

Exploring the Fear of Commitment among LGBT Individuals in Dagupan City

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ABSTRACT

This paper aimed to explore commitment among lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender individuals (LGBT) using a phenomenological research design with the intent of comparing the social, psychological, and cultural causes of commitment issues. The study was conducted in Dagupan City and included 27 LGBT participants aged 18 to 50. The data collection method was semi-structured interviews, which captured the participants' experiences, views, and concerns regarding relationship commitment. Various studies indicated that certain key factors played a significant role in causing fear of commitment among LGBT individuals, including societal stigmatization, negative past relationship experiences, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which escalated feelings of loneliness and insecurity. Furthermore, the lack of familial and community acceptance, along with limited institutional support, intensified the reluctance of LGBT individuals to commit to relationships. It was recommended that awareness, counseling, and community programs should focus on these issues and work toward healthier relationships among LGBT community members. These findings set a foundation for further studies and interventions to improve relational quality in this population and add to the growing knowledge base about LGBT relationships.

Keywords: Gay and lesbian identity, Avoidant attachment, Phenomenology, Interpersonal characteristics, Discrimination, Dagupan, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Fear of commitment, or commitment phobia, is a critical relational and psychological challenge to individuals worldwide. For LGBT individuals, fear of commitment is also entrenched in societal stigma, cultural norms, and legal inequalities affecting these groups. Institutional and social frameworks failing to be supportive of sexual minorities can be most expressly stated in the case of the Philippines. These issues are issues directly aligned with several of the Sustainable Development Goals, such as SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), which all strive for more inclusive societies and the betterment of individual lives.

Across the world, homosexuality is shunned in most places due to the lack of inclusivity in policies concerning cultural understanding. Liberal countries in Western Europe and the Americas are more accepting. In contrast, conservative regions, including parts of Southeast Asia, remain resistant to same-sex relationships due to deep-seated religious and cultural sensitivities (Pew Research Center, 2020). In the Philippines, the lack of legislation that recognizes same-sex relationships, combined with the pervasive dominance of Christian conservatism, disempowers LGBT individuals and denies them the opportunity to form and maintain a lasting relationship. These structural inequalities reinforce emotional and relationship insecurities, which go against the progression toward SDG 10, aimed at reducing inequalities.

Even more critical than structural factors is psychological momentum aggravating commitment fears. The attachment theory gives a perspective on understanding the effects of early relational experiences on adult commitments. Rejection by the parents leads to insecure attachment styles, which prevent the person from forming trusting and committed relationships (Ryan et al., 2010). Internalized homophobia, or internalization of societal anti-LGBT attitudes, further decreases self-esteem and relational satisfaction

(Doyle & Molix, 2015). Psychological barriers are addressed as support for SDG 3 since doing so contributes to the well-being of LGBT people's mental well-being by promoting healthier relational dynamics.

The COVID-19 pandemic threw in new dimensions of complexity, doing away with the traditional relational dynamics and amping up feelings of loneliness and insecurity. Physical distancing measures reduce opportunities for intimacy while enhancing reliance on virtual communication (Mikolajczak et al., 2021). These challenges fell even more sharply on LGBT heads already dealing with societal and familial rejection, pointing to the need for inclusive health and social services emphasizing mental health and resilience, a prime focus under SDG 3.

Commitment fears among the LGBT also have very close ties with gender equality. Discrimination and stigma thus maintain/entrench conventional norms of gender and their restrictions and disadvantage sexual minorities. The interventions should be aligned with SDG 5, working towards creating an environment allowing LGBT individuals to indulge in relationships without societal pressures and constraints due to promoting gender equality through advocacy, education, and policy reforms.

