

A CASE STUDY OF LESBIANS, GAYS, AND BISEXUALS (LGB) TEAM SPORTS ATHLETES OF THE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES

Sharmaine P. Bañadera LPT¹, Rhene A. Camarador, MPES²

^{1,2} College of Human Kinetics, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Philippines

¹memainebanadera@yahoo.com, ²rheneamarador@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT: The study determined how the coaches and non-lesbian, gay, and bisexual teammates treat the lesbian, gay, and bisexual athletes; the advantages of being lesbian, gay, and bisexual athletes; and identified the challenges lesbian, gay, and bisexual athletes experience. The study utilized the case study method of research which conducted one on one interview with six (6) selected lesbian, gay, and bisexual team sports athletes. The researchers recorded the interview and transcribed the data gathered. Results revealed that the coaches and non-lesbian, gay, and bisexual teammates treat the lesbian, gay, and bisexual athletes positively and negatively. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual athletes give advantages for their teams, but still the discrimination and bullying are the main challenges they experience nowadays. The treatment of coaches and non-lesbian, gay, and bisexual teammates, and the advantages of lesbian, gay, and bisexual athletes depend on their open mindedness and acceptance to lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals, and vary depending on what sports events they are. Most of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual athletes are still hiding their gender preferences in order to pursue their careers.

KEYWORDS: athletes, bisexuals, challenges, gays, lesbians

I. INTRODUCTION

Sports became an agent of change in the stand of LGBT community in many countries. In recent years, more and more professional athletes have come out with their gender identities which uplifted acceptance and awareness for lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) athletes in the worldwide sports culture (Carrol HJ, 2016).

Many researches have given positive impact in participating in school-organized sports has on youth development. Engaging in school organized sports has a demonstrated positive relationship with academic performance (Bradley et al., 2013). Given the well documented advantages of participation in school organized sports, it only makes sense to investigate whether these advantages are shared by all students. Over the years, research had shown tremendous development in inclusivity and acceptance of the LGB individuals in school institutions. For many LGB students school is still not a safe place. The multiple experiences of LGB students of being part of the minority because of their gender identity within intercollegiate athletics are under-reported and less valued. It's been too long but schools have done too little to take away the bullying, harassment, and social exclusion of LGB students because of their sexual orientation or gender expression (Rankin S & Weber G, 2014). Bullying based on a student's gender identity is unsurprising in schools (Mishna, et al., 2009), with approximately 80% of students reporting being harassed verbally and approximately 40% reporting being harassed physically due to their gender identity during over the course of one academic year. For many LGBTQ students in this situation avoiding school or classes is more desirable than facing these hostile situations, hence we can observe high rates of absenteeism for LGBTQ students (Kosciw, et al., 2012).

Recently, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Committee made tremendous progress in improving policies for much developed inclusivity of the athletic administrators, coaches, and student-athletes to cause the end of sexual minority of the student-athletes. Participating in athletics and team sports has been proven effective for developing social relationships, acceptance, and self-esteem, and even excelling in academic performance (Bailey et al., 2017). In 2012, the NCAA Women's Athletics and Minority Opportunities and Interests Committee have established guidelines for the inclusion of the LGBT students, athletes and staffs. By this, coaches, administrators, and student-athletes has been aware of their responsibilities in creating an environment with non-discriminatory and great inclusivity (Griffin P & Taylor H, 2017).

II. MATERIAL & METHODS

The researcher used validated guide questions by some experts and conducted one on one interview with selected LGB athletes of PUP; an active advocate of LGBT Psychology (Psychological Association of the Philippines); a representative from State Colleges and Universities Athletic Association (SCUAA); some coaches, trainers and non-LGB athletes. It was recorded and the researcher transcribed the responses of the key informants and the participants.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher used qualitative inquiry method wherein the informants and participants were interviewed and audio recorded. The researcher used the case-study method to gather relevant data needed in this study.

IV. PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING METHOD

The participants of this study purposely include six LGB team sports athletes of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines and the key informants include an advocate Active Advocate of LGBT Psychology in the Psychological Association of the Philippines; a Director of State Colleges Athletic Association (SCUAA)-NCR; six coaches of team sports events in the Polytechnic University of the Philippines; and twelve non-LGB teammates of LGB team sports athletes.

V. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The participants and the key informants were interviewed one by one through validated interview guide questions. The interviews were audio recorded and the researchers transcribed the responses of the participants.

