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Problems Faced by LGBT People in the Mainstream Society: Some Recommendations

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Abstract

LGBT has become a widely accepted designation for minorities based on sexual and gender orientation. All members of these subgroups are subject to similar prejudices rooted in beliefs and traditions about sexuality and gender. LGBT people, as members of a social minority group, are suffering from various forms of socio-economic and cultural injustice. The lack of social recognition has an effect on the capacity of LGBT people to fully access and enjoy their rights as citizens. They are more likely to experience intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and the threat of violence due to their sexual orientation, than those that identify themselves as heterosexual. Highlighting some major problems faced by LGBT people across the world is the theme of this article.

Key Words: LGBT, Marginalization and Social Exclusion, Homophobia, Criminalization of homosexuality.

Introduction

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are more likely to experience intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and the threat of violence due to their sexual orientation, than those that identify themselves as heterosexual. This is due to homophobia (the fear or hatred of homosexuality). Some of the factors that may reinforce homophobia on a larger scale are moral, religious, and political beliefs of a dominant group. In some countries, homosexuality is illegal and punishable by fines, imprisonment, life imprisonment and even the death penalty. Human sexuality is diversely experienced, and can be fixed or fluid. Male/female sexuality is blurred further with the existence of transgender, transsexual and intersex identified people. Heterosexuality should no longer be assumed; this assumption is called heterosexism. Although many societies have made significant strides in human rights advocacy, LGBT rights struggle to find universal acceptance. The fact that the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, drafted in 1948, does not specifically include sexual orientation allows some people to consider LGBT rights debatable. The declaration does however state: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind..." Now more and more people are openly expressing their sexual orientation, and organizing and demanding their rights. Because of the work of these groups and their allies, acceptance of LGBT rights around the world is growing, and governments in certain countries are beginning to legislate in favor of LGBT rights and anti-discrimination laws. Influential international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch continue to run effective campaigns. In the coming years the major issues for LGBT rights on a global scale will be: eradicating persecution based on sexual orientation; protection in the law from hate crimes and hate propaganda; equal rights and privileges (marriage, common law partnerships, medical-decision making, wills and estates, parenting and adoption) and to work and educate others on homophobia and heterosexism.

Despite these encouraging realities, Deeply-embedded homophobic and transphobic attitudes, often combined with a lack of adequate legal protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, expose many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people of all ages and in all regions of the world to egregious violations of their human rights. They are discriminated against in the labour market, in schools and in hospitals, mistreated and disowned by their own families. They are singled out for physical attack – beaten, sexually assaulted, tortured and killed. And in some 76 countries, discriminatory laws criminalize private, consensual same-sex relationships – exposing individuals to the risk of arrest, prosecution, imprisonment — even, in at least five countries, the death penalty. Highlighting some major problems faced by LGBT people across the world is the theme of this article.

Concept of LGBT: LGBT is an initialism that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. The initialism LGBT is intended to emphasize a diversity of sexuality and gender identity-based cultures and is sometimes used to refer to anyone who is non-heterosexual or non cisgender instead of exclusively to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. To recognize this inclusion, a popular variant adds the letter Q for those who identify as queer and/or are questioning their sexual identity as LGBTQ, recorded since 1996. Whether or not LGBT people openly identify themselves may depend on whether they live in a discriminatory environment, as well as the status of LGBT rights where one lives. Before the sexual revolution of the 1960s, there was no common non-derogatory vocabulary for non heterosexuality; the closest such term, "third gender", traces back to the 1860s but never gained wide acceptance in the United States. The first widely used term, homosexual, was thought to carry negative connotations and tended to be replaced by homophile in the 1950s and 1960s, and subsequently gay in the 1970s. As lesbians forged more public identities, the phrase "gay and lesbian" became more common. Lesbians who held a more essentialist view that they had been born homosexual and used the descriptor "lesbian" to define sexual attraction, often considered the separatist, angry opinions of lesbian-feminists to be detrimental to the cause of gay rights. This was soon followed by bisexual and transgender people also seeking recognition as legitimate categories within the larger community. After the initial euphoria of the Stonewall riots¹ wore off, starting in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, there was a change in perception; some gays and lesbians became less accepting of bisexual or transgender people. It was thought that transgender people were acting out stereotypes and bisexuals were simply gay men or lesbian women who were afraid to come out and be honest about their identity. Each community that is collectively included has struggled to develop its own identity including whether, and how, to align with other gender and sexuality-based communities at times excluding other subgroups; these conflicts continue to this day².

