Discrimination, Homophobia, and Mental Health: Comparison of Russian and USA LGB Populations

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CAVEAT AGE 18+

Introduction

The Russian LGB community is considered one of the most oppressed communities in the world. After 2016 LGB community in the USA started to experience more distress.

Definitions

LGB is defined as lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals and include individuals of all gender who define themselves as non-heterosexual. Transgender individuals were also included in the sample in case they defined themselves as non-heterosexuals.

Study Design

This study examined the level of perceived discrimination, internalized homonegativity, and the level of mental health symptoms, including the symptoms of depression and anxiety, in a sample of 100 LGB individuals residing in Russia in comparison to a sample of 78 LGB individuals residing in the United States. The group of LGB individuals from Russia was compared to the group of U.S. LGB controls over one assessment session.

Measures

- State Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, 1989)
- Center for Epidemiological Studies of Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977)
- Experiences of Discrimination Scale (Williams, 2012)
- Reactions to Homosexuality Additive Scale (Smolenski, Diamond, Ross & Rosser, 2010)

Statistical Analysis

Independent samples t-tests were conducted in order to compare U.S. and Russian LGB groups on such measures as Level of Perceived Discrimination, Level of Mental Health Symptoms, and Internalized Homonegativity. Additional correlation analysis had been conducted across all the variables.

Results

The results indicated that Russian residents did not have significantly higher symptoms of depression and anxiety, perceived discrimination, and internalized homonegativity. Differences in correlations had been found.

Discussion

- Depression and anxiety might be underreported in Russian sample
- As homophobia has been normalized in Russia, many LGB individuals who display homophobic feelings may avoid stress and feel more adapted
- Russian participants are less likely to be "out" and acknowledge their sexual orientation
- It is possible that in Russia older LGB individuals are more conservative and might have higher homophobia than younger individuals

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that the results of LGB oppression have similar effects on mental health in both Russia and the US. However, the Russian LGB individuals understood oppression, discrimination, and the need for human rights activism differently than the U.S. LGB participants. The approaches to the treatment of anxiety and depression in the Russian and U.S. LGB communities might be similar, but clinicians must be sensitive to a Russian cultural difference in their perception of this topic.

Difference Between Groups

State Anxiety	$t(176) = -.121, p = .904$
Trait Anxiety	$t(176) = .198, p = .844$
Depression	$t(176) = .496, p = .620$
Perceived Discrimination	$t(176) = -1.66, p = .099$
Internalized Homonegativity	$t(169) = .706, p = .481$

Correlation analysis

Significant Positive Correlations

	US sample	RU sample
Homonegativity&Depression	Yes, $r = .278, p = .05$	No
Homonegativity&StateAnxiety	Yes, $r = .273, p = .05$	No

Significant Negative Correlations

	US sample	RU sample
Age&Discrimination	Yes, $r = -.402, p = .01$	No
Age&Depression	Yes, $r = -.410, p = .01$	No
Age&State Anxiety	Yes, $r = -.446, p = .01$	No
Age&Trait Anxiety	Yes, $r = -.550, p = .01$	No

Reason For Discrimination- Sexual Orientation

	Frequency	%
US	46	59
RU	31	31