This study investigates the fear of commitment among LGBT individuals and analyzes this under the respective lenses of these SDGs within the Philippine context. The research fills out the gaps in the determinants of commitment fears in a way that advances global efforts to foster inclusive societies. The paper will provide actionable insights and recommendations that not only allow for enhancing relational well-being among LGBT individuals but contribute to the realization of equality and inclusion as well as sustainable development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Commitment phobia, or the fear of commitment, has also been documented through both psychological and sociological literature. According to Jackson (2021), the fear of commitment is defined as a huge challenge whereby an individual struggles to commit to a goal or a relationship. This fear is often rooted in factors such as a lack of trust, low self-esteem, and past experiences of abuse. Psych Central (2022) says avoidance is based on fear of the unknown, where relationships, intimate actions, and decisions are delayed. To compound this, for LGBT individuals, societal stigmatization and discrimination have ensured their emotional responses and behaviors are unique, differentiating their relationship experiences from those of heterosexuals.

The dynamics of commitment in same-sex relationships differ significantly because of external societal pressures and internalized challenges. According to Rotosky and Riggle (2006), commitment is a process that depends on mutual interactions to maintain relationships. However, for LGBT couples, discrimination based on society or institutions clouds this process. Due to the lack of legal and social recognition, expectations are navigated differently, creating stress in these couples' relationships (Stanley & Markman, 2010).

Globally, perceptions of homosexuality vary, significantly influencing the ease with which LGBT individuals form committed relationships. The Pew Research Center (2020) highlights regional disparities, with more liberal societies in Western Europe and the Americas showing greater acceptance than conservative regions in Asia and Africa. These cultural and religious factors manifest in heightened relational insecurities among LGBT individuals in less accepting environments.

Religious and cultural beliefs, typically conservative, dominate people's attitudes in a predominantly Christian country such as the Philippines. Such cultural frameworks tend to suppress positive attitudes and amplify internalized negativity amongst LGBT individuals. According to Katz-Wise et al. (2017), parental rejection further complicates the commitment process because rejection from their parents leads to mental health issues and attachment insecurities.

Parental acceptance and rejection theories point out how secure childhood relationships lay the groundwork for healthy adult commitments (Ryan et al., 2010). On top of this, the absence of legal protections for same-sex unions in the Philippines adds further complexity. Not only do individuals of the LGBT community face familial rejection, but they are also exploited and maltreated at the hands of society, thus creating a climate of entrenched fear of commitment.

Attachment theory provides a strong framework for understanding the commitment fears among LGBT individuals. Ryan et al. (2010) established that children experiencing parental rejection during formative years often exhibit insecure attachment styles. These insecurities through attachment consequently translate to avoidance or anxiety attachment styles in adult relationships that prevent one from venturing

into meaningful commitments. According to Connolly and McIsaac (2009), it is further noted that negative past experiences, such as betrayal and abandonment, enhance the fears of vulnerability and foster mistrust in new relations.

Internalized homophobia, or the internal acceptance of anti-LGBT attitudes from society, significantly contributes to commitment fears. Doyle and Molix (2015) found that individuals with high levels of internalized homophobia reported lower relationship satisfaction and more reluctance to commit when compared with others in the LGBT community. Overcoming the internal issues requires intervention through therapy to enhance the outcomes of relations.

The pandemic of COVID-19 brought new facets to problems in the commitment of LGBT participants. Mikolajczak et al. (2021) comment that social distancing measures and lockdowns disrupted the best universal face-to-face interaction modes. Virtual platforms became alternatives to face-to-face interaction. Such limitations amplified feelings of loneliness as well as instability in relationships where physical intimacy was a big part of the connection - this has detected how the extended period without physical contact during lockdowns increased fears of abandonment- in fearsome individuals who already felt uneasy about commitment.

The pandemic, however, also brought about self-care among LGBTs. According to Jakubiak and Feeney (2017), self-care became a coping mechanism against societal prejudice and loneliness. While a very healthy practice in terms of resiliency building, sometimes this resulted in relational avoidance as a person found it convenient to neglect relational commitments in favor of their needs.

