

# SELF DETERMINATION AND REALIZATION OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION AMONG ELDERLY FILIPINO GAY MEN

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## ABSTRACT

Self-determination results from subjective experiences that match one's behavior based on goals and values essential in reaching psychological growth, well-being, and actualization of full potentials. (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Conducting this study aimed to investigate how elderly Filipino gay males underwent the process of self-actualization despite challenges as part of a marginalized and stigmatized group by inviting 40 elderly gay males to participate in this study. From this initial selection, 30 among them consented while data from 20 elderly Filipino gay males were considered to be applied and integrated to fit this study's chosen theory. Encoded data applied through Straussian Grounded Theory analysis allowed the researchers to conceptualize self-actualization stages among elderly gay males through the process of Daunting, Driving, and Discovering. The researchers called this model ROSA, Realization of Self-Actualization. This model showed that despite their experiences to disempowerment, they still got to self-actualize through the process called ROSA.

**Keywords:** Self-determination, LGBT, Self-Actualization, Psychological Growth.

Maslow's self-actualization theory is widely used to focus on studying and identifying psychological well-being from achieving full and unique potential [1]. However, current research showed the importance of integrating culture to create variations of the actualized self and achieve potentials. According to Park & Peterson [2], Maslow's theory and the person's background, including the culture and other influences, must be integrated to understand human motivation, especially self-actualization.

Other than the concept of full-potentials, self-actualization also refers to an act in ways centered on others' social interests [3], a prosocial construct similar to Adler's concept of social interest [4]. When applied to a marginalized, oppressed, and stigmatized group such as LGBT people, pursuing self-actualization combined with prosocial behavior is very challenging due to little and available opportunities and even work discrimination and negative stereotypes [5] [6].

Given these challenges encountered by LGBT people to achieve their full potentials, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was chosen by the researchers to investigate three universal motivational needs as determined by SDT such as (a) autonomy, (b) competence, and (c) relatedness. According to Deci and Ryan, these three elements influence behavior change needed in sustaining positive psychological well-being [7].

Conducting this study aims to contribute new knowledge on how elderly Filipino gay men realized self-actualization despite **experiences of and responses to disempowerment**, sociocultural demands, and challenges. Furthermore, this study aims to develop recommendations on how other elderly LGBT members may discover their actualized selves.

## Methods

This study made use of Straussian Grounded theory. The Straussian approach allowed the researcher to use available literature to guide each stage [8]. Applying this method made use of three steps such as (a) open coding, (b) axial coding, and (c) selective coding. This Grounded theory method is practical and applicable in relating encoded data to fit an existing concept or theory [9] [10] [11] [12]. For constant comparative analysis, these three (open, axial, and selective) coding stages of encoded individual and group analysis were used to develop theory [13].

**Participants**

For theoretical sampling and saturation of field texts, the study invited 40 elder gay males selected through a criterion that includes that the selection must be 40 years and above and has done achievements whether personal or in a different career. Of the invited 40 participants, 30 agreed and consented to be part of the study. Data from 20 elder gay males were chosen to be applied and integrated to fit this study's chosen theory after encoding their interviews.

**Materials Used**

**Informed Consent:** Before conducting the interviews, the researchers distributed and explained an informed consent to the participants to inform them about the nature and objectives of the study, including their rights as participants. Consenting participants were also asked permission to record interviews. While some did not agree to be audio-recorded, they still decided to proceed with the interview. Participants were also assured of how data from their interviews will be safe keep by the researchers.

**Interview Guide:** The researcher drafted a structured interview to answer how they realized self-actualization despite their experienced sociocultural demands and challenges. An aide-memoire (**table 2**) was prepared to generate data that fit in with Self-determination theory by addressing how they motivated themselves towards autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

**Data Gathering**

Each selection was interviewed for a minimum of two hours, while some interviews were extended through the selection's approval. An interview guide was followed to make sure that each selection was asked the same set of questions. The interview was then transcribed, validated by the co-researcher, and returned to the selection to validate the written data. The study also used journals containing information about challenges and difficulties, career and workplace discrimination, family issues faced by LGBT, and self-actualization.

