus on in what follows.

Table 1: Profile of the LGTs surveyed

Code	Function	Level of study	Gender identity	Age of perceived identity
HKA	Community councillor (private)	Secondary (6ème to Terminale)	Gay	7 years old
BZ	Director (private sector)	Secondary (6ème to Terminale)	Gay	7 years old
NK	Private sector	Secondary (6ème to Terminale)	Lesbian	8 years old
GM	Beautician hairdresser	Higher education (University)	Transgenre	8 years old

The three categories of sexual minorities became aware of their gender identity before the age of adolescence, as shown in table 1 above. On this subject, GM, a trans-female, aged 43, replied that "from a very young age (07) I knew I was different". By "different" he was already showing that he had identified his sexual orientation, which he considered to be "different". In addition, all the LGTs interviewed were private-sector workers, and three of them had at least secondary education, except for one (0) who had a university degree.

Assumed gender identity: the paradox of self-affirmation

Tajfel (1978) defines social identity as that part of the self-concept that individuals derive from their membership of a social group, together with the value and emotional significance of that membership. For the LGT respondents, this identity is part of the cognitive dimension of social identity. Here, these individuals identified at a very young age with a category of social group, the LGBTQ+ community. HAK, a gay man aged 34, puts it this way: "I'm gay and I'm fully aware of it", while GM's reaction shows that these people initially assume their gender identity without questioning their sexual orientation: "I've never doubted my identity".

In fact, the self-affirmation of the people surveyed is nevertheless accompanied by 'regret' due to the absence of a space for the free expression of this identity. The paradox that arises from this situation is also expressed by the LGBTQ+ members surveyed. This situation of discomfort is expressed here in the following half-spoken words by the respondents:

For GM, she translates this discomfort as "I am a transgender woman but it has to be said that transidentity is badly perceived by society". In fact, she goes on to say that it is societal practices and considerations that justify this double language among the LGBTQ+ community: "We live in an African society that is still inky in its habits and customs, so it is difficult for it to understand transgender people"

As for HAK, he expresses his powerlessness by saying "I'm gay and I've come to terms with it. But it's not easy at all". The vulnerability of LGBTQ+ people is also highlighted by certain individuals, whose comments show the extent to which their gender identity exposes them to all sorts of arbitrary decisions. This arbitrary attitude on the part of "society" is reflected in the words of ZBO, a gay man aged 52,

when he states that it is "difficult to live in such a society where laws are voted in at the drop of a hat to condemn us, to kill us". Let's just say that this cognitive dimension of social identity translates into self-categorisation within a group and is a determining factor in individual behaviour, in this case that of LGTs.

Social and gender identity: identities called into question

The construction of an individual's identity also incorporates an evaluative dimension insofar as the individual will have to compare his or her social group or LGBTQ+ community with the social groups with which his or her community will have to trade socially. In order to take this social reality into account, Jordan, D and Herman, G (2005), citing (Lorenzi-Cioldi/Doise, 1994), present this situation by saying that :

"Social groups are not devoid of judgements, but are associated with positive or negative connotations. These evaluations, which tend to be shared socially, either within or between groups, colour the social identity with a positive or negative valence. This evaluative dimension, known as collective self-esteem (Luhtanen/Crocker, 1991), is defined as the social value given to the group to which one belongs. Here the individual is not comparing himself to another individual, he is comparing his group to other groups".

For these LGTs¹, self-categorisation will de facto include them in a community within society, which is the yardstick against which they must evaluate their group. This process of evaluation of the group by members of sexual minorities is based on practices that are common in society in general. In the case of our study, material elements and fundamental rights seem to be taken away from members of the LGBTQ+ community. This sad reality can be seen in the words of BL, a 28-year-old lesbian GM. In fact, BL believes that :

"Our realities as sexual minorities are not taken into account in a number of areas, health, education, law, etc.", and for GM, he goes on to say "I have never doubted my identity, but the only problem is that I can't get administrative documents drawn up in line with my borrowed gender".

