

The Research on Discrimination Against LGBTQ Youth

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Abstract:

The discriminatory lifestyle of LGBTQ youth in specific situations, as well as the scenes in schools and families, deserve public attention. This article takes LGBTQ youth as the research object, uses literature research method to study the discriminatory life, school and family scenarios of LGBTQ youth in specific situations, and proposes solutions and support system construction. Through research findings, it has been found that providing professional psychological counseling and support groups, improving the educational environment, strengthening anti discrimination education, and creating a more inclusive campus culture can enable LGBTQ youth to be respected and accepted, and better integrated. Family education is also important because parents need to have a better understanding of LGBTQ youth, and families need intervention services to manage potential family conflicts and communicate effectively. At the same time, the author also hopes that society can provide more legal protection and policy support, and strengthen social propaganda and education.

Keywords: LGBTQ; youth;discrimination.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the discourse surrounding LGBTQ rights has gained significant traction, revealing the multifaceted complexities of sexual orientation and gender identity. The estimated number of LGBT individuals varies significantly across different countries and studies, but it maintains a certain degree of comparability [1]. The acronym LGBTQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning individuals, encompassing a diverse range of identities and experiences. Each of these identities holds unique challenges as they navigate

a societal landscape still rife with prejudice and discrimination. Among these groups, LGBTQ youth face particular vulnerabilities that merit critical examination due to their formative age and developmental needs. LGBTQ youth, generally defined as individuals ages 13 to 24 who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer, experience an intersection of challenges stemming from both their sexual orientation or gender identity and their developmental stage. During adolescence, individuals are highly impressionable, seeking autonomy, acceptance, and identity formation. However, for LGBTQ teens, this period can be tumultuous, often compli-

cated by societal stigma, familial rejection, and a lack of support systems. Studies reveal that LGBTQ youth are at a higher risk for mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers. This disparity underscores the critical need for understanding and addressing the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ individuals within this age group. The discrimination faced by LGBTQ youth manifests in various domains, including educational settings, healthcare access, and social environments. Schools, often seen as safe havens for self-exploration, can also serve as environments of hostility and exclusion. Bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity remains alarmingly prevalent; a 2021 national survey indicated that nearly 70% of LGBTQ youth reported experiencing bullying at school [2]. Such negative experiences can lead to high dropout rates, decreased academic performance, and social isolation. Moreover, societal stigma extends beyond the school gate, impacting familial acceptance and access to supportive mental health resources. Many LGBTQ youth report feeling unsafe at home and in their communities, leading to a lack of emotional and psychological support during a critical juncture of their lives. The consequences of this discrimination are stark and far-reaching. Research shows that LGBTQ youth are more likely to experience homelessness and engage in self-harming behaviors than their heterosexual peers. Furthermore, systemic discrimination and lack of inclusivity in various institutions contribute to an overall environment of invisibility and marginalization. Understanding the experiences and challenges faced by LGBTQ youth is thus paramount in fostering a more inclusive society that promotes their well-being and mental health. This paper aims to delve into the current state of discrimination against LGBTQ youth, examining its manifestations, effects, and the urgent need for comprehensive support systems. The structure of the paper will unfold as follows: the first section will provide a theoretical framework on the nature of discrimination and its implications for LGBTQ youth. The second section will highlight empirical data delineating the extent of discrimination in various facets such as education, healthcare, and familial dynamics. The third section will explore the psychological and emotional ramifications of such discrimination on LGBTQ youth, drawing links to higher instances of mental health issues and suicidality. Lastly, the paper will discuss actionable recommendations for policy and practice, advocating for systemic change to create safer and more supportive environments for LGBTQ youth across all arenas of life.

2. The Group Characteristics of LGBTQ and the Forms of Discrimination They Face

2.1 Characteristics of the LGBTQ Group

Diversity: The LGBTQ group shows extremely rich diversity. In terms of sexual orientation, it covers different types such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc. Each sexual orientation represents a unique emotional tendency and lifestyle. Gender identity is also diverse, including the recognition and brave pursuit of transgender people whose self-identified gender is inconsistent with their biological gender, as well as the challenges of queer people to the traditional binary gender division. At the same time, this group comes from different ethnic backgrounds. People of various skin colors come together, carrying the cultural imprints of their respective races, adding richer colors to the LGBTQ group. Different cultural backgrounds also shape their unique values and behaviors. From the implicit and reserved in the East to the open and diverse in the West, LGBTQ individuals under the influence of different cultures have different manifestations when facing self-identification and social interaction. This diversity makes the LGBTQ group a social group full of vitality and creativity, but precisely because of this, they face more complex challenges on the road to fighting for equal rights.

Concealment: Social pressure and discrimination are like heavy shackles, making many LGBTQ individuals have to choose to hide their identities. In a social environment where traditional concepts still dominate, the LGBTQ group often faces misunderstanding and prejudice from various aspects such as family, school, and workplace. Worries about being excluded, ridiculed, losing jobs or facing opposition from family members make them hide their true selves behind masks. This concealment not only makes them bear huge psychological pressure, but also makes it difficult for society to accurately grasp the real scale and needs of this group. They may suppress their emotional expressions in public places, avoid overly intimate actions with same-sex partners, and even deliberately disguise their sexual orientation or gender identity in social occasions. This concealed state protects them from direct harm to a certain extent, but at the same time it hinders their communication and integration with other groups, further deepening society's misunderstanding and estrangement from them.

