

**Forum:** United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

**Issue:** Measures to address bias and disparities against minors based on their gender identity and sexual orientation

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## Introduction

All children have the right to a safe and healthy upbringing without of prejudice, regardless of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Human rights are universal, according to both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. No one, whether a child or an adult, should be subjected to any risk of harassment, discrimination, abuse, exclusion, or intimidation, as well as on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Similarly, no one's universal human rights, freedoms, or basic chances should be withheld.

Individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), or intersex, or who are presumed to be, face stigma, discrimination, and violence in their day-to-day lives due to their perceived or actual sexual orientation and gender identity, or because their bodies do not fit standard notions of female or male. However, in recent years this issue has begun to severely impact not only adults, but youth.

School violence and various forms of educational violence are a global issue.

Students who are viewed as not conforming to prevalent sexual and gender norms, such as LGBT students, are particularly susceptible. Homophobic and transphobic violence, also known as sexual orientation and gender identity/expression violence, is a type of gender-based violence that occurs in schools. Many times, when a child's genuine or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity differs from social norms, they are more vulnerable.

Discrimination in school, hospitals, sports teams, and in a variety of other settings; abandonment and rejection by family, community, or society; pressured relationships; hate-motivated violence, including murder; and increased health risks due to the absence of access to appropriate life-skills education and health services are just a few examples.

Although the number of nations with homosexuality-related laws is changing, recent estimates imply that over 70 countries have laws that criminalize homosexuality. Homophobic and transphobic violence in schools has an impact on kids' education, employment opportunities, and well-being. Targeted students are more likely to feel frightened in school, skip classes, or drop out. Homophobic and transphobic behavior has negative consequences for mental health, including an increased risk of anxiety, worry, tension, loneliness, low confidence and self-esteem, self-harm, depression, and suicide, all of which have bad repercussions for learning.

More needs to be done to change attitudes and protect children from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Healthy social norms that acknowledge and encourage diversity in cultures around the world should be reinforced to also include the identification, promotion, and protection of all people's human rights, despite sexual orientation or gender

identity, actual or perceived. Abuse based on sexual orientation or gender identity, whether genuine or perceived, should not be condoned. All efforts to protect LGBT children should be implemented in a way that is actually in the best interests of the children, rather than merely mute the victim or bury the discussion.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

**Gender identity:** A personal understanding of oneself as being a male or a female or sometimes both or neither. It is how an individual person perceives themselves and what they call oneself, which can be different from their sex assignment after birth.

**Sexual orientation:** Sexual orientation is a romantic or sexual attraction to people of the opposite sex or gender, the same sex or gender, or to both sexes or more than one gender. These include lesbians, bisexuals, Homosexual and more.

**Bias:** Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, mostly in a way that is considered to be unfair.

**Disparities:** A lack of equality or similarity, which is thought to be unfair.

**Child neglect:** It is when a parent or another responsible adult fails to provide necessary food, shelter, clothing, supervision, or medical care to a child.

**Gender expression:** An external appearance of a person's gender identity, usually reflected through their behavior, clothing, haircut, voice etc.

**Gender dysphoria:** A concept appointed by the DSM-5 as Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.

**Gender stereotypes:** A generalized view of characteristics, differences, and attributes of a certain group specifically based on their gender.

**LGBTQ:** "L" stands for lesbian, "G" stands for gay, "B" stands for bisexual. "T" stands for transgender, and "Q" stands for queer or questioning.

**Homophobia:** The dislike of gay people or prejudice against gay individuals.

## General Overview

### Parental Influence

Social aspects, in this case parents, are likely to influence the development of their child's gender identity and sexual orientation. Most of the actions and behaviors that parents portray are meaningful to their children and can impact the way they express themselves internally and to society. Family dynamics such as gender roles play a critical role in their lives, as parents of sons are more likely to express conservative gender role views while daughters may be led to act as the opposite. What dominates this concept is mostly a family's culture and religion since in some communities, they limit the possibility of a child's self

expression when coming out to their parents which can be detrimental to their well-being. However, as society has developed and opened wider opportunities to those in the LGBTQ communities, parents have become accepting, and feel motivated by care to help their child feel welcomed. Data conducted by <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7087348/#R97> demonstrates how nowadays, kids are coming out to their parents at an earlier age than before. In the 1970s they reported an average age of coming out being 20 years, as compared to age 16 years in the 1990s, and age 14 years in the 2000s.

