

Title: The Moderating Role of Forgiveness on the Relationship of Bisexuality and Depression

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Abstract

Symptoms of depression have been highly prevalent amongst sexual minorities, including bisexuals. Shame-proneness and forgiveness are two characteristics that can have a significant impact on sexual minority people's mental health. Shame-proneness is a predictor in the formation of depression and has a positive relationship. Within a sexual minority population, shame proneness is negatively correlated to forgiveness. Along with the recovery of shame, forgiveness can also decrease depression rates within an individual. However, these effects have not been implemented as whole linking them to sexual orientation, specifically, bisexuality. We hypothesized that for those who are attracted to both men and women (bisexual), the relationship to depression is moderated by shame proneness. The moderation of high shame proneness will be moderated by total forgiveness. Using Mechanical Turk, 980 participants completed a survey including our variables. After data screening the analysis using Hayes Model 3 linked bisexuality to depression (DASS) with a moderation of shame proneness (TOSCHA) and forgiveness (HFS) and the covariates gender and neuroticism (IPIP_N). Within the results, a three-way interaction

was found to be significant as per our hypothesis. This experiment gives a theoretical basis to a possible treatment for depression even when a person has a high shame proneness. Since there is a direct path from bisexuality to depression, it is important to find methods that can lower the depression levels.

Christian Worldview Integration: As Christians, it is not our place to judge other people (Romans 1:32-2:1). Instead, fellow believers are to correct and teach each other according to God's word (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Even if we believe same-sex attraction to be a sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), our job is to help those who are in need just as God helps us in our weaknesses. When we are depressed God hears our cry and comes to our aid to provide us freedom from our mental burdens (Psalms 40:1-3). Forgiveness is a powerful tool that God uses to release us from shame and guilt. The Bible teaches us to ask God for forgiveness, which can lead to us forgiving ourselves (Micah 7:18-19). He also tells us to forgive others, which releases grudges and frees the mind to not be set on things of the past, but rather a more optimistic future. Regardless of personal belief, we can use this theology and thinking to lessen the problems of shame and depression. In this way, bisexuals no longer have to feel that pain that is likely to develop from depression or a high shame proneness and they can use forgiveness of self and others as a treatment. As seen in our study, total forgiveness impacts high levels of shame proneness and furthermore impacts the relationship between bisexuality and depression. In today's culture, the conflict between the LGBT community and Christianity is extremely relevant. The research in our study will bridge a gap for biblically-based counseling strategies for bisexual individuals.