

Life Satisfaction and Gender Discrimination among Lesbian and Gay Students

Susie Hope Romuros-Tomol¹, Erna Narida-Nacionales²

Iloilo Science and Technology University- Miagao Campus

Miagao, Iloilo, Philippines

susiehopetomol@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study is conducted to determine the level of life satisfaction and gender discrimination among lesbian and gay students. Survey questionnaires were fielded to 46 respondents in order to attain the general objective of the study. With the used of descriptive-correlation as the sole design of the research undertaken, the result revealed that the lesbian and gay students are satisfied in terms of gender, year level and course. Discrimination was slightly perceived by the lesbian and gay students when classified according to year level and course. However, the gay students feel fairly discriminated as compared to lesbians they felt a slight discrimination towards their sexual orientation in terms of their gender. This shows that lesbian and gay students tend to experience a justifiably fair discrimination leading to a more content affirmation of their sexuality in the community. The intensification of information drive in dealing with the sexual orientations and personality differences and help promote healthy living individuals is suggested.

Keywords: *Gender discrimination, life satisfaction, sexual orientation, acceptability, sexuality*

I. INTRODUCTION

Gays and lesbians are homosexuals who are sexually attracted to members of the same sex. Typically, gay refers to a man whose sexual orientation is to men and lesbian refers to women whose sexual orientation is to women. Lesbian and gay students have in recent years come to constitute a portion of the student body in higher learning institutions (American Psychology Association, 2002).

The development of a gay, lesbian, or bisexual (GLB) sexual identity is a complex and often difficult process. Unlike members of other minority groups (e.g., ethnic and racial minorities), most GLB individuals are not raised in a community of similar others from whom they learn about their identity and who reinforce and support that identity. Rather, GLB individuals are often raised in communities that are either ignorant of or openly hostile toward homosexuality. Because sexual identity development is a process for which GLB individuals have been unprepared and which is contextually unsupported and stigmatized, it would seem that the process would be characterized by inconsistency or incongruence among its affective, cognitive, and behavioral components, such that behavior may not always coincide with affect and/or identity.

However, one rationale behind the increasing number of lesbian and gay students is the assumption that students can be

discriminated by the sexual orientations of these individuals (Datti, 2015). Although the number of studies is quite limited, researchers have found relatively low life satisfaction among lesbian and gay students in a school setting (Powdthavee & Wooden, 2015). It is, then, why everyday life settlement is a central issue for lesbian and gay students. Still, lesbian and gay students who feel unwelcome or discriminated against are likely to be less satisfied with their life.

In the contrary, they can also develop a stronger identification with their own members as part of the LGBT groups and implies a sense of belonging that might attenuate or buffer the negative effects of perceived discrimination on life satisfaction among lesbian and gay students. Experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay discrimination in the school can be expected to have negative repercussions for the way LGBT members feel about their lives. Needless to say, the idea that satisfaction in domains of life contributes to the explanation of gender discrimination, whether in an additive or some other way (Singh & Durso, 2017).

It is in this light that the study is supported by one of the major cores in Lewin's (Zeigarnik, 1984) work is the idea of a "life space which focuses in the combination of all factors that influence a person's behavior at a given moment in time and Albert Bandura's Social Learning theory (McLeod, 2016) believes that humans are active information processors and think about the relationship between their

behavior and its consequences. Observational learning could not occur unless cognitive processes were at work.

Moreover, the theory states that a person may include instantaneous thought, memory, drives and motives, personality, as well as the situation and external environmental factors. This idea is prominent today with the idea of the person-situation interaction and observation or modeling as a factor in affecting the life satisfaction and gender discrimination among lesbian and gay students. The current study undertakes the life satisfaction and gender discrimination experienced by lesbian and gay students particularly those who are enrolled in the college level.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used the descriptive method of research with correlational analysis. Good and Scates (1943) explain that descriptive research presents facts about the nature as well as the subjects, like a set of persons, a class of events, a system of thought or any kind of phenomenon present. The correlation and comparative analyses were utilized for the identification of relationship between the level of gender discrimination and life satisfaction, and the differences that were found in gay and lesbian groups.