Problems Faced by LGBT People: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) people face tremendous difficulties growing up in a society where heterosexuality is often presented as the only acceptable orientation and homosexuality is regarded as deviant. They continue to face discrimination and exclusion across the world in all spheres of life. Homophobic violence and abuse targeting LGBT people occur on a regular basis. In most EU Member States, same-sex couples do not enjoy the same rights and protections as opposite sex couples, and consequently suffer from discrimination and disadvantage in access to social protection schemes, such as health care and pensions. In the labour market, a majority of LGBT people continue to hide their sexual orientation or to endure harassment out of fear of losing their job. Particularly vulnerable are young LGBT people who experience estrangement from family and friendship networks, harassment at school and invisibility, which can lead in some cases to underachievement at school, school drop-out, mental ill-health and homelessness. This

discrimination not only denies LGBT people equal access to key social goods, such as employment, health care, education and housing, but it also marginalizes them in society and makes them one of the vulnerable groups who are at risk of becoming socially excluded. Here I am highlighting some major problems faced by LGBT people across the world:

1. Marginalization and Social Exclusion: Marginalization is at the core of exclusion from fulfilling and full social lives at individual, interpersonal and societal levels. People who are marginalized have relatively little control over their lives and the resources available to them; they may become stigmatized and are often at the receiving end of negative public attitudes. Their opportunities to make social contributions may be limited and they may develop low self-confidence and self esteem and may become isolated. Social policies and practices may mean they have relatively limited access to valued social resources such as education and health services, housing, income, leisure activities and work. The impacts of marginalization, in terms of social exclusion, are similar, whatever the origins and processes of marginalization, irrespective of whether these are to be located in social attitudes (such as towards impairment, sexuality, ethnicity and so on) or social circumstance (such as closure of workplaces, absence of affordable housing and so on). LGBT individuals may experience multiple forms of marginalization—such as racism, sexism, poverty or other factors – alongside homophobia or transphobia that negatively impact on mental health. The stigma attached to sexual orientation and gender identity or expression that fall outside the expected heterosexual, non-transgender norm relegates many LGBT people to the margins of society. This marginalization often excludes LGBT people from many support structures, often including their own families, leaving them with little access to services many others take for granted, such as medical care, justice and legal services, and education. Marginalization and bias around sexual orientation and gender identity and expression regularly prevent LGBT people from accessing fundamental public services such as health care and housing and contributes to significant health disparities. Marginalization of LGBT people often starts with the family into which they were born. According to one study, approximately 30 percent of LGBT youth in the U.S. have been physically abused by family members because of their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, and LGBT youth are estimated to comprise up to 40 percent of the homeless youth population in the U.S.³. The familial marginalization of LGBT youth hinders initial prevention and education efforts, encourages risk-taking behavior that can lead to HIV infection, and places obstacles in the way of receiving proper medical treatment and psychosocial support for LGBT youth already living with HIV/AIDS. Moreover, lacking other means of support, many LGBT youth are forced to turn to criminalized activities such as sex work to survive, which drives them further onto the margins of society and can expose them to greatly elevated risk for HIV.

Impact of Exclusion and Discrimination:

The exclusion and discrimination have major impacts on the lives of lesbian, gay and transgender persons. This has resulted in the following:

- * Dropping out of school earlier
- * Leaving Home and Family
- * Unable to find regular jobs, have less options than others.
- * Being ignored in the community and isolated
- * Unable to access various services and Unaware of what they are entitled to
- * Mobility, Move to other areas, (such as the city and urban areas)

- * Lack of family and social support
- * Migrate to other countries for seeking safer livelihood and acceptance
- * Rejected from Religion (Esp. Muslim and some Christian Fundamentalist sects)
- * Attempt suicide
- * Decide to follow their parents to marry opposite sex and then divorce.

