

SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SELF-ESTEEM AMONG GAY MEN IN TAGBILARAN CITY

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords — Social discrimination, self-esteem, gay men, LGBTQ, perceived discrimination scale, self-esteem scale, correlation.

The study examined the association between reported social discrimination and self-esteem among homosexual males in Tagbilaran City, Bohol. Specifically, it identified levels of perceived social discrimination and self-esteem among respondents, examined correlations between selected demographic parameters and the research variables, and investigated the relationship between perceived social discrimination and self-esteem. The study

design adopted was a quantitative descriptive-correlational. A standardized questionnaire measuring perceived social discrimination and self-esteem was administered to 393 self-identified homosexual males in Tagbilaran City. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Spearman's rank-order correlation and chi-square tests. The results indicated that, in general, the respondents reported modest levels of perceived social prejudice. However, most respondents had low self-esteem. Perceived social prejudice was significantly associated with selected demographic factors, including age, civil status, educational attainment, and employment, but not with geography. By contrast, none of the demographic characteristics were significantly associated with self-esteem. Further analysis revealed a statistically significant, weak negative correlation between felt social discrimination and self-esteem ($\rho =$



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-0.240, $p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of perceived discrimination were associated with lower levels of self-esteem. The results highlight the need to develop inclusive and supportive environments to improve psychological well-being among sexual minority populations. Although the general feeling was that there was little bias, respondents' ongoing low self-esteem suggests that additional social, cultural, and psychological factors may be affecting self-perceptions. Interventions that focus on self-acceptance, social support, and community involvement may have positive effects on the well-being of gay men.

INTRODUCTION

Discrimination experiences still impact the well-being of sexual minority communities in many nations. Although some progress has been achieved around diversity and inclusion, homosexual men continue to experience discrimination, stereotyping, and uneven treatment in a range of social contexts. Such events may affect individuals' self-image, relationships with others, and ability to cope with daily life. Research has found that exposure to prejudice is connected with negative psychological health effects such as reduced self-esteem, emotional discomfort, and worse life satisfaction (Meyer, 2003; Russell & Fish, 2016).

An important component of psychological well-being is self-esteem, defined as the overall evaluation of one's self-worth and abilities. Rosenberg (1965) indicated that self-esteem has a critical role in an individual's self-image and reaction to social circumstances. Therefore, for sexual minority individuals, self-esteem may not only be affected by individual characteristics but also by social circumstances that affirm or stigmatize their identities. Minority Stress Theory suggests that members of stigmatized groups are subject to unique stressors such as discrimination and social rejection that may contribute to poor mental health outcomes (Meyer, 2003).

Theoretical Background. The study is primarily based on the Minority Stress Theory developed by Meyer (2003) and supported by Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Theory. Together, these theoretical ideas offer a framework for studying the relationship between experiences of social discrimination and the self-esteem of homosexual men. Minority Stress Theory proposes that members of socially stigmatized groups may endure distinct stresses related to prejudice, discrimination, and social exclusion. These experiences differ from ordinary life stresses in that they are related to one's minority status and may compound over time, influencing psychological well-being and overall quality of life (Meyer, 2003). The idea proposes that individuals belonging to sexual minority groups frequently experience external stresses such as rejection, stereotyping, and discrimination, and internal stressors such as fear of rejection and internalized unfavorable social beliefs. Not all persons experience these experiences in the same way, but repeated exposure to discriminatory treatment

may increase the risk for unfavorable psychological effects for certain persons.

In the context of this study, social discrimination can be considered as a type of minority stress that can impact the way homosexual men perceive themselves and their role in society. Experiences of exclusion or uneven treatment can affect people's self-perception, their relationships with others and their emotional well-being. At the same time, the theory acknowledges that protective qualities such as social support, acceptance, and resilience may help individuals cope with these stresses and sustain optimal psychological functioning. The study is also greatly supported by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Theory. Rosenberg conceptualizes self-esteem as an individual's entire judgment of worth and value (Rosenberg, 1965). Self-esteem is formed via interpersonal interactions and the interpretation of social events. Positive social interactions can lead to greater emotions of self-worth, but bad experiences such as rejection and prejudice may influence how people see themselves. Rosenberg argues that self-esteem is not just a function of personal accomplishments, but also of social responses and a feeling of acceptability by others.

