

PARENTING DESIRE IN LESBIAN, GAY, AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE ROLE OF MINORITY STRESS

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Introduction: Parenting desire is one of the main psychological factors influencing the decision to become parents. Among lesbian, gay, and transgender (LGT) people, there is a rapid increase in the rate of couples who desire to become parents, but this population experiences many psycho-social barriers compared to heterosexual and cisgender counterparts due to the minority stress processes. Therefore, this study examined the direct effect of prejudice and the indirect effect of internalized stigma on parenting desire in a group of LGT people.

Method: Two datasets generated by different online cross-sectional studies were matched to analyze the associations between parenting desire and two minority stressors (i.e., enacted and internalized stigma) in 380 Italian LGT people (170 gay men, 120 lesbian women, and 90 transgender people). Three mediational analyses were performed using the SPSS PROCESS Macro with bias-corrected bootstrapping (5,000 samples). The analyses were controlled for age, educational level, partnership (yes vs. no), and for gender identity (only in transgender participants).

Results: 73.5% of gay men, 77.5% of lesbian women, and 58.9% of transgender participants desire to have children ($\chi^2 = .009$). Results indicated that internalized stigma mediated the relationship between prejudice and parenting desire only in lesbian women [$b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.14$, 95% CI (0.01, 0.13), $p = 0.01$]. Additionally, only in transgender participants, internalized stigma increased the likelihood of reporting higher levels of parenting desire ($b = 0.81$, $p = 0.01$).

Conclusions: Our results highlighted that a consistent number of LGT Italian individuals feel a parenthood desire. In our socio-cultural context, parenthood seems still strongly associated to the construction of the female identity, probably because there is a strong social pressure to become a mother.

Keywords: parenting desire; lesbian; gay; transgender; minority stress; prejudice.