**Data Analysis**

After encoding interviews, the researchers used Straussian Grounded Theory Analysis to collect, examine, and check data to be articulated based on the study's theory and refine major categories [14]. Analyzing encoded data also went through the stages of coding, comparison, and theoretical sensitivity until data saturation is achieved.

**Results:**The final selection comprised 20 elderly Filipino gay men(**table 1**) from 44 years old to 63 years old. The majority of the participants were 52 and 54 years old. This age range gave the researchers sufficient interview data about their experienced **responses to disempowerment**,sociocultural demands, and discriminatory acts towards a marginalized and stigmatized group. When it comes to Educational Attainment, five participants finished a Master's Degree while the majority finished college level. However, interviews revealed that they would have wanted to pursue a different degree if their family or society only accepted it. For their current and recent occupation, the majority are business owners. Data from their encoded interviews also revealed that they finished a degree that was not their preferred career. Instead, they ventured to put up their own business with the majority as salons. Most participants are single and have had difficulty finding a partner to settle with because it was not accepted by society. Some participants married a woman but with a disclosure to their wives that they identify as gay males. One participant was also married but was divorced by his wife upon finding out his sexual identity.

Age	30 (44-63)
Highest Educational Attainment	5 (25%) Master's Degree 12 (60%) College Degree 2 (10%) High-School 1 (5%) Elementary
Occupation	5 (25%) Retired Teacher 14 (70%) Business Owner 1 (5%) Public Servant

**Table 2. Aide-memoire**

I.	Autonomy	Were there things you wanted to pursue but chose not to because people believed it was unacceptable?
II.	Competence	How did the demands of society influenced your new goals and plans?
III.	Relatedness	From the entire experience, what values about yourself did you rediscover?

**SELF DETERMINATION**

Proponents of SDT argue that satisfaction of all three needs is necessary for an individual's actions to be self-determined. More self-determined actions are likely to be maintained and lead to greater well-being [15]. Recently, an additional element known as beneficence was added. This fourth element relates to the positive impact on other people [16].

**Autonomy**

Since SDT's primary focus is on people's motivation to flourish, people as authors have the freedom towards their actions.[17]. Within SDT, autonomy is expected to align with accomplishing one's desired goals. This self-authorship gives the person a sense of authenticity towards autonomy or control instead of being imposed. However, when applied to LGBT and making career decisions, Hetherington [18] found that the environmental factors influencing career decisions among LGBT people are significantly different from those for heterosexual people. For LGBT individuals, extrinsic or external factors must be considered to avoid workplace discrimination [19]. When this element of autonomy joins with Asian values, putting the family's needs is prioritized by changing career plans and conforming to norms. This norm adherence shows that when Asian values intermediate with autonomy, extrinsic factors such as putting the family before anything else are extensively considered among members of the LGBT, which leads members of the LGBT at this stage to daunt their original plans because of challenges pursuing a preferred career choice due to uncertainties of acceptance within the family and society, in turn, results in abandoning original plans and goals [20]. This is supported by encoded interviews, as seen in **table 3** that show tolerance is given among family members of the LGBT but not full acceptance that results in a stage of daunting of their career choice.

"I wanted to be a pilot or in the fashion industry and have my own family but not with a girl. I was prevented from pursuing fashion industry-related courses because it was not for males."  
-Selection 1

"I wanted to try to do some things, but I did not continue because other people will not approve, so I had to stop schooling from earning my own money." -Selection 3

"I had many jobs, I worked hard, but I guess it was not really for me because of how people treated us back then."  
-Selection 6

"I wanted to be a nurse, but I was more interested in-salon and parlor, and because we lack the finances, I told my mother just to let my brother study instead of me." -Selection 8

"I know that I am older now, but I am studying again, finally pursuing a degree. I am now in my 4th year of college. I also wanted to have sexual reassignment surgery, but religion will not allow doing that". -Selection 9

"It was difficult that sometimes it is not just the society that rejects you but also your own family." -Selection 10

"Having grown up in a family of teachers, society expects us to grow up with prim and proper behavior. It was difficult." -Selection14

"It was hard to get the approval and acceptance from the people important to you. I did not think that I will not achieve my ambitions because I was gay." -Selection17