Vulnerability: LGBTQ youth often show high vulnerability at the psychological and social levels. At the stage of

growth, they are already facing many challenges such as self-identification, academic pressure, and interpersonal relationships. The particularity of sexual orientation or gender identity adds an extra burden to them. Social discrimination and lack of understanding make them prone to self-doubt and inferiority complex, and feel confused and painful about their identities. They may constantly ask themselves: „Why am I different from others? „ „Am I abnormal? „ This inner struggle will seriously affect their mental health. At the social level, they are more likely to be discriminated against and hurt, and lack sufficient support and protection. When facing bullying from classmates, rejection from family or prejudice from society, they often feel helpless and lonely and lack effective coping strategies. This vulnerability makes them more likely to fall into psychological difficulties when facing difficulties and setbacks, and may even lead to the occurrence of psychological problems such as depression and anxiety.

2.2 Forms of Discrimination Faced by LGBTQ Youth

2.2.1 Discrimination in schools

In schools, which should be a palace of knowledge and a paradise for growth, LGBTQ youth often become the targets of bullying by classmates. Verbal insults are like sharp swords, deeply stinging their hearts. Discriminatory nicknames such as „sissy „ and „tomboy „, are not only attacks on them personally, but also disrespect for the entire LGBTQ group. Laughter and abuse echo in classrooms, corridors and playgrounds, leaving them nowhere to escape [3]. Physical attacks cause double trauma to their body and mind. Violent behaviors such as pushing and beating not only bring physical pain to them, but also make them full of fear of schools that should be safe places. In addition, social exclusion is also a common form of discrimination. Classmates intentionally isolate LGBTQ youth and do not interact with them or participate in activities, as if they are forgotten corners. In group assignments and extracurricular activities, they are excluded and cannot feel the friendship and warmth among classmates.

At the same time, some teachers and school administrators lack understanding and support for LGBTQ students and may even have implicit discriminatory attitudes. They may avoid discussions on LGBTQ-related topics, thinking that this is a sensitive topic that should not be mentioned. When handling bullying incidents, they may not be fair enough and fail to give sufficient protection to LGBTQ students. For example, in sports activities and locker rooms, transgender students may feel uncomfortable and marginalized. They may face the strange eyes and inap-

propriate words of classmates, but teachers fail to stop this behavior in time. This makes transgender students feel uneasy everywhere in school life and cannot be fully devoted to learning and growing.

2.2.2 Discrimination in families

Families should be the warm harbor and strong backing for children, but for some LGBTQ youth, families have become the source of their pain [4]. Some families find it difficult to accept their children ‚s sexual orientation or gender identity, leading to tense parent-child relationships. Parents may show emotions such as disappointment, anger, and rejection and criticize their children. They may not understand their children ‚s choices and think it is an abnormal behavior. This tense parent-child relationship will bring huge psychological pressure to LGBTQ youth and affect their emotional stability and self-identification. They will begin to doubt whether they have really done something wrong and whether they should change themselves to meet their parents’ expectations. In extreme cases, families may reject or even sever ties with LGBTQ youth. This is undoubtedly a heavy blow to them. They lose family financial support and emotional reliance and fall into difficulties. Some LGBTQ youth may become homeless or have to rely on external forces such as friends and social organizations to survive. They struggle in loneliness and helplessness and are full of confusion and fear for the future.

2.2.3 Discrimination in society

When renting or buying a house, LGBTQ youth may encounter discrimination. Landlords may refuse to rent houses to them, worrying that they will bring trouble or affect the value of the house. Or set obstacles in signing contracts, making them feel helpless and frustrated [5]. This kind of housing discrimination makes them face greater difficulties in finding suitable living places and increases their living costs and pressure.

In the field of public services, such as medical care, education, and social security, LGBTQ youth may also be discriminated against. Medical service providers may not pay enough attention to their health needs or have biases when providing services. They may misjudge the conditions of LGBTQ patients or give inappropriate treatment. Educational institutions may treat LGBTQ students unfairly in terms of enrollment and scholarships, limiting their development opportunities [6]. The social security system may also fail to fully consider their special needs, making them face difficulties when enjoying social welfare [7].

During the employment process, LGBTQ youth may face various forms of discrimination. Employers may refuse to hire them because of their sexual orientation or gender

identity, thinking that they do not conform to the company's culture or image. Or give them unfair treatment at work, such as fewer promotion opportunities and lower salary. They may need to put in more effort than others to obtain the same recognition and opportunities. In addition, colleagues in the workplace may also have discriminatory behaviors towards LGBTQ employees, affecting their work environment and career development. They may be subject to sarcasm, exclusion or isolation from colleagues, unable to integrate into the team, and difficult to give full play to their talents.

