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“The Effect of Minority Stress Processes on Smoking for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Individuals: A Systematic Review”

Purpose: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) individuals are more likely to smoke than non-LGBTQ individuals. Smoking has been posited as a coping mechanism for LGBTQ individuals facing minority stress. However, the exact relationship between minority stress and smoking behaviors among LGBTQ individuals is unclear. Therefore, the purpose of this systematic review is to examine how minority stress processes are associated with smoking behaviors for LGBTQ individuals.

Methods: Searches of the PubMed and PsycINFO databases were conducted for smoking-, LGBTQ-, and minority stress-related terms. No date, geographic, or language limits were used. 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: The final review included 42 articles. Aside from one outlier study, all of the reviewed studies exhibited that 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 LGBTQ 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.