**Negative Representation of LGBT People in the Community**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) have received negative perceptions in the community for a long time. Most states nor the federal government have not come up with robust laws that protect the group. This has made them receive a lot of discrimination, at the workplace, in public places, and even at home. According to the data by the national representative survey of LGBT, which was done by CAP, it was established that 25.2% of the respondents who were LGBT have once experienced discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation (Singh and Durso, 2017). Further, the survey unfolded that in 2016, there was continuous discrimination despite the progress which was being done to combat the practice (Singh and Durso, 2017). Therefore, the LGBT individuals suffered health-wise, economic security, and general well-being. Discrimination is also observed on social media platforms which makes the minority group even more inferior. In this essay, I will argue that individuals involved in LGBT are negatively represented on mainstream and social media and, hence, face discrimination in their socializations.

The survey by CAP indicates the impact of discrimination on LGBT people, in terms of percentage, who experienced gender-identity-based and sexual-orientation discrimination in the year 2016. The 68.8% were affected psychologically, 56.6% were affected in terms of community environment and neighborhood, 52.8% were impacted the work environment, 47.7% were affected spiritually, 43.7% were physically affected, and 38.5% were affected in the school setting (Singh and Durso, 2017). The devastating figures presented from the findings are a threat to the well-being of the group. This shows that LGBT individuals are at least affected in one way or another, therefore, having no liberty like normal people.

Notably, if LGBT individuals do not suffer overt discrimination, which includes being fired from work, they still face subtle lives albeit in profound ways. For instance, despite the non-discrimination policy in the majority of the companies, at socializing levels there still exists discrimination. There have been cases where LGBT people suffer psychologically because of lacking intimate friends with whom they can share life experiences as they offer solutions to each other (Singh and Durso, 2017). For example, if workers invite straight men/females to squash, the LGBT people are not invited. This creates segregation which leads to stress and mental health problems. Some of the people in the group try to impersonate so that they can fit in the society but the moment they are identified, the relationships are put to an end (Singh and Durso, 2017). In the work environment, for instance, if you don’t have a good relationship with your mates because of gender or sexual orientation issues the self-esteem is lowered, thus, poor performance.

The CAP survey further indicates LGBT people disguise themselves in various ways to avoid discrimination. At least 42% of the minority deployed vague language while engaging in relationship talks. Further, 36.5% hid personal relationships and 14.7% hid affiliation to the various organization (Singh and Durso, 2017). Also, some people avoided engaging in LGBT issues, particularly in social situations, or completely avoided social situations. Some avoided public places such as hotels and restaurants as well as public transportation. A good number avoided the doctor’s office which poses a risk of buying drugs without self-evaluation to identify the type of disease before the prescription. Changing the way of dressing, talking, walking, migrating from rural areas, going away from the family, excluding integral people in their lives, and holding limited social presence were also some of the ways of disguising (Singh and Durso, 2017). This reveals that people who have experienced discrimination in the past tend to alter their way of living as a way of preventing further discrimination. However, even those who have not received discrimination try to avoid it by altering the normal way of living. They mostly suffered discrimination among the LGBT people is rejection. The rejection emanates from the workplace, public places, and even homes.

Harassment, violence, and discrimination are almost becoming a norm to LGBT, particularly transgender in public places, for example, government offices, hotels, and restaurants. In the survey conducted in 2015 by United States Transgender Survey, it was proved that one in three people who visited public accommodation and was identified as transgender was harassed or discriminated against. The discrimination included physical attacks and denial of equal services. Gov. McCrory 2016 signed into law the North Carolina H.B.2 which provided for anti-transgender discrimination so that they could easily and freely access public places (Singh and Durso, 2017). Still, in 2016, more than 30 bills were implemented to facilitate transgender to participate in public life. Therefore, transgender people are in the limbo of accessing key services in public with the fear of being discriminated against.

Furthermore, the discrimination extends to the health facility. Studies show that in 2010 more than half of LGBT individuals were discriminated against by health providers as 25% were denied health services. From this incidence, it can be seen that there has been geared protection in matters concerning the health of LGBT people stemming regulations from ACA and Affordable Care Act which provides free medical services and prohibits the discrimination of the group (Singh and Durso, 2017). Despite this, in 2015, there reports of discrimination among transgender at a rate of one in a third through physical assault or being denied the service.

The United States over the years has had significant progress for equality in social orientation but the perception of the mainstream perceives people as either straight or gay, thus, non-monosexual are rejected by the communities. Monosexuality is the sexual attraction to one type of gender. On the other hand, non-monosexual involves sexual orientations apart from straight or gay dichotomy (Meyer, 2019). Therefore, bisexuality, queerness, and pansexuality fall under non-monosexual. Bisexuality involves sexual attraction for more than one gender. Some researches reveal that 2% of men and 5.5% of women are bisexual (Meyer, 2019). The internet has been a pivotal asset that helps LGBT people construct their identity (Craig, 2021). It has been reported that sexual minorities have social media as an asset to grow their population through knowing each other. This has escalated the process of social learning among the group compared to the offline (Meyer, 2019). It has been proved that those who use social media for sexual identity have health mental outcomes.

