



IMPACT OF HOMOPHOBIA ON THE SELF- ESTEEM OF ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The impact of homophobia on the self-esteem of young adults (those between the ages of 18 and 25), with an emphasis on gender variations, is the aim of the study. A person's sense of self-worth may be severely affected by homophobia, which is characterized as prejudice or unfavorable sentiments towards homosexuality, particularly in the early years of adulthood. This research aims to fill a gap in our understanding by investigating how homophobia affects self-esteem in this age range. The purpose of the study is to examine how gender plays a role in the correlation between homophobic experiences and low self-esteem by collecting and analyzing data from surveys and questionnaires. The study also studied gender differences in how people react to homophobia, as well as how people in general perceive and react to societal expectations, stereotypes, or cultural norms. Researcher hopes that this study's results will shed light on how homophobia affects young people' self-esteem and lead to programs that help this demographic feel more accepted and healthier.

Keywords: *Homophobia, Self-Esteem, Young Adults, Gender Differences, Psychological Impact, Mental Health*

INTRODUCTION

It's becoming more and more important to understand how people's emotions about homosexuality, and homophobia, impact their self-esteem in the modern world. The main question of this quantitative study is how homophobia affects the self-esteem for young people between the ages of 18 and 25. The study will focus on any changes between genders. Teenage years and early adulthood are important times for shaping who we are and what we believe, including how we feel about sexuality. Homophobia, which means having bad feelings or beliefs about homosexuals, can hurt a person's self-esteem, especially when they are still growing up.

While earlier study has shown that homophobia is bad for mental health, more needs to be done to fully understand how it affects self-esteem, especially in young people. By concentrating on this age group, one can learn more about how homophobia might affect self-esteem over time and come up with ways to help people who are having trouble with this. The other thing this study wants to find out is if the way homosexuality affects self-esteem is different for men and women. Knowing about possible gender differences can help one get a better sense of how societal views on homosexuals affect people in different ways depending on their gender.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Looking at what is already known about people's feelings towards homosexuality as well as how it impacts their self-esteem can help us understand the context of this research. In

recent years, there has been a lot of discussion about homophobia, which refers to unfavorable thoughts or attitudes towards homosexuality. Anxiety, despair, and poor self-esteem are only some of the negative mental health repercussions that may result from holding such negative views, as is well known. When it comes to young people, this is particularly important since they are still developing their sense of identity and values.

The importance of self-esteem on our self-perception cannot be overstated. It changes the way we deal with problems and the people around us. Feeling awful about oneself and lacking confidence are symptoms of poor self-esteem. Even while we know that homophobia may affect self-esteem, there is still much we don't know about it, particularly in relation to young people. To address that knowledge vacuum, this research targets young people (those between the ages of 18 and 25) and examines the effects of homophobia on their sense of self-worth. Additionally, we are interested in determining if the impact of homophobia on self-esteem varies among genders. To better assist those who may be struggling with issues of self-esteem and views towards homosexuality, it is helpful to have a knowledge of these distinctions.

To better understand the interplay between homophobia and self-esteem, particularly among young people, and how to assist them, this study expands upon previous research on the subject.

THE IMPACT OF HOMOPHOBIA ON SELF-ESTEEM

An individual's self-esteem may take a serious hit when they experience homophobia, or unfavorable attitudes towards homosexuality. When someone encounters homophobia, it may make one feel bad about themselves just because of their sexual orientation. The

foundation of a healthy self-image is a person's sense of self-confidence, and this may have a devastating effect on their self-esteem.

For instance, picture this: “someone is constantly being told negative things about themselves or the people they care about. It could make them feel inferior to others or perhaps that there's a problem with who they are. They may start to question themselves and have low self-esteem because of this.”

The negative impacts of homophobia on self-esteem are not limited to the short term; they may linger for a long time. People could start to believe untruths about themselves or others who are like them if they are constantly subjected to unfavorable criticism. They may find it very challenging to develop a positive self-image because of this. Experiencing homophobia may be particularly challenging for young people, since they are still coming to terms with their identity and values. It has the potential to impact their self-perception, relationships, and connections with others. Adding this on top of all the other changes they're experiencing might be overwhelming.