Although these reactions from the respondents reflect a lack of well-being in the exercise of these people's basic rights, they also place at the centre of the

¹LGTs stands for Lesbians-Gays-Transgenres in plural form

process of socialisation of the individual as a sexual minority, the evaluative dimension in the construction of social identity. Here, the problem, which in our view is structural, is the growing sense of injustice experienced by members of the community, particularly LGBTQ+ members.

Difficult self-categorisation of MSM and Transgender people

An individual's socialisation involves accepting and becoming aware of his or her personal identity. In this case, it is a matter of reconciling the identity the individual has assumed with the identity he or she desires. For the respondents, there is a real confusion in the understanding of this reality and the following comments are a perfect illustration of this. For HAK:

"When I was very small, I played a lot with girls. I liked cooking and stuff. Even with my boy friends, I always took on the role of the woman and it was when I grew up that I discovered my sexual orientation. I was attracted to men of the same sex as me".

GM agrees, "I remember always telling my mum to put me in dresses instead of knickers. And I always felt bad when people treated me like a man". In reality, for these people, their gender identity is confused with their social behaviour, which for them reveals their sexual orientation. This confusion in the definition of gender identity or sexual orientation among these players is linked not only to the type of perceptions that society or the community to which they belong has of non-heterosexual people, but also to the various questions that the individual is subjected to during adolescence about the morphological changes at work in the process of construction and transition from adolescent to adult.

Sexual orientation: revealed by sexual experience

Some people's awareness of their sexual minority status is endorsed by their sexual experience. The reactions of some respondents indicate that the act of sexual intercourse is an element in the acceptance of their gender identity. ZBO, for example, justifies this in the following statement:

"It was early evening in the pouring rain when we were playing... As if by telepathy, a mate and I felt mutually attracted. We flirted and the rest took its natural course".

Here, we note that it is the sexual act that allows the individual to "discover" and "accept" himself as such. This situation is also shared by BL: "This discovery was made in the most natural way possible. Very early on, I felt that I was attracted to women and that I took pleasure in touching a woman". It's easy to see why these individuals accept themselves through sexual intercourse. They are therefore the process by which LGBTQ+ communities legitimise their gender identity as part of the sexual minority.

SOCIAL CONTEXT AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IDENTITY

One of the processes by which individuals are socialised in society is through interaction with other players in the social environment. This socialisation also enables individuals to construct their real or virtual social identity. Socialisation methods such as interaction, imitation and injunction certainly play a role in the identity-building process.

So we can deduce that different contexts and social groups play a part in the construction of the individual in one way or another. This is all the more evident when we see that sexual minorities also integrate these considerations into the process of constructing their gender identity.

Heteronormative environment: source of temporary rejection of gender identity

The family and professional environments are areas where individuals are socialised and play an active role in the construction of their identity. Indeed, as Reingardé (2010, cited by Olry Isabelle and Poyraz Sahin, 2016) points out when discussing heteronormativity, the dominant discourse of heterosexuality in organisations puts the discourse of the 'homosexual' dominated under control in order to silence or eliminate them, giving them only limited legitimacy and protection. We note that in an environment strongly marked by heterosexual behaviour, there will be a negative impact on the process of constructing identity or acceptance of an individual's sexual orientation. In this respect, our study demonstrates this to some extent through ZBO, who believes that:

"I asked myself a thousand and one questions about why I was different. Immediately, I didn't accept this orientation because it was frowned upon by the family and the community; and so I curled up on myself and did everything so that no one would suspect my sexuality".

In the same vein, the following comments by BL bear witness to this reality:

"Initially, I did everything I could to be like the people around me. I tried relationships with men; and I even got married with children. But the more time went by, the more I couldn't stand being touched by a man. So I had to accept who I am and live my life and my sexuality to the full. Now I live a fulfilled life with my sweetheart".