In the present study, self-esteem may be impacted by homosexual men's interpretation and response to experiences in their social context. People may be more inclined to make favorable self-assessments when they feel accepted, respected, and included. In contrast, experiences of prejudice can erode one's feeling of belonging and self-worth. Many factors affect self-esteem, but social experience remains crucial to its growth and maintenance.

Combined, Minority Stress Theory and Self-Esteem Theory provide a viable framework for investigating the link between social discrimination and self-esteem among homosexual males in Tagbilaran City. These ideas propose that experiences of discrimination may be related to self-esteem outcomes, but also recognize that individual experiences may vary based on personal, social, and environmental factors. The paradigm therefore provides a platform for the examination of the relationship between perceived social discrimination and the self-esteem of homosexual men within the local environment.

Related Literature. Social discrimination is the uneven treatment, exclusion, or prejudice against people because of their gender, race, religion, handicap, or sexual orientation. Discrimination against sexual minority groups may take many forms, including verbal harassment, social rejection, disparities in the job, and limited access to opportunities. The forms and severity of these encounters vary by context. However, researchers have shown that discrimination is a prominent worry impacting the well-being of many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people (Herek & McLemore, 2013). The evidence demonstrates that experiences of discrimination may be rooted within larger social and cultural systems. Many civilizations have norms and expectations that influence the way in which sexual minority people are viewed and treated. Discrimination may not necessarily be obvious in overtly hostile behavior, but can also manifest in subtle forms such as exclusion, stereotyping, or uneven treatment. Experiences such as these can shape how a

person feels about the need to belong and social connection over time (Meyer, 2003).

Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being. Self-esteem has long been regarded as a crucial construct in psychological functioning. Rosenberg (1965) defines self-esteem as an individual's entire judgment of one's own worth and value. People with good self-esteem tend to be more confident in their talents and more accepting of themselves. Lower self-esteem, however, may be related to self-doubt and sensitivity to bad social encounters.

Many personal and environmental variables affect the development of self-esteem. Self-evaluations have been attributed to social interactions, familial ties, peer acceptability, and community support. Coopersmith (1967) said that part of the reason people's self-esteem is affected is the extent to which they feel appreciated and accepted by important others. Experiences of acceptance and inclusion may thus promote good self-perceptions, whereas experiences of rejection may threaten one's feeling of worth.

Discrimination and Self-Esteem. Research has increasingly focused on an association between discrimination and self-esteem among disadvantaged groups. Repeated experiences of discrimination and exclusion can shape individuals' self-perceptions. According to the Minority Stress Theory, stigma-related stresses might lead to undesirable psychological consequences, including lower self-esteem and well-being (Meyer, 2003).

At the same time, the link between prejudice and self-esteem seems complicated. Some people may experience negative psychological effects after discriminatory interactions. In contrast, others may draw on their resilience, social support, and positive identity development to maintain a healthy level of self-esteem (Russell & Fish, 2016). These findings indicate that social prejudice and self-esteem are related, although the intensity and form of this link may differ across individuals and settings.

Social Context of Gay Men. The experiences of gay men are often shaped by the social environments in which they live. While many communities have become increasingly accepting of sexual diversity, discrimination and stigma continue to be reported in educational institutions, workplaces, families, and public spaces. Such experiences may influence opportunities for social participation and personal development.

Within the Philippine context, social attitudes toward sexual minorities have undergone gradual changes in recent decades. However, cultural expectations, religious influences, and traditional gender norms may continue to shape the experiences of many gay men. Understanding how discrimination is perceived and how it relates to self-esteem may therefore provide useful insights into the well-being of sexual minority individuals within local communities.

Related Studies. Several research have examined the correlation between prejudice and mental health among sexual minority groups. Meyer (2003) revealed that experiences of stigma, prejudice, and discrimination were

connected with greater psychological stress among lesbian, homosexual, and bisexual persons while establishing the Minority Stress Theory. The study underscored the role social surroundings might have in differences in mental health outcomes. Similarly, Herek, Gillis, and Cogan (2009) showed that experiences of victimization based on sexual orientation were connected with negative psychological repercussions for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. Those who experienced greater prejudice also expressed more emotional anguish and less psychological well-being. These findings highlighted the possible effect of social experiences on individual adjustment.