Legal acknowledgment of same-sex unions has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on levels of commitment. According to Riggle et al. (2010), legally recognized same-sex couples were more likely to have higher satisfaction and commitment rates than those not possessing recognition. In the Philippines, where legal protection is not in place, societal influence has marred the willingness of LGBT members to commit themselves for the long term.

Therapeutic approaches customized for LGBT experiences open avenues to work on commitment fears, aligning with Hardtke et al. (2010), in which they point out that EFT helps lay strength on emotional bonds and aids the couple in developing commitment among same-sex couples. Community-based interventions foster acceptance while reducing societal stigma, proving great importance. Frost and Meyer (2009) emphasize that supportive environments lead to superior relational outcomes owing to the reduction of minority stress effects.

The fear of commitment among the LGBTs is a multidimensional issue that has contributing factors to societal stigma, psychological vulnerabilities, cultural norms, and legal inequalities. An integrated approach combining societal education, legal reform, therapeutic intervention, and community support could be all it takes to overcome these challenges. Understanding and mitigating the reasons behind no-commitment can, in this way, make an environment friendly for healthy, happy relationships between LGBTs.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Beyond its immediate task, focusing on the fear of commitment among LGBT individuals, this study touches upon broader societal, psychological, and development paradigms. Anchoring itself firmly in the vein of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), this research fills an essential gap in the contemporary endeavor to understand the relational dynamics of marginalized communities. This study yields important insights and recommendations regarding promoting more inclusive societies, advancing mental health frameworks, and supporting long-lasting human relationships.

Fear of commitment is a multi-determined phenomenon - influenced by socio-cultural, psychological, and legal factors. For LGBT, fear of commitment is compounded by stigma, discrimination, and systemic inequalities, leading to relational insecurities and diminished well-being. This study explores the lived experiences of LGBT individuals in the Philippines and, with profound insights, identifies the difficulties and frustrations LGBT people encounter in creating and sustaining stable, committed relationships. This research may help contribute to the formulation of specific interventions aimed at augmenting relational satisfaction and alleviating psychological burdens to marginalized groups.

The psychological dimensions of commitment fears, such as insecure attachment styles, internalized homophobia, and past relational traumas, highlight the study. SDG 3 provides a cornerstone for sustainable development by giving mental health priority. The study aims to suggest mental health

interventions that help promote self-esteem, trust, and resilience among LGBT individuals through the emphasis placed on early relational experiences and their subsequent influence on adult commitments. Such results can be helpful when creating therapeutic frameworks and community programs that focus on emotional healing and relational stability.

Relational conflicts among LGBTs are based on rigid gender norms and discriminatory practices. This study implies much for gender equality, which is a condition essential for sexual minorities to pursue meaningful relationships without any threat of reaction from society. The study aligns with SDG 5 since it considers advocacy, education, and policy reforms in dismantling barriers to equality. In addressing the relational implications of gender discrimination, the study contributes to a broader effort toward inclusivity and challenges long-standing norms that serve to marginalize LGBT individuals.

In the absence of legal recognition and societal acceptance, same-sex relationships have been hindered by the continuation of inequalities in relational and personal development. This research brought attention to the institutional and cultural barriers that exacerbate commitment fears, promoting policies that will reduce discrimination and promote equality. In the Philippine setting, where LGBT people often go through rejection from their families and societal stigma, the study showed the need for systemic changes in alignment with SDG 10 to provide equality for everyone.

Relationships have faced unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, and for LGBTs, who already confront societal and relational insecurities, these additional pressures are significant. This paper considers the pandemic's impact on relations, suggesting the potential of adaptive coping mechanisms such as self-care or virtual communication during the changes. This way, the research will deepen knowledge about what crises mean for marginalized communities and how to develop resilience and relational harmony in uncertain times.

