

## THE IMPACT OF STIGMATIZATION ON SOCIAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE LGBT-COMMUNITY

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### **Abstract.**

**Introduction.** The current stage of society's development is the time to remove taboos. Around the world begin to speak openly on the previously taboo topics. One of them is the issue of non-traditional sexual orientation. It's natural that in every society there is a certain number of people who have a non-traditional sexual orientation. The reasons for the taboo of this topic in Ukraine include the unreadiness of Ukrainian society to openly discuss it, because firstly the older generation's minds brought up in the ideals of the Soviet era, homosexuality is an inadmissible phenomenon. In addition, in Ukraine, as a Christian state, homosexual relations are openly condemned by the Church. These and other factors affect the fact that manifestations of homophobia and transphobia, stigmatization, discrimination and violations of the rights of people with non-traditional sexual orientation are quite frequent. The issues of homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination of LGBT-people are not underdeveloped, but Ukrainian scientists did not focus on the aspect of stigmatization of LGBT-people.

Different types and aspects of stigmatization are investigated in the Ukrainian scientific space: from the stigmatization as a sociocultural phenomenon, to individual manifestations of stigmatization in various spheres of social life. However, there was still no detailed study of stigmatization based on sexual orientation, because the study of this subject by Ukrainian researchers began relatively recently and was carried out within the framework of Western stigma theories (although there are certain empirical researches concerning sexual stigma that make it possible to draw certain conclusions regarding the actions of this mechanism in Ukraine). Based on Western methodologies for studying this phenomenon in Ukraine, given its specificity in our country, it requires modification of these approaches, adapted to modern Ukrainian realities. This determines the theoretical relevance of this topic. The study of this phenomenon

in Ukraine, based on Western methodologies, requires modification of these approaches, adaptation to modern Ukrainian realities. This fact determines the theoretical relevance of this topic.

In practical terms, the study of this topic is relevant, because it can be a ground for studying the level of tolerance to LGBT-people in Ukraine, problems of that category of people in Ukrainian society and the search for ways to regulate them; it can be a useful material for gender studies and the basis for further research on this topic. Our research will also be relevant to the activities of public organizations dealing with gender issues, issues of equality and human rights because the study of stigma will help prevent social divisions in relations between heterosexual people and representatives of the LGBT community. Thus, the applied dimension of the study is quite obvious: to "remove stress" and overcome the "points of schism" in the modern Ukrainian society, and, consequently, to normalize relations in it by increasing the level of tolerance and trust between different socio-cultural groups of society.

**Purpose.** the analysis of the features of the phenomenon of stigmatization based on sexual orientation in modern Ukrainian society.

**Methods.** Since sociology is a multi-paradigm science, we relied on the methodological principles of various scientific approaches. In particular, the theoretical and empirical study of this topic relies on the principles of structural functionalism, since the phenomenon of stigmatization is described in terms of a system having a certain structure, types, determinants, and consequences, is exposed to the factors of a wider system - society and, in turn, has the property of influencing on this system. However, the methodology of structural functionalism limits the depth of the study of stigmatization, and therefore the methodological principles of symbolic interactionism have been used to interpret the phenomenon of gender stigmatization as a certain symbol bearing the usually negative content and to explain how an individual's assessment (representative's of LGBT) of himself, based on his society's assessment. The research is also based on I. Goffman's concept of stigma, set forth in his work "Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity" (Goffman, E. 1963). Consequently, we adhere to the interpretation of the concept of "stigma" by I. Goffman and rests on the stigma typology identified by the author. In addition, we take into account the fact

that the differences between the non-stigmatized and stigmatized ("we" and "them") groups are exaggerated (which offset the differences within the groups themselves), and social interaction with the stigmatized person often involves discrimination leading to reduce the lifespan of a person who has stigma. Also, the methodology includes P. Byrne's interpretation of stigma, who treats the concept of "stigmatization" as an action, a certain sequential mechanism that includes the outlined steps. So, using the western stigmatization theories, the mechanism of stigma overlaying and its effects within the Ukrainian space is analyzed.