Similarly, a review undertaken by Russell and Fish (2016) found that discrimination and victimization continue to be important issues for sexual minority communities. Their investigation showed that poor social experiences are related to a range of mental health problems, including lower self-esteem, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. At the same time, favorable social situations seemed to nurture resilience and positive self-concept. More subsequent research has continued to establish the link between discrimination and self-perceptions of sexual minority persons. Bridge et al. (2019) found that felt discrimination was connected with lower self-esteem and poorer psychological outcomes among LGBTQ+ groups. "Exclusion and stigmatization experiences may influence people's self-evaluation as well as their evaluation of their position in society," the authors said.

In the Philippine context, research has primarily focused on the lived experiences, identity development, and societal issues of LGBTQ+ persons. Although these studies have begun to shed light on concerns of inclusion and acceptance, few have specifically investigated the link between perceived social discrimination and self-esteem among homosexual men. Local studies to date tend to study the wider LGBTQ+ experience and do not isolate the gay male experience as a discrete category.

Furthermore, a significant portion of the extant material has been collected in highly urbanized locations, educational settings, or among mixed LGBTQ+ groups. Empirical research from provincial areas, where cultural norms, family relationships, and societal expectations may shape experiences differently, is limited. Hence, there is a need to provide context-specific information on the relationship between perceived social discrimination and self-esteem among homosexual men in local areas such as Tagbilaran City.

Prior research has shown that discrimination is connected with higher psychological vulnerability among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) groups. Social exclusion, stigma, and unfavorable social views have been associated with depression, anxiety, internalized stigma, and lowered self-esteem (Herek & McLemore, 2013; Russell & Fish, 2016). Positive social surroundings and greater societal acceptability have been linked to more positive self-perceptions and greater psychological well-being.

In the Philippines, societal attitudes towards sexual variety have steadily become more tolerant. However, many homosexual men still experience

subtle and overt discrimination in educational institutions, jobs, families, and communities. While there are local studies that have touched on the lived experiences and problems of LGBTQ+ persons, the current research has focused more on the LGBTQ+ population broadly, and not on the association between perceived social discrimination and self-esteem among homosexual men specifically. There is also a lack of empirical information from local populations, especially in provincial metropolitan areas, where cultural, religious, and socioeconomic factors may affect experiences differently.

Context-specific research is needed to fill these gaps, including homosexual men's experiences and the relationship between perceived discrimination and self-esteem. A better understanding of this link may inform the creation of more inclusive community, mental health, and advocacy programs to foster the well-being of sexual minority communities. Research has highlighted the experiences of discrimination, stigma, and social exclusion faced by sexual minority communities and the ramifications of these experiences for psychological wellbeing. Previous research has indicated that prejudice may be linked to several mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, stress, and lowered self-esteem (Herek & McLemore, 2013; Meyer, 2003; Russell & Fish, 2016). These studies have greatly increased our awareness of the problems experienced by LGBTQ+ people in many social and cultural situations.

Despite the growing number of studies, several gaps remain. Much research has been done on the LGBTQ+ community as a whole or as a heterogeneous group, but less on homosexual males as a specialized category. Therefore, the specific experiences and views of gay men may not be well represented in larger LGBTQ+ polls. Second, much of the existing data has been generated in Western countries with social, cultural, legal, and institutional arrangements markedly different from those prevailing in the Philippines. Thus, the results of worldwide studies may not be representative of the realities of homosexual males in local areas. Third, although there are individual studies on discrimination and psychological well-being, there has been relatively little direct study on the link between perceived social discrimination and self-esteem among gay men. In the Philippine context, the relationship between experiences of bias and self-esteem is not yet thoroughly established. Finally, information from provincial urban environments remains limited. Most local studies focus on highly urbanized areas or broader topics, such as LGBTQ+ identity, rights, and lived experiences. The association between perceived social discrimination and self-esteem in homosexual males living in small towns like Tagbilaran City is not well understood, since the influence of cultural norms, family ties, and community interactions may differ. While earlier research has highlighted the psychological consequences of discrimination for LGBTQ+ communities, few studies have focused on homosexual men as a unique subpopulation. In addition, empirical evidence from provincial contexts in the Philippines is scarce. This study seeks to fill these gaps by analyzing the association between reported social discrimination and self-esteem among homosexual males in

Tagbilaran City.

The study's main objective is to determine the correlation between social discrimination and self-esteem among gay men. Understanding the correlation between social discrimination and self-esteem among gay men may help address the country's social issue, discrimination against gay men.

Specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the respondents' profiles in terms of:
 - 1.1. Age
 - 1.2. Location/Barangay
 - 1.3. Civil status
 - 1.4. Highest Educational Attainment
 - 1.5. Employment Status or Profession
2. What is the respondents' level of social discrimination?
3. What is the respondents' level of self-esteem?
4. Is there a significant relationship between respondents' profiles and their:
 - 4.1 social discrimination; and,
 - 4.2 self-esteem?
5. Is there a significant correlation between respondents' social discrimination and self-esteem?
6. What action plans can be proposed based on the research findings?

Statement of Null Hypotheses.

H01: There is no significant degree of relationship between respondents' profiles and their social discrimination, and self-esteem.

H02: There is no significant correlation between social discrimination and self-esteem.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was used to determine the level of perceived social discrimination and self-esteem among gay men, while the correlational component examined the relationship between these variables. This design was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to describe existing conditions and determine whether statistically significant associations existed among the variables without manipulating the research environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research Setting. The study was conducted in Tagbilaran City, Bohol, Philippines. As the capital city of the province, Tagbilaran serves as a social, educational, and economic center where individuals from diverse backgrounds

interact within various community settings. The city provided an appropriate context for examining the experiences of gay men in relation to perceived social discrimination and self-esteem.

Participants of the Study. The participants were self-identified gay men residing in Tagbilaran City during the study. Eligibility criteria included being at least 18 years old, currently residing in the city, and willing to participate voluntarily in the research. The required sample size was determined using an appropriate sampling procedure based on the estimated population and desired level of precision. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, which enabled the inclusion of respondents with characteristics relevant to the study's objectives. Respondents were recruited through community networks, LGBTQ+ social groups, and referrals from community contacts within Tagbilaran City. Included in the study were only self-identified gay men.

Research Instruments. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of three sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including age, educational attainment, employment status, monthly income, and selected personal characteristics relevant to the study. The second section measured perceived social discrimination. The instrument assessed respondents' experiences and perceptions of discriminatory treatment in social, educational, occupational, and community contexts. Responses were measured on a Likert-type scale, with higher scores indicating greater perceived discrimination. The third section measured self-esteem using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), one of the most widely used instruments for assessing global self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965). The scale consists of ten items rated on a four-point response format, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of self-esteem.

Prior to data collection, the instruments underwent content validation by experts in psychology, social sciences, and research methodology. Suggestions from the validators were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. A pilot test was conducted with respondents not included in the actual study to establish the instrument's reliability and clarity. The Social Discrimination Scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$), while the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$).

Data Collection Procedure. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the appropriate institutional authorities prior to data collection. Eligible participants were informed about the objectives, procedures, benefits, and potential risks of the study.

After obtaining informed consent, the researcher personally administered the questionnaires. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the instrument, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the data collection process. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Ethical Considerations. The study adhered to the fundamental ethical

principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Ethical clearance was obtained from the appropriate Research Ethics Committee before the study was conducted. Participation was entirely voluntary. Respondents were informed of their right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were protected by excluding identifying information from the dataset and research report. Given the sensitivity of issues related to sexual orientation and experiences of discrimination, particular attention was given to privacy, dignity, and emotional well-being during data collection. All information provided by participants was treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for research purposes.

Data Analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics, perceived social discrimination, and self-esteem. Prior to inferential analysis, normality tests were conducted to determine the appropriate statistical procedures. Given the data's non-normal distribution, Spearman's rank-order correlation and Chi-square tests were employed. Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 level. All analyses were performed using statistical software.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Level of Social Discrimination. The findings indicate that the respondents generally reported a low level of perceived social discrimination. A substantial majority of the participants fell within the low-discrimination category, while a smaller proportion reported experiencing a moderate or average level of discrimination. These results suggest that overt experiences of discrimination may not be frequent in respondents' daily interactions.

One possible explanation is that respondents may have experienced fewer overt discriminatory encounters within their immediate social environments. Some respondents may have had more positive interpersonal interactions due to greater exposure to diversity-related debates, advocacy initiatives, and inclusive social contexts. However, the very narrow range of answers also implies that experiences of discrimination continue for some, albeit in less visible or less frequent forms.

It is vital to understand that discrimination is not necessarily a matter of outright hostility or obvious exclusion. In settings where overt discriminatory behaviors are less visible, sexual minority persons may nevertheless encounter subtle types of discrimination, stereotyping, and societal bias. Sexual discrimination can be expressed directly or indirectly, with different repercussions for psychological well-being (Herek & McLemore, 2013).