These study results inform a broad audience regarding policymaking, counseling, and advocacy: 1) The research evidence supports the legal protections and inclusive policies that can foster equality and stamp out stigma. 2) Understanding the psychological barriers to commitment can help develop specific therapeutic interventions to suit the LGBT individual's needs. 3) The study highlights the importance of community support systems in fostering acceptance and reducing relational insecurities. 4) The contribution of this research lies in adding another dimension to the university discourse on issues concerning LGBT relationships and by focusing on the intersection of societal norms, psychological frameworks, and global crises. The interconnection between theoretical perspectives and everyday lives provides a holistic understanding of the fear of commitment based on the lived experience of marginalized communities – and enriches the body of knowledge in sociology, psychology, and development studies, creating a foundation for further research in these areas.

The significance of this study lies in its ability to illuminate the multifaceted challenges faced by LGBT individuals in their pursuit of relational stability and fulfillment. By aligning its objectives with the SDGs, the research addresses immediate relational and psychological concerns and contributes to broader societal goals of equality, well-being, and inclusivity. Through such insights and recommendations, the study provides a basis for change while advocating for a world where all people can love and live their lives without any inhibition of sexual orientation and gender identity.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To determine the characteristics of LGBT individuals regarding their experiences, meanings, and perspectives on fear of commitment in relationships.
2. To evaluate and explain these experiences, the emotional and psychological aspects must be mainly focused on.
3. To establish how these experiences, meanings, and perceived roles influence fear of commitment, particularly regarding personal choice, peer influence, and acceptance from family and society.

By addressing these objectives, the study aimed to deepen the understanding of the factors that contribute to commitment fear among LGBT individuals and provide a basis for strategies aimed at fostering healthier, more supportive relationship environments.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design for the investigation of the lived experiences of LGBT subjects concerning their commitment-phobia in relationships. The methodology was conceived to uncover the personal, emotional, and social dimensions of commitment fears by exploring participants' narratives and analyzing subjective experiences. Purposive sampling was adopted

to ensure a focused and relevant population, and semi-structured interviews will provide the participants with a legitimate opportunity to articulate their insights. The holistic approach that the data gathering tools and ethical safeguards have been integrated to make reliable, valid, and meaningful findings that contribute to understanding this complex phenomenon.

The study was a qualitative study that took on a phenomenological research design to deeply explore the lived experiences of LGBT individuals concerning their fear of commitment in relationships. The phenomenological method was used for its strength in uncovering the meanings that participants attach to their experiences, emphasizing the ideational and emotional processes that underlie their perspectives. This approach was relevant in this research to delve into the participants' fears, giving some insight into how societal, psychological, and cultural contexts influence the relational behaviors of the participants. By focusing on subjective experiences, this study aimed to uncover how these fears are manifested and how more prominent extrinsic and intrinsic factors shape them.

The study targeted LGBT individuals residing in Dagupan City, Philippines, utilizing purposive sampling to ensure that participants possessed specific characteristics aligned with the research objectives. The inclusion criteria required participants to self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, be aged between 18 and 50 years, single, and not currently partnered. They also needed to be English-speaking and have experienced some form of relational or psychological difficulty associated with commitment. These parameters ensured a homogeneous sample relevant to the focus of the study. Any participants who did not meet these parameters were excluded, allowing the researchers to focus on the shared characteristics influencing commitment fears consistently.

The recruitment process was conducted through social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, by tapping into the vast reach and potential participants. Posts and messages containing a short introduction to the study and screening survey link were posted in relevant groups and on participants' timelines. The screening survey requested demographic details and pre-qualification responses to determine whether participants meet the predefined inclusion criteria. Qualified participants were sent invitations to take part further in the study. This recruitment method ensured that a diverse yet relevant pool of participants was identified to reflect the myriad experiences within the LGBT community of Dagupan City.

Two self-developed tools were applied to grapple with the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of participants' experiences to understand the phenomenon under study better. The first tool used was the Sexual Orientation Test, which was designed based on Michael Storms' Sexuality Axis and consisted of 40 questions validating participants' sexual orientation and preferences that helped researchers understand the identity of participants based on which they could further classify them as target participants for this study.