### **Restrictions in educational opportunities**

LGBTQ youth students experience and endure verbal harassment in school and in result, have significantly higher rates of mental stress. Over 55% of LGBTQ students in the U.S. address feeling unsafe at school. According to a survey of U.S. Secondary School Students and Teachers, bullying these students is also more likely to be ignored or mishandled by staff, which creates disparities amongst the school population. It is demanding that LGBTQ youth learn in places where people are inclusive, and they receive the education necessary to stay safe and healthy. In most places, Teachers and textbooks fail to appropriately address their identities, behaviors, and experiences. Nowhere is this absence more clear, and potentially damaging, than in sex education. These programs should be inclusive to all students in order for them to understand gender identity and sexual orientation with age-appropriate and medically accurate information. The GLSEN 2013 National School Climate survey, found that fewer than 5% of LGBT students had health classes with representations of LGBT-related topics that were positive. Adding on, research

done by Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) and the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation, demonstrated that LGBTQ youth have a few well trusted adults they feel comfortable talking with about sexual health, and therefore, frequently seek information online or from peers. Unfortunately, much of the information online is neither age-appropriate nor medically accurate, and peers may be misinformed. It is vital to address this problem and seek for the LGBTQ youth, a better and more complete education.

### **Effects on mental and social health**

LGBTQ minors are likely to experience violence compared to those younger people who don't belong in that community. Violent behaviors they are repeatedly faced with include bullying, teasing, harassment, physical assault and other forms of identity-based shame. LGB youth are at greater risk for depression, suicide, substance use, and sexual behaviors which can place them at an increased risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. According to research conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), In 2014, young gay and bisexual men accounted for 8 out of 10 HIV diagnoses among youth. As technology advances, the internet, and social media have become another route for people to interact without assuming full responsibilities of what they publish. According to data from the 2015 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), of the surveyed LGB students, 28% were bullied electronically. The LGBTQ community faces harmful comments related to their gender identity and sexual orientation which can negatively impact a person's mental health and motivations.

## **Gender roles**

Gender stereotyping reinforces societies views on specific gender 'norms' that they consider acceptable. They are usually based on the ideas of masculinity and femininity and the behaviors people should follow with respect to their biological and perceived sex. The LGBTQ community has continuously been the target of prejudice and violence in society. Women and men are taught to fit into certain gender roles which as a result, can affect peoples gender roles and sexual orientation. Most negative attitudes are guided by the perception that gays and lesbians violate traditional gender norms and therefore are faced with disparities. For children who do not conform to the gender binary these stereotypes can build confusion and discomfort. Eventually, this will also cause a lack of self-worth, self-respect, and internalized transphobia within themselves. Research has shown that these issues can negatively impact a child's mental health and academic success. Creating a more inclusive and accepting society whether it is in school or at home is crucial for young people to have a decent and thriving life. Growing up should be about discovery and diversity, so by building a brighter future for generations this will be achievable.

## **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

### **United States**

In the United States, many citizens get involved in the LGBTQ marches to demonstrate their support towards an inclusive society where people can freely express their gender identity and sexual orientation. Countries such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, California, and New York, have legalized same sex

marriages or other unions and have laws protecting people from inequalities in employment, housing, public accommodations, etc. However, other states such as Alabama, Georgia, Arizona and more, don't have explicit laws protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination. President Biden has assured citizens he will protect people's gender identity and sexual orientation by calling action to the issue and creating an Equality Act.

## **Netherlands**

The UN has worked tirelessly to promote LGBTQ equality for children, and their methods have been significantly successful. To begin, the Netherlands launched the Gay Straight Alliances program, run by COC Netherlands with the Ministry of Education's assistance. This program is a fantastic approach to empower high school LGBTQ students; the number of schools partaking in the annual Day against Homophobia has increased from 23% in 2010 to 74% in 2019. Furthermore, the government promotes "secure online gathering spaces for young LGBT individuals." The Ministry of Education funds a website managed by COC Netherlands that has 3,000 members under the age of 19, and monthly meetings are held for this group. Both initiatives are best practices for safeguarding LGBTQ youth's rights.