Research Locale

The data collection was conducted in Iloilo Science and Technology University Miagao Campus. It was selected as the study locale because of the number of identified lesbians and gays in the school and it is also accessible for the researchers. Since this paper aims to find out relationship between life satisfaction and gender discrimination, whatever results were derived from the study it would be very beneficial to the research locale to serve as anchorage for an improved Gender and Development Plans and Program in a countryside school.

Participants

The participants of the study were selected through purposive sampling. The selection were done by conducting gender preference survey and those who have selected lesbian and gay as their gender preference were considered. However, convenience sampling techniques was also sought because the researcher also take into consideration the accessibility and proximity to

the researchers. The total number of participants who voluntarily responded in the study is 46.

Data Gathering

Ethical considerations were secured prior to the conduct of the study. Consent form and letter were given to the authorities specifically to the deans of the students who are involved in the study. Upon approval, those who volunteered themselves and those who were willing to participate were the ones included in the study and provided with the instrument used for data collection.

Instrumentation

The instruments used for data collection were 25 items Life Satisfaction Questionnaire and 25 items Gender Discrimination Questionnaire, a researcher-made instrument. The instrument was subjected to content validation by a jury composed of three experts.

Research Hypothesis

The research hypothesis in this study was tested at 0.05 level of significance presented in its null form and stated as: there is no significant relationship between the life satisfaction and gender discrimination among lesbian and gay college students.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Distribution of Respondents' Personal Characteristics

The distributions of respondents' personal characteristics are presented in Table 1. The data shows that among the respondents' 71.7% were male college students classified as gay persons which refers to male homosexuality and 28.3% are female college students classified as lesbian which refers to female homosexuality, both in the context of sexuality but may be used in a broader sense to refer to all LGBT people.

In terms of year level, 36.9% of the respondents' were first year college students, 20% in the second year, 17% were third year and 26.1% were fourth year students who are included in the study. In terms of course, 10.8% of the respondents' were Bachelor of Industrial Technology, 6.5% were Hotel and Restaurant Technology students, 45.6% were Teacher Education students, 10.8% were Bachelor of Information Technology students and 26.3% AXE Technology students.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents’ Personal characteristics.

Personal Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Male	33	71.7
Female	13	28.3
Total	46	100
Year Level		
First Year	17	36.9
Second Year	9	20
Third Year	8	17
Fourth Year	12	26.1
Total	46	100
Course		
BIT	5	10.8
HRT	3	6.5
EDUCATION	21	45.6
INFOTECH	5	10.8
AXE	12	26.3
Total	46	100

Table 3. Mean Scores on the Level of Life Satisfaction and Gender Discrimination by Year Level

Life Satisfaction	Year Level	N	Mean	SD	Description
	First Year	17	3.06	0.19	Satisfied
	Second Year	9	2.88	0.07	Satisfied
	Third Year	8	2.86	0.23	Satisfied
	Fourth Year	12	3.17	0.25	Satisfied
Gender Discrimination					
	First Year	17	2.09	0.37	Slightly Discriminated
	Second Year	9	1.85	0.48	Slightly Discriminated
	Third Year	8	1.82	0.44	Slightly Discriminated
	Fourth Year	12	2.06	0.42	Slightly Discriminated

Table 2. Mean Scores on the Level of Life Satisfaction and Gender Discrimination by Gender Orientation

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	SD	Description
Life Satisfaction	Gay	33	3.02	0.24	Satisfied
	Lesbian	13	3.02	0.21	Satisfied
Gender Discrimination	Gay	33	1.95	0.42	Fairly Discriminated
	Lesbian	13	2.09	0.44	Slightly Discriminated

The bulk of the data therefore comes from the male respondents, first year students, and from education courses.

Level of Life Satisfaction and Gender Discrimination

As for the level of life satisfaction and gender discrimination, Table 2 results showed that both gay and lesbian are satisfied with their life and there is no significant difference in the mean, $t = 0.02, p = 0.988$.