"It was not easy to find a job, I did not finish college, and they say I was gay, so they did not want to hire me." - Selection18

**Competence:** As seen on encoded significant statements at **table 4**, cultural factors related to emotional self-control and the Asian value of giving honor to the family through achievements resulted in a driving motivation among elderly LGBT members to achieve a new and redirected goal. In addition, cultural factors, values, prosocial behaviors, extrinsic motivators, and intrinsic motivators result in strengthening competence, as seen in their encoded interviews(**Table 4**) factors increases the motivating force towards competence among members of the LGBT [21]. For this stage, they may not have pursued their desired and original goals because of sociocultural limitations and challenges, butstill, they redirected their competency towards achieving a new plan for themselves and their family due to intrinsic motivators. This shows an interplay between the extrinsic factors from social challenges and intrinsic aspects of family-related values that result in arousal and drive, which leads to the second stage.

"I had to tone back to what I believe is the normal and acceptable behaviors. You have to act according to the prescribed roles and status we follow if you want to be accepted. I had to blend in because of my work. " – Selection 1

"It was challenging for us to be accepted, but I used it to my advantage. I developed skills that suit my talent as gay. I started my Salon back then, and I worked hard for it." -Selection9

"I did not listen to what they say about me. I just focused on studying. I learned to work hard and prove myself to other people so that their judgment of me was wrong." -Selection10

"Whenever I heard things from other people, I study and tell myself I will prove them all wrong. I had to work extra hard. I had to prove to them I am gay, but I will reach my ambition." -Selection14

"I persevered and worked hard, and I just motivated myself that I will prove them wrong." -Selection15

"Yes, I had to adjust because people back then look at us with disgust like we have a disease or sort. I was able to bear it all because of my family, and I worked hard for them. Even my priorities changed because of my family." - Selection16

"I was scared of people from the community not accepting of me and my situation, so with my skills, I came back here, and I started a business. I put effort into it by hard work." -Selection 20

**Relatedness:** Lastly, Asian values strengthens regulating goals, emotions, and even altruistic behaviors [22]. This concept of relatedness extends to prosocial activities inherent to Asian values [23]. As seen on encoded interviews **in Table 5**,the process of making new and unexpected findings from the **experiences of and responses to disempowerment, sociocultural demands, and challenges** led to the realization of self-actualized behaviors.

"I may not have reached my original ambition and goal, but right now, I am successful in this field I chose to be. It gave me self-worth and fulfillment." -Selection1

"It was revealed that upon all the experience, I was able to manage how I understand people."

-Selction2.

"We (LGBT) have always experienced bullying, and I learn just to ignore them so that they will accept me." - Selection3

"I am happy right now that I get to help my siblings and other members of the family. Because of this, I made my mother proud before she died." -Selection4

"I have learned that what my family would say matters, but I did not change. I just acted more human than them." -Selection5

"I became stronger and tougher, I had to be strong to show them I will achieve something, and I did." -Selection 11

"I had to hide being gay because people will criticize you. Even how your parents raised you will be questioned. I had to get along with them, I had to do what they want, I just swallowed what they say, and I just focused on being successful." -Selection 12

"The people around me influenced me to be better, successful and improved. Their opinions made me open-minded with the things I needed to hear and learn to become decent". -Selection8

"Because of them, I became stronger and tougher when it comes to challenges of life." – Selection12

"I toughened up, I told myself we are all equal, so I became stronger but very humble." -Selection15

"I am now stronger and tougher, and I have learned many life lessons." -Selection16

"After all my experiences, I learned to be understanding." -Selection 17

"They mistreated gays like me back then, but because of that experience, I became stronger and tougher. In the process, I have learned to respect other people's opinions." Selection 19

"I am very religious. I have good interpersonal relationships with people in our community. We have an organization consisted of gays where we do fundraising to help our community." Selection 20

### **Beneficence**

Recently, an additional element known as beneficence was added on SDT. This fourth element relates to the positive impact on other people [16] which was also seen on their encoded interviews.

