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LGBT: Is this our responsibility?

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LGBT and first impression?

The issue of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) has become a social issue in many community including the Muslim. LGBT is associated with sexual disorders and gender issues which require the attention of everyone, including the policymakers and leaders.

Many communities do not condone such behaviour, thus various approaches had been used to overcome or at least minimise this social menace. It is a very sensitive issue that demands research to understand it better.

We may choose to ignore or accept it as a reality; but how would we react if one of our family members or close friend claimed to be an LGBT? Will we be worried, try to understand the problem and help them or just ignore it totally?

Perhaps, in this situation some would try to help out of empathy, love and care. Some may resort to the blaming game and find reasons to explain the phenomena. Can it be a genetic disorder? Is it a result of upbringing, influence from friends or social media? Or is it part of qada' and qadar from Allah as a test from Him?

The problem is worse when one's faith is jeopardised. In verses 80 to 84, Allah has explained about the homosexual problems that occurred among the population of Luth. Homosexual is a despicable act as mentioned, Surah al-A'raf, which means:

And [We had sent] Luth when he said to his people, "Do you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with from among the worlds? Indeed, you approach men with desire, instead of women. Rather, you are a transgressing people." But the answer of his people was only that they said, "Evict them from your city! Indeed, they are men who keep themselves pure. So we saved him and his family, except for his wife; she was of those who remained [with the evildoers]." And we rained upon them a rain [of stones]. Then see how was the end of the criminals.

Generally, LGBT is rarely accepted by communities all over the globe since it is against the practice of many religion(s). However, it is not right to accuse or abuse this community without trying to understand the situation and find solution or providing guidance to rehabilitate them. This is especially important for healthcare professionals, be it a nurse, physician, pharmacist, dentist, allied health sciences officer or religious, social worker and academician.

You may face this issue throughout your lifespan either during teenage and adult phase at several institutions such as school, public place, workplace, and even university. They may be your client/patient, students, neighbours or family members. If you could not manage to help, stop being a critic, yet does nothing.

There are several issues regarding LGBT that a concerned citizen could give attention to, such as health-related matters and providing outreach program, either through the involvement of government agencies or non-government organisation (NGOs).

This is important to ensure the balance between mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of that particular LGBT individual as highlighted in the Psychosocial Health Model. LGBT is not a simple or small issue that should be taken for granted. It is actually a part of macro environment issues which may begin from a dysfunctional family.

It has been observed that a parent's divorce, poor parenting style and neglected children will lead to further problems in the society. These include illicit drug abuse/smuggling, vandalism in neighbourhood, crime, threats to safety, injury, school failure, unemployment and financial problems (These facts were obtained from several interviews with patients involved in LGBT).

Besides that, an individual involved in LGBT may also come from a prestigious and religious background; but somewhere in between their lifespan, they might be involved in life crisis such as a break up with their loved ones, marital problems or crucial issues such as financial crisis. Perhaps they may choose this pathway as an escapism from reality and to earn for their living to ensure sustainability of their family members.

LGBT health issues and safety measures

Among health issues that an LGBT individual may be exposed to is the sexual transmitted disease (STD) such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and syphilis due to unsafe sexual practice. Therefore, dissemination of health awareness and peer counselling should be delivered if you know any of your colleagues that is involved or has a higher tendency to get involved in LGBT.

Do not harass them! If you keep on harassing and stereotyping them, there are higher possibilities for them to keep isolating themselves from the normal community.

If it happens to be your close sibling(s), family member(s) or friend(s), do not hesitate to get advice from experts such as counsellor or religious officer if they are studying in the university; discipline teacher, counselling teacher or student affairs officer will be the person in-charge in handling such matter at primary or secondary school. If they are a working person or a married couple, seek help from relevant bodies which will be discussed further after this in LGBT outreach program.

Furthermore, an LGBT individual is prone to be abused by their partner/spouse, gigolo/boss or so-called 'mak ayam/bapa ayam' especially among the transgenders and bisexuals. Some of them are beaten up and their money or belongings are taken away if they refuse to entertain 'customers'.

Besides that, if they willingly serve customers who might have sexual transmitted diseases (STD) such as syphilis, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) the chances of encountering STD is high. This is especially true if the LGBT individuals and their partners do not practice standard precaution such as wearing condoms/diaphragm during intercourse be it oral or anal.