Lesbian and gay students are satisfied and thrive during their adolescent years. Going to school that creates a safe and supporting learning environment for all students and having caring and accepting parents are especially important. This helps all youth achieve good grades and maintain good mental and physical health. On the other hand, there are some LGBTQ youth that are more likely to experience difficulties in their lives and school environments (Higa, Hoppe, Lindhorst, Mincer, Beadnell, Morrison ... Mountz, 2012).

Table 4. Mean Scores on the Level of Life Satisfaction and Gender Discrimination by Course

	Course	N	Mean	SD	Description
Life Satisfaction	BIT	5	2.97	0.17	Satisfied
	HRT	3	3.22	0.25	Satisfied
	EDUCATION	21	2.96	0.21	Satisfied
	INFOTECH	5	3.18	0.29	Satisfied
	AXE	12	3.03	0.22	Satisfied
Gender Discrimination	BIT	5	2.16	0.31	Slightly Discriminated
	HRT	3	2.50	0.21	Slightly Discriminated
	EDUCATION	21	1.83	0.41	Slightly Discriminated
	INFOTECH	5	1.86	0.32	Slightly Discriminated
	AXE	12	2.10	0.45	Slightly Discriminated

Table 5. Relationship between Life Satisfaction and Gender Discrimination

Variable	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> value	Interpretation
Life Satisfaction and Gender Discrimination	.439**	.002	Significant

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Findings also revealed that these gay respondents are fairly discriminated as compared to lesbian who are slightly discriminated. However, the difference is not significant, $t = -0.99$, $p = 0.324$. Heterosexuality is the most acceptable sexual orientation which means that gay men and lesbian women students may be marginalized and discriminated against. While gay and lesbian students are as diverse as the rest of the population, discrimination among the gay students were equitably fair while lesbian students receive a moderate experience of discrimination which creates common issues (Higa et al., 2014).

The data in Table 3 revealed that gay and lesbians were all satisfied across year levels and feel slightly discriminated. It is stated in the minority stress theory (Bates, 2010) that lesbian and gay individuals are likely to experience rejection as a result of their marginalized sexual orientation and must learn to cope and adapt to a potentially "inhospitable social environment". Since prior research indicates that close family ties help these individuals foster a sense of identity, it is understandable that sexual minorities may not only want more support from family and friends, but need more of it (i.e., individuals who affirm their minority identity) compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Roland & Burlew, 2017).

It is not established in this research, however, the result on the level of satisfaction

only shows that respondents receive more substantial social support from family, friends, and from other people.

The same result is shown for level of satisfaction and gender discrimination across courses as shown in Table 4. The lesbian and gay respondents feel satisfied and slightly discriminated.

Relationship between Life Satisfaction and Gender Discrimination

Table 5 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between life satisfaction and gender discrimination. Social support extended by significant social relationships showed important contributions to which they demonstrate the behaviors depending on the situation or environment in which they find themselves and satisfied to what they think it suits in the community (Charles & Carstensen, 2010). From the data, it can be inferred that satisfaction to life of lesbian and gay students can possibly lead to a slight discrimination.

IV. CONCLUSION

Gay college students are satisfied and feel fairly discriminated in terms of gender while lesbian college students are also satisfied and feel they were slightly discriminated as compared

to gay students; however, the difference in the gender discrimination is not significant. The level of life satisfaction as to year level and course were all satisfied and respondents' feel slightly discriminated. Whereby, lesbian and gay in particular receive more substantial social support from family, friends, and from other people. Lesbian and gay individuals are likely to experience rejection as a result of their marginalized sexual orientation and must learn to cope and adapt to a potentially inhospitable social environment. HRT LGBT feel slightly discriminated near the higher end of the range towards no discrimination.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the present research study, there are recommendations, which may enrich the lesbian and gay's life satisfaction and gender discrimination, which are as follows:

1. It may be recommended that School Administrator and communities can implement clear policies, procedures, and activities designed to promote a healthy environment for all lesbian and gay students.
2. For the LGBT youth, it may recommend intensifying information drive in dealing with the sexual orientations and personality differences and help promote healthy living individuals.
3. Seminar-workshops maybe conducted about the tools and techniques on tri-media that will enhance creativity and innovativeness, administrators to initiate training seminars on LGBT awareness and short term program to enrich the lives of this people. For parents, seminars on responsible parenthood for parent lesbian and gays; group counseling; and peer tutorials.
4. For future researchers, it is recommended that they conduct similar studies at a diverse culture implementing the strong foundation of respect and support for lesbian and gay students with greater emphasis on the LGBT development of self and Sense of Community as well as Expanding One's World View.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers acknowledged with gratitude the support given by the university, the deans from various programs, and most especially to the participants of the study. With

their help the study has been completed on time.

