



## Introduction

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) were first studied in 1998 as a product of Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program and the Center for Disease Control's partnership with Dr. Vincent J. Felitti.
- ACEs are faced due to various socioeconomic factors, the interaction between an individuals' social and physical environment, the quality of their relationships to attachment figures (biological or nonbiological), and social relationships (Craig et al., 2020; Creighton et al., 2019; Fish, 2020; Goldsen et al., 2019; Schmitz et al., 2020).
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people experience an increased risk for multiple negative mental health outcomes as well as experience discrimination at high rates (Craig et al., 2020; Fish, 2020; Hatzenbuehler, 2009).
- LGB individuals undoubtedly represent a minority group subjected to various forms of discrimination (Goldsen et al., 2019; Nadal, 2019).

## Objectives

### Purpose of Study

- The purpose of this study is to increase knowledge related to the mental health of the LGB community

### Research Question

- The research question for this study is: what is the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and mental health among LGB adults?

### Hypothesis

- This study hypothesized that LGB adults who have experienced more ACEs are at a heightened risk for developing negative mental health outcomes such as suicidal ideation, anxiety, depression, and psychological distress.



## Literature Review

Research has shown that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can be associated with different psychological distress outcomes and mental health diagnosis as well as can be attributed to some of the most common chronic diseases (Heard-Garris et al., 2018; Maclsaac et al., 2021; Nadal, 2019).

### Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Individuals and ACEs

LGB individuals have been found to experience ACEs at higher rates than heterosexuals, but also experience layers of discrimination across all systems involved creating a disproportionate rate of poor mental health (Craig et al., 2020; Fish, 2020).

### LGB Individuals, ACEs, Anxiety, and Depression

When combining minority status variables, such as LGB and gender minority status, the rate at which exposure to ACEs were experienced was shown to be a strong predictive factor of negative mental health outcomes (Bond et al., 2021). Exposure to ACEs were found to be directly associated with higher rates of anxiety, depression, and psychological distress in LGB individuals when compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Bond et al., 2021; Craig et al., 2020).

### Gaps in Research

As more understanding of ACEs and the possible implications of this knowledge arise, it is important to note that there is still much to learn about ACEs and how they intersect with vulnerable populations. More research needs to be done on LGB individuals' resiliency levels and the ways in which they influence an individuals' ability to overcome psychological distress.

## Methods

### Research Design

The current study is a secondary data analysis of the Life and Health of LGB People in a Changing Society (Meyer et al., 2020). The original study was a longitudinal study conducted over a period of 5 years in order to study mental health and wellbeing across three generations of LGB adult individuals. The original study consisted of 1,518 participants from different demographics such as age, race, sex at birth, gender identity, sexual minority identity, education level, and personal income.

### Sampling Method

Participants from the original study were self-identified lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) adults (Meyer et al., 2020). The original study utilized a mixed methods approach to studying the 1,518 participants living in both urban and non-urban regions of New York, California, Arizona, and Texas (Meyer et al., 2020). Participants were recruited by a questionnaire which identified participants to be LGB, and assessed for eligibility to participate in the study (Meyer et al., 2020).

### Measures

**Independent variable:** The independent variable of the current study is experiencing ACEs as an LGB individual.

**Dependent variable:** The dependent variable for the current study is mental health. Mental health for the purpose of this study is identified to be psychological distress and suicidal ideation and behaviors.

## Results

- Spearman *rho* correlation analysis indicated a positive and statistically significant association between ACEs and psychological distress.
- A multiple linear regression predicted a study participant's psychological distress based on demographics and ACEs score. Younger, binary, lesbian and gay college grads with lower levels of ACEs had significantly lower psychological distress than other study participants ( $p < .001$ ).
- A one-way ANOVA comparing the mean ACEs scores of participants from various suicidal ideation groups was computed. Study participants who had suicidal ideation one time had significantly lower ACEs scores than study participants who had suicidal ideation more than one time ( $p < .001$ ).
- A one-way ANOVA comparing the mean ACEs scores of participants from various suicidal attempts groups was computed. Study participants who had no suicidal attempts had significantly lower ACEs scores than study participants who had suicidal attempts one time and study participants who had suicidal attempts more than one time.

Table 2

### Regression Model for Psychological Distress

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$
Constant***	13.308	.629	
Age***	-.097	.010	-.260
Sex at Birth	.003	.270	.001
Binary Gender Identity***	-2.547	.526	-.113
Lesbian/Gay Sexual Orientation***	-1.342	.295	-.122
College Graduate***	-1.328	.268	-.121
ACEs***	.518	.060	.202

Reference groups; Male, Non-binary, Not Lesbian/Gay, Not a College Grad.

\*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$

## Conclusion

- Quantity of adverse childhood experiences were reported, the higher the individual's psychological distress.
- Participant's age, college graduation status, binary gender identity, and lesbian/gay individuals who had lower ACE scores, were found to have significantly less psychological distress. Sex at birth was not found to be significant predictor of psychological distress.
- It was found that the participants who experienced less suicidal ideation and less suicide attempts experienced significantly less ACEs.
- These findings, along with previous studies, indicate a greater need for research on ACEs and gender and sexual minority groups.

### Implications for Practice, Policy, & Future Research

- Preventative measures can be considered such as implementing more interdisciplinary approaches to treatment.
- Research on this population can lead to better research informed practices in order to meet the needs of this population.
- More research on effective interventions for this population could serve to decrease the negative mental health outcomes.
- Social workers aim to serve the most vulnerable communities. Sexual and gender minorities are of the most vulnerable as many face layers of discrimination: race/ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, etc.

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