2. Impact of Family Reactions on LGBT Children: Conflict and Rejection

In the past, very few adolescents “came out” to their families or told others they were gay. Most lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals (LGB) waited until they were adults to talk about their LGB identity with others. Fear of rejection and serious negative reactions kept many LGB adults from openly sharing their lives. Until the 1990s, there were limited resources for LGBT youth. Gay and transgender adolescents had few sources of information to learn about their identity or to find support. More recently, the Internet, school diversity clubs, and LGBT youth groups have helped gay and transgender youth find accurate information, guidance, and support. With greater access to resources, more LGBT youth are coming out (sharing their gay or transgender identity with friends, family, and other adults) during adolescence. Until recently, little was known about how families react when an LGBT young person comes out during adolescence. And even less was known about how family reactions affect an LGBT adolescent’s health and mental health. Families and caregivers have a major impact on their LGBT children’s risk and well-being^{4 5}. New research from Family Acceptance Project (FAP)⁶ shows it. FAP researchers identified more than 100 behaviors that families and caregivers use to react to their LGBT children’s identity. About half of these behaviors are accepting and half are rejecting. FAP researchers measured each of these behaviors to show how family reactions affect an LGBT young person’s risk and well-being. FAP researchers found that families who are conflicted about their children’s LGBT identity believe that the best way to help their children survive and thrive in the world is to help them fit in with their heterosexual peers. So when these families block access to their child’s gay friends or LGBT resources, they are acting out of care and concern. They believe their actions will help their gay or transgender child have a good life. But adolescents who feel like their parents want to change who they are think their parents don’t love them or even hate them. Lack of communication and misunderstanding between parents and their LGBT children increases family conflict. These problems with communication and lack of understanding about sexual orientation and gender identity can lead to fighting and family disruption that can result in an LGBT adolescent being removed from or forced out of the home. Many LGBT youth are placed in foster care, or end up in juvenile detention or on the streets, because of family conflict related to their LGBT identity⁷. These factors increase their risk for abuse and for serious health and mental health problems. Research from FAP shows that family rejection has a serious impact on LGBT young people’s health and mental health. LGBT young people who were rejected by their families because of their identity have much lower self-esteem and have fewer people they can turn to for help. They are also more isolated and have less support than those who were accepted by their families. LGBT teens who are highly rejected by their parents and caregivers are at very high risk for health and mental health problems when they become young adults. They have poorer health than LGBT young people who are not rejected by their families. They have more problems with drug use. They feel more hopeless and are much less likely to protect themselves from HIV or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). And this behavior puts them at higher risk for HIV and AIDS. Compared with LGBT young people who were not rejected or were only a little

rejected by their parents and caregivers because of their gay or transgender identity, highly rejected LGBT young people were:

- More than 8 times as likely to have attempted suicide;
- Nearly 6 times as likely to report high levels of depression;
- More than 3 times as likely to use illegal drugs; and
- More than 3 times as likely to be at high risk for HIV and STDs. Many LGBT youth and those who question their identity feel like they have to hide who they are to avoid being rejected. Many hide so that they won't hurt their parents and other family members who believe that being gay is wrong or sinful. But hiding has a cost. It undermines an LGBT adolescent's self-esteem and sense of self-worth. It increases risky behaviors, such as risk for HIV or substance abuse. It also affects their ability to plan for the future, including their ability to have career or vocational plans. And it makes them less likely to want to have a family or to be parents themselves.

3.Problems of Homelessness: The myriad problems facing LGBT people who are homeless include a lack of housing and services that meet their specific needs. For example: An estimated 40-50% of the homeless youth living on New York City's streets identify as LGBT. They are living there because they were thrown out of their homes for being queer, or ran away to escape an abusive situation. Family housing in the shelter system across the country is not available for homeless same-sex couples. Transgender people are not allowed to choose with which gender they are more comfortable living in the shelter system. Abuse and harassment of LGBT homeless people is rampant in the shelter system. Most domestic violence shelters do not accept gay men or transgender people. There has been also a lack of any comprehensive plan for long-term housing for people with AIDS⁸. Homeless LGBT youth are without economic support, often engage in drug use and risky sexual behaviors, and often develop mental health disorders. Homeless LGBT youth miss out on education and social support during critical formative years—more than half of homeless LGBT youth report experiencing discrimination from peers.

4.Problems of Homophobia: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are more likely to experience intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and the threat of violence due to their sexual orientation, than those that identify themselves as heterosexual. This is due to homophobia. Some of the factors that may reinforce homophobia on a larger scale are moral, religious, and political beliefs of a dominant group. Living in a homophobic environment forces many LGBT people to conceal their sexuality, for fear of the negative reactions and consequences of coming out. Actually there is no single definition for the term 'homophobia', as it covers a wide range of different viewpoints and attitudes. Homophobia is generally defined as hostility towards or fear of gay people, but can also refer to stigma arising from social ideologies about homosexuality. Negative feelings or attitudes towards non-heterosexual behaviour, identity, relationships and community, can lead to homophobic behavior and this is the root of the discrimination experienced by many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. Homophobia manifests itself in different forms, for example homophobic jokes, physical attacks, discrimination in the workplace and negative media representation. For people who have been brought up to believe that homosexuality is wrong, the realisation that they might be gay can cause feelings of shame and self loathing, leading to low self-esteem. Suppressing homosexuality involves denying an important part of a person's identity, and can have a serious impact upon their life and relationships. Furthermore, the dilemma of whether to 'come out' or not can cause a great deal of personal distress. LGBT people who make the decision to declare their sexual orientation can face prejudice and discrimination from their family, friends, and also from