The behaviour of members of this social minority is linked to the social control of heterosexuality, which acts as a mechanism for verifying the conformity of the norms and values upheld by those who defend this sexual orientation. For some respondents, then, it is the strategy of pretense (William & Dispenza, 2009) that is employed to make people believe that they are heterosexual, and BL's case

corroborates our argument in that she went to the wedding to conceal her gender identity and orientation. The 'game' strategy proposed by William & Dispenza (op. cit) was also used by BL to avoid having her sexual orientation revealed by having a heterosexual relationship in public to prove her preference for men of the opposite sex. For GM it was more a strategy of "implicit disclosure" in that he neither disclosed nor lied about his sexual orientation and his following response clearly demonstrates this:

"I didn't have any particular reaction, but it was more the people around me who didn't understand me when I said I was a woman. Otherwise, even as a child, I was a woman in my mind".

In reality, for these populations, this strategy not only helps to "protect" the individual from the negative representations of their community of origin, but is also a means of "living" their sexual orientation and gender identity to the full.

DISCLOSURE OF LGTS' GENDER IDENTITY: A COMMUNITY-ORIENTED APPROACH

We would point out that, unlike stigmatised people, sexual orientation is not necessarily visible or observable. As a result, the people affected by this state of affairs are 'responsible' for disclosing or concealing their gender identity from others, whether they want to or not. The respondents in our study chose the option of disclosing their identity, but only to one category of the population, i.e. their peers. Thus, the issue of disclosure to members of their community is a strategy for these individuals to not only escape the gaze of society as a whole, but also a means of recreating a homogenous group in which their gender identity is not labelled. The following statement by ZBO clearly reflects this reality: *"What encouraged me to share my sexual orientation with friends was the fact that we were all of the same sexual orientation, so it was a good fit. Otherwise, I could never share my sexuality with someone who wasn't from our community".*

For the LGTs surveyed, sharing their sexual orientation or gender identity has a dual function: on the one hand, it is a safety issue and, on the other, it has an emotional function for these individuals. For these individuals, disclosing their orientation in the community of their peers enables them to protect themselves from the homophobia to which they are sometimes subjected. Moreover, the choice of the community as a social space for disclosure is also a strategy for them; to benefit from the empathy and emotional protection of the members of the group. HAK's intervention justifies this in the following terms: *"Given that I had people with whom I found myself in the same situation (sexual minority) as I was, this comforted me somehow and enabled me to say that I am not ill". "Coming out", the term used for announcing one's sexual orientation to the community, is also a way for individuals to (re)take their place in the community,*

by officially claiming to belong to a group that recognises them as full members."

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE AS A MEANS OF CONFIRMING GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

In the process of constructing the gender identity of LGTs, family social contexts being sometimes hostile or strongly heterosexualist, individuals tend to check the conformity of their feelings and their gender identity. For these sexual minorities, it is the "first" sexual encounter that enables them to check the consistency between their feelings and their gender identity. HAK justifies this situation by saying:

"I felt liberated after my first sexual encounter with my first partner. That's when I said to myself that yes, I'm different and it's not the end of the world. I just have to live my sexuality, but I had to hide to be able to live my sexuality in peace".

We also note that it is sexual practice that allows the individual to identify as a homosexual, as he was confused about his identity. The following words from ZBO easily convey this situation:

"Both good and bad. Good to have discovered another part of myself. But bad in the sense that this practice was (and still is) considered an abomination, an unnatural sexuality... And that really saddened me".

Sexual practice among sexual minorities is therefore a strategy for self-realisation and self-discovery through sexual orientation and gender identity.

INTRA-GROUP DISCLOSURE OF LGT GENDER IDENTITY

The tension between conformity and deviance among Lesbians, Gays and Transgenders in a highly heterosexual Ivorian society leads these people to adopt sometimes contradictory behaviour with regard to the recognition and acceptance of their gender or sexual identity. Far from wanting to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity, homosexuals "disclose" within the group, i.e. share their identity in an environment that is favourable to them. To cope with this denial of recognition by society (Bajoit, 1999), LGTs disclose their identities to their various peers. The following comments are perfect illustrations of this strategy. For HAK:

"At first I had no one to share this situation with. I didn't know anyone like me and I was very scared too. But little by little, as I got older, I started to meet friends of the same sexuality as me and we started to share our experiences and situations".

