



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MORAL VALUES AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS LGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS

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Abstract: Each day, moral values influence the way people think, based on their values, make decisions, and treat others. The current research investigates the connection between people's moral values and their attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals. Family, culture, religion, and society dictate the boundaries of what is considered normal and what is abnormal. It is through these factors that a person is molded, hence, morals come first. Values that stress care and fairness are likely to be associated with more accepting attitudes, meanwhile, values that stress tradition and authority may lead to moral discomfort or less willingness to connect with people of different sexual orientations. Acknowledging the way people reason about morality rather than just assessing visible prejudice is the method the researchers have chosen to adopt in their quest to understand better the not-so-clear-cut aspect of LGBTQ+ acceptance. The findings could be a great support for educators, psychotherapists, and society at large in reconsidering the impact of moral beliefs on everyday life and the psychological well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals.

IndexTerms - Moral values, LGBTQ+ individuals, Social attitudes, Moral judgment, Acceptance

Introduction

Moral values play a very important role in the perception of people, their decision-making, and their relationships with others. These values are the ones which help the people to draw the line between the right and the wrong, the acceptable and the unacceptable. Family, culture, religion, education, and social norms are the main sources of moral values. Although moral values can create a peaceful and good society, they have the power to influence the way people perceive those who live differently than the mainstream way.

The LGBTQ+ community is judged mostly based on moral values that consider heterosexual couples and binary genders as the norm. In many societies, being a member of the LGBTQ+ community is not a personal matter but rather a moral issue. Consequently, believers' and non-believers' morality will heavily influence how these individuals are accepted, rejected, or regarded with ambivalence. It is paramount to bring up that moral beliefs can differ from person to person. Some may highlight the importance of love, justice and non-injury; others might prioritize rites, power and social acceptance. People having different beliefs about morality could possibly see LGBTQ+ people in extremely different ways, ranging from supporting them and being inclusive to discriminating against them or being aloof. Thus, it is not morality itself that leads to bias or acceptance; what matters is the level of strictness or flexibility in one's moral reasoning. The process of moral judgment in the case of LGBTQ+ people is not only limited to the public realm but also includes their private lives. Such situations could be encountered in the family, school, or workplace. If a person's sexual orientation is viewed as immoral by others, that person might suffer from anxiety, identity confusion, and fear of rejection to a high degree. It is very crucial to recognize the impact that moral values have on the LGBTQ+ community, not only for the purpose of social research but also for mental health assistance.

Background of the Study

Research in psychology indicates that a person's moral values can be a great influence on their attitudes toward groups that the society has judged wrongly and unfairly.

Moral Foundations Theory states that people appreciate different moral norms, such as taking care of others, being just, being loyal, having respect for authority, and being pure. These norms, in turn, determine the way people react to the variety of sexual and gender differences in the society. According to studies, individuals who appreciate caring and fairness are most likely to be involved in equal treatment activities and to possess a positive outlook on LGBTQ+ individuals. Conversely, those who are more oriented towards the authority, the tradition, and the moral purity might as well consider the LGBTQ+ identities as not right or proper and, thus, opposing to what is considered right or proper. This may eventually result in strong moral condemnation, which is often sp...

and unchallenged in the society. The constant confrontation with moral condemnation may have a devastating effect on the mental health of the LGBTQ+ individuals. When an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity is being questioned or is not being accepted for moral reasons, the individual may start to think very negatively about himself or herself. Consequently, the individual may feel ashamed, guilty, and have low self-worth. This process is related to minority stress, where the long-term exposure to stigma and rejection indirectly affects the person's mental health. Though the discourse on inclusion has become common, there is still lack of understanding about moral values as a psychological reason behind people's attitudes toward LGBTQ+ persons. While many studies examine discrimination or legal rights, fewer studies investigate the concept of morality as such. It is essential to address the issue so as to promote the creation of support programs that accept and at the same time respect different morality beliefs..

Review of literature

Moral values are seen as important things that shape how people feel about LGBTQ+ people. Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009) and Haidt (2012) looked at how differences in moral beliefs affect social views. Herek (2000, 2004) talked about how moral and cultural beliefs can lead to prejudice and stigma towards sexual minorities. Meyer (2003) studied how social stress and moral judgments can impact the mental health of people who identify as sexual minorities. Koleva et al. (2012) and Barnett, Öz, and Marsden (2018) discussed the connection between moral beliefs like binding and individualising and how society feels about certain groups. Ochoa et al. (2016), Wang (2019), and Rowatt et al. (2006) looked into how religious beliefs and values based on purity influence attitudes. Schwartz and Bardi (2001) covered cross-cultural views on tradition, conformity, and values, while Hill et al. (2010), O'Brien and Crandall (2003), and Massey, Hodson, and Dhont (2010) examined moral attitudes in relation to how people think about sexual minorities. Martin and Smith (2008) and the Pew Research Centre (2013) included broader societal and global views. Wilkins, Rybakova, and Kavanaugh (2019) and Van den Bos, Loseman, and Doosje (2011) studied attitudes in younger groups and personality traits. Barnes, Brown, and Tamborini (2021), Rios (2020), and Leafblad et al. (2022) focused on moral foundations and how acceptance varies in different political, cultural, and identity settings.

Research design

The qualitative conceptual method is good for this research paper as it draws upon the findings of the related, empirical and theoretical studies.

Procedure:

The paper conceptually developed a new perspective after a comprehensive review of previous theoretical and academic debates regarding moral principles and attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people. The first stage in the process was to develop a deep understanding of both concepts by reading psychological and social literature that describes the formation of moral views and the evolution of societal perceptions of excluded groups.

Theoretical texts relevant to the subject were then reviewed in order to understand how moral principles impact societal judgments, acceptance and attitudes towards sexual and gender diversity. The focus was mainly on how different perspectives interpret the connection between moral reasoning and attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people rather than on particular findings.

The analyzed literature was not simply restated; rather, it was critically read, compared and evaluated to identify the recurring themes and concepts. From this viewpoint, the concepts were linked together in a logical way to propose a connection between moral principles and attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people. The paper concludes by indicating the inadequacies of existing theories and the possibility of further research to enhance our knowledge.

Discussion

Moral Judgment and Social Distance

Those who believe strongly in traditional or authority-based values may feel uncomfortable or conflicted when they meet LGBTQ+ people.

This can lead to quiet forms of exclusion, like keeping emotional distance or only accepting someone under certain conditions. These behaviours are often seen as moral and hard to change because they seem justified.

Psychological Impact on LGBTQ+ Individuals

When LGBTQ+ people are constantly judged morally, it can cause internalized stigma and emotional pain.

The message that their identity is wrong can lead to anxiety, doubts about themselves, and poorer mental health. These experiences match up with minority stress theory, where social attitudes affect mental health indirectly.

Cultural Context of Morality

In collectivist cultures, moral values generally stem from family, religion, and social harmony. Such cultures indeed consider the viewpoints on LGBTQ+ matters, not as solely individual opinions, but as the very norms that society expects to exist. This predominant moral standard may further entangle LGBTQ+ individuals in a struggle for acceptance based on moral grounds only.

Conclusion

The present study supports the idea that to a considerable extent, moral values could influence the attitudes of the individuals towards the LGBTQ+ community.

These moral beliefs, according to their characteristics, can either promote acceptance and understanding or result in judgment and rejection. This understanding gives one the opportunity to treat the issue of acceptance as a dialogue that is consistent with the various moral beliefs and at the same time contributes to mental health.

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