

Research Questions

RQ1: Does religiosity impact an individuals' attitude towards LGBTQ+ individuals?

RQ2: Is there a significant relationship between the age of participants and their attitude towards LGBTQ+ individuals?

Background

Previously research has examined homophobia in an attempt to explain it (Hoffarth et al., 2018, Callender, 2015). The response of different Christian denominations to LGBTQ+ individuals has been examined by Paul (2016), and Gattis et al. (2014).

Attitudes towards LGBTQ+ issues have been examined with regards to other religious communities other than Christianity have been studied by Hildebrandt (2015) and by Rosenkrantz et al. (2016). Policies regarding LGBTQ+ issues and the influence of media have also been examined to determine how they impact on people's attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people (Whitehead, 2018; Rockenbach et al., 2017; Perry & Snawder, 2016).

Methods

Data was collected through an online survey using a 33-point Likert scale measure. Participants were recruited through Facebook and Instagram. The participants answered questions that were based on Kite and Deaux's (1986) Homosexuality Assessment Scale (HAS) and Vicky Genia's Spiritual Experience Index- Revised (SEI-R) (1997). The HAS had participants select from a 5-point scale, ranging from strongly disagree to agree. The SEI-R had participants select from a 7-point Likert scale, with participants selecting from strongly disagree to agree. All 18 questions of the HAS were scored together, while the SEI-R was separated into two subscales to be scored separately (Spiritual Support Scale (1-13) and Spiritual Openness Scale (14-23)).

Religiosity and Attitudes Towards LGBTQ+ Issues

Emily Parker, Rogers State University

Results

138 participants were included in the study. The average age of participants was 29.94. 79% were female, 86% were white, and 52% had some college education. 27.5% of participants were non-religious/atheist, and 69% were Christian. When the two scales were scored, the overall mean for the SEI-R scale was 4.1815 with a standard deviation of 0.7886. The overall mean for the HAS was 3.2786 with a standard deviation of 0.26614. A significant negative relationship was found between the two measures ($r=-0.242$, $p=.004$). Therefore, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis that spirituality has no impact on attitudes towards LGBTQ+ issues. When comparing age to spirituality, a significant positive relationship was found between increase in age and spirituality ($r=0.327$, $p=.000$). This finding makes sense, since we know from developmental psychology that spirituality increasing with age indicates a natural and healthy progression throughout life. However, when comparing age to the HAS, a significant negative relationship was found between age and attitudes towards LGBTQ+ issues ($r= -0.176$, $p=.039$). Because of these findings, the researcher concludes there is a significant relationship between the age of participants and their attitude towards LGBTQ+ issues. Most of the participants in the survey either identified as Christian ($N=95$) or as non-religious/atheist ($N=38$). An independent-samples t-test was run against religious affiliation and the SEI-R. Christians scored significantly higher than atheists on spirituality, but when the same test was run on religious affiliation and HAS scores, atheists scored higher than Christians in terms of support for LGBTQ+ issues ($t(131)= -15.126$, $p=0.000$).

Discussion

The findings of this research show that attitudes towards LGBTQ+ issues are beginning to change; however, religious individuals still tend to harbor less support for LGBTQ+ individuals when compared to their non-religious peers. Age plays a significant role in an individuals' support of LGBTQ+ individuals. Ultimately, the results of the study show an increasing amount of support for LGBTQ+ people and issues, which is considered a positive thing for members of the LGBTQ+ community. Increasing support for members of the LGBTQ+ community will hopefully lead to less discrimination and less depressive symptoms that happen as a result of discrimination. There were a few limitations to the study. One was how spirituality was operationalized. In future research, the researcher would like to operationalize spirituality in a way that is not inherently connected to religion. The researcher believes this is one of the reasons non-religious participants scored lower in the SEI-R than the Christian counterparts. Another limitation was confirmation bias. Participants may have guessed how the researcher wanted them to answer and filled out the survey accordingly. The final limitation was the wording of some of the questions. A question regarding the relationships between same sex individuals versus the relationships between opposite sex individuals was commonly cited as one that participants were not sure how to answer. Future research can also be done to more closely examine how the different types of relationships are viewed at a later time.

Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to Dr. Munsell for mentoring me this semester and putting up with my endless questions, and her help with analyzing data. Thank you as well to Dr. Marrero for all the advice he gave me throughout the semester.