Methods of gathering information: General scientific methods: analysis and synthesis (analysis of various approaches to the study of sexual orientation and stigmatization and formed in thematic blocks), comparative method (compared the approaches to the study of the phenomenon of stigmatization, as well as comparison of secondary data), deduction (scientific research was conducted from general to concrete, that is from the outline of the general approaches to the interpretation of the phenomenon of stigmatization to specific theories, the allocation of certain important features of stigmatization on the basis of sexual orientation, its types, causes, consequences, etc.). Empirical methods: in-depth interviews (which allow to capture individual views of people about the problem of stigmatization based on sexual orientation and establish certain tendencies regarding the course of the process of imposing stigma in the Ukrainian society, in particular in Lviv), the method of focus group research (which allows to diversify information, reveal controversial moments, the most important factors that influence the stigmatization of the LGBT community in the Ukrainian society).

**Results.** Stigmatization is a process of imposing the stigma label. Stigma is the result of selective perception, the distinction between "we" and "they" groups (Goffman, E. 1963).

Stigmatization based on sexual orientation is a special kind of stigmatization. Sexual stigma (based on sexual orientation) ties to any non-heterosexual behavior, identity, relationship or community, it is a socially widespread perception of the underdeveloped homosexuality status status comparing to heterosexuality (Teliti A. 2015). There are three varieties of sexual

stigma (Herek G. 2009): felt-stigma (meaning the person's expectation of stigmatization), internalized stigma or self-stigma (hidden negative attitude towards oneself and their own homosexual desires) and enacted stigma (open behavioral expression of stigma).

The most significant effects of stigmatization based on sexual orientation include inequality between heterosexuals and homosexual people, which is *expressed and fixed in the form of hierarchical relations within society and correlates with discrimination*. Sexual stigma is characterized by consolidation (in the past or today) at the institutional level, for example in medicine, religion, legislation (in particular, religion is one of the most important factors in the stigmatization of LGBT). The peculiarity is that there is a fact of ungrounded or intense perception by themselves (LGBT) as a stigmatized group (by default) because heterosexual people do not always show a lack of bias in themselves. The problem in modern society is that any member of society can be attributed to this stigmatized group on the basis of having some external "attributes of homosexuality", as well as by frequent concealment by representatives of the LGBT community of their orientation. There is a gradation in the strength of stigmatization about certain groups of LGBT communities. In particular, there is a higher level of tolerance to lesbians than gay or transgender people. Stigmatization also manifests itself in the absence of the necessary, adequate state support.

Analyzing the reports of social and public organizations, independent researchers for the years 2008-17 (Martseniuk T., 2010; Compliance with human rights 2009; Status and problems of LGBT movement in Ukraine, 2013; A New Beginning, 2018; Minorities Report, 2017; Basic principles and ways of forming of a common identity of Ukrainian citizens, 2017; Ukrainian society and European values, 2017), we found a tendency of increase of the tolerance level towards the LGBT community, but we cannot claim that the **real** Ukrainian level corresponds to the same indicator **in developed countries**.

Certain features of stigmatization practices in relation to LGBT: due to the dominance of gays' social activity, this group suffers the greatest stigma; LGBT movement in Ukraine is not well-organized: not enough activists and resources for effective activity - it cannot fully achieve its goals; an "homophobization"

through manipulations, speculations on this topic; any social activity associated with LGBT is impeded. We found that Ukrainians are not quite ready to accept the LGBT community in any capacity (even as citizens of their country).

To study the features of stigmatization based on sexual orientation in the Ukrainian space, a program of empirical research on "Causes, manifestations and possible consequences of the stigmatization based on sexual orientation in modern Ukrainian society" was compiled. The aim was to identify the features of stigmatization of people with non-traditional sexual orientation in different age groups of Lviv. To accomplish this goal, eight in-depth interviews were conducted to see the personal experiences of ordinary people who can face LGBT in their everyday life and observe or participate in social interaction with them. As well as two focus group interviews to diversify information, identify the most important factors influencing the stigmatization of LGBT community representatives in Ukrainian society, understanding the vision of the problem by the subject of the study.