The second tool used was the Fear of Relationship Commitment (FRC) Test, based on standard relationship assessment instruments used online through Psychology Today. The test consisted of 38 questions assessing participants' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors toward relationship commitment. By quantifying the participants' perspectives, the FRC Test provided statistical context that supported and enriched the findings from the qualitative themes. Together, these instruments allowed the researchers to pick the most relevant participants based on their experience, thus allowing an in-depth exploration during the qualitative phase.

The key method for data collection was semi-structured interviews. The in-depth and descriptive nature of the participants' experiences on commitment was expected to be addressed by interviews. Interviews took place using Google Meet, hence enabling increased ease and flexibility. The semi-structured format made use of a guide of 17 open-ended questions to encourage participants to elicit their personal experiences, the challenges they faced, and the broader societal and psychological factors contributing to their fear of commitment; thus, the format would allow the researchers to explore emergent themes, and it was still relatively consistent across interviews.

All the interviews took between 30 minutes and 1.5 hours, thus giving the subjects ample opportunity to articulate their thoughts and feelings as fully as possible. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' informed consent, ensuring an accurate record of their narratives. These recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim to maintain the authenticity of the data. The principle of Epoché, as suggested by Moustakas (1994), was applied to eliminate researcher bias and promote an open dialogue. The environmental conditions, free from preconceived notions, allowed the participants to share their experiences fearlessly and without feeling judged.

The transcribed data were analyzed inductively to identify the repeated patterns and themes from the participants' narratives. Beginning with a thorough review of all the transcripts helped familiarize the researcher with the data. Significant excerpts were then coded and grouped into thematic clusters, highlighting shared experiences or insightful information. The themes then were investigated concerning broader societal, psychological, and cultural contexts so that the findings would incorporate individual and collective perspectives.

The thematic analysis was iterative, with the researchers revisiting the data to refine the emerging themes and ensure their accuracy and relevance. This approach facilitated a deep understanding of the complex interplay between personal experiences and external influences, providing a holistic view of the factors shaping commitment fears among LGBT individuals. The final themes were contextualized within the existing literature, offering a robust framework for interpreting the findings.

Ethical considerations have played a paramount role in the study in protecting the rights and interests of participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed by providing participants with an alias and storing all data securely. Participants were given an information sheet explaining the purpose, the procedures involved in the study, and the possible risks. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point with no resultant consequences.

The selection was based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the screening process was performed without discrimination. There were also emotional control mechanisms that would manage uncomfortable feelings resulting from discussion of sensitive or traumatic issues, and participants were referred to counseling services when necessary. Such an approach ensured minimal risks and a comfortable environment for participants.

This methodology has been well-crafted to offer an in-depth investigation of the fear of commitment among LGBT in Dagupan City. This study ensured that ample, complex, and rich knowledge about the participants' experiences was acquired by including quantitative tools with deep qualitative interviews. Reliable and valid findings were also generated due to rigorous data collection and analysis operations and strict ethical safeguards. These insights are, therefore, valuable contributions to academic literature and practical interventions for addressing psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of commitment fears in the LGBT community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Responsibility to a Lifetime Commitment

The first objective of this study sought to understand how LGBT individuals perceive commitment in relationships. Participants consistently described commitment as a profound and enduring responsibility involving trust, love, time, and understanding. For example, one participant stated, "Commitment is when a person fully trusts the partner and loves him or her and is always there to support the partner whatever the situation" (P1). Another participant remarked, "It's about discussing what is to come in terms of partnership, marriage, and creating a family" (P3). These responses indicate that participants conceptualized commitment as aligning with traditional notions of lifelong partnership rooted in monogamy and shared goals.