VI. RESULTS

Table 1:

Key Informants	Treatment received by LGB Athletes
Active Advocate, LGBT Psychology	<i>“Yeah there are some coaches and non-LGBT teammates who treated their LGBT athletes positively and negatively. I observed some of the coaches and non-LGBT athletes treated positively and some of them are being bullied also and being discriminated.”</i>
SCUAA – NCR Director	<i>“There are some coaches who feel irritated if they have LGB athlete. But some accept them openly.”</i> <i>“I don’t see any unequal treatment. Non-LGB teammates don’t separate LGB athletes in the group.”</i>
Baseball/Softball Coach	<i>“For the straight coaches, they really don’t allow LGB players. But the other coaches are after the performance. If they can deliver good performances, they don’t enter their personal life. Some discriminate their players. Some treat them equally.”</i> <i>“Some are teased, bullied, but some, especially when they are with each other for a long time, accept them already.”</i>
Basketball Men Coach	<i>“For me I treat them as normal athlete. There’s no difference regarding their gender.”</i> <i>“Okay so we can all see that there are comments, bullying and teasing in LGB athletes like in Volleyball. But I guess during the game or outside activities, it does not matter at all.”</i>
Basketball Men Non-LGB	<i>“We are treated by our coach as equal. What one does, everybody should do.”</i> <i>“There are times that when we are bored, we tease our LGB teammate.”</i>

	<i>And sometimes they are get bullied.”</i>
Basketball Women Coach	<p><i>“From my experience as a coach and as what I can see from other coaches, there’s no difference about treatment. It’s the same ‘cause they are all human being.”</i></p> <p><i>“In different ways, they are all not the same. Some are aloof, they are not too close with each other. Maybe because the action of some are different from others’ actions, some are lesbian, some are straight girls.”</i></p>
Volleyball Women Assistant Coach	<p><i>“I don’t choose my players. If he/she’s LGB, I should respect that. As long as you train during training and you play well during the game.”</i></p> <p><i>“Sometimes, since they are both LGB, they connect easily. But sometimes there are groups like LGB group and girls’ group”</i></p>
Volleyball Women Non-LGB	<p><i>“When it comes to coach, it’s okay. But of course when you say you are LGB, you’re different from the others. You’re different from your co-players.”</i></p> <p><i>“For the teammates, they treat LGB athletes normally. When it comes to circle of friends of course we will accept them.”</i></p>
Futsal Coach	<i>“In other sports, I don’t have any idea how they are being treated but in my sports I treat them as fairly as like their other teammates.</i>
Participants	Treatment received by LGB Athletes from Coaches
Baseball Bisexual	<i>“Just like a normal man.”</i>
Basketball Men Bisexual	<i>“Just like a normal, because nobody knows it.”</i>
Basketball Women Lesbian	<i>“Like how they treat other players in straight gender.”</i>
Softball Lesbian	<i>“He treats me normally, like his own child.”</i>
Volleyball Men Gay	<i>“He treats me like a normal athlete, just like how he treat my straight teammates.”</i>
Volleyball Women Bisexual	<i>“There’s no change. Like a normal treatment.”</i>
Participants	Treatment received by LGB Athletes from Non-LGB Teammates
Basketball Men Bisexual	<i>“They treat me normally, maybe because they don’t know it.”</i>
Basketball Women Lesbian	<i>“They treat me normally, because we are all almost the same.”</i>
Softball Lesbian	<i>“Nothing, they treat me normally.”</i>
Volleyball Men Gay	<i>“Some of my teammates treat me normally. But some are not. They tease us and sometimes it gets below the belt. They look at us as weaker than them.”</i>
Volleyball Women Bisexual	<i>“They treat me normally, but sometimes teases from them cannot be prevented because of my gender preference.”</i>

Table 2

Key Informants	Advantages of LGB athletes in the team
Active Advocate, LGBT Psychology	<i>“Yeah, there are lots of advantages of being an LGBT athlete in the team. Being an LGBT athlete as an athlete, LGBT are very flexible, they do understand the behavior of their teammates, and actually as what I observed in the team in university, LGBT athletes are encouraging and motivating their employees. They’re the one who mostly motivate and encourage their teammates.”</i>
Baseball Non-LGB	<i>“They help us to cheer up when we feel down already.”</i>
Softball Non-LGB	<i>“For me their advantage is that they are boyish when it comes to actions so it is natural for them to be stronger.”</i>
Basketball Women Coach	<i>“Of course since I’m handling women’s team, lesbians are more masculine than the straight girls. Their strengths are not the same. They can catch up easier and I can develop them even more.”</i>

