Marginalized Women: Lesbians

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**Introduction**

Though lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people have become increasingly open and accepted, acknowledged and visible members of the society, researchers and clinicians have faced a lot of difficulties to collect the health status of these members of the community. A lot of information has been developed on lesbians over the last decades but there are some gaps, which still remain to be explored. Lesbian has not single defined definition but it is regarded as women who are in relations with their sexual identity (Meyer, 2013). It is also described as same sex behavior or attraction and therefore, it is important to understand their health status. For a number of women, sexual orientation do falls along the range where a woman may not be exclusively homosexual or may develop lesbian orientation in her lifestyle. It is pointed that bisexual women are usually engage in sexual behavior with similar sexes and therefore, sexual orientation cannot be conclusively be determined by any certain factors. This study therefore, focuses on the health status of lesbians in the United States. It provides clear illustrates of the socioeconomic life of lesbians.

Although the available statistic various in the United States, the data from the National Survey indicates that 1.1% and 3.5 of women identify themselves as lesbian and bisexual respectively. Studies have indicated that women in the United States are diversely represented among the minorities and therefore, they suffer similar condition most ethnic minorities experienced in the country. Statistic shows that the population of lesbians increases annually and from early 2000 to date, the population of lesbians has increased by almost 1.5%c and it is expected to continue rising. The rise of the population of this group is due to acknowledgement and acceptability, which they have received from the community and the government among the LGBT. The population of LGBT in the United States is 4.8% and lesbians make about 1.5% of the LBGT and therefore, the number of lesbians is high compared to other countries such as the United Kingdom and other western countries where lesbianism in not openly accepted and there is a lot of stereotypes regarded lesbianism. According to Belge (2018), lesbian rarely revealed their sexual orientation to healthcare practitioners because of fear of victimization. The research needed to be done to establish the health status of this population. This will help in identify the gaps, which exists so that better healthcare service could be provided to this community.

**Economic status of Lesbians**

The lesbians are regarded as minorities like any other ethnic minorities in the United States. They face several socioeconomic disadvantages in the society, which need to be addressed. Research indicates the lesbian like any other minorities are vulnerable to poverty as compared to heterosexual couples or people. Studies also found that lesbians like other LGBT members are more likely to receive cash assistance, food stuffs and other benefits. It is means that several lesbians live in poverty compared to other people in the society. Among women aged 18 to 44 years 29% are bisexual and 23% of lesbians live in poverty compared to 21% of heterosexual couples in the community. The data therefore, indicates that majority of lesbians experience economic difficulty and depends on the assistance such as food stuff for their living. It is also established that most lesbians are not absorbed in the formal job market and therefore, the unemployment rate among the lesbian is high. This means that majority of lesbians are economically unstable and this affect the lives of many of them.

**Health disparities**

Studies have shown that there is high level of health disparity among the lesbians in the society (Saúde, 2019). This is because many lesbians do not reveal their sexual orientation to the medical or healthcare professionals and therefore, the provision of efficient healthcare services become difficult. It is also because most health studies are focused on the heterosexual and have completely ignored lesbians in the community. It is also established that 12.6% of lesbians have not disclosed their status and therefore, this is one of the bottlenecks in the provision of medical or healthcare services to lesbian community. Research has also indicated that the rate of sexual transmitted infection and bacterial infection among lesbians is high and this could be as a result of sharing some of the objects, which they use. The increased sexual transmission index is a threat to health status of lesbians. Among the LGBT, gays lead in sexual transmitted diseases followed by lesbians and therefore, it is important to establish the best method to improve the health condition of lesbians in the country. Research has also focused on the mental health of LGBT, with more focus on gay and lesbians (LaVaccare, et al., 2017). It established that lesbians are second in mental health problems. It means that many lesbians have mental related issues, which affect their health status and can shorten their live span.

Research also shows that women from marginalized community are more exposed to health disparities compared to the rest of women (Chen, 2016). Lesbians are therefore, more affected compared to other women. Again, it has been established that Veteran lesbians stopped taking medical treatment from veterans’ administration. There is also high presence of chronic diseases among the lesbians in the community and lower rate or preventative care utilization among the lesbian women in the society. Some studies also have established among the race, the people of color, Hispanic, and other minorities reveal their health medical condition to healthcare practitioners compared to whites in the United States. The fact that the people of colored found it difficult to reveal their medical condition affects how they receive medical treatment (Wheaton, 2019). And lack of it, deter health practitioners from offering the best services to lesbians in the society. It is therefore, evidence that most lesbians suffer and therefore, health status deteriorate due to poor healthcare services. Without revealing their status it would be very difficult to understand the kind of medical problems majority of lesbians have and therefore, it is important to create an environment where lesbians can freely interact and receiving medical treatment as well.

**Solution to the problems face by lesbians**

Addressing the problem faced by lesbians could help in improving the living standard of many women in the society. The genesis of the problems being faced by lesbians is the economic disparity. Providing lesbian with jobs, and business opportunities would be the ideal method to solve several of problems which lesbians face. As stated by LaVaccare, et al.( 2017) policy orientation is also one of the best methods, which should be used to solve economic and health problems among lesbians. First, the economic difficulties could be addressed through offering lesbians equal employment opportunities in the formal sector and any other sectors. The provision of employment opportunity is likely to make women more economically independent and therefore, they would be able to get healthcare insurance cover hence a better living condition. Lesbians like the rest of LGBT require mentorship or counselor so that they can live and interact freely in the society. Though the Unites protect LGBT, there some elements of discrimination, which lesbians and other minorities face in the society. It is therefore, important to ensure that any kind of discrimination, stereotype and any measures, which could frustrate minorities are addressed.

It is also important to state that health disparities among the lesbians could be solved through policy initiative. The government should provide health insurance coverage to minorities include lesbians and other members of LGBT. The provision of insurance coverage would make sure that lesbians cannot afford a better healthcare provision in the country. As a result it would reduce the number of death rate resulting from chronic diseases such sexual transmitted diseases. With efficient provision mentorship the rate of sexual transmitted disease in the community will drastically reduced. Besides the provision of a bill to entrench the right of LGBT in the constitution would change the operations and establish the status of lesbians and therefore, they would be able to enjoy the freedom and access all the amenities without facing any discrimination.

In conclusion, the issue of lesbian can be traced back from the early days. It has grown in the country and statistic indicates the lesbians make 1.8% of population. Among the LGBT lesbians are the second majority after gay and therefore, a serious focus must be given to change the perception of many people, towards lesbians in the society. It is also important to establish healthcare policies to provide medical services to the group. The government should provide healthcare insurance coverage as a matter of urgent to every lesbian and other minority to reduce the health mortality of many lesbians. Without a proper mechanism of solving the current problems it would be difficult to address the problems, which many lesbians and even the rest of LGBT faces. It is also essential to remove the sense of rejection among the people so that lesbians and other stakeholders could have feel equal and access medical health report and work with other people to addressing the problem.

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