Moreover, frequent and unsafe sexual intercourse among bisexuals may open up the chances of getting pregnant. When this happens, abortions are usually performed if the foetus is still at an early stage and sometimes it is a repeated event of the bisexuals' individual lives!

Without good care, their reproductive system may be deteriorated easily especially due to reoccurrence of sepsis, genital warts or fungal infection due to unsafe procedure (e.g., illegal abortion service provided by non-license medical practitioners, use of non-sterile equipment etc.). In the long run, they have higher chances of getting cervical cancer, ovarian cancer or uterine fibroid due to repeated unsafe pregnancy or frequent abortions.

On the other hand, gay(s) have higher chances of getting rectum cancer due to frequent anal intercourse. By nature (or fitrah), intercourse should involve the sexual genitalia of a man and a woman. Doing it 'the other way around' will definitely affect one's health. Sometimes, anal intercourse may also cause injury to the rectum which leads to severe bleeding which requires medical attention for repair (e.g. surgery).

Furthermore, depression are also common among the gay(s) and lesbian(s) if they are facing difficult relationships in their lives. There is no guarantee of happiness that their relationship will be accepted by their family and society. The 'loyal' attitude among these group of people will usually jeopardise their own mental health especially when they break up with their partners.

Nevertheless, there are some of the LGBT individuals that actually has the intention to return back to fitrah since they know, deep inside that their way of living is not accepted by norms and religions. However, the harassment they had received from the society makes them feel ambiguous over the risk they will encounter to live back in the normal society. Will they be accepted?

If you read this article, please have your mentality set to change and be HUMAN. We all make mistakes and perhaps chances should be given and guidance should be allocated for them. *There will always be hope, chance and mechanism...*

LGBT outreach program

An LGBT individual may have encountered multiple problems in their lives including sexual health, drug/alcohol abuse and faith/religions especially if they are Muslims. If there are LGBT among your spouse/life partner, please get help from religious departments available at every states such as Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), Agensi Anti Dadah Kebangsaan (AADK) or non-government organisations (NGOs) such as Persatuan Pengasih Malaysia (PENGASIH) or Pertubuhan Amal Perubatan Ibnu Sina Malaysia (PAPISMA).

For the non-Muslims, particularly Christians, you may seek help from a Christian-based organisations such as Malaysian Care or Pursuing Liberty Under Christ (PLUC). If you have family members/loved ones involved in illicit drugs abuse, please get help from nearby primary health clinic to refer them with drug abused for direct observational therapy (DOTs).

An injecting drug users (IDU) may seek help from Drop-in Centers (DIC) under the effort of Malaysian AIDS council available for various ethnicity background such as Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia (BMSM), Malaysian Consultative Committee of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) or Malaysian Indian Youth Council (MIYC).

Healthcare provider(s) may assist you in providing behavioural risk reduction counselling and health education for persons at risk for STD such as HIV and syphilis. Local health departments can implement health provider awareness campaigns with a special focus on HIV and syphilis via continuing medical education on the symptoms' recognition and management recommendations which may include pharmacological approach.

In some places, such as in San Francisco, their public health agencies had expanded their outreach and prevention efforts by using online social media. Their Internet-based prevention program comprised of website development, creation of internet links to syphilis testing services, individual outreach in internet chat rooms and public message boards, health-promotional banner advertisements, development of an email list server to distribute syphilis updates, creation of an online syphilis-testing program, and collaboration with officials to develop an Internet-based STD educational question and answer service.

Conclusion

LGBT is a social problem in the society that affects many families and educational institutions. If you are facing this problem, stop being in denial as if nothing is happening and get help! Love yourself and appreciate that there is still a chance for you to change your future.

Bring along a trusted friend, siblings or family members. You could even go alone to any religious department if you choose to do so. For the non-Muslims, perhaps you may refer to any NGO established in your religion line and seek their advice and help.

There is nothing wrong with sharing your problems even if you think it is embarrassing. Perhaps, getting involved with religion-based social service or NGOs such as Pertubuhan IKRAM Malaysia may help you feel better as it provides a platform to do good deeds.

As a member of a civil society, stopping to harass these people is the least that one could do, which is already a commendable act. You may also pray and du'a that they find their way back to their norms. The choice is yours!

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