Basketball Women Non-LGB	<i>“Number one is, they have more confidence compared to the straight athletes. They really like to show that they’re more different than the straight athletes. Like compared to their strength.”</i>
Volleyball Men Coach	<i>“So I’ve seen it in our last SCUAA and he is the one who ended up the championship match. They are the one who lead the game.”</i>
Volleyball Women Assistant Coach	<i>“They act faster and they are more determined to win.”</i>
Volleyball Women Non-LGB	<i>“They can act as a man. They are more masculine than the straight girls, feminine.”</i>
Futsal Coach	<i>“In my opinion, in other sports, there is no big advantage of being an LGB athlete in a team. But in some sports especially on contact sports there are bit advantages of being LGB or a lesbian because they are more men attitude rather than the ordinary girl.”</i>
Participants	Advantages of LGB Athletes
Baseball Bisexual	<i>“My advantage to them is that I have more confidence.”</i>
Basketball Men Bisexual	<i>“My advantage is that, the confidence, I can face everything. And the braveness.”</i>
Basketball Women Lesbian	<i>“I think my advantage to them is that I am more masculine than straight girls, and I have more strength.”</i>
Softball Lesbian	<i>“I’m strong, brave and as a lesbian, I have more confidence.”</i>
Volleyball Men Gay	<i>“Our advantage to the team is that, we are the mood changer in the court. We can lift the mood up when there are times during the game that we feel down. So that we can play better.”</i>
Volleyball Women Bisexual	<i>“For me I have advantage physically. Because I believe I am boyish, I am stronger than them. I believe that I can do what men can do.”</i>

Table 3

Key Informants	Challenges that LGB athletes experience nowadays
Active Advocate, LGBT Psychology	<i>“Actually there are still issues and challenges facing by the LGBT athletes nowadays. Definitely they are being bullied because they are not being accepted by the society even in the sector and non-sectorial groups. Still they are not being accepted and they are being discriminated. So, what would be the role of LGBT now is to educate all these people that they are also human being to be accepted and to be loved.”</i>
SCUAA – NCR Director	<i>“The challenge they encounter is the bullying from people around them.”</i>
Baseball/Softball Coach	<i>“The discriminations and the unacceptance from hypocrite individuals are the challenges they are facing.”</i>
Baseball Non-LGB	<i>“Nowadays they are being bullied because their actions are not appropriate to the sports event they belong to.”</i>
Softball Non-LGB	<i>“My lesbian teammate have shared to me that she is not accepted by her parents. Her parents’ expectation is for her to become a straight woman. And also, she is being discriminated by her classmates.”</i>
Basketball Men Coach	<i>“As I have heard and see, there are sports where lesbians and gays are not accepted to the national team, especially in Volleyball. And it brings another challenge to them because they have to hide their real gender preference in order to join and play. But in the Basketball National team, they are welcome.”</i>
Basketball Women Non-LGB	<i>“I have an experience with one of our leagues, where they have strict rules for the women’s team. So the challenge for them is they are having a hard time expressing their gender preference. So there are times that their rights are not respected at all.”</i>
Volleyball Men Coach	<i>“Well, I think, on the part of the gay, in terms of training, they have soft</i>

	<i>side. Sometimes they easily give up. And at the same time, the discrimination, the hardest challenge they experience. Some of the players and coaches who I know, they really don't accept gay athletes."</i>
Volleyball Men Non-LGB	<i>"Their challenge is overcoming discrimination, because it can't be gone. No matter what they do, people will judge them. For instance, in Volleyball, when our coach recognizes some girly move during spiking, he immediately tell my teammates to fix that."</i>
Participants	Challenges LGB Athletes are Experiencing
Baseball Bisexual	<i>"As an LGB athlete I can experience verbal abuse, especially from my friends who know the truth."</i>
Basketball Men Bisexual	<i>"My problem is that my conscience is struggling if I'm going to reveal it or not. And I already experience bullying from my close friends who know the truth."</i>
Basketball Women Lesbian	<i>"Some people don't accept us. Especially my relatives and some biblical people."</i>
Softball Lesbian	<i>"They treat me normally. But sometimes I feel bad when they tease me, it gets below the belt."</i>
Volleyball Men Gay	<i>"Our challenge is overcoming the discriminations. Because it can't be easily gone and controllable. Whatever we prove, the treatment among us can't be change. For instance, during training when our coach recognizes girly spikes, he will immediately comment about that because he doesn't want it that way. So we don't have our freedom to play by expressing our gender preference as LGB athletes."</i>
Volleyball Women Bisexual	<i>"Sometimes our loved ones can't accept us easily. Like my older brother, he doesn't accept me this way as having a girlfriend and being bisexual."</i>