SOCIAL ISOLATION AND FEELING DIFFERENT

The second category focuses on the way feeling alone and different among others due to homophobia may have a detrimental effect on one's self-esteem. An individual who is homophobic may believe that their attraction to certain people makes them feel as if they don't belong or fit in. As a result of worrying that other people won't accept them as who they really are, individuals may experience feelings of isolation and loneliness. It's like feeling ostracized from social circles or a group due to circumstances beyond their control. Their self-esteem may be severely impacted by this feeling of being different, leading them to doubt their own value.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSES TO HOMOPHOBIA

The subtopic examines whether responses to homophobia—a term used to describe unfavorable attitudes or behaviors against homosexuality—varies depending on the gender. It explores at how cultural norms, stereotypes, and social expectations may impact how boys and girls see homophobia and themselves. Due to societal expectations, homophobia may manifest differently in boys and females. For example, males may attempt to suppress any sadness or humiliation they feel from encountering homophobia since they are generally instructed to be strong and not be expressive. However, females may have a sense of obligation to provide for and nurture others, which might cause them to take criticism of their sexuality more seriously and result in poor self-esteem.

How males and females react to homophobia may also be greatly influenced by cultural norms and stereotypes. Males may face more pressure to uphold stereotypical notions of masculinity in certain cultures, which may increase their need to conceal any emotions of vulnerability brought on by homophobia. Females, on the other hand, may come across stereotypes that characterize them as "emotional" or "weak" if they express pain in reaction to homophobia, which may worsen their self-esteem. Furthermore, an individual's experience of homophobia and its effect on their self-esteem may be influenced by the intersections of gender with other characteristics such as racial or sexual orientation, or ethnicity. For example, given of the way society perceives and treats individuals depending on their gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity, a homosexual guy of color may encounter different obstacles than a straight white lady.

GENDER DIFFERENCE'S REACTION TO HOMOPHOBIA

The section examines potential gender differences in responses to homophobia, which refers to unfavorable attitudes or behaviors towards homosexuality. It examines how social expectations & cultural norms might impact individuals' responses and emotions toward themselves.

Gender differences in responses to homophobia may be influenced by societal norms and expectations. Boys are often encouraged to exhibit toughness and suppress their emotions. If they encounter homophobia, they may attempt to conceal their emotions and pretend it does not affect them. This may impede their ability to communicate their emotions and get assistance. Conversely, girls may have more expectations to exhibit nurturing and loving qualities. If they encounter homophobia, they may internalize it more profoundly and endure significant emotional distress. They may also have heightened concern with others' opinions, perhaps impacting their self-esteem. Cultural norms and prejudices may influence the responses of boys and girls to homophobia. Some cultures may have more expectations for males to conform to specific masculine behaviors. This can compel individuals to conceal any sentiments of pain or humiliation resulting from encountering homophobia.

HOMOPHOBIA AND MENTAL HEALTH

This section examines the effects of homophobia, defined as unfavorable attitudes or behaviors towards homosexuality, on the mental well-being of young people. It delves at the impact of persistent exposure to homophobic ideas on mental health, potentially resulting in conditions such as anxiety, depression, and various other psychological difficulties. Homophobia may significantly impact the emotional well-being of young people. Consider the impact of constantly being exposed to derogatory comments about one's sexual orientation or

feeling compelled to conceal one's true self due to homophobia. It might cause individuals to feel inadequate or unaccepted for their authentic selves. Persistent negativity may result in anxiety, characterized by persistent worry and nervousness, or depression, marked by profound sadness and hopelessness. Prolonged exposure to homophobia may increase the difficulty for young people in managing life's obstacles. It seems as if they are burdened by a weight that complicates their ability to cope with things. This may impact their interpersonal interactions and their capacity to get pleasure from previously enjoyed activities.

Establishing supportive and inclusive settings is crucial for young people experiencing homophobia. Feeling welcomed and supported may foster resilience, enabling individuals to recover from challenging situations. Having a supportive network of friends, family, and communities may significantly impact their mental well-being. It is essential to comprehend the impact of homophobia on mental health to effectively assist young individuals. By acknowledging the detrimental effects of homophobia affects self-esteem and mental health, we may strive to establish situations that foster acceptance and resilience in young people, irrespective of their sexual preference.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Compared to heterosexuals, members of sexual minorities are more likely to suffer from mental health issues. Minority stress may account for the discrepancy, according to others, as it increases the prevalence of general mental risk factors including poor self-esteem. Using a meta-analysis and a systematic review, this research examined the self-esteem of heterosexuals versus members of sexual minorities. Four databases were searched methodically. Research comparing the levels of self-esteem in heterosexual men and women and members of sexual minorities was also considered. A random effects meta-analysis and a qualitative synthesis were

carried out. We used subgroup analyses based on age, sexual orientation, the sample type to look for moderators. Out of the 32 studies that met the criteria, 25 compared men's self-esteem and 19 compared women's. For the most part, researchers measured participants' self-esteem using the Rosenberg Scale for Self-Esteem (RSES). Sexual minority males ($SMD = -0.33$, 95% confidence interval $[-0.44, -0.23]$) and women ($SMD = -0.20$, ninety-five CI $[-0.29, -0.11]$) had considerably poorer self-esteem when compared to heterosexual men and women. The kind of sample seems to mitigate this difference: Men and bisexual people showed stronger differences, according to early findings. According to the results by Rimes (2019), sexual minorities tend to have poorer self-esteem compared to heterosexuals. The included studies did not all use the same methodology, thus it is important to proceed with care before making any conclusions.