These results are different from previous research, which found greater levels of prejudice among sexual minority communities. Meyer (2003) found that sexual minority group members are often exposed to stigma and discrimination that might result in minority stress. The somewhat lower levels

of prejudice experienced in the present study may reflect contextual variations in social contexts, community acceptability, or individual perceptions of discriminatory encounters. However, the results do not mean that prejudice does not exist; rather, respondents usually judged encounters to occur at relatively low levels.

Level of Self-Esteem. The results further revealed that the respondents generally exhibited low levels of self-esteem. Nearly all participants were classified in the low self-esteem category, indicating that many respondents held less favorable evaluations of their personal worth and self-value.

This finding is particularly remarkable as respondents also reported very low levels of perceived social prejudice. The pattern is consistent with the idea that self-esteem may be affected by more than just direct experience of prejudice. People's self-perception may also be influenced by personal experiences, familial ties, social support, identity formation, internalized societal views, and larger cultural influences.

The findings may be explained in terms of Rosenberg's (1965) concept that self-esteem is developed via continual interactions with one's social surroundings. Experiences of acceptance, validation, and belonging typically encourage positive self-regard; unpleasant social experiences may shape how individuals assess themselves. Even in places where blatant prejudice is low, self-perceptions may be influenced by residual cultural expectations and subtler stigmas.

The results also seem to be consistent with the findings of Savin-Williams (1994), who claimed that sexual minority persons may continue to experience the impact of society's attitudes across life stages. Therefore, experiences of social acceptance, identity affirmation, and community support may be important in the development of self-esteem. The low self-esteem reported by the respondents may thus result from the combined effects of several social and psychological variables rather than prejudice alone.

Overall, the data reveal that the respondents experienced modest levels of social discrimination, although self-esteem issues remain evident. This underscores the necessity of considering not only exterior experiences of prejudice but also the larger social and psychological elements that shape individual well-being for homosexual men. An interesting finding of the study is that respondents generally reported low levels of perceived social discrimination while exhibiting low self-esteem. This pattern suggests that self-esteem among gay men may be associated with factors such as family expectations and religious beliefs. However, these variables were not examined in the present study. Previous studies have suggested that sexual minority individuals may internalize societal attitudes toward homosexuality, which can influence self-worth regardless of whether discrimination is openly experienced (Meyer, 2003; Russell & Fish, 2016). This finding highlights the importance of examining both external and internal sources of psychological stress among sexual minority populations.

Relationship Between Respondents' Profile and Level of Social Discrimination. The analysis revealed that age was significantly associated with the level of social discrimination experienced by the respondents. Although the relationship was relatively weak and negative, the finding suggests that perceptions of discrimination may vary across age groups. Older and younger individuals may encounter different social expectations, levels of visibility, and forms of social interaction that shape how they perceive and experience discrimination. The weak magnitude of the relationship, however, indicates that age alone explains only a small portion of the variation in perceived discrimination.

Table 1. *Relationship Between Respondents' Profile and Level of Social Discrimination (N = 393)*

Demographic Variable	Statistical Test	Test Statistic	p	Interpretation
Age	Spearman's rho	-0.119	.019*	Significant relationship
Location/ Barangay	Chi-square	9.364	.672	No significant relationship
Civil Status	Chi-square	5.841	.016*	Significant relationship
Highest Educational Attainment	Chi-square	8.562	.035*	Significant relationship
Occupation	Chi-square	10.259	.001*	Significant relationship

No significant relationship was found between location and perceived social discrimination. This finding suggests that respondents generally reported similar experiences of discrimination regardless of their barangay of residence. The result may reflect relatively comparable social environments across the communities represented in the study, where experiences related to sexual orientation are not significantly associated with geographical location alone. Significant relationships were identified between civil status and perceived social prejudice. These findings suggest that relationship status may be related to how respondents experience or interpret social interactions. People who are single, coupled, or in various types of relationships could face varying societal norms and acceptability levels, thereby affecting their experiences of prejudice. Similarly, educational attainment was significantly associated with social prejudice. Education may expose people to diverse social environments and perspectives, which can shape awareness of discriminatory behavior and sensitivity to social treatment. This implies that individuals from diverse educational backgrounds may perceive and interpret biased events differently. There was also a strong association between occupation and perceived social prejudice. The employment situation frequently includes degrees of social interaction, company culture, and workplace diversity. So the respondents' experiences of acceptability, inclusion, and social treatment might vary across

occupational categories.