This perspective corroborates the work of Rotosky and Riggle (2006), who defined commitment as a dyadic process based on respect, interaction, and shared aspirations. However, unique challenges emerged for LGBT individuals, particularly those who experienced familial rejection or societal stigma. Participants expressed that commitment carried an additional emotional burden due to their marginalized status. For example, one participant shared, "It feels like you have to prove your relationship's worth to others while also proving it to yourself" (P7). This finding aligns with Stanley and Markman's (2010) research, which suggests that commitment within marginalized groups often requires additional emotional and psychological labor to maintain stability.

Participants' views also revealed a heightened sense of responsibility in navigating societal perceptions of same-sex relationships. For many, the fear of judgment added pressure to make relationships appear flawless to others. The idea aligns with Meyer's (1995) Minority Stress Theory, highlighting how societal discrimination contributes to relational challenges, emphasizing the need for inclusive support systems.

Negative Experiences and Fear of the Unknown

The second objective addressed the emotional and psychological barriers to commitment, with participants citing past negative experiences, such as infidelity and betrayal, as key deterrents. A participant shared, "Once you've been cheated on, you find it difficult to trust again. You don't want to feel

the same pain all over again" (P5). Another participant highlighted the inherent uncertainty of relationships: "It is possible to end up getting hurt, so the thought of that makes it hard to engage deeply" (P8). These fears contributed to pervasive vulnerability and mistrust, making participants hesitant to engage in new relationships.

This finding aligns with Connolly and McIsaac's (2015) observations that relational trauma amplifies fears of vulnerability and hinders trust in future partnerships. For LGBT individuals, these fears are further compounded by societal stigma and limited support systems. Participants described feeling isolated and unsupported, a sentiment echoed by Psych Central's (2022) findings on the need for effective strategies to process trauma and rebuild trust.

The narratives also highlighted how internalized homophobia magnified commitment fears. Participants shared experiences of doubting their self-worth and feeling unworthy of stable relationships. One participant explained, "It's hard to trust someone when you don't fully trust yourself" (P12). This insight aligns with Doyle and Molix's (2015) assertion that internalized homophobia diminishes relationship satisfaction and perpetuates self-doubt, underscoring the need for interventions that address internalized biases.

COVID-19 Restrictions and Impact on Intimacy

The third aim explored the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the relational experiences of the participants. As testified by the overwhelming responses of the participants, the restrictions due to the pandemic disrupted intimacy and commitment-building. A participant narrated, "The pandemic made it challenging to work at the relationship because they were separated by the couple, hardly seeing each other and could not touch one another physically" (P11). Another said, "Because of the spread of the pandemic, we switched to online communication.". It is not the same as being face-to-face, and it puts our dedication to the test" (P13).

Participants emphasized the importance of physical touch in maintaining relationships and described how its absence heightened fears regarding the longevity of partnerships. These findings align with Mikolajczak et al.'s (2021) observation that physical intimacy is a cornerstone of relational stability, and its absence during lockdowns exacerbated existing commitment fears. Additionally, the prolonged periods of separation led participants to question the stability and durability of their relationships, supporting Waymack's (2022) conclusion that long-distance relationships are inherently more challenging due to physical separation.

At the same time, the pandemic encouraged some participants to focus on self-care and personal growth. One participant explained, "Being alone during the pandemic taught me to take care of myself first" (P15). While self-prioritization fostered resilience for some, it led others to avoid relational commitments entirely – this aligns with Jakubiak and Feeney's (2017) findings that self-care can inadvertently result in relational withdrawal when individuals prioritize their needs over partnership obligations.

Social and Familial Influences on Commitment

The fourth objective explored how societal and familial acceptance influenced participants' commitment fears. Participants cited conditional acceptance from family members and societal stigma as significant barriers. One participant noted, "Even though my family accepts my sexuality on certain conditions, it becomes hard to feel safe in a relationship. That rejection is always lurking around the corner" (P16). Another participant highlighted societal pressures, stating, "Society does not fully accept same-sex relationships, and that is why one cannot fully commit to the relationship as a couple" (P18).