wider society. Homophobia can cause extreme harm and disruption to people's lives. For example, many LGBT people have become homeless as a result of being rejected by their families after revealing their sexual orientation. Homophobic individuals play an effective role in inferring with the lives of LGBT individuals. They cannot suppress their feelings of hatred and the fact that they cannot accept LGBT individuals. Thus, they harass LGBT individuals verbally or physically and expose them to violence. Such attitudes direct LGBT individuals to stress, dissatisfaction of the place they live in, exposure to physical disturbance, loneliness and ostracism.

5. Harassment of LGBT Students in Schools:

LGBT students face harassment in schools. Being a teenager is tough enough without fearing harassment in a place where you're supposed to feel safe. All over the country lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students get harassed every day in school. Students who may be even just perceived as being LGBT also get harassed. According to Sara Kost⁹, Studies done by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) report that nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students face harassment. The 2007 National School Climate Survey found not only that LGBT students were harassed, but that 31.7% of LGBT students missed a class and 32.7% missed a day of school in the past month because of feeling unsafe. If students don't go to class, they can't learn and their grades begin to reflect it. The reported grade point average of students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression was almost half a grade lower than for students who were less often harassed (2.8 versus 2.4). The only thing teenagers should worry about in school is learning the material presented. Obviously, most teenagers have much more on their minds than that, however harassment shouldn't be one of them. Over 4000 Gay-Straight Alliances are registered with GLSEN. These clubs provide a safe space for the LGBT students in their school, as well as an educational tool for the rest of the school to help better the climate and diminish harassment. Too many LGBT students find it hard to speak up about harassment because it is so embedded in our culture. LGBT harassment is one of the last forms of harassment that is still allowed in popular culture.

6. Psychological Distress: LGBT people face considerable levels of stigmatization, discrimination and harassment in their daily lives. The majorities of LGBT people learn to cope with this, particularly when they have the support of family and friends, and participate with LGBT organizations and social networks. However, a significant number of LGBT people, most particularly younger LGBT people, had to cope with stigmatization, discrimination and harassment without support. Many also faced additional stress from experiences such as very high levels of homophobic bullying in schools and physical and verbal attacks. This had a negative impact on their mental health, leading to significant levels of psychological distress, self-harm and suicidality. LGBT teenagers can be particularly isolated, given that many will be exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity without any support. At this time of negotiating their journey to adulthood, a critical period of social and emotional development, they can be particularly vulnerable. It is often more difficult for LGBT people to be out in rural areas. Cities are more conducive to allowing LGBT people select which areas of their life they wish to be out in and to whom they are out to e.g. work, with friends, to family, neighbours, with medical services and associative activities. This is more difficult in rural areas where being out in one domain e.g. at work means it is more likely that one's community, one's family and one's friends are aware that one is LGBT. Rural LGBT people may be more likely to leave the place of their birth/youth than the general population. Gay and bisexual

men and women are more likely to experience depression and anxiety than are their heterosexual counterparts. These emotions might include intense sadness, anxiety, loneliness, discomfort in social situations, and feeling overwhelmed. It's not because of their gender identity alone! It's because in a patriarchal society, being gender variant causes a lot of distress. So much distress, in fact, that it can be described by the diagnosis of a mental disorder. A number of factors may contribute to this, from living in an often homophobic society to facing family rejection to being closeted in some or all aspects of life. Mental disorders are not symptoms of sexual orientation, but rather they are symptoms of discrimination and fear of discrimination. Most likely due to violence, social rejection, and isolation, the LGBT community experiences higher rates of anxiety, mood and substance use disorders, and suicidal thoughts among people ages 15-54¹⁰. Possibly due to rejection from both gay and straight communities, bisexual women have been found to have significantly poorer mental health than either lesbians or heterosexual women. Mayock et al. (2009)¹¹ in a large scale Irish study report that young LGBT people as a whole are more vulnerable to psychological distress. They report that over 60% of respondents directly attribute stress and depression directly to their non-heterosexual identity. There is a large body of evidence which supports the claim that poor emotional health can be as a result of homophobic attitudes and heterosexism in society leading to lowered self-esteem and confidence and increased stress particularly for young gay women.