Taken together, the findings suggest that selected demographic characteristics are associated with perceived social discrimination among gay men. However, the observed relationships appear modest, suggesting that other social, cultural, and psychological factors may also shape how discrimination is experienced and perceived. These findings generally align with previous literature suggesting that social experiences are shaped by multiple dimensions of an individual's identity and social position (Herek & McLemore, 2013; Meyer, 2003).

Relationship Between Respondents' Profile and Level of Self-Esteem.

The results indicated that respondents' self-esteem was not significantly associated with any of the demographic characteristics studied. There were no statistically significant relationships among age, place of residence, civil status, educational achievement, employment, and self-esteem levels. The lack of significant association shows that demographic parameters alone may not have a major impact on respondents' self-esteem. Self-esteem may be influenced by a larger range of personal, interpersonal, and psychological characteristics than age, educational background, work situation, or area of residence. Self-acceptance, identity development, social support, familial ties, and coping strategies might have a bigger impact on how individuals view their self-worth.

Table 5. *Relationship Between Respondents' Profile and Level of Self-Esteem (N = 393)*

Demographic Variable	Statistical Test	Test Statistic	<i>p</i>	Interpretation
Age	Spearman's rho	0.086	.087	No significant relationship
Location/Barangay	Chi-square	9.311	.779	No significant relationship
Civil Status	Chi-square	0.346	1.000	No significant relationship
Highest Educational Attainment	Chi-square	0.827	.461	No significant relationship
Occupation	Chi-square	0.362	1.000	No significant relationship

Note. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$.

The finding that age was not significantly related to self-esteem indicates that respondents across different age groups generally reported comparable levels of self-esteem. Likewise, the lack of a strong relationship between educational attainment and employment suggests that socioeconomic and educational inequalities may not be reflected in variations in self-evaluation in this cohort. Self-esteem was not related to civil status or geography either. This suggests that self-worth evaluations are less dependent on demographic

variables and more on individual experiences and psychological resources. The conclusion highlights the complexity of self-esteem as a psychological construct and that it is not based just on demographic features but on a multiplicity of interacting elements. Previous research has pointed to the importance of self-acceptance, social support, and identity affirmation in promoting psychological well-being among sexual minority individuals (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995; Russell & Fish, 2016), and the current findings are consistent with this literature.

Although demographic variables may be associated with some life events, they do not necessarily dictate how people view their value and worth. Overall, the results show that the self-esteem of homosexual men may be somewhat independent of demographic variables and may be more related to social, emotional, and psychological experiences, none of which were specifically evaluated in the present study.

Relationship Between Social Discrimination and Self-Esteem. The study demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between social discrimination and self-esteem among the participants. The correlation coefficient revealed a slight negative association, indicating that higher perceptions of social discrimination were associated with lower self-esteem. Despite the association being slight, the study indicates that experiences of discrimination may correlate with respondents' assessments of their self-worth and value.

Variables	Spearman's ρ	Strength	Direction	p-value	Decision
Social Discrimination and Self-Esteem	-0.240	Weak	Negative	<.001	Reject H_0

Note. Spearman's rank-order correlation was used because the data did not satisfy the assumptions of normality. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$.

The negative direction of the association is interesting, as it suggests that people who report higher levels of prejudice may be more likely to report lower self-esteem. Being subjected to exclusion, bias, or differential treatment can affect a person's sense of belonging or self-acceptance, both of which are key components of self-esteem. The association's strength is minimal, indicating that social prejudice is only one of several factors that may influence self-esteem. Additional factors, including parental support, peer relationships, personal resilience, identity validation, and community acceptance, may also be crucial in fostering self-worth. The results may be analyzed through the lens of Minority Stress Theory, which posits that individuals belonging to marginalized social groups encounter specific stressors linked to prejudice and discrimination (Meyer, 2003). Over time, these occurrences may affect psychological well-being and self-perceptions.

Although statistically significant, the weak magnitude of the correlation suggests that perceived social discrimination accounts for only a limited portion of the variation in self-esteem. This finding indicates that other psychosocial

factors not examined in the study may also contribute substantially to self-esteem among gay men.