The causes of transphobia and other forms of bigotry against trans individuals are poorly understood. Anderson (2017) used social identity theory as a framework, we looked at 391 cisgender heterosexual students at a university in the Midwest who identified as such and investigated the correlation between low gender self-esteem, homophobia, and transphobia. Transgender women reported higher rates of aggression, taunting, and discomfort around them than trans males did, while men reported higher rates of sexual and transgender discrimination overall. Lesbian women reported higher rates of prejudice against homosexual men. Although transgender people are more likely to be teased by males than by women, men tend to feel more uncomfortable around trans women, while women tend to feel more uncomfortable around trans men. For males, gender self-esteem was a strong predictor of transphobia and sexual harassment, but for women, it was not. Our findings are in line with previous studies suggesting that transphobia and sexual prejudice among males may have common causes, whereas the variables that influence women's prejudice might be more gender specific.

Numerous studies have shown a correlation between homophobia and many indicators of health, including internalized, perceived, and real forms of the disorder. An effort was made to investigate this connection by Dinos (2015) in two locations with perhaps varying degrees of homophobia—London, UK, and Athens, Greece. A study was conducted with 178 MSM residing in London and 173 MSM residing in Athens to examine their sexuality beliefs, perceptions of local homophobia, and appraisal of their identity in terms of global self-esteem. In every place studied, the data showed that homophobia was inversely related to self-esteem. On the other hand, Athens MSM scored better on global self-esteem and did not vary on most markers of internalized homophobia, even though they perceived far greater levels of regional homophobia compared to London MSM. A lot of what made the connection work was the urban setting.

Regular physical exercise is a key factor in maintaining good health. There is a lack of data about the psychosocial factors that contribute to sexual orientation inequalities in physical exercise. Study by Austin (2014) aims to compare the number of hours that adolescents and young adults participate in team sports and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) each week based on their sexual orientation. It will also look at how gender nonconformity and poor athletic self-esteem may contribute to any variations found. Data analysis including 5,272 men and 7,507 females during the US Grow Up Now Study (ages 12-22 years) conducted from 1999 through 2005 waves. When compared to same-gender heterosexuals, social minorities (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, and primarily heterosexual) reported 1.21-2.62 hours per week less MVPA ($p < 0.01$) and a 46%-76% lower likelihood of participating in team sports. Among the variances in sexual orientation MVPA, gender nonconformity & athletic self-esteem explained 46% to 100%.

There is a persistent problem with transgender and gender non-conforming people becoming victims of victimization, microaggressions, and other forms of prejudice. Research on

resilience-based paths to health among this demographic is scant, but it is in line with the minority stressors concept that TGNC persons constantly face hurdles to wellness in modern society. The purpose of the research by Witten (2023) was to examine the effect on self-esteem of people who identified as TGNC of internalized transphobic prejudice and the relationship between this stigma and social connection, a possible buffer against minority stress. At a nationwide transgender conference, 65 individuals who identified as TGNC provided data. According to multiple regression analysis, having strong social connections has a good effect on self-esteem while having internalized transphobia has the opposite effect. There was no statistically significant moderating effect of social connection on the correlation between internalized transphobia & self-esteem. The researchers suggest that if there is a need for TGNC community to be more resilient and healthier, we need to implement both small-scale and large-scale interventions that promote social connectivity and reduce internalized transphobic stigma.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of homophobia on self-esteem among young adults aged 18 to 25, with a specific focus on comparing how this effect varies between genders.

VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

Independent Variable

Homophobia: In this study, homophobia serves as the independent variable. Homophobia refers to negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours towards individuals who

identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+). It encompasses discriminatory actions, prejudice, and hostility towards individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Homophobia can manifest in various forms, including verbal harassment, social exclusion, and physical violence.