Experiences that could negatively impact mental health:

- *Hostility from or rejection by loved ones or religious groups
- *Bullying at school, harassment by neighbors, danger of violence in public places
- *Casual homophobic comments on everyday basis
- *Prejudice/embarrassed response from professionals
- *No protection against discrimination at work, housing, pensions, etc.
- *Childhood sexual abuse
- *Verbal harassment, greater fear of physical violence and discrimination.

7. Poor Economic Condition and Discrimination in the Workplace: In addition to homophobia, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people confront racism and poverty on a daily basis. Discrimination of LGBT persons in the workplace is a significant factor in the differences in socioeconomic status for LGBT persons. Gay and transgender individuals suffer from socioeconomic inequalities in large part due to pervasive discrimination in the workplace. Discrimination directly causes job instability and high turnover, resulting in greater unemployment and poverty rates for gay and transgender people, as well as the wage gap between gay and straight. In her 1998 report, 'Income Inflation: The Myth of Affluence Among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Americans', economist Lee Badgett¹² notes that LGBT people do not earn more than heterosexual people. Badgett points to the diversity of economic life among LGBT populations, observing that in many cases, LGBT people earn less than their heterosexual counterparts.

8. Drug Addiction of LGBT people: LGBT people are more likely to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs than the general population, are less likely to abstain, report higher rates of substance abuse problems, and are more likely to continue heavy drinking into later life. LGBT's use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs for the same reasons as others, but their likelihood for doing so is heightened by personal and cultural stresses resulting from

anti-gay bias. Reliance on bars for socialization, stress caused by discrimination, and targeted advertising by tobacco and alcohol businesses in gay and lesbian publications are all believed to contribute to increased pressures on LGBT individuals to engage in substance abuse. Internalized homophobia is a form of self-limiting, self-loathing— an important concept to understand in developing substance abuse services for this population.

Anti-gay bias also results in frequent hate crimes aimed at LGBT youths, adding further to the stress of homophobia and heterosexism (an assumption that heterosexuality is the preferred norm for everyone.) Since the early 1980s “AIDS-phobia”—from both the outside world and as another form of internalized negative self-perception— causes added stress for many LGBT individuals. Preventing Alcohol and Other Drug Problems in the Lesbian Gay Community (published in 1995 for “Alive With Pleasure,” a SAMHSA/CSAP-funded conference on the topic) lists five substance abuse-specific risk factors for LGBT adolescents:

- *Sense of self as worthless or bad.
- *Lack of connectedness to supportive adults and peers.
- *Lack of alternative ways to view “differentness”
- *Lack of access to role models.
- *Lack of opportunities to socialize with other gays/lesbians except bars.
- *The risk of contracting HIV.

9.Barriers to Care: People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) face particular obstacles, barriers, and challenges that frequently make it difficult for them to find and receive competent and affirming healthcare. Heterosexist assumptions can adversely affect the quality of treatment, and fear of a negative experience keeps many LGBTs from seeking help. Organizations and individual therapists are not always LGBT friendly, and some therapists may not even recognize their own heterosexism. Staff can be judgmental toward LGBT sexuality, or be misinformed/uninformed about LGBT resources. In one UK study, over 40% of lesbians recounted negative/mixed reactions from mental health professionals when they were open about sexuality (including instances of overt homophobia, discrimination, and perceived lack of empathy)¹³.

10.Challenges facing LGBT elders: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) face a number of particular concerns as they age. They often do not access adequate health care, affordable housing or other social services that they need due to institutionalized heterosexism. Most LGBT elders do not avail themselves of services on which other seniors thrive. Many retreat back into the closet, reinforcing isolation Many LGBT elders experience social isolation and ageism within the LGBT community itself. These issues, often compounded by racism and other kinds of discrimination, demand the attention of policymakers, service providers and activists working on behalf of, and with, the elderly. As LGBT people grow older, they enter a world of services that may not be familiar with LGBT people. A number of problems faced by LGBT elders also stem from the fact that they often do not have the same family support systems as heterosexual people. Little is known about LGBT elders because of the widespread failure of governmental and academic researchers to include questions about sexual orientation and gender identity in their studies of the aged. Legal and policy frameworks which have traditionally excluded LGBT people engender social and economic consequences which deny LGBT elders access to financial resources and community support networks. The need to make broad assumptions about the size of the LGBT elderly population underscores one of the major problems in

