

“EMBRACING DIVERSITY? A CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION OF INFLUENCES ON STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN LGBT ACTIVITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION”

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Abstract: *Recognizing the rising emphasis on diversity and inclusion, this study looks at the factors that influence student participation in LGBT activities in higher education. The study will use earlier research to uncover the characteristics that impact students' decisions to attend LGBT-related activities on campus. The term LGBT, which refers to sexual minority communities, exemplifies the evolving nature of inclusiveness. The study, which focuses on Malaysia, demonstrates the difficulties that the LGBT community suffers in a cultural and legal environment where same-sex relationships are considered taboo and illegal. The findings indicate the potential impact of cultural, religious, and legal factors on acceptance in Malaysian culture. The study provides insights into the various variables determining LGBT student engagement by investigating influencing factors such as natural personality, childhood sexuality role orientation, repercussions of sexual harassment, and peer influence. This study contributes to the greater conversation on diversity and inclusion in higher education by emphasizing the significance of having a sophisticated understanding of the difficulties that the LGBT community encounters.*

Keywords: *LGBT, Higher Education, Factor Influencing LGBT.*

Introduction

In today's higher education settings, the push for inclusion and diversity has become louder, reflecting a cultural movement toward acknowledging and appreciating the breadth of human experiences and identities. Hu et al., (2022) stated among the several facets of diversity, the inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) people has arisen as a focus topic for academic investigation and institutional consideration. This conceptual inquiry aims to dive into the complex terrain of factors that impact student engagement in LGBT activities in higher education.

The importance of diversity and inclusion cannot be stressed as institutions of higher learning strive to build settings that stimulate intellectual progress, personal development, and societal awareness. The range of sexual orientations and gender identities adds greatly to the tapestry of variety, providing new views, problems, and possibilities to the educational environment. Recognizing this, our conceptual study seeks to elucidate the underlying variables that influence students' decisions to actively participate in LGBT-related activities on college and university campuses. (Peel et al., 2023)

Definition of LGBT

The term LGBT by Price, (2011) refers to a conceptually interrelated group of sexual minority communities that includes Lesbian (L), Gay (G), Bisexual (B), and Transgender (T). This acronym is famous for its extreme pliability. It has been repeatedly re-modelled to include other minority populations, and as a result, it has become a useful, if perhaps abused, tool for demonstrating inclusion. Indeed, some research has gone so far as to broaden the abbreviation to include Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual/Two-Spirited Queer/Questioning, and Intersex persons (LGBTTTQI), with the goal of excluding no one.

The Scenario of LGBT in Malaysia

Study by Hoffarth & Hodson, (2020) showed that The Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM) estimated that the number of gay males climbed from 173,000 to 310,000 in five years up to 2018. The increased number of LGBT people would increase heterosexuals' everyday interaction with LGBT people. Intergroup interaction can serve as a strategy to enhance acceptance of LGBT people and eliminate negative stigma associated with them.

According to the Ling & Ting, (2022) findings, approximately half of the respondents have direct contact with LGBT people, such as having close friends who are LGBT or knowing an LGBT couple, but very few have attended a marriage ceremony for LGBT couples, are in a romantic relationship with LGBT people, or are LGBT themselves. The majority of respondents are aware of the issues faced by LGBT people by reading about them, but few have taken active measures to demonstrate public support for LGBT people. Respondents can tolerate it if their friends, neighbors, coworkers, instructors, and close relatives are LGBT, but they are less tolerant if their kid or religious leader.

Due to Islamic beliefs and legislation, LGBT people in Malaysia are still considered taboo. Same-sex relationships are illegal not just under Sharia (Islamic) law, but also under civil law. For example, Penal Code 377(A) and 377(B) declare that anybody who engages in "carnal intercourse against the order of natural" would be punished and imprisoned for up to 20 years. (Lim et al., 2018)

Factors Influencing LGBT Student Participation

Natural Personality

The results of the study found by Akhir et al., (2019) that the majority of informants admitted that their soft, feminine natural personality and instinct to be attracted to men had influenced them to be involved in LGBT. Personality is closely related to a person's behaviour where it determines how an individual gets along with the people around him.

Study by Apperson et al., (2015) understanding the link between LGBT people and their natural personality features is critical for fostering acceptance and supporting their psychological well-being. Miles & Fassinger, (2014) stated the understanding the nature of LGBT identity and its relationship to natural personality features is a difficult issue to grasp. Biological, environmental, and social elements also play a role in the creation of LGBT identity.

Identifying the nature of LGBT identity and its relationship to specific aspects of personality is a difficult problem. Understanding the nature of LGBT identity and its relationship to specific personality natural features is a difficult problem.

According to Lamanna et al., (2020) Personality describes a person as being distinct from other people, and the behaviour patterns that become the individual's habit are the result of social learning from the environment, and some argue that it is also influenced by the complex interaction between genetics and hormones without regard for the individual's choices.

