



## Abstract

Transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals face unique struggles compared to cisgender, heterosexual counterparts (i.e., family rejection, discrimination, more likely to engage in survival sex). Understanding how family rejection or acceptance can impact the life of LGBTQIA+ individuals is highly important as it can further help mental health professionals effectively understand, validate and work with their clients who have experienced these issues. Additionally, mental health professionals can help support families, so they are better equipped to support their LGBTQIA+ children. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between family rejection and sexual exploitation among transgender and gender-nonconforming adults.

## Introduction

### Significance:

Transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals often face significant rejection from their families, friends, society, and the world at large.

### Research Question:

Does family rejection among transgender and gender-nonconforming adults lead to an increased risk of sexual exploitation?

### Hypothesis:

It is hypothesized that transgender and gender-nonconforming adults who have experienced family rejection due to their gender identity will have a higher risk of being sexually exploited compared to those transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals who have not experienced family rejection.

## Literature Review

Transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals often face significant rejection from their families, friends, society, and the world at large. Additionally, transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals can experience family rejection which often includes being kicked out of the home. In turn, this leads to homelessness and unstable housing. As a result, transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals may use sex in return for housing or a place to stay. Transgender and gender-nonconforming adults are at a higher risk of being sexually exploited compared to their heterosexual counterparts. On top of this, being sexually exploited often leads to considerable mental health issues.

## Methods

### Research Design

The study is a secondary quantitative cross-sectional study that uses data from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey.

### Sampling Method

The original study was composed of  $N=6,456$  participants, ranging between the ages of 18 and 89 from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The sample was recruited using convenience sampling techniques to target transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, including the use of venue-based sampling and snowball sampling. Members of transgender-led or transgender-serving community-based organizations in the United States were asked to participate in the original study.

### Measures

The National Transgender Discrimination Survey utilized a 70-question survey which asked questions related to education, employment, health, family life, housing and homelessness, public accommodations, identity documents and police and incarceration.

**Independent Variables:** The independent variable for this study was family rejection. Variables included loss of family, family acceptance, outness to family, parents/family choosing to not speak with the individual, children choosing to not speak with the individual, relationship ended and ex limited relationship with children.

**Dependent Variables:** The dependent variable for this study was sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation was defined in this study as having sex with others for shelter or engaging in sex work/sex industry.

## Results

### INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

- Loss of Family
- Family Acceptance
- Outness to Family
- Parents/Family Chose not to Speak/Spend Time with Me
- Children Chose not to Speak/Spend Time with Me
- Relationship Ended
- Ex Limited Relationship with Children



### DEPENDENT VARIABLES

- Sex for Shelter
- Sex Work/Sex Industry



✓ \* Equates to a p-value of  $p = .05$ . A Chi-Square analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between family rejection and sexual exploitation among transgender and gender-nonconforming adults.

## Discussion

- The present study found a significant relationship between family rejection and sexual exploitation among transgender and gender-nonconforming adults.
- Family rejection was significantly related to transgender and gender-nonconforming adults being at a higher risk of sexually exploitation.
- Though generally the findings suggest that family rejection leads to a greater risk of sexual exploitation, one relationship was not significant. The relationship between outness of one's gender identity to their family had no significant relationship to being at a greater risk of sexual exploitation.

## Implications

- Parents of LGBTQIA+ children who lack knowledge and understanding related to gender-nonconforming individuals are at risk of negatively impacting their children through a lack of acceptance.
- Providing education for parents of LGBTQIA+ children is necessary in order to articulate the negative impacts that a lack of parental acceptance can have on children.
- These findings further demonstrate the importance of working on eliminating homelessness among the LGBTQIA+ population as family rejection often leads to these individuals being kicked out of the home.
- An increase in LGBTQ+ affirming trainings for social workers who work with youth and/or in LGBTQ+ specific settings would help provide a deeper understanding and perception of how to effectively support clients who may experience family rejection as a result of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

## Strengths & Limitations

### Strengths

- Large sample size
- The data has a diverse collection of gender identities, rather than limiting respondents to binary responses.
- The current study is consistent with previous research findings.

### Limitations

- The present study uses a cross-sectional design, which limits ability to infer causality.
- Not enough information on environmental factors that may impact risk of sexual exploitation among study participants.
- There is a lack of diversity as the majority of the sample is White.