understanding the needs of this population. LGBT elders are not only underserved, they are also understudied. There is an overall lack of empirical demographic data on LGBT people of any age, but data on LGBT seniors are particularly limited. Very little literature examines the lives of older LGBT people, and that which actually does exist has many limitations. Most samples over-represent white gay men from urban areas with middle or upper incomes, and under-represent women, people of color, low-income people or residents of suburban and rural regions. In addition to a policy agenda, a research agenda is urgently needed. Health care environments often are inhospitable to LGBT elders. Many professional caregivers are not accepting of, or trained to work with, LGBT elders. These providers may be hostile, discriminatory, or simply unaware that LGBT elders exist. Nursing homes often fail to protect LGBT elders. Nursing home rules, together with prejudice and hostile treatment on the part of staff and fellow patients, can create unwelcoming environments for elders who are unable to advocate for themselves.

11. Victims of hate Crimes and Violence: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people and those perceived to be LGBT are regularly targeted as victims of hate crimes and violence. LGBT people experience stigma and discrimination across their life spans, and are targets of sexual and physical assault, harassment and hate crimes. Additional factors that may impact on mental health and well-being for LGBT people include the process of “coming out” (sharing one’s LGBTQ identity with others), gender transition, internalized oppression, isolation and alienation, loss of family or social support, and the impact of HIV and AIDS. However, LGBT individuals’ experiences of violence and discrimination differ depending on a number of factors including race, gender, income, immigration status and language barriers. LGBT immigrants are more likely to face violence based on race and ethnicity and/or sexual identity and/or gender identity.

12. Problems of Criminalization:

In some countries, homosexuality is illegal and punishable by fines, imprisonment, life imprisonment and even the death penalty. Generally speaking, regardless of Sunni or Shia, a majority of Muslims do have very negative attitudes toward people of LGBT. To the traditionalists the Quran is clear about homosexuality, and there is no tolerance for debating the context or semantics. According to Mission Islam, an online network on varying Islamic teachings, every major Islamic school of thought considers sex between two men to be sinful and unlawful. Some schools of thought believe it merits severe physical punishment; including stoning to death. Others would sentence it with imprisonment or banishment from the state. Today, most governments that follow Islamic law defer on the punishment used for offenders. But, there have been cases where men convicted of having gay sex have been killed. According to the International Lesbian and Gay Association, only eight predominately Muslim countries, as of 2011, retain capital punishment for homosexual behavior: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Yemen, Qatar, Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and Mauritania. LGBT Muslims living in the United States do not typically experience this sort of physical punishment though they often face verbal persecution and social exclusion from traditional Muslim communities¹⁴. The advancement of gay rights also took a huge step back in the country of India. According to Reuters on December 2011, India’s Supreme Court has overturned a ruling by a lower court back in 2009 that decriminalized gay sex in the country, thus ruling homosexuality as an offense. Section 377 of India’s penal code that dates back to the 19th century bans “sex against the order of nature”. Homosexuality fits that definition and is an offense punishable to up to 10 years in prison¹⁵.

13. Legal Injustice : LGBT communities have an important stake in legal injustice issues. Specific groups within the LGBT community are disproportionately affected by violence and discrimination, sometimes at the hands of law enforcement officials. In recent years, there have been many documented instances of police brutality directed towards LGBT people in the U.S. Many police departments continue to be accused of insensitivity, including not appropriately responding to violence directed at LGBT people¹⁶. For example: LGBT people of color, youth, and sex workers are particularly vulnerable to police misconduct and abuse; transgender people are also at greater risk of being targeted by police and treated inappropriately or abusively while in police custody. LGBT people of color, transgender people and LGBT homeless youth are disproportionately targeted by police officers for non-violent drug arrests; they are more likely than most white, heterosexual middle-class drug users to face drug possession charges; and they often receive harsher sentencing. Once imprisoned, LGBT people are frequently targeted for additional harassment in an already inhumane prison system. In many instances LGBT individuals are not legally protected from abusive and discriminatory actions, as many oppressive legal ordinances and laws restrict LGBT-identified individuals from sharing the same basic human rights and privileges as those who do not identify as LGBT.

