THE INFLUENCE OF REGIONAL BACKGROUND AND INCLUSIVITY OF PRIDE EVENTS TO THE MENTAL WELLBEING OF LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

Dr. Rakesh Sarpal, Emily Lim Fong Yee

INTI International College Subang, Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

*E-mail: rakeshs.skumar@newinti.edu.my

Abstract

This literature review attempted to answer the reason of the LGBTQ+ community in gaining more support presently by utilising the approach of structuralism and poststructuralism theoretical methods. Then, the mental health of the sexual minorities is critically assessed through the kaleidoscopic lenses of regional backgrounds, specifically the influence of cultural and religion upbringing towards the degrees of acceptance in LGBTQ+ people. The inclusivity of pride events to the mental wellbeing of the LGBTQ+ people had been deliberately reflected and justified through research findings and statistical data. Ultimately, the implications had been given to event organisers and corporates to have better scope in understanding the niche market of LGBTQ+ consumers. This literature review can be momentous for future researcher to endeavour a finer and comprehensive investigation on the subject matters in this study.

Keywords

LGBTQ+ People, Pride Events, Regional Background, Inclusivity, Mental Health

Introduction

A significant trait of human beings is having a multiplex cognitive mechanism to have the ability to function in complex social groups (Sakman, 2019). To be accepted into a society, people are required to adhere to a set of fundamental unspoken rules in the society, which can be referred to as social norms. Particularly, the traditional beliefs and rooted impression in sexuality norms are inherited longitudinally and regionally, for example, heterosexual is normal, and homosexual is frowned upon, or even considered a crime. According to Brennan (2013), the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and more) community had been fervently fighting for the equality of people with different sexual orientation through LGBTQ+ events and protests. The view of the public had been shifting towards acceptance and advocacy of embracing different sexuality. Referring to the findings from Flores (2019), 131 out of 174 countries had increased in accepting the LGBTQ+ community since 1984.

In the perspective of marketing, LGBTQ+ community is an ever-growing target market that has a relatively high income, and they have high loyalty towards brands that advocate the LGBTQ community (Pinto et al., 2020). Enhancing the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in a society to have equal rights and fair treatment is crucial for the economic development of a country. The inclusion of LGBTQ people in legal rights in a country can increase an average of 2065 United States Dollar

(USD) per capita (Badgett et al., 2019). Additionally, the LGBTQ+ people are more vulnerable mentally due to the fear of being scrutinised, rejected, orisolated by others. The LGBTQ+ people have a 50% more probability to be susceptible to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, which led to a high percentage of alcoholor drug abuse, suicidal thoughts, and self-harm (Mental Health Foundation, 2021). Undeniably,as social animals, humans will always seek companionship to have the sense of belonging in acommunity. Which begs the questions of how much the LGBTQ community rely on the inclusivity of LGBTQ+ events to improve their mental health.

In this literature review, there will be three research questions that will be evaluated in depth. Firstly, what shaped the LGBTQ+ community? The topics related to homosexuality had always been a taboo subject since the 18th century. However, society had slowly been accepting the LGBTQ+ community. Frankly, it is an intriguing aspect to understand what made it different that the society is opening to the LGBTQ+ community now but not then. This literature review will attempt to answer this question through comparing structuralism and poststructuralism sociological theories. Secondly, does the mental health of LGBTQ+ people differ in regional backgrounds? The geographical demography can dictate how well the LGBTQ+ community is accepted in a society. For instance, Southeast Asia countries are less LGBTQ+ friendly due to a more traditional and religious background compared to western countries; it can be more stressful for LGBTQ+ people as they feel isolated from the local community (Lewis et al., 2019; Wilkinson et al., 2017). Finally, how inclusivity in pride events influence the mental health of the LGBTQ+ people? Inclusivity is the core element for a harmonious and content society because it signifies fair treatment and the engagement of all individuals regardless of anything that differentiates a person's identity from another. