

EXPLORING THE IMPACTS OF THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

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DOI: 10.46609/IJSSER.2022.v07i09.008 URL: <https://doi.org/10.46609/IJSSER.2022.v07i09.008>

Received: 1 September 2022 / Accepted: 17 September 2022 / Published: 28 September 2022

ABSTRACT

This paper will explain the different aspects of the LGBTQ community as it relates to their sexual orientation. Various studies and reports have supported that society can have numerous negative impacts on the community regarding race and socioeconomic factors. However, looking further into these controversies on trying to improve mental and physical health can allow one to think more positively about their well-being.

Keywords: sexual orientation, mental and physical health

Exploring the Impacts of the LGBTQ Community

The LGBTQ community, such as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders, appears to be viewed differently among other people and some even consider them to be in the need of medical care. In contrast, others treat them as any other individual. What are the relationships of society and their impact on the LGBTQ community? In this paper, I will use evidence from different sources to provide information on how discrimination among LGBT people can lead to mental and physical health issues and how looking further into the psychology behind their experiences can lead to efforts on finding treatments and improving their well-being.

Acknowledging the impacts on the LGTQ community can lead to better social skills as well as developing more connections with others to improve mankind.

As bias against the LGBTQ community continues, it increases the many ways that might affect them, contributing racial and socioeconomic factors (Balsam, Beadnell, Molina, Simoni, & Walters, 2011). My research shows these people are in the risk of both mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety, and physical disabilities, including suicide and violence (Friedman, 2014; Sandfort, Bakker, Schellevis, & Vnwesenbeeck, 2006). These studies reflect on the ideas whether or not being gay, bisexual, or transgender is a mental disorder. Majority of the research also discusses the controversies on finding treatment or cures and how the development and

efforts on trying to improve their life led to a more positive mind set. First, I will discuss how discrimination is continuously growing and the many effects that it may have on their health.

Then, I will illustrate the perspectives of whether being born this way is a mental disorder, and finally, how attempting to study these cases and finding a way to rehabilitate the LGBT people will increase their well-being. Succeeding to comprehend the beliefs and effects of the LGBT people will also help studies to improve the ways to help the community.

Background

Discrimination is unfair or prejudicial treatment against people who are different from others (Friedman, 2014). Normally, people are born to be attracted to the opposite sex, but LGBT people are born to be lured to the same gender or both male and female. Gays, lesbians, and bisexual people are ten times more likely to experience bias against them, including forms of jokes, insults, bullying, and even physical violence (Friedman, 2014). When bullying is not stopped it can increase overtime and last a lifetime. Balsam (2011) and his colleagues' empirical research on what affects LGBT discrimination show that it is due to racial and socioeconomic factors (Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simon, & Walters, 2011). They used the LGBTQ-POC Microaggression Scale, which measured psychological distress through demographic variables. They recruited over one thousand people on a survey which asked questions about why they felt they were sexually discriminated against and to what extent. They concluded that most people thought other components like race paired with their sex was a huge part of bias towards LGBT people (Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simon, & Walters, 2011). Their study even determined the way that LGBT people thought of the society towards them mainly contributed to the way the society acts in response. This research also used parallel analyses to support these claims and to make sure it was valid. They noticed that most people thought there was a strong correlation between how people who aren't educated about race issues, such as Caucasians, are the ones who usually discriminate against them. Ultimately, it is what the LGBTQ community's perspectives of what others think about them that are key factors in determining how they will be affected.

Negative Effects

Unfair and prejudice towards the LGBTQ community led to many negative outcomes regarding their health (Singh & Durso, 2017). For example, data collected from a survey by the CAP stated that 68.5% people experienced negative effects in their psychological well-being, 43.7% in their physical well-being, 47.7% in spiritual well-being, 38.5% in their school environment, 52.8% in their work environment, and 56.6% in their community and neighborhood environment (Singh & Durso, 2017). Their research also provides information that people had to change their lifestyle in order to avoid trouble and conflict (Singh & Durso, 2017).

This relates to Balsam's (2011) research on minority stress that LGBT people already have the expectation of being rejected. Even people who haven't experienced bias would adjust their lives (Singh & Durso, 2017).

Additionally, discrimination can take forms in many ways, such as verbal and physical bullying, which can affect both physical and mental health. Bullying can lead to increasing risks of depression and anxiety, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of substance abuse (Friedman, 2014). For instance, Wilson and Cariola's research identified five important themes in the challenges of the LGBTQ community from what they have experienced: 1) isolation, rejection, and phobia, 2) marginalization, 3) depression and self-harm, 4) policy and environment, and 5) connectedness (Wilson & Cariola, 2019). First, isolation from friends and family can lead to suicidal thoughts because of distress that might occur from not being able to share their feelings with anyone. Rejection lowers self-esteem and allows one to think more negatively of themselves when someone else feels the same way. Isolation was linked to both marginalization, policy, and how the environment interacts with them (Peter et al. 2016, Wolff et al. 2014). Their study was impressive in considering how all the themes related to each other in terms of sexual orientation and how that affected the ways LGBT people viewed themselves. Their study intersects with the research done by Sandfort (2006) and his colleagues at Am J Public Health, who determined how sexual orientation related to mental and physical health and even health behaviors in the society. In Sanfort's (2006) study, he conducted a survey on both homosexual and heterosexual individuals and compared their health score on a scale. The SF-36 (Short-Form Health Survey) showed that gays and lesbians scored lower overall. The scores ranged from 0 to 12, 12 representing higher risk of psychological disorders, indicating health behaviors which were based on the different physical symptoms they have experienced and conditions they had. The conditions included drug abuse and eating disorders. From this data, they could conclude how the symptoms correlated with disorders in their thinking, which ultimately shows the psychological health issues that might occur. I could establish that depending on sexual orientation, LGBT people have a harder time in accepting the differences in their gender which can lead to more health disorders. Some flaws they should have considered was the difference in age cohort and how much they have experienced discrimination before taken into consideration of health. They may have symptoms, but not generally due to their sexual orientation bias. In contrast, they significantly accounted for both mental health and physical health and how they showed negative behaviors. Both of these studies examined the different symptoms that may occur for the LGBTQ community to have caused certain negative health issues. While Wilson and Cariola's (2019) result only looked into how one factor may lead to many themes, Sandfort's (2006) study opened up to many different factors that can lead to more health issues.

One article informed that because of these injustices against LGBT people, they are more likely

to be distant from others, isolating themselves from social interaction. (Owen & Sovec, 2018). This relates to Wilson's and Cariola's (2019) theory of self-isolation from others and how that focuses on the negative effects. For instance, younger LGBT people miss school, trying to distance themselves from others, which leads to developing mental disorders throughout their life (Friedman, 2014). From this, I can theorize that having a homosexual mind set is not a disorder but something that can correlate one to have self-inflicting thoughts at a younger age since they won't ever learn to improve their social skills from all the discrimination. Other harmful ideas may develop in the future because of these continuous actions.

There are many ways that discrimination can lead to negative health effects or behaviors, but it is difficult in determining the psychology why such ideas are constructed into their brains. But clearly different factors and what causes these actions should be mentioned.

Controversies

There are two distinct views of the LGBTQ community: the government should discourage these people because they are making a choice to act this way; and sexual orientation is biologically determined (Malory, 2012). In the DSM-5, gender dysphoria (difference in their biological sex and psychological identity) was mentioned as a psychological disorder, but due to criticism, it is now not considered a "disorder" (Owen & Sovec, 2018). According to PET and MRI studies, numerous parts of the brain such as the structures in the hypothalamus is affected during exhibition to sex hormones in the uterus when the brain is developing, later affecting future sexual orientation (Malory, 2012). From this result, I can conclude that being homosexual is not a choice but something that you are born with. Should we develop a cure for the LGBTQ community? Although sexual preference is not a choice and can not be controlled, many people feel bad for the LGBTQ community and outlook them as a disease in which there is no cure (Malory, 2012). Various organizations like the American Psychological Association ban therapy for these people and go against practice to improve mental health of LGBT people (Owen & Sovec, 2018). Although there is no official treatment on helping the LGBTQ community with their mental health because of increasing discrimination, research has shown that suggesting certain ways to help will still impact how they grasp onto the continuing amounts of bias and put them into a positive state of mind (Owen & Sovec, 2018). In order to help improve the health of the LGBTQ people, we need to understand how they are affected mentally and physically.

A survey from the National Health Interview (2013), collecting data about sexual orientation, obtained information to see which regions are most affected to establish a way to encourage better health. They were successfully able to encourage the LGBTQ community with efforts to improve their health including parent-child relationships, therapy, providing anti-bullying rules at school, training people in medical care to be aware of suicidal thoughts, and making their

neighborhood and environment more friendly for LGBTQ people (Sanchez & Rabatin, 2006).

Conclusion

Many of these studies (Sandfort, Bakker, Schellevis, & Vnwesenbeeck, 2006; Singh & Durso, 2017) illustrates that there are patterns in the relationships between discrimination against the LGBTQ community and health issues. The wide variety of surveys shows a negative correlation due to factors like race and what the LGBT person thinks about themselves that affect their perspective on how they may behave towards them.

Furthermore, the two main views of the LGBTQ community, and whether or not there should be treatment, inflict controversies. Because most of the surveys (Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simon, & Walters, 2011; Sandfort, Bakker, Schellevis, & Vnwesenbeeck, 2006) might not be reliable or valid due to disadvantages such as dishonesty and inaccuracy, more empirical research should be evaluated and explored to better understand the society's impact on LGBT people. As of present day, the LGBTQ community is gradually starting to have a standard role in the environment, but is continuously evoking. Increasing these studies will also allow people to become aware of the LGBTQ community and help learn the ways to treat them more efficiently, so discrimination and bias will eventually decrease further through the years. We must continue to educate on the controversies of the LGBTQ community in order to better understand and help LGBT people, and also encourage psychologists in the future.

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