















somatization, depression, and anxiety several days. The Global Severity Index, which measures a patient's severity-of-illness and also the overall psychological distress level indicated that the LGBTs suffered from somatization, depression and anxiety several days. Moreover, a significant level of incidence of somatization, depression and anxiety was recorded among the LGBTs. Bisexuals and gays were found to experience somatization several days than the lesbians and transgender group. On the other hand, the bisexuals and gays on several days got depressed than the lesbians and transgender. Meanwhile, the bisexuals, gays and the lesbians were found to experience more anxiety than their transgender counterpart. These findings supports previous research findings on mental health of LGBT population, which reveals that people engaging in same-gender sexual behaviour and/or identifying as LGBT are at higher risk for mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicide ideation and attempts (Cochran, 2001, 2003, 2007; Gilman et al., 2001; Sandfort, de Graaf, Bijl, & Schnabel, 2001; Balsam, *et al.*, 2005; Cochran and Mays, 2000; D'Augelli, 2002; Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008).

Evidence from previous studies, which the finding of this study also supports, suggests that compared with their other homosexuals, gay men suffer more from mental health problems including substance use disorders, affective disorders, and suicide (Cochran, 2001; Gilman et al., 2001; Sandfort, de Graaf, Bijl, & Schnabel, 2001; Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Espelage et al., 2008; Fedewa & Ahn, 2011; Feinstein, Goldfried, & Davila, 2012; Russell, Ryan, Toomey, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2011; Ueno, 2005). These mental health disparities among these LGBT individuals have been explained by the direct experiences of stigma, prejudice, and discrimination that create a stressful social environment for these individuals (Friedman, 1999 as cited in Meyer, 2003; D'Augelli, 2002; Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Fedewa & Ahn, 2011; Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2012).

The findings of this study also revealed that 4.3% of the LGBTs had had suicide ideation under the age of 18 years, 7.4% of the sexual minorities over the age of 18 years had contemplated suicide, about 5.0% of the LGBTs had attempted suicide under the age of 18 years,

while 5.1% of the LGBTs over the age of 18 years reported of having attempted suicide. Savin-Williams (2001) suggested that LGBTs may over-report suicide attempts in response to a cultural script that says that being an LGBT is associated with distress and being suicidal. However, this result shows that cultural script does not have significant role to play in the retrospective reports of the LGBTs as the proportion of the participants who have reported to have contemplated and attempted suicide are less than 10% respectively. Notwithstanding this, the percentage of LGBTs who have had suicide ideation under the age of 18 and over the age of 18, and those with attempted suicide under the age of 18 and over the age of 18, are of great concern. This goes to give insight into the emerging suicide cases of youth and young ones being recorded lately in Ghana.

LGBT individuals have been reported to be more likely to be consumers of mental health services. Although few studies of LGBTs' mental health include measures of utilization, those that do consistently find that LGBT individuals are high utilizers of psychotherapy (Balsam, *et al.*, 2005). The result of this study seems to support this claim as more than 20% of the LGBT individuals reported of undergoing therapy. The high use of this mental health services has usually been interpreted as a sign of psychological distress (Cochran, 2001). The proportion of the LGBTs reported of being under psychiatric medication, give us insight that these individuals continue to be affected by the psychological distress of the stigmatization of being an LGBT.

## Conclusion

In an atmosphere of hostility toward LGBTs in Ghana, it very crucial that the society-government, policy makers, stakeholders, the media and hostile populace get to know the challenges facing these sexual minorities. This will help so that social intervention that could effectively reduce tension and create enabling conditions for the protection of the fundamental rights of LGBTs in Ghana is seriously advanced. Based on previous studies that which reveals that people who engage in same-gender sexual behaviour and/or identifying as LGBT are at higher risk for mental health disorders, the author empirically examined the mental health conditions in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and



transgender populations in Ghana, by sampling LGBT individuals through the LGBT communities in Ghana. Recruiting the participants of the study through a non-probability sampling technique of Snow-ball, the results of the study corroborate with some of the findings of previous studies. The results of the study show that engaging in same-gender sexual behavior, LGBTs are at higher risk for mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicide ideation and attempts. The results of the study revealed that LGBT individuals in Ghana experience somatization, depression, and anxiety several days. The Global Severity Index, reveals that LGBT individuals in Ghana suffer from somatization, depression and anxiety for several days. The results of the study also show that LGBTs who have had suicide ideation under the age of 18 and over the age of 18, and those with attempted suicide under the age of 18 and over the age of 18, are significant for great concern as a country. Given the homophobic attitude towards gays in Ghana, it is not surprising that the gays in Ghana experience much more of mental health problems than the lesbians, bisexuals and the transgender population in Ghana. It therefore implies that the level of hostility towards LGBTs in Ghana is different, and is more tilted towards gays than the lesbians, bisexuals and the transgender populations.

The seriousness of the mental health conditions of LGBTs in Ghana calls for a serious intervention by all and sundry. If not, an individual having the feeling of “gayism”, “lesbianism”, or “bisexualism” could result in suicidal tendencies. This is because it is difficult for LGBT individuals to voice out their feelings publicly, even to their family members and close friends, as a result of the anti-LGBT environment we live in as a country. These findings therefore suggest that the law against LGBTs in Ghana should be as a matter of urgency be examined to reduce the harassment, stigmatization and discrimination against the LGBT communities in Ghana. This will go a long way to help improve the mental health conditions of LGBT individuals in the country and even prevent future escalation of suicides among the youth in the country. Secondly, there is the need for the public to be educated on LGBT issues in Ghana. It will to help address the homophobic climate and to prevent violent attacks on LGBT individuals in

the country. Thirdly, there should be counselling and health facilities specially setup for LGBT individuals to deal with their peculiar cases, such as their mental health issues, and others that could be of help especially for those who want to come out. Fourthly, until the homophobic climate against LGBTs in Ghana changes mental health workers need to be trained on how to deal with LGBT individuals who seek mental health care at the hospitals, and other health care facilities in Ghana.

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