REFERENCES

- Adams, C. L., & Kimmel, D. L. (1997). *Exploring the lives of older African American gay men*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: Greene B, editor. Ethnic cultural diversity among lesbian and gay men.
- American Psychology Association. (2002). Answer to Your Questions FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION & HOMOSEXUALITY. Retrieved January 11, 2018, from <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation.pdf>.
- Balsam, K. F., & Mohr, J. J. (2007). Adaptation to sexual orientation stigma: A comparison of bisexual and lesbian/gay adults. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(3), 306–319. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.54.3.306
- Bates, D. D. (2010). Once-Married African-American Lesbians and Bisexual Women: Identity Development and the Coming-Out Process. *Journal of Homosexuality, 57*(2), 197–225. doi: 10.1080/00918360903488848
- Berger, R. M., & Kelly, J. J. (1996). Gay men and lesbians growing older. In: R. Cabaj and T. S. Stein (Eds.), *Textbook of homosexuality and mental health*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 305–318.
- Bowleg, L., Craig, M. L., & Burkholder, G. (2004, August). Rising and surviving: a conceptual model of active coping among Black lesbians. Retrieved February 1, 2018, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15311976>.
- Charles1, S. T., & Carstensen21Department, L. L. (2010). Social and Emotional Aging. Retrieved March 4, 2018, from <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev.psych.093008.100448>.
- David, S., & Knight, B. G. (2008). Stress and coping among gay men: Age and ethnic differences. *Psychology and Aging, 23*(1), 62–69. doi: 10.1037/0882-7974.23.1.62
- Datti, P. A. (2015). Counseling With Rural Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons. *Casebook for Counseling, 223–229*. doi: 10.1002/9781119221715.ch21
- Dean, L., Wu, S., & Martin, J. L. (1992). Trends in violence and discrimination against gay men in New York City: 1984 to 1990. In G. M.

- Herek & K. T. Berrill (Eds.), *Hate crimes: Confronting violence against lesbians and gay men* (pp. 46-64). Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Díaz, R. M., Bein, E., & Ayala, G. (2006). Homophobia, Poverty, and Racism: Triple Oppression and Mental Health Outcomes in Latino Gay Men. *Sexual Orientation and Mental Health: Examining Identity and Development in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People.*, 207–224. doi: 10.1037/11261-010
- Higa, D., Hoppe, M. J., Lindhorst, T., Mincer, S., Beadnell, B., Morrison, D. M., ... Mountz, S. (2012). Negative and Positive Factors Associated With the Well-Being of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth. *Youth & Society*, 46(5), 663–687. doi: 10.1177/0044118x12449630
- McLeod, S. (2016). Bandura-Social Learning Theory. Retrieved February 5, 2018, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>.
- Roland, C. B., & Burlew, L. D. (2017). Counseling LGBTQ Adults Throughout the Life Span. Retrieved February 3, 2018, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>.
- Singh, S., & Durso, L. E. (2017, May 1). Widespread Discrimination Continues to Shape LGBT People's Lives in Both Subtle and Significant Ways. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/news/2017/05/02/429529/widespread-discrimination-continues-shape-lgbt-peoples-lives-subtle-significant-ways/>.
- Stewart, M. D. (2015, September). The Experiences of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Students at the University of South Florida, Tampa Campus Using Aspects of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire. Retrieved January 12, 2018, from <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6975&context=etd>.
- Zeigarnik, B. V. (1984). Kurt Lewin and Soviet Psychology. *Journal of Social Issues*, 40(2), 181–192. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.1984.tb01101.x