These narratives corroborate Meyer's (1995) Minority Stress Theory, which posits that societal discrimination leads to internalized stigma and negatively impacts relationship quality. Conditional acceptance from families created a persistent sense of insecurity, further compounding fears of rejection and failure. Additionally, participants described how negative portrayals of same-sex relationships in mass culture reinforced stereotypes, influencing their relational choices. Frost and Meyer's (2009) findings support these insights, emphasizing that societal acceptance and support are critical for fostering long-term relational stability among sexual minorities.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

While the study offers significant insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. The sample size, limited to 27 participants from Dagupan City, restricts the generalizability of findings to broader LGBT populations. Additionally, the self-reported nature of the data introduces potential biases. Future research should expand the sample size and include diverse geographical and demographic populations

to address these limitations. Studies exploring variations in commitment fears across subgroups of the LGBT community, such as transgender and bisexual individuals, are also recommended.

The study revealed that a combination of societal stigma, relational histories, and cultural influences shapes fear of commitment among LGBT individuals. Familial rejection, societal discrimination, and the absence of physical intimacy during the pandemic were significant factors contributing to commitment apprehensions. Such findings validate the need for targeted interventions, from therapy concerning historical trauma to social campaign efforts aimed at re-education toward greater inclusivity and community-based support programs. Through this approach, future efforts may better assist LGBT participants in developing healthier, more satisfying relationships as they contribute to broader societal goals of equality and mental health.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper, therefore, provided a comprehensive discussion on the fear of commitment among members of the LGBT community, identifying numerous social, psychological, and cultural factors that drove this fear. The study, conducted using a phenomenological approach, revealed that the participants valued fulfilling and stable relationships yet faced challenges due to societal stigma, adverse experiences, and the general impact of the pandemic. These challenges were worsened by weak institutional support and low social acceptance, leaving individuals feeling vulnerable and reluctant to commit.

This paper identified two major themes: the type of relationship and the social context in which LGBT individuals lived and experienced heightened levels of commitment fear. The failure to find acceptance and support from family and society negatively affected the interpersonal relationships of LGBT individuals, making them feel insecure and unsafe in their relationships. They feared betrayal and emotional harm. This fear was further fueled by experiences of infidelity or rejection, which left lasting scars and hindered trust in new partners. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced new dynamics in the relationships of LGBT individuals. The pandemic restricted physical contact between people and couples, limiting interactions to their homes and reducing opportunities for physical engagement. The social distancing measures and the absence of physical contact left many feeling more lonely and insecure, particularly those already hesitant to engage in close relationships. The conclusions drawn from this study emphasized the necessity of understanding the experiences of LGBT individuals in terms of commitment and relationships – that required enhanced social acceptance and encouragement of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender relationships, along with finding ways for individuals to overcome their fear and alienation to foster healthy, committed relationships.

The following recommendations were made concerning the study's objectives to address the mentioned challenges. First, targeted awareness-raising campaigns and educational activities should be implemented to trace respondents' characteristics concerning their experiences and understanding of the fear of commitment. These interventions should focus on creating a supportive environment within families and society to reduce LGBT individuals' apprehension about commitment. Second, professional counseling and support services should be developed to assess and interpret these experiences, particularly their emotional and psychological components. These services should include therapy sessions that help LGBT individuals work through past traumas, build self-esteem, develop healthier relationship patterns, and reduce their fear of commitment. Finally, community-based interventions are essential to gaining insight into how these experiences and perceived roles influence commitment, particularly in decisions based on personal choice, peer influence, and family acceptance. These interventions should foster positive peer group experiences and involve case-sharing among LGBT individuals. Additionally, workshops and discussions to raise awareness and reduce stigmatization, with the involvement of family members, were recommended. Collectively, these recommendations aimed to improve conditions for LGBT individuals and provide them with tools to overcome obstacles preventing them from experiencing commitment and forming healthy, fulfilling relationships.

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