## **Argentina**

LGBTQ rights in Argentina are very advanced, same-sex marriage was legalized in 2010, prior to many other countries. Societal acceptance is also quite high in Argentina, still, 15 percent of LGBTQ and 45 percent of trans students have left school due to bullying or some kind of exclusion. This exclusion comes mainly



from peers and sometimes authority figures in schools. 51 of the 70 percent of LGBTQ students that suffer from bullying at school have reported acts of discrimination to adults at school and were offered little to no help. The participation of the educational system is essential, but there is no teacher training that works on the subject of diversity. Organizations such as the APSA in Argentina have urged schools to include rules that address topics regarding LGBTQ in teachers' curricula because it saves schools, and most importantly, saves lives.

## **India**

India has recently been working on modernizing its approach to societal and scholastic LGBTQ acceptance and understanding. They're working on the sensitization of parents and society to end the stigma against the LGBTQ community in India. Professional counseling is available for parents with LGBTQ children or those who just want to understand the concepts. However, Sensitization of police about the human rights abuse of the youth LGBTQ community is an urgent need. As there are several allegations of police atrocities and crime against LGBTQ youth, police personnel should be given special training. Appropriate steps should be taken to stop the abuse and there should be a code of conduct both for the LGBTQ youth and police authorities.

## **Nigeria**

Ideologies in Nigeria regarding the rights of LGBTQ people overall are very archaic. They are yet to legalize same-sex marriage and even relationships, but this doesn't seem to be happening anytime soon. Nigeria was recently

undergoing controversy after censoring the posting of any type of LGBTQ acts or support online. This has made it extremely difficult for LGBTQ youth to find support, whether it be in real life or online. 31 percent of the reported LGBTQ youth community in Nigeria suffers from depression. Internalized homophobia and stigma, both sexuality-related factors, were also associated with psychological distress in homosexual students, accounting for an additional 14% of the variation in depression in gay students. The findings emphasize the significance of minority stress elements in understanding depression in non-heterosexual people in a developing nation.

## Timeline of Events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of event</b>
1897	The first registered LGBTQ organization called the Scientific Humanitarian Committee was established by Magnus Hirschfeld in Berlin. Hirschfeld was also known of doing groundbreaking effort to help transgender identity.
1932	The first documented surgery is performed by Magnus Hirschfeld to Dora Richer as a sex reassignment surgery. It was from male to female.
1933	The Nazi Germans ban gay and lesbian community groups as well as academic research on specifically sexual orientation. The LGBTQ community face unequal consequences of this time.
1973	The American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed homosexuality from DSM which is the second edition of its

diagnostic and statistical manual, resulting on homosexuality not being a mental illness anymore.

- 1978 The rainbow flag, which is known as a symbol of LGBTQ pride and liberation, is uncovered first in San Francisco.
- 1989 Denmark is the first country to recognize same-sex civil unions while the Netherlands, 11 years later, is the first country to completely legalize same-sex marriage.
- 2009 The world's first openly gay elected head of state is Johanna Sigurdardottir in Iceland.
- 2010 The first Latin American country to recognize both same-sex unions and transgender rights is Argentina.
- 2019 The first to legalize marriage equality in East Asia is Taiwan
- 2020 Russia accepts a constitutional amendments in order to ban same-sex marriage.

## **UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events**

The UN has made a significant contribution in regard to the implications that must be made to better address the bias and disparities against minors based on their gender identity and sexual orientation. They have been consistent in combating this issue, building upon previous actions, and allowing progress to take place by constantly increasing its efforts.

- On the month of March 2022, UN and UNAIDS, released a campaign called “unbox me” that gives visibility to lives of transgender children. It emerged in India, where more than 90 per cent of transgenders leave

their houses, or are thrown out at 15 years old. They lack education and financial support which can lead to them relying on sex work. The meaning behind the name is that for some transgender children, hiding treasures in a box can become a way of hiding their identity from disapproving people, UNAIDS said. Therefore, Unbox Me was implemented to help give this community visibility.