"I noticed that they show they are accepting of me if I show them love even if they mistreat me." -Selection2

"I explored being nice to them even if they mistreat me, and it worked. They treated me well." Selection3

"I started to respect myself, I deterred myself from doing the things that they will not approve of, that leads to others respecting me too."- Selection4

"I was scared they will not accept, so I acted how they wanted me to behave whenever in front of them." Selection5

"Yes, I had to adjust because they always make fun of us. I became nice to them, and I respected them even if their opinions of me are not correct. I used their judgments of me to improve myself and make myself successful." Selection6

"I had observed my friends got beaten when they stood up for themselves. I was scared to stand for myself, so I just let them say things about me, and I ignore it. After that, I showed my skills and talent, and I acted decently by not being too extravagant in clothing, talking, and behavior." -Selection8

"I learned to get along with them, whatever they say about me I just ignored it, you just let them." -Selection 11

"Yes, I had to adjust. I had to conform and comply. I complied so that they will accept. I did not fight back because I do not want to start a fight with anyone, so I just learned to understand them." -Selection13

"Even if my experiences with them are not so pleasant, I still treat them nicely by helping them, giving donations, and I was also active in other community projects." -Selection17

"I toughened up, and I encouraged myself to be strong. I think of my family so that I could gather strength." - Selection18

"It was challenging for me to accept myself. I suppressed it for the family." Selection 19

**REALIZATION OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION**

Realization of Self- Actualization (RoSA) amongelderly Filipino gay men is also seen to have its stages, namely:

**Stage 1. DAUNTING:** a process that discourages the person from achieving the desired goal caused by extrinsic factors such as cultural expectations, conformity, and family approval that results in changing original plans or making new plans.

**Stage 2. DRIVING:**the process that arouses an organism to continue moving forward the desired goal that was thwarted by extrinsic factors and redirected by intrinsic factors such as values that resulted in making new plans. This can be understood by the statements of the interviewees on the reasons behind their motivations.

**Stage 3: Discovering:**the process of reflecting anddiscovering a strengthened prosocial value that is innate within them that facilitated autonomy and competence and has led them to achieve their potentials despite negative experiences, disempowerment, and social challenges, and discrimination.

Self-actualization stages	Process	Cause	Result
1. Daunting	Discourages the person to achieve the desired goal.	EXTRINSIC FACTORS	CHANGING ORIGINAL PLANS/ MAKING NEW PLANS
2. Driving	arouses an organism to take action toward a new plan.	EXTRINSIC FACTOR and INTRINSIC FACTORS	CARRYING OUT NEW PLANS
3. Discovering	Making new and unexpected findings.	INTRINSIC FACTORS	REALIZATIONS

**Discussion**

Applying the Self-Determination Theory for this study revealed that despite sociocultural challenges, discrimination, and **experiences of disempowerment**, Self-determination was seen among elderly Filipino gay

mens to achieve their fullest potential through a series of stages that eventually lead them to rediscover strengthened values within them. Although Maslow's concept of self-actualization is commonly known for achieving full and unique potential; the prosocial behavior construct among a marginalized, oppressed, and stigmatized group such as LGBT people lead to rediscovering of strengthened values that are intrinsic within them. According to Niemiec, Ryan, & Deci [24], intrinsic human motivators are found to be being linked with all three elements of self-determination such as (a) autonomy, (b) competence, and (c) relatedness. As seen on the parameters (**table 6**) of the conceptualized ROSA (Realization of Self Actualization), intrinsic motivations such as life goals, when influenced by culture such as Asian values, even though thwarted by external factors, finds a way towards achieving autonomy, competence, relatedness, and beneficence that eventually lead to a positive self-actualization by formulating and redirecting new goals to achieve personal growth, meaningful relationships, and even community contributions. This resulted in a rediscovery of strengthened innate and intrinsic values that led them to self-actualization.

In conclusion to these findings, Self-Actualization is a stage with a process that involves Daunting, Driving, and Discovering. Discovering is essential in the realization of the actualized selves and potentials. The actualized self is not the product of an ideal experience but of overcoming life challenges. In opposition to Abraham Maslow, to Self-actualize is to undergo a series of daunting and driving stages, resulting in discovering learned values through self-realization. People do not fail to self-actualize. People fail to realize what they have achieved in the process of self-actualization. Self-actualization is then maximizing one's potential that should be done through reflection and realization of strengthened intrinsic motivations.

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