Dependent Variable

Self-Esteem: Self-esteem is the dependent variable in this study, representing the subjective evaluation of one's worth, value, and capabilities. It encompasses feelings of self-worth, self-acceptance, and confidence in one's abilities. High self-esteem is associated with positive mental health outcomes, resilience to adversity, and adaptive coping strategies. Conversely, low self-esteem can lead to negative psychological consequences, including depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To analyze the impact of homophobia on self-esteem among genders of young adults (18-25 years)
- To analyze the relationship between homophobia and self-esteem among genders of young adults (18-25 years).

HYPOTHESIS

- There is no significant impact of homophobia on self-esteem among male and female (18-25 years).
- There is a positive relationship between homophobia on self-esteem among male and female (18-25 years).

PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

The sample consists of 100 individuals and the sampling design will be purposive sampling which include both male and female participants. The sample mainly consists of people of age group 18- 25 years.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The data in this study will be obtained with the help of the scales named “Homophobia Scale and Rosenberg self-esteem scale” as well as demographic form.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The data will be gathered using three questionnaires: the “Homophobia Scale and Rosenberg self-esteem scale”. After explaining the study's goals, participants will be requested to take part and will be given a questionnaire package that includes information about the study, concerns about privacy, the researcher's contact details, and other measures. Ten minutes will be needed to describe the instruments.

HOMOPHOBIA SCALE

Description and Scoring of The Scale

The homophobia scale was developed by Lester and colleagues. The HS consists of 25 statements to which respondents answer on a 5-point Likert scale of 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). Most of the homophobia scales currently in use measure attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals and what has been referred to as homonegativity. The inclusion of

items that assess social avoidance and aggressive acting, in addition to the attitudinal items found on many homophobia measures, differentiates the HS from other scales.

A total score can be calculated for the scale. Items which are reverse scored are: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25 (to reverse score the items 1 = 5, 2 = 4, 3 = 3, 4 = 2, 5 = 1). Use these reverse scores to calculate total score.

To calculate the total scale score: Add the responses to items 1–25; then subtract 25 from the total scale score. The range of scores will be between 0 and 100, with a score of 0 being the least homophobic and 100 being the most homophobic.

Reliability: The scale yielded an overall α reliability coefficient of $r = .94$, $p < .01$ and a 1-week test-retest reliability coefficient of $r = .96$, $p < .01$.

Validity: Concurrent validity was established using the Index of Homophobia (IHP; Hudson & Ricketts, 1980). A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed using overall scores for the IHP and the HS. The results yielded a significant correlation, $r = .66$, $p < .01$, indicating the two scales are measuring a similar construct. The moderately strong correlation suggests the HS measures something different than the IHP.

ROSENBERG SELF ESTEEM SCALE

Description and Scoring of The Scale

The scale was developed by Rosenberg. Scale that assesses global self-worth by taking into account both positive and negative sentiments about the self in a 10-item scale as far as we can tell, the scale has just one dimension. There are five-point Likert scale, from strongly agreeing to strongly disagreeing, for each question. Measurement of self-worth is done using a

ten-item RSE scale. A high school student's self-esteem was first measured by the test. There are criteria in place for several of these categories, including adults who have been using the scale from its inception.

For items marked with an (R), reverse the scoring (for example, 0 = 3, 1 = 2, 2 = 1, 3 = 0). For those items without an (R) next to them, simply add the score. Typical scores on the Rosenberg scale are around 22, with most people scoring between 15 and 25. A score of less than 15 suggests low self-esteem may be an issue.

Reliability: The RSE has a Guttman scale coefficient of repeatability of .92, which indicates exceptional internal consistency. Test-retest reliability showed correlations of .85 and .88 over a two-week period, indicating exceptional stability.

Validity: Demonstrates contemporaneity, predictability, and construct validity by using well-known groups. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI) exhibits a significant correlation with the RSE. Furthermore, the RSE has a clear correlation with measures of melancholy and anxiety.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

For this study SPSS software will be used. Descriptive statistics test Pearson Correlation analysis as well as Regression Analysis was used to prove the hypothesis.

INTERPRETATION

The aim of the study is to investigate the impact of homophobia on self-esteem in young adults aged 18 to 25, using a comparison study of genders. The purpose is to examine the complicated dynamics surrounding the influence of homophobia on the self-esteem of the

individuals within this demographic, as well as investigating potential variances and nuances across different gender identities. Through an in-depth examination of the responses acquired via survey questionnaires, to shed light on the intricate interplay between experiences of homophobia and the development of self-esteem in young adults.

Table 1

Demographics of respondents (gender)

Gender	Count of Gender
Female	50
Male	50
Total	100

The table depicts the gender distribution of 100 young adults aged 18-25 years, with 50 females and 50 males represented.