Through the in-depth interviews, some of the planned categories were confirmed and new indicators were discovered that would allow us to talk about new LGBT attributes, including changes in appearance (modification), use of cosmetics, an HIV-tag. In addition, the *reasons* for stigmatization of LGBT are highlighted by the informants: lateness in-state development, specific education, unwillingness to understand, social sentiment, lack of personal acquaintances. The informants also expressed their views on the *manifestations* of stigmatization of LGBT: Internet violence, labor inequality, ridicule, the need to remain silent (manifestation), glass ceiling, pity, latent stigmatization, lack of government support. The following were also the *consequences* of stigmatization of LGBT representatives: intercession, impossibility to create a family, spontaneous attitude, "hunting," the need to remain silent (consequence), LGBT publicity, pressure, "anti-homophobia". These newly highlighted informants, indicators give me an opportunity to talk about the *diversity and multifractality of the phenomenon of stigmatization of LGBT* in the Ukrainian space.

Focus-group interviews. The category "Attitude": participants argued that the attitude towards the LGBT community is between the neutral (from the majority of young people) and sharply negative (from the side of mainly the older

generation). This tendency is alarming because such attitude *leads to social splits* - the division of society into "us" and "they", which is a factor of conflicts, hostility, "loosening" of the social system.

By the "Attributes" category the participants approved the achievements of the previous study and added new ones: specific coloring, removing the borders of "male" and "female", expressive self-presentation, weakness, tenderness, care, styling (the last four - for men), the frame of LGBT. These “Attributes” give us the opportunity to see stereotypes impact on “LGBT character”.

The third block of the focus group interviews was a kind of brainstorming to highlight the causes, manifestations, and consequences of stigma, discrimination and negative attitudes in the LGBT community in general. Participants of focus-group discussions were supposed to fill in the sheet to get the **"cause-manifestation-consequences"** formula. Regarding features of the process in Ukraine, the participants identified the following elements. Reasons: the correlation of LGBT with HIV, a distorted image of [the LGBT representative] in the media, conservatism. Manifestations: "non-tolerant" questions, denial of religious rites, talking about non-acceptance in the family (for example, "if my son was a gay, I would give up from him"). Consequences: for LGBT: suicide, usage of the fact of orientation for mercenary purposes, emigration, decrease in self-esteem, apathy, mental disorders; for a society: a bilateral rally / struggle for rights (on both sides), a bad attitude of other states / perception of Ukrainian society as a “back-viewing” by other states; the transmission of negative attitude to the next generations, the spread of infectious diseases (due to the unwillingness of LGBT people to seek medical advice, to be aware of, etc.), the polarization of society, discrimination against people who support the LGBT community, xenophobia.

*Table 1. Thoughts of participants of FGI about cause-manifestation-consequences of LGBT stigmatization.*

Reasons	Manifestations	Consequences	
		For LGBT	For society
Harassment of LGBT for 70 years - Soviet era	Images	Suicide	Polarization of society is a two-way protest
Religiosity	Isolation - Ignoring	Depression	Xenophobia
Education [specifics]	Aggression / fights	Apathy	Violence
Unnatural Sexual Orientation	Neglect	Hatred	Stagnation
Alienation of the new (conservatism)	Denial of religious practices	Decrease in self-esteem	The spread of infectious diseases
The novelty of this [the openness of unconventional sex. orientation] phenomena	Infringement of rights	Usage of the fact of their orientation for selfish purposes	Broadcast of the negative attitudes to the next generations
Impossibility of continuing the lineage [LGBT couples]	Family rejection	Emigration	Perception of Ukrainian society as backward by other states
Relating LGBT people to AIDS.	Jokes	Persecution	Discrimination against supportive people
Awareness	"Wrong" words (intolerant)	Loss of social connections	
Disease [perception of non-traditional orientation as a disease]	Ticking with your finger	Mental disorders	
Distorted Image (Media)	Beating	Aggression in response	
	Harassment	Self-isolation / social divisions	
	Psychological pressure	The desire to give up their orientation	
	Intolerant issues		
	Refusal of employment		
	Negative attitude from the authorities		