In the same vein, ZBO replies to say that I have informed "gay and even heterosexual friends...", not forgetting GM, who agrees with ZBO that "the first person I shared this with was a gay friend".

However, BL is the only exception in the strategy of disclosing his gender identity and orientation by sharing the information with people in his non-immediate space. For example: "At first, it was just my cousin. But over time, my friends and colleagues. I only share it with people who are close to me, except my parents. I don't see the point in sharing it with anyone else."

At this level, individuals adopt several strategies when it comes to disclosing their homosexual identity: for some of those 'close' to her, she adopts a strategy of displaying and asserting her homosexual identity, while for her 'parents', it's clandestine (Dubar, 2000; quoted by Laura Mellini, 2009). This reaction is linked to the negative social representation of homosexuality or transidentity in the individual's community of origin. It also reflects a security issue for the transgender person in the identity-building process. This is perceptible in ZBO when he highlights the protection and comfort he receives from his peers: "because I had people with whom I was in the same situation (same sexual identity) as I was, and that comforted me somehow". So, for him, sharing or disclosing his sexual orientation within his community is less risky than within the family, where hostility to this orientation is certainly visible.

SOCIAL PERCEPTION AND PRACTICE OF SEXUAL MINORITY ORIENTATION

LGTs a highly stigmatised community: When the actors are in the immediate space
The LGBTQ+ community is one of the most discriminated against in Sub-Saharan Africa, despite the wind of protest and the demand for rights for the various sexual minorities. Côte d'Ivoire is also plagued by gender-based discrimination and violence, with homophobic acts perpetrated here and there and perpetrators not prosecuted or convicted. The social links between these perpetrators and the victims are generally not established, but for some of our respondents not only are the actors known, but the types of links are known. For example, according to HAK, two types of actors adopt discriminatory behaviours towards him and these individuals are from his family sphere, in this case his brothers and, further on, his friends:

"In my environment, I have brothers who make negative comments about my behaviour, and friends who are not from my LGBT community who make negative comments about my orientation. In my professional environment, the pharmacist made negative comments about my sexual orientation".

For these people, homosexual sexual orientation is a stigma, even though it is invisible and has no place in a highly heteronormative society. The comments of the other respondents confirmed this reality, which people have to face up to, and which undermines the self-esteem of people who are

discriminated against or socially rejected. ZBO and MG add that they are victims of homophobic behaviour from "close relatives, friends, colleagues, religious leaders..." according to ZBO and "certain members of my family" as MG explains. Homophobic behaviour reflects these people's reticence and hostility towards homosexuality, despite the high profile it has gained in recent years (Broqua and Busscher, 2003).

HESITATIONS AND DOUBTS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GENDER IDENTITY OF LGTS

The negative and discriminatory social representations to which sexual minorities are subjected, reflected in inappropriate and sometimes violent behaviour, lead them to adopt two attitudes to guard against the consequences. Given that heterosexuality is considered by the majority of individuals in Ivorian society, acceptance or admission of another category seems difficult. Faced with this situation, LGBTQ+ people are left with hesitations and doubts in the process of constructing their gender and sexual identity. Thus, the process of socialisation of the LGBTQ+ individual cannot be linear as it is sometimes discontinuous and disjointed depending on the case. However, we assume that the construction of identity is rooted in the social interactions of individuals but also in one of the most important centres of socialisation. In reality, hesitation is a difficult time for individuals of homosexual orientation in the process of constructing their identity, as HAK admits: *"In the beginning, it really wasn't easy because I didn't accept myself, but with time I accepted myself as an MSM"*. This denial of his gender identity is the result of the anti-social behaviour of members of the social spaces he frequents.