- The United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC)I, in a defining vote, acquired a resolution on June 30, 2016, on “Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation, and gender identity,” to mandate the appointment of an independent expert on the subject. The Core Group of seven Latin American countries includes Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Uruguay, and 41 additional countries. Countries who voted in favor of the resolution include Cuba, Panama, France, Germany, UK, and more. Amongst those countries who voted against include China, Qatar, Nigeria, Russia and more. Those who abstained were India, South Africa, and four other countries.
- As of UNICEF, the organization released its first Gender Policy in 2010. Now looking towards 2030, UNICEF is creating a new Gender Policy, which mentions current realities in regard to the evolving gender equality landscape. This policy allows UNICEF to have a more ambitious vision for gender equality and the empowerment of all children, adolescents, and women, while also touching on the Sustainable Development Goals and United Nations Reform.

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

### **ILGBTIA**

The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association is an international organization bringing together LGBTQI groups around the world with the purpose of improving people's safety, equality, and freedom no matter someone's gender identity, or sexual orientation. It was created during a conference in 1978 where they discussed the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. Among the various activities the organization performs, they campaign for human rights, petition the UN and also countries governments, have world conferences to address LGBTQ issues, etc. ILGBTIA was also involved in getting to erase homosexuality from the World Health Organization's list of illnesses.

### **IGLYO**

The international Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Intersex Youth and Student Organization (IGLYO) is a youth and student organization created in 1984 with the means of strengthening LGBTQI youth voices and rights. This organization represents the diverse rights and need of these young people so it helps build a strong future for them. Their three strategic objectives include to strengthen youth rights, Empower youth organizations, activists, volunteers, etc, and build a strong network across Europe. Other more specific activities in the organization include study sessions where they provide educational programs, an activist academy to motivate those interested in LGBTQ problems to become activists, and they also provide online capacity building workshops.

**Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental rights and Article 19 of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU**

European countries extended the protection of LGBTQ individuals through Article 21, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, and Article 19, which permits to act and combat this type of discrimination and bias.

## **Possible Solutions**

It is imperative that countries work together to find a solution or set of regulations that suit the needs of every nation and reduce disparities based on gender identity and sexual orientation amongst children. Schools are a key component of improving this issue since it is where most kids develop and find their full potential within themselves. This can be achieved by implementing school programs that talk about the issue, providing additional service and support, and more. Teachers that work with youth who self-identify as transgender can be trained particularly regarding health and medical issues. Students should feel secure and a feeling of belonging within their school. Places like this can also implement policies that go against LGBTQ bullying and discrimination more specifically, as to give a sense of support and respect for students of this community. Parents in the households may also contribute by being taught to not be bias when it comes to educating their children on their gender identity and sexual orientation. Health care also plays a vital role on this issue as children should feel comfortable asking for care and help. There should be health care providing systems that ensure appropriate support is available where there is no bias or prejudice, and it is easily accessible.

## **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)**

### **Reduced Inequality**

This issue is tied with the sustainable development goal related to gender inequality when considering women, men, both or even none. Poor measures have been taken by countries to address inequalities in the LGBTQ community as young people still experience higher levels of violence and disparities because of their gender. Kids still aren't able to express themselves fully in public areas as gender identity and equality haven't been fully expanded and liberated within countries and individuals.

### **Quality Education**

This goal is an essential part for combating and ending bias against minors from the LGBTQ community. Young people specially require adequate education to achieve their full potential in the future. It's a right every human being should be granted with, but many people aren't able to do so whether it's because of established stereotypes in school, or even norms that may affect the people who are LGBTQ. By granting solutions to this issue, countries will be one more step to achieving goal number 4.

## **Appendix**

1. <https://www.hrc.org/resources/a-call-to-action-lgbtq-youth-need-inclusive-sex-education>
  - a. This article provides a detailed description of the importance of inclusive sex education for LGBTQ youth.

2. <https://www.lgbtqprimaryhub.com/gender-stereotyping>
  - a. Describes the meaning of gender stereotyping in places like school, or even at home, and its effects on children. The link also includes three informative videos.
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7087348/>
  - a. Talks about the significance of parenting and parent-child relationships for sexual and gender minority adolescents by performing studies and giving quantitative data.
4. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1115182>
  - a. This article talks about the unbox me campaign in a more indepth way as it is a significant step forward for the United Nation.

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