Critical Issues Paper 3: LGBTQ youth

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**Introduction**

Humans have been divided into many categories. Some differences are external or clearly notable and can be used to categorize the person with ease according to them. These differences or categories include race, gender, social class, nationality, religion, caste, ethnicity and many more. But there are some differences or disparities that cannot be identified in the first glance. They are kind of hidden and are not detectable easily. A person has to go deep or investigate a little more to identify them. They are also used to nominate a person into various classes but are not easy to identify, until unless a person himself tells that they have the following characteristics. One of such characteristics is sexual orientation.

 Sexual orientation refers to a person’s unique identity to relate to any gender or the attraction to any specific gender. It is of three types, heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual. Heterosexual is the romantic or sexual attraction or exhibition of sexual behavior towards the individuals of the opposite gender. Heterosexuality is considered the norm and the most common and prevalent sexual orientation in the world. The second type of sexual orientation, homosexuality is the romantic or sexual attraction and the expression of sexual behavior towards the members of the same gender. The last type of sexual orientation bisexuality refers to the sexual or romantic attraction towards the members of both the genders.

Every person has the complete right to choose their sexual orientation according to their preferences. It has even become legal in many countries to openly announce and belong to any sexual orientation that is suitable for any individual. Considering this freedom and birthright, a relatively new movement was started that raised its voice for the rights of the members of the individuals of the homosexual community. They also coined a new term for their movement, LGBTQ. LGBTQ refers to lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. It is not a much older concept and was coined almost 50 years ago.

**Discussion**

It has been observed at a large level that individuals belonging to the LGBTQ community face great difficulty in getting acceptance in society. Not only in the adolescent or the adults face this difficulty but the people of every age, class, gender, race or nationality face this issue alike including children,

**Unique Challenges Faced By the People of LGBTQ Community in the Various Developmental Domains and Environments**

* 1. **Identity**

Self-identity is an important part of growing up and the development of an individual. A person goes through various stages of self-realization and reclamation while growing up and assigning an identity to themselves. Research has proved that the definition of self-identity and self-recognition has always been a difficult task for the youth. It is a complex and dynamic process that requires great knowledge of self and the social constructs around a person (Wagaman, 2016). As they step into the adolescent stage, where it becomes immensely necessary for them to relate to a proper group, they find it more and more tough to relate to some specific class. This confusion arises due to the actual voice of their mind and the fear of the social outrage of the surroundings they have been living in.

* 1. **Peers**

Contrary to the normal attitude shown by the society, LGBTQ Youth gets a little support from their peers, due to the less or no difference in age and thus lesser generation gap. Sometimes, they can even relate to them as many of them are in the same mental condition as them and facing the same stresses because they also belong to the same community.

* 1. **School**

During their developmental phase, especially the youth period, individuals belonging to LGBTQ community face a hard time in their educational institutes like schools, colleges and universities regarding their identities and unique sexual orientation (Snapp, Hoenig, Fields, & Russell, 2015). Many cases have been witnessed in which the youth, having a different sexual orientation, were bullied and called names that were quite disturbing. Sometimes the situation got so worse that the child or teenage belonging to the unique community committed suicide or at least tried to do so.

* 1. **Family**

Just like all the other domains, people belonging to the LGBTQ community also face great resistance from their own families as well ("Growing Up Trans | Season 34 Episode 1 | FRONTLINE", 2015). In many cases, it has been observed that the individuals belonging to LGBTQ community find it much tougher to communicate their sexual orientation to their own family members as compared to their friends, due to the fear of resistance.

* 1. **Romantic relationships**

Perhaps the only solace or acceptance, the individuals belonging to the LGBT community find is in their romantic and that only if they find the right partner, which can only be in the case that the partner also belongs to the same community (Jeffrey, 2004). Such people understand the mentality and sexual needs of each other and comply with that or allow their partner to fulfill their needs in some other way, but that happens in very rare cases. Most of the times if the times, the individuals especially adolescents find it hard to fall into romantic relationships, even if they do, they face a hard time in that.

**Developmental Implications of Social Support (Family, Peers, School, and Community Support) For LGTBQ Youth during Adolescence:**

* 1. **Mental health**

As it has already been established that the members belonging to the LGBTQ community receive very less or no social support at all (McInroy, & Craig, 2015). They constantly face rejection and taunts in the hands of their own friends and family which pushes them towards various mental illnesses like stress, depression, and anxiety.

* 1. **Physical health**

Sadly, in many cases, the young people, who belong to the LGBTQ group are forced to take medicines and hormones, in order to alter their mental makeup and change their perceptions about their sexual orientation. These practices may not only disturb their mental peace but also their physical well-being as well.

* 1. **Education**

Owing to the continuous pressure and rejection from, friends, family, and the society, the academic career of LGBTQ youth suffers a lot and they can face bad grades in their subjects (Mayo, 2014).

* 1. **Social relationships**

The LGBTQ youth finds it hard to develop social relations especially romantic relations as they are constantly looked down upon by the members of the society. Recently the trends are changing and people are accepting the individuals of LGBTQ youth as a part of the society, but still, it will take a long time to change the perceptions completely.

**Conclusion**

In short, it can be seen clearly that the only acceptable sexual orientation, even in the modern era, is heterosexuality. Being a member of LGBTQ is still considered a great taboo or even a sin in many countries. This characteristic or trait is even punishable by death, still in many countries. Individuals belonging to the LGBTQ community have to face various difficulties in every society and had to see a backlash in many fields. The adults somehow accept the reality and compromise with the situation or fight for their rights but it is still very tough for the children to accept the complexity of the situation. Growing up with a different sexual orientation than the norm puts great pressure on the sensitive minds and significantly affects the development process, which may leave scars on the mental growth, for the whole life. The adolescent may suffer from multiple mental illnesses like stress, depression and identity crisis and may refuse to blend in the society, which may prove to distressful and harming for their upcoming life in a longer run.

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