VII. DISCUSSION

In objective 1, to determine how they are being treated by their coaches and other non-LGB teammates, coaches and non-LGB teammates treat them positively and negatively. Some coaches treat their LGB athletes equally and normally. They are not after the gender preference, as long as the athletes are performing well. But some coaches don't really accept LGB athletes in their team, nor wanting to see any action inappropriate to their gender. When it comes to treatment of their non-LGB teammates, below the belt teases, verbal abuses, bullying and discrimination socially and physically are the negative treatments LGB athletes experience nowadays. But not all of them. Some are experiencing equal and normal treatment, especially to those sports events where lesbians, gays and bisexuals are usual.

Furthermore, in Objective 2, to determine the advantages of being LGB athletes, LGB athletes are flexible, they do understand the behaviours of both men and women. They are also the ones who lead on motivating and encouraging their teammates. They lead the cheering ups especially when the time is tough. Physically, lesbians and bisexual women has more advantage because their masculinity brings them more strength and easier to cope up with the physical activities. Gays and bisexual men can do both the activities for men and women and they are very enjoyable to be with.

Lastly, in Objective 3, to identify the challenges LGB Athletes experience, the discriminations and bullying are the main challenges LGB athletes experience nowadays. According to some coaches, they are familiar with some coaches who don't really want or accept LGB athletes in their team. They don't want any actions showing inappropriately to their gender. In the non-LGB teammates, teases and bullying which always hurt LGB athlete's emotional feelings are non-stop. Some non-LGB teammates admitted that sometimes it get into worse, where there is physical bullying already. Furthermore, unacceptance to them also happen inside their home. Being afraid to be discriminated also by people around them, sometimes they prefer to hide their real gender preference. Also, they have no freedom on expressing their gender preference because some leagues, teams and coaches are not capable of accepting LGB athletes. Gays in the men's teams are experiencing humiliations because of their soft side emotionally and physically. Some coaches and non-LGB teammates look at them as weaker due its matter.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Most of the coaches treat their LGB athletes normally, like how they treat their athletes in straight sex. Coaches are after the performance, not for anything else. They believe that the gender identity of an athlete should not be the reason to discriminate and reject the LGB athletes, as long as they are performing well and doing their responsibilities. But not all of them. There are still some coaches who really do not accept LGB athletes in their teams, regardless of how they perform well. On the treatment of the non-LGB teammates, the findings turned upside down. Some accept and treat them normally, but most of the LGB athletes are experiencing below the belt teases and bullying from their non-LGB teammates.

The advantages of LGB athletes vary depending on the sports events they belong to. Some LGB athletes are acquiring advantages when it comes to their performances in playing sports because of their gender preferences. One good example of this are the lesbians and bisexual women who are showing much masculinity in women's sports events which require high physical strengths such as Basketball, Volleyball, Futsal and Softball. On the other hand, come out gays give advantage to their teams as well in terms of uplifting the motivation of their teammates and/or cheering for the team when most necessary.

In the Philippines, though it is well-known as a Catholic country, LGBT community are closely to be fully accepted by most of the people. Except in the sports industry, wherein performance is really important, and gender identity is one of the main factors affecting it. There are sports events wherein LGB athletes are very common, and the acceptance in these sports events is very favourable and unsurprising. Yet, for those sports events wherein LGB athletes are uncommon, such as gay or bisexual men on Basketball and Baseball, the unacceptance, discrimination and bullying is still the main challenge, believing they are the weaker ones. With this, some LGB athletes prefer to hide their gender identity to avoid these challenges and to continue pursuing their careers. Sadly, the unacceptance of their gender identity comes from their home, which should be the first place wherein we can feel loved, safe, and accepted.

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