Sexuality Role Orientation During Childhood

Furthermore, the study's findings on LGBT in higher education by Akhir et al., (2019) revealed orientation. The role of sexuality has a minor impact on LGBT informants. The informant revealed misconduct in their childhood sexuality and the influencing environment different lifestyle than gender their origins have caused them to experience gender identity confusion and therefore trapped in LGBT.

There is continuous research into the development of sexual orientation and gender identity in children and teenagers. According to research by Kar et al., (2015), self-awareness of sexuality, including gender role and gender identity, develops during childhood.

While Akpan, (2019) believed genetic variables also have role in sexual orientation, the interaction of genetic and environmental effects makes identifying a single determinant difficult. The psychological approach also connects a person's conduct to how they are educated and nurtured from birth to adolescence and maturity. Ninggal, (2003) mention all behaviours taught in a family have an impact on the child's development. This is due to the fact that how parents teach and mould their children's personalities may impact their children's identity, role, and gender orientation.

Addiction Consequences of Sexual Harassment

The study's findings by Akhir et al., (2019) also revealed that the experience of being a victim of sexual harassment played a role in informants' engagement as LGBT. The informant who study in high education institution indicated that suffering sexual harassment at school was the catalyst for the informant's engagement with LGBT.

Sexual harassment can have significant consequences, including addiction. According to Liebschutz et al., (2002) studies, people who have experienced sexual assault or misconduct often prefer to self-medicate with drugs or alcohol to deal with their sentiments and emotions about the occurrence. Batri et al., (2016) discovered that suffering sexual abuse and harassment as a kid, especially if it was the first sexual experience, was a substantial factor of gay conduct as an adult.

Many participants in study by Watson et al., (2021) reported a variety of relational and sexual affects for instance, greater caution when entering into relationships with people of a specific gender, sexual discomfort, decreased sexual agency as well as effects on their bisexual identity such as identity disclosure process, questions about multiple aspects of their identities.

D'augelli et al., (2020) investigated the association between sexual orientation development milestones and childhood gender atypicality. They also looked at the links between childhood gender atypicality and two measures of contemporary adjustment: self-esteem and internalized homophobia. Internalized homophobia may more clearly reflect early gender atypicality worries. It has been connected to a variety of problems among adult LGB persons. The repercussions of LGB youth's changing sexual orientation and gender atypicality include intentional parental efforts to reduce gender atypicality.

Peer Influence

Peers, particularly throughout adolescence, can have a substantial impact on the formation of gender identity and views about sexual orientation. According to studies by Kornienko et al., (2016), friends have a considerable effect on their peers, even in areas of gender identity, and peer networks can determine how much pressure young people feel to adhere to gender norms.

Furthermore, the study by Akhir et al., (2019) discovered that the effect of same-sex friends is one of the elements that affect LGBT informants. According to the informant, he has numerous same-sex friends who are participating in LGBT activities at the institution where he studies, and they frequently relate stories that persuade the informant to participate in the same activity.

Peer influence is highly potent because of the community. Worrell et al., (2022) stated When LGBTQ community members assist their friends with their mental health, they encounter a number of issues. Individuals who take up informal peer-support positions assume a great deal of responsibility. Members of the LGBTQ community who volunteer to help others should be better supported in handling their obligations and the implications of their actions.

Discussion

Finally, this conceptual investigation digs into the complex aspects impacting student involvement in LGBT activities in higher education settings. Recognizing the changing landscape of diversity and inclusion, especially in terms of sexual orientations and gender identities, is critical for creating meaningful learning environments. The study emphasizes the necessity of understanding the factors that influence students' decisions to engage in LGBT-related activities on college and university campuses. As Peel et al., (2023) explain, the pursuit of such knowledge is essential to the larger objective of establishing educational places that not only encourage intellectual advancement but also contribute to personal development and societal awareness.

The situation portrayed in this study of LGBT persons in Malaysia throws light on the obstacles experienced by the group in a cultural setting where same-sex relationships are not only considered taboo but are also legally outlawed. The findings highlight the possible influence of cultural, religious, and legislative issues on the acceptance and involvement of LGBT people in Malaysian society. Despite the challenges, the study suggests that intergroup relationships and tolerance are important in developing perceptions and attitudes about the LGBT population. As Malaysia grapples with the junction of cultural norms and changing social attitudes, initiatives to get an understanding of LGBT and not promote inclusiveness are becoming increasingly important in establishing better higher education environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the LGBT issue is caused by a variety of variables, of which the ones discussed in this article are only a few. There are several more factors that contribute to the prevalence of LGBT among students in higher education institutions. This LGBT problem is not limited to Islamic nations like Malaysia; it is a worldwide issue, and there is already a movement that supports LGBT despite Islam's opposition. Based on the criteria stated, authorities are hoping to develop a program to counteract this conduct.

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