14. Problems of Terminology: Problems in language occur when terminology is unclear or when terminology has been associated with negative stereotypes. Problems occur in language concerning lesbians, gay men, and bisexual persons when the language is too vague or the concepts are poorly defined. Language may be ambiguous in reference, so that the reader is uncertain about its meaning or its inclusion and exclusion criteria; and the term homosexuality has been associated in the past with deviance, mental illness, and criminal behavior, and these negative stereotypes may be perpetuated by biased language. The term sexual orientation is preferred to sexual preference for psychological writing and refers to sexual and affectional relationships of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual people. The word preference suggests a degree of voluntary choice that is not necessarily reported by lesbians and gay men and that has not been demonstrated in psychological research. The terms lesbian sexual orientation, heterosexual sexual orientation, gay male sexual orientation, and bisexual sexual orientation are preferable to lesbianism, heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality. The former terms focus on people, and some of the latter terms have in the past been associated with pathology¹⁷.

Conclusion and Necessary Recommendations

It is clear that LGBT individuals who basically have different sexual orientation, face discrimination, exclusion from the society, thus quite often, meet with obstacles to satisfy their needs. This exclusion and ostracism could vary from the simplest personal relations to the most general social ignorance, exclusion, ostracism, working simultaneously together, and can even violate the rights of life. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have long been involved in efforts for racial and economic justice. Today, LGBT organizers and groups are increasingly drawing connections between the movement for LGBT rights and the movement for economic and racial justice, noting that people have multiple, layered identities and are members of more than one community at the same time, simultaneously experiencing oppression and privilege.

There is no short cut solution that can address the problems facing many LGBT people in across the world. Therefore, in the light of the above mentioned discussion, following recommendation can be developed in recognizing the role that individuals as well as institution can take effectively.

- 1.** Support the most marginalized of the LGBT community—people of color, low-income, young, elderly and transgender people.
- 2.** Establish collaborations on cross-issue work that includes LGBT issues affecting low-income and people of color populations.
- 3.** Engage foundation staff in public education around issues affecting LGBT low income people and LGBT people of color, especially as they relate to transgender issues.
- 4.** Schools and teacher education programmes are crucial sites where LGBT issues and concerns need to be addressed. To help promote health and safety among LGBT youth, schools can implement the following policies and practices:
 - i) Encourage respect for all students and prohibit bullying, harassment, and violence against all students.
 - ii) Identify “safe spaces,” such as counselors’ offices, designated classrooms, or student organizations, where LGBTQ youth can receive support from administrators, teachers, or other school staff.
 - iii) Encourage student-led and student-organized school clubs that promote a safe, welcoming, and accepting school environment (e.g., gay-straight alliances, which are school clubs open to youth of all sexual orientations).
 - iv) Ensure that health curricula or educational materials include HIV, other STD, or pregnancy prevention information that is relevant to LGBTQ youth; such as, ensuring that curricula or materials use inclusive language or terminology.
 - v) Encourage school district and school staff to develop and publicize trainings on how to create safe and supportive school environments for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity and encourage staff to attend these trainings.
 - vi) Facilitate access to community-based providers who have experience providing health services, including HIV/STD testing and counseling, to LGBTQ youth.

Facilitate access to community-based providers who have experience in providing social and psychological services to LGBTQ youth.
- 5.** Consider LGBT issues as a central theme in all economic and racial justice work.
- 6.** Advocate with philanthropic peers to support LGBT racial and economic justice work.
- 7.** To change societal attitude media has to play a responsible role by reporting on LGBT issues and promoting a culture of tolerance and freedom for minorities.
- 8.** Legal funds need to be created that can take on Public Interest Litigation on LGBT issues.
- 9.** Training needs to be conducted for health professionals to increase their understanding of LGBT identity as potential risk factor for self-harm suicidal behavior and depression. Respective authorities should ensure that health, mental health and social care services are provided in a way that is accessible and appropriate to LGBT people.
- 10.** National as well as state government should develop initiatives to support employers in making workplace and workplace culture more supportive and inclusive of LGBT people.
- 11.** To check the violence that is perpetrated in the home as well as in the public sphere, the domestic violence law has to be expanded to include non-spousal and parental violence as well.