MG goes on to say that:

"He goes on to justify this behaviour by saying, "If we can't share it with everyone, it's because the country's socio-cultural context doesn't allow it. Also, the law has not yet ruled on the case of transgender people. In a word, for our own safety..."

On this subject, Bajoit (1999) considers that, in view of the tension that arises between "two poles" of identity, "the subject who is disowned by others seeks to change his relationship with himself, to adapt his desired identity", and this is the effect of the doubt engendered by the denial of recognition to which he is subjected by society.

ACCEPTANCE OF IDENTITY BUT NOT ACCEPTANCE IN SOCIETY

For the sexual minorities surveyed, the multiple and shifting nature of the individual's social identities is part of a strategy to avoid being recognised by society as behaving in a deviant manner. For example, as BL points out, having heterosexual relations, or being in a couple with a heterosexual partner and children, enables them to construct a dual

identity, i.e. one that is assigned and one that is desired. This strategy manifests itself on two levels: on the one hand, it involves taking breaks and denying one's sexual orientation by building relationships with heterosexual people according to social tension (making a child for the mother), and on the other, rejecting one's identity for a certain period of time because of family pressure or the desire to comply with certain ad hoc requirements. MG agrees when he says that "It doesn't affect me as such. But it does sometimes lead some people to deny their identity or lose their self-esteem and go underground".

ZBO's reaction corroborates the strategy of "temporary denial" of his gender identity when he says: "My mum used to nag me about her grandson, so I got together with a girl for 02 years to please her, because my father died when I was a child, so I had to please him and I did".

This shows that the gender identity of the people surveyed is not static, but adapts to social contexts and incorporates the collective identities of the social environment in the identity construction process. The highly heteronormative social context also influences this attitude in the construction of the identity of sexual minorities in Côte d'Ivoire, insofar as although no law or regulation formally authorises homosexuality, society nonetheless has a less than tolerant attitude towards sexual minorities. Faced with this reality, it would appear that this leeway, i.e. concealing one's identity, makes it possible, among other things, to have amorous, friendly or social experiences with other homosexuals, but without anyone knowing, as these experiences remain essentially in the private domain. In fact, some young people will do anything to keep this aspect of their intimacy private (Tremblay, 2010).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The visibility of the social movement of the LGBTQ+ community over recent decades has been a real success. Despite the dynamic that these movements have brought to the fight for the rights of this section of the population, it should be noted that members of this community are still not "accepted" by all societies and all countries, and this is the case in Côte d'Ivoire. Indeed, Côte d'Ivoire has no legislation criminalising or not criminalising homosexual sexual orientation or gender identity. The silence of the Ivorian legal arsenal on this subject gives free rein to all kinds of practices that are sometimes demeaning to LGBTQ+ people. Members of this community confronted with this reality adopt behaviours depending on the situation in the process of constructing their gender or sexual identity.

The interviews conducted with four (04) members of sexual minorities (01 lesbian; 01 transgender and 02 men who have sex with men "MSM") teach us about the process of discovering one's

gender identity in Côte d'Ivoire, the relationship between the social context and the construction of the individual's identity and not forgetting the sometimes negative implication of social perceptions and practices on the discontinuous or disjointed process of constructing their gender identity and sexual orientation. In the process of constructing gender identity, the discovery of gender identity among the sexual minorities LGTs surveyed is a crucial stage in a society. Like the results of the study by (Tremblay, 2010), which show that gender identity is discovered at a fairly early age, our results also reveal this tendency among the LGTs surveyed, who sometimes identify as minorities from the age of eight (08), particularly in 'early childhood' (Tremblay, op. cit).

However, the process of constructing gender identity among the LGT minorities studied shows that social contexts, whether internal or external, shape the behaviour of individuals. For the people surveyed, the social contexts in which they evolve structure their behaviour in the process of constructing their gender identity or sexual orientation, resulting in hesitations or doubts and/or discontinuity or disjointedness. Most of the time, these situations are the result of reactions from the individual's immediate environment, in particular the legal context of minority protection, the socio-cultural context and, above all, society's social representation of homosexuality.

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