Not everyone is affected the same way by discriminatory experiences, but continuous exposure to social stigma can lead to difficulties in maintaining a good self-concept. The finding also adds to previous studies showing that feelings of discrimination are related to psychological consequences in sexual minority communities. The link between discrimination and self-esteem may be influenced by how people perceive discriminatory events and whether they ascribe these experiences to personal-level or group-level bias (Taylor et al., 1990). Herek and McLemore (2013) also highlighted that self-perception and mental health may be related to experiences of sexual discrimination, but that individual reactions might differ greatly

Limitations of the Study. This study is correlational in nature; causality should not be inferred. Social discrimination and self-esteem were significantly associated; however, the data do not suggest that discrimination caused poor self-esteem. Instead, data point to a link between the two variables that might be bidirectional and embedded within larger social and psychological circumstances. Overall, the data show how important social experiences are for knowing how gay men feel about their health. Even though most survey respondents reported little discrimination, the strong correlation between discrimination and self-esteem suggests that even small amounts of it may be associated with how people see themselves. As a result, making settings more accepting, lowering shame, and improving social support networks are likely to improve the mental health and self-esteem of sexual minority groups.

CONCLUSION

Respondents generally reported relatively low levels of perceived social discrimination, suggesting that overt discriminatory experiences were not frequently encountered within their reported social environments. However, the continued presence of poor self-esteem among most responders implies that psychological well-being is still a significant issue. The results further showed that perceived social prejudice was significantly associated with age, civil status, educational attainment, and employment, but not with geography. These findings may indicate that social experiences related to prejudice vary across specific demographic and socioeconomic factors.

In contrast, none of the demographic characteristics we considered were significantly associated with self-esteem. Demographic variables may have less effect on self-esteem. In contrast, personal, interpersonal, and psychosocial factors, such as self-acceptance, social support, identity formation, and life events, may have a greater influence. Most notably, the study found a statistically significant weak negative association between social prejudice and self-esteem. Although the effect was small, the results imply that those who reported more discrimination also reported lower self-esteem. This finding is in line with the

idea that social experiences could have ramifications for psychological well-being and self-perception among homosexual males. In summary, the study emphasizes the enduring importance of fostering social inclusion, eliminating discriminatory attitudes, and strengthening support structures that promote positive self-worth among sexual minority persons. While social acceptability may be on the rise, measures to improve psychological well-being remain crucial.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. **Strengthen Mental Health and Well-Being Programs.** Local government units, educational institutions, and community organizations may develop programs that promote self-esteem, self-acceptance, resilience, and psychological well-being among gay men and other sexual minority populations.
2. **Promote Inclusive and Non-Discriminatory Environments.** Community leaders, schools, workplaces, and civic organizations should continue fostering inclusive practices and awareness campaigns that encourage respect for diversity and reduce discriminatory attitudes toward sexual minority individuals.
3. **Enhance Social Support Networks.** Support groups, peer mentoring programs, and community-based initiatives may be strengthened to provide safe spaces where gay men can share experiences, access emotional support, and develop positive social connections.
4. **Increase Public Awareness of Sexual Diversity.** Educational campaigns addressing sexual orientation, gender diversity, and inclusion may help reduce misconceptions, stereotypes, and subtle forms of discrimination that continue to affect sexual minority populations.
5. **Encourage Family and Community Engagement.** Families and community stakeholders may be encouraged to foster supportive, affirming environments that promote positive identity development and healthy self-esteem.
6. **Develop Policies that Promote Equality and Inclusion.** Policymakers and local government officials may consider strengthening measures that protect individuals from discrimination and promote equal opportunities regardless of sexual orientation.
7. **Conduct Further Research.** Future studies may examine additional factors associated with self-esteem among gay men, such as family support, identity affirmation, religious influences, mental health status, social connectedness, and experiences of stigma. Qualitative and mixed-methods studies may also provide deeper insights into the

lived experiences of sexual minority individuals.

8. **Expand Research to Other Settings and Populations.** Similar studies may be conducted in other municipalities, cities, and regions to determine whether the observed patterns are consistent across different social and cultural contexts.
9. **Develop Community-Based Intervention Programs.** The findings may serve as a basis for designing evidence-informed interventions that address both social discrimination and psychological well-being among gay men and other marginalized populations.

These recommendations recognize that improving well-being involves not only reducing discrimination but also creating conditions that support positive self-esteem, social connectedness, and meaningful participation in community life.

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