3. Solution Strategy and Support System Construction

3.1 Mental Health Support

3.1.1 Provide professional psychological counseling

In response to the vulnerability of LGBTQ adolescents at the psychological and social level, schools and social institutions must take proactive measures. This includes the provision of professional psychological counseling services with one-on-one counseling for these adolescents by experienced psychological counselors [8]. These professionals can not only help them to deal with self-doubt and inferiority complex, but also guide them to explore and confirm their identity, thus enhancing their confidence and sense of self-worth. Psychological counselors can use a variety of psychological treatments such as cognitive behavioral therapy and emotional focus therapy to help teenagers deal with the inner struggle, reduce depression, anxiety and other psychological problems.

3.1.2 Establishment of a support group

Support groups are an important part of the LGBTQ youth social network. These groups can be held regularly to provide a platform for teenagers to share their personal stories, feelings and challenges. In the group, members can support each other and share coping strategies, thus reducing the sense of isolation [9]. Group activities can include role-playing, seminars and social activities designed to enhance connections among members and enhance their social skills and cope with stress. Through these activities, adolescents are able to recognize that they are not alone and that their feelings are understood and respected.

3.2 Improvement of the Educational Environment

3.2.1 Strengthening anti-discrimination education

Schools are important places for teenagers to grow up, so

it is crucial to strengthen anti-discrimination education. Schools can incorporate LGBTQ history and culture into the curriculum so that students to understand and respect the diversity of gender and sexual orientation from an early age. In addition, schools can hold a variety of theme weeks or events, such as Pride Month celebrations, inviting LGBTQ activists and speakers to the school to share their stories, in order to increase student awareness of the LGBTQ community. Through these educational activities, schools can create a more open and inclusive atmosphere and reduce bullying and discrimination.

3.2.2 Creating an inclusive campus culture

The establishment of an inclusive campus culture needs to start from the details. The school should ensure that all facilities, including locker rooms and toilets, are safe and friendly to all students. For example, schools can provide bathrooms for single-gender use, or have neutral bathrooms to accommodate students with different gender identities. In addition, schools can encourage students and teachers to wear clothes representing the LGBTQ for pride, such as rainbow-colored ties or badges, to demonstrate support for the LGBTQ community. With these measures, schools can send a clear message to LGBTQ teenagers: they are accepted and respected.

3.3 Family Support

3.3.1 Family education and communication

Family is the first class for teenagers to grow up, and therefore, family education and communication are very important. Parents should learn how to better understand and support their LGBTQ children through reading, seminars, and family tutoring. Parents need to understand that sexual orientation and gender identity are part of a child's identity, not choice or illness. Through family conversations, parents can express their love and support for their children, and they can also ask about their children's needs and feelings, so as to build a closer and more understanding family relationship.

3.3.2 Home intervention services

For those families with strained parent-child relationships, family intervention services can provide professional help. These services often include family therapy and counseling, with professional family therapists directing family members for effective communication and conflict resolution. A family therapist can help family members understand each other's feelings, learn how to express love and acceptance, and how to deal with issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity. With these interventions, families can be transformed into a supportive environment

where LGBTQ adolescents feel safe and loved.

3.4 Optimization of the Social Environment

3.4.1 Legal protection and policy support

The government plays a key role in protecting the rights and interests of the LGBTQ youth [10]. By creating and implementing anti-discrimination laws, the government can provide legal protection for LGBTQ groups, ensuring that they are not treated unfairly in employment, housing, health care and education. In addition, the government can also provide policy support, such as tax incentives, financial subsidies, etc., to encourage enterprises and organizations to adopt inclusive measures to promote the employment and career development of LGBTQ groups. Through these measures, the government can create a more equitable and friendly social environment for LGBTQ youth.

3.4.2 Social publicity and education

Social propaganda and education are an important means to change public perception and reduce discrimination. Public awareness and understanding of the LGBTQ community can be improved through media campaigns, public events, and educational programs. For example, documentaries on the challenges and achievements of LGBTQ youth can be produced and broadcast, public lectures and seminars held and LGBTQ activists and experts invited to share their insights. Through these activities, society can gradually eliminate prejudice and misunderstanding about LGBTQ groups and promote a more inclusive and diverse social atmosphere.

4. Conclusion

The challenges presented for LGBTQ adolescents are complex and multidimensional, involving multiple levels of psychology, education, family, and society. By providing mental health support, improving the educational environment, strengthening family support, and optimizing the social environment, we can build a more supportive and inclusive environment for them to grow up in. This not only helps them overcome the difficulties of growing up and realize their personal potential, but is also a necessary step in building a just, equal and diverse society. Through these comprehensive strategies, we can jointly promote a more open and inclusive future, allowing every teenager to grow up in an environment without fear and discrimination. This study has several limitations. First, the research mainly focuses on the challenges faced by LGBTQ ado-

lescents in general, without delving into the specific issues of different groups within the community. Second, the study does not provide a detailed analysis of the effectiveness of the strategies proposed and their implementation in different contexts. Future research could explore these areas in more depth to provide a more comprehensive understanding and solutions. It is recommended that future scholars pay more attention to the specific needs and experiences of different LGBTQ adolescent groups, as well as the practical challenges and effectiveness of intervention measures in diverse socio-cultural contexts.

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