It should be noted that none of the participants chose the "Neutral" option regarding the public's attitude to LGBT people. Analyzing the answers of the participants, it is impossible to determine the exact pole of the attitude of Ukrainian society to the LGBT community, but it should be noted that the vector is somewhat negative, based on such indicators as Unkind, Unethical, Non-tactful, Unsuitable, Non-Progressive, Non-Progressive, Non-Progressive, Non-Progressive. However, most participants still agree that the attitude of Ukrainians to LGBT people is non-aggressive and humane. During the discussion, the hypothesis about the *negative* attitude of the Ukrainians to LGBT people is more affirmed. The emphasis is on the more negative attitude of the older generation brought up on the ideals of the Soviet era, and the youth are more loyal in this sense.

Most men and women have been found to believe that men's attitude towards gays is total rejection. Men's attitude toward lesbians is closer to neutral and women's one to partial acceptance. Men's and women's views on the attitude

of men to transgender and transgender people are between partial and complete rejection. For men, women's attitudes toward gays are closer to neutrality and partial acceptance, and for women, between neutrality and partial rejection. Men's attitudes toward lesbians are also closer to neutrality and partial acceptance, but women's view is between neutrality and partial rejection. According to men and women, which took part in the discussion, the attitude of women to transgender and transgender people is between neutrality and partial rejection. Was found a tendency that women's attitudes are less radical - that is, closer to neutral to all LGBT groups. The discussion revealed that more stigmatized LGBT groups are transgender (inter-sex) and gay, and less - lesbians. At the same time, the most stigmatized group on the part of men is gays. It should also be noted that participants are inclined to believe that women are more loyal in this sense.

The P. Byrne's mechanism of stigma suppression (identification of differences, constructing stereotypes, categorization, discrimination) during the study was found in the informants' responses and therefore confirmed. This testifies to the adequacy of this mechanism to Ukrainian realities and provides an integral picture of the process of implementing stigma. To illustrate it, we created the final conceptualization of the Sexual Stigma in Ukraine.

*Table 2. The conceptualization of the Sexual Stigma in Ukraine.*

Sexual stigma									
Attitude		Attributes		Reasons		Manifestations		Consequences	
To LGBT	To different groups of LGBT			Individual, psychological	Social	Physical, social, direct	Individual, interpersonal, indirect	Social	Customized
Positive	To gays	Mannerism	Femininity (Men)	Individual, psychological	Stereotypes	Beating	Uncomfortable interaction	Exclusion	Chronic stress
Negative	To lesbians	Appearance modifications	Use of cosmetics	Fear	Stereotypes	Beating	Uncomfortable interaction	Exclusion	Chronic stress
		Blurring the boundaries of male and female	Expressive self-presentation	Incomprehension	Social attitudes	Harassment	Disgust to LGBT people	Discrimination	Spoiled identity
Neutral	To bi-sexual	Masculinity (in women)	Specific coloring	Specific upbringing	Distorted image	Labor inequality	Internet violence	Anti-homophobia	Deviance actualization
	To inter-sex	Conversation style	HIV label	The reluctance to understand	Delayed development of the state	Glass ceiling	Mockery	Discrimination against supportive people	Pressure
		Weakness, tenderness (in men)	LGBT frame (social border)	Lack of personal acquaintance	Fixation of negative experiences	Lack of state security	The need to remain silent	Shifting stigma to other people	Too shy / aggressive behavior
		Well-groomed, stylish (in men)		Conservatism	Cultural and historical factors	Denial of religious	Pity	Hunting	Spotting Attitudes
					Attitudes of society		Latent stigma	Protection	Inability to have a family
							Not tolerant questions	Perception of Ukrainian society as backward by other states	The need to remain silent
							Family rejection	Publicity of the topic	Apathy
								Polarization of society	Emigration
								The struggle for rights (bilateral)	Decrease in self-esteem
								Broadcast negative attitudes to the next generations	Usage of the fact of orientation for selfish purposes
								The spread of infectious diseases	Mental disorders



**Keywords:** *stigma, stigmatization, sexual stigma, discrimination, LGBT, homosexuality, homophobia*

**The authors declare that they have no competing interests**

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