However, non-monosexuals are questioned publicly or erased. Notably, erasure is the act of ignoring that there is sexuality – non-monosexuals representation on television is very little. According to GLAAD, a body that collects data about television representation, in 2015 only 76 bisexuals were represented on TV (Meyer, 2019). Unfortunately, there was no account for the number of asexuals who were represented on TV. The appearance of non-monosexual on TV generates stereotypes. GLAAD notes that bisexuals are perceived to be unstable and untrustworthy. On many occasions, male bisexuals are erased while female bisexuals are hypersexualized. On the other hand, asexuals are perceived to be obstacles for other people to overcome. It is important to note that media representation is paramount in terms of sexual identity development. If bisexuals and asexual are denied equal chances on TV, it will be an uphill for these sexual orientations to identify themselves and develop.

Moreover, social media poses risks of discrimination and bullying among the LGBT. Cyberbullying is a matter of concern on which the perpetrators anonymously attack the group. Research indicates that cyberbullying has emerged to be a pervasive problem to LGBT which results in depression, lower academic performance, and suicidal attempts (Meyer, 2019). In addition, the existence of dating sites has ignited infidelity. Sex has been prioritized in the group, unlike romance. This presents a lot of risk factors such as losing relationships, contracting STIs, and even murder. It is important to acknowledge the co-cultural theory which reinforces that the dominant groups in the community are the ones dominating and controlling communication systems. This shows why the LGBT group has moved to dominate social media and freely reveal their identities to get more people with a similar identity. Social media appeals to all the four factors of co-cultural communication - perceived costs and rewards, the field of experience, situational context, and communication abilities (Meyer, 2019). Due to their bad past experiences with the dominant cultures, the minority LGBT group finds the anonymity and/ or vast network of social media as the best place to communicate their sexual orientation. On Facebook or Twitter, there is not much to lose in terms of reputation, so the perceived cost of communication is quite low, while the reward, which comes in form of acceptance, could be significant. Further, the openness of social media changes the situational context of the LGBT discussion. However, the same factors that make social media a strong representation of the LGBT group can be used against them in a big way, especially in conservative communities.

LGBT children are affected academically due to their situation. Children with different sexual orientations often interact in several ways in the process of learning. However, due to the stereotypes and the mentality of the community, students who belong to the LGBT community do not get an equal chance to explore their intellectual capabilities. Even though the learning environment may not be conducive to all the students irrespective of their gender or sexual orientation, the LGBT face a harsher learning environment as compared to the rest of the students who are heterosexual, which makes them suffer from emotional stress (Almeida, 2009). Lack of the necessary policies and the workable protection mechanisms has, therefore, contributed to the immense emotional torture and in certain circumstances poor academic performance in schools by students. In the school settings, the students, particularly the adolescents who are identifying themselves as LGBT face constant bullying and various forms of harassment. The students face bullying in form of verbal abuse from the rest of the students. Harassment usually occurs in the form of written texts or the students drawn as cartoons on the walls around the schools. (Thoreson, 2016) Moreover, LGBT students are usually discouraged by their fellow students from engaging in same-sex relationships and accessing bathrooms. Participation in extracurricular activities by the students is usually limited.

The Human Rights Watch study carried out in the United States in the year 2001 revealed the heartbreaking experience the LGBT students were going through in the schools in the country. According to the report, the students were faced with different discrimination including, bullying, restriction of the students to form their alliances, and other serious issues relating to bigotry given their sexual orientation (Bochenek, 2001). In some instances, the teachers themselves who are supposed to be supposed to ambassadors of championing unity and equality mocked the students (Bochenek, 2001). The students through the interviews revealed that they could not access sufficient information relating to the LGBT from both the teachers and the counselors. The libraries and the computers also lacked the relevant information that could assist them in getting answers to the serious questions they had. The harassment, bullying, and restrictions imposed on the students have devastating consequences on the student's general wellbeing and academic performance. Mechanisms and strategies are therefore needed to ensure the school's environment is responsive to the unique needs of the students who belong to the LGBT community.

Evidently, LGBT people are facing discrimination in society in various places including public places, workplaces, and at home. The immense discrimination makes them feel unsuitable to society, thus, disguising their lives so that they can fit. Some of them run away from intimate friends, workmates, and even family members so that they can find tranquility. Social media has played a vital role in enabling minorities to identify themselves and develop. Despite the benefits the LGBT people enjoy on social media, anonymous people go ahead and bully them based on gender and sexual orientation. The suffrage the group undergoes calls for more interventions despite the progress that has been in existence. Therefore, it is clear that individuals involved in LGBT are negatively represented in both communities. It is imperative to recognize them and treat them as equal normal human beings.

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