Health Disparities in LGB Teen Families

RESULTS/FINDINGS

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INTRODUCTION

Interventions to reduce pregnancy in adolescence have contributed to a reduction in the last decade. When considering sexuality and teen pregnancy, lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) adolescents experience considerably higher rates of pregnancy: 1 in 5 gay/bisexual males (18.6%) reported they had caused a pregnancy, compared to 11.8% of their heterosexual counterparts. Similarly, 1 in 4 lesbian/bisexual girls (25.0%) reported a history of one or more pregnancies compared to 21.9% of heterosexual girls. Interventions require an examination of sexuality and gender as important factors in adolescent pregnancy. Current scholarship is emerging in the field but has limitations.

PURPOSE

This preliminary research aims to identify gaps in current scholarship to understand population characteristics, propose interventions, and suggest adequate resources for LGB adolescents’ families.

METHODS

A literature review was conducted using multiple databases to identify relevant scholarship in teen pregnancy and LGB adolescents. Search keywords included: LGB teen parents and LGB adolescents. Given the limited research available, local resources were also included. The review compiles both scholarly articles and local resources to examine characteristics, trends, and resources available for LGB adolescent families.

Current literature indicates that LGB teen parents are more likely to (1) attempt suicide, (2) experience sexual and physical abuse at early age, (3) engage in sexually risky behaviors such as early onset of intercourse, (4) have a greater propensity of abusing substances, (5) are at higher risk of becoming homeless, and (5) witness social impacts of stigma on their sexuality. Coping with their sexuality, impacts LGB teen pregnancy and parenting. Additionally, a literature search indicated limited research on this topic.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

Although there were some important findings, more research is needed to understand LGB adolescent families. The development of resources is needed to address the complex needs of LGB adolescent families. LGB adolescent families can benefit from curriculum that includes comprehensive sexuality education and gender-specific programs to reduce risk behaviors and victimization. Additionally, implementation of gender-neutral language and safe spaces in schools and healthcare is integral for LGB adolescents’ health and overall well-being. Further research should be conducted on characteristics, trends and interventions targeting LGB adolescent mothers and fathers.

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