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“The Role of Minority Stress Processes on Smoking Behaviors among LGBTQ Individuals: A Systematic Review”

Background: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) individuals are more likely to smoke than non-LGBTQ individuals, and there is currently a heavy need for smoking cessation research for LGBTQ populations. Smoking has been posited as a coping mechanism for LGBTQ individuals facing minority stress. However, no studies have examined the exact effect that minority stress has on smoking in LGBTQ populations. Therefore, the purpose of this systematic review is to examine which minority stress processes effect smoking behaviors for LGBTQ individuals.

Methods: PubMed, EBSCO, and PsychInfo searches were conducted for smoking-, LGBTQ-, and minority stress-related terms. No date, geographic, or language limits were used. These searches yielded 19, 43, and 52 articles, respective to each database. For inclusion, the study must have: 1) been written in English, 2) had an LGBTQ group as the study population or a component of the study population, 3) assessed some form of smoking behavior, and 4) assessed at least 1 minority stress-related process (internalized stigma, perceived stigma, or prejudice events).

Results: 49 articles were flagged for inclusion and reviewed, and 35 articles were included in the final review. Across all studies, increased levels of minority stress processes (internalized stigma, perceived stigma, and prejudice events) were associated with increased probability of historical or current cigarette use in LGTBQ individuals. Increased minority stress was also associated with greater psychological distress/ mental health decline.

Conclusion: The findings of this review suggest that minority stress processes represent a contributing factor to smoking health disparities in LGBTQ populations. These results highlight the need for smoking cessation and prevention programs to address minority stress and improve smoking disparities in these populations. Major areas of concern are the greater likelihood of poor mental health status and development of a Tobacco Use Disorder (TUD) in LGBTQ individuals afflicted by minority stress.