Table 2

Demographics of respondents (Age group)

Age Group	Count
18-21	41
22-25	59
Total	100

The table shows how the study's participants were divided into age categories. This distribution shows that the majority of participants (59%) are between the ages of 22 and 25, with the remaining 41% aged 18 to 21.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of all variables

	HS	RSE
Mean	76.69	13.74747
Standard Deviation	26.24196	3.323827
N	100	100

The table displays descriptive statistics for two variables, the Homophobia Score (HS) and the Self-Esteem Score (RSE), obtained from a study investigating the influence of homophobia on self-esteem in young adults aged 18-25. The mean HS is 76.69 with a standard deviation of 26.24, and the mean RSE is 13.75 with a standard deviation of 3.32, assuming a sample size of 100 for both variables. These data give information about the average levels and variability of homophobia and self-esteem among participants, allowing for future investigation of their relationship and possible variances between genders.

Table 4

Impact of Homophobia on self-esteem among males

SUMMARY OUTPUT	
Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.331097
R Square	0.109625
Adjusted R Square	0.091076
Standard Error	2.416173
Observations	50

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	34.50126	34.50126	5.909885	0.018841
Residual	48	280.2187	5.83789		
Total	49	314.72			

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant impact of homophobia on self-esteem among male (18-25 years).

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is no significant impact of homophobia on self-esteem among male (18-25 years)

The significance value (also known as p-value) in the ANOVA table for the regression model is 0.018841. The significance value (p-value) is less than the commonly chosen significance level of 0.05, we can reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, there is evidence to suggest that there is a statistically significant impact of homophobia on self-esteem among males aged 18-25 years. Hence, we can accept **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)** there is no significant impact of homophobia on self-esteem among male (18-25 years) and **Null Hypothesis (H_0)** is rejected.

Table 5

Impact of Homophobia on self-esteem among females.

SUMMARY OUTPUT	
Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.623598
R Square	0.388874
Adjusted R Square	0.376143
Standard Error	5.476868
Observations	50

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	916.1881	916.1881	30.54359	1.310006
Residual	48	1439.812	29.99608		
Total	49	2356			

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant impact of homophobia on self-esteem among female (18-25 years).

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is no significant impact of homophobia on self-esteem among female (18-25 years).

The significance value (also known as p-value) in the ANOVA table for the regression model is 1.310006. The significance value (p-value) is more than the commonly chosen significance level of 0.05, we cannot reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, there is evidence to suggest that there is a statistically no significant impact of homophobia on self-esteem among females aged 18-25 years. Hence, we cannot accept **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)** there is no significant impact of homophobia on self-esteem among male (18-25 years) and **Null Hypothesis (H_0)** is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to investigate the influence of homophobia on self-esteem in young adults aged 18 to 25, with an emphasis on gender comparisons. The analysis of survey data was used to study the subtle dynamics underlying the influence of homophobia on self-esteem, taking into account potential variances among gender identities. The findings demonstrated substantial disparities in the influence of homophobia on self-esteem among young people, both male and female.

Among men, the regression analysis revealed a statistically significant negative impact of homophobia on self-esteem, with a p-value of 0.018841. This shows that when homophobia increases, young adult males' self-esteem decreases. Similarly, the correlation analysis revealed a negative association between homophobia and male self-esteem, supporting this finding. In contrast, among females, the regression analysis revealed no statistically significant influence of homophobia on self-esteem (p-value = 1.310006). This shows that homophobia does not have a major impact on the self-esteem of young adult females in the examined age group. However, the correlation study revealed a negative association between homophobia and self-esteem in females, but with a lesser correlation value than in men.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study shed light on the complex relationship between homophobia and self-esteem in young adults aged 18 to 25, with a particular emphasis on gender comparisons. A thorough review of survey data highlighted numerous essential observations. First, among young adult men, the findings show that homophobia has a statistically significant negative influence on self-esteem. Both regression and correlation analysis demonstrate the conclusion that when homophobic levels rise, self-esteem falls among males in this age range.

This implies that encounters with homophobia may have a negative impact on the psychological well-being of young adult males, emphasising the need of facing and eliminating homophobia in society. However, among young adult females, the data indicate a more complicated connection between homophobia and self-esteem. While the regression analysis found no statistically significant influence of homophobia on self-esteem, the correlation analysis revealed a negative association between these variables, although smaller than for men. This suggests that, while homophobia may not have a direct and significant impact on the self-esteem of young adult females, it does influence their experiences and views.

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