- 12.** Police force at all level needs to be sensitized on LGBT issues and also on the general principles of fundamental human rights.
- 13.** Stigmatizing or pathologizing language regarding gay men, lesbians, and bisexual persons should be avoided (e.g., "sexual deviate", "sexual invert").
- 14.** Local authorities, policy makers, schools and family need more education on accepting gender-variant children, and in treating people of different sexuality and gender identity equally, and in applying policies and programs in a "friendly" manner, rather than being hostile.
- 15.** The LGBT movement is facing a leadership transition as longtime leaders begin to pass the torch to a new generation. Many key leaders of LGBT organizations are baby boomers who will need to ensure a lasting legacy so that tomorrow's leaders can build on their groundbreaking work. Today's and tomorrow's leaders of LGBT nonprofits need support during this ongoing transition so that their organizations can sustain their institutional vision, knowledge, personal networks, and historical context. At the same time, leadership investments are needed to help new and emerging leaders apply their energy and new ideas to ensure that their organizations can become still more successful and contribute to the ongoing vitality of the broader movement for LGBT equality. Strong LGBT organizations remain the backbone of the movement for equality. Talented leaders have played an essential role in advancing the equality of LGBT people – and talented leaders are central to the movement's ongoing work. But the movement cannot succeed based on the work of individual leaders alone. To secure its recent gains and further the cause of equality, the LGBT movement needs strong, effective organizations. LGBT nonprofits must be well-led and well-managed with paid, professional staff members who can help harness and support board and volunteer action at all levels of society and sustain the movement's work over the long haul. These organizations need strong staff leaders to ensure that they have the capacity to meet increasing demands in areas from policy and legal advocacy to direct services.

At the end it can be said that , protecting LGBT people from violence and discrimination does not require the creation of a new set of LGBT -specific rights, nor does it require the establishment of new international human rights standards. The legal obligations of States to safeguard the human rights of LGBT people are well established in international human rights law on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequently agreed international human rights treaties. All people, irrespective of sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, are entitled to enjoy the protections provided for by international human rights law, including in respect of rights to life, security of person and privacy, the right to be free from torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, the right to be free from discrimination and the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The core legal obligations of States with respect to protecting the human rights of LGBT people include obligations to:

Protect individuals from homophobic and transphobic violence.

Prevent torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

Repeal laws criminalizing homosexuality.

Prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Safeguard freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly for all LGBT people.

Glossary:

Bisexual— A person who is sexually attracted to both men and women or to a set of qualities that do not necessarily line up with biological sex.

Come out—To publicly affirm one’s homosexual identity, sometimes to one person in conversation, sometimes by an act that places one in the public eye. It is not a single event, but rather a lifelong process.

Gay—Used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attractions are to people of the same sex. In contemporary contexts; “Lesbian” is often a preferred term for women.

Gender Identity—The gender that a person sees themselves as. This can include refusing to label oneself with a gender.

Heterosexual privilege- The benefits granted automatically to heterosexual people that are denied to gay men and lesbians.

Homophobia- A fear and hatred of LGBT individuals based on a lack of knowledge and cultural conditioning. It is also manifested as a fear of being or being perceived as gay, or the fear of one’s own attraction to the same gender.

Internalized Homophobia-The process by which a member of the LGBT community comes to accept and live out inaccurate, disparaging myths and stereotypes about LGBT persons.

Lesbian-A woman who has emotional, social, psychological, and physical commitments and responses to other women.

Marginalization- The process whereby something or someone is pushed to the edge of a group and accorded lesser importance. This is predominantly a social phenomenon by which a minority or sub-group is excluded, and their needs or desires ignored. Marginalization can be defined as the process in which groups of people are excluded (marginalized) by the wider society. Marginalization is often used in an economic or political sense to refer to the rendering of an individual, an ethnic or national group, or a nation-state powerless by a more powerful individual.

Queer-Once a derogatory term, the word “queer” has been embraced by the GLBT community and is used as an umbrella term for all sexual minorities.

Questioning—Being unsure of one’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Sexual Orientation or Identity—Emotional, physical, and/or sexual attraction to others, which may be towards the same sex (homosexual), the other sex (heterosexual), or both sexes (bisexual).

Social Exclusion- The European Commission and European Council defined social exclusion as a: “process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education and training opportunities as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day to day lives”. (European Council 2004) [European Council (2004). Joint Report on Social Inclusion. 7101/04 (March 2004)]

Transphobia- is a range of negative attitudes and feelings towards transsexuality and transsexual or transgender people, based on the expression of their internal gender identity.

Transgender—Refers to persons whose self-perception as male or female is different than their biological sex and who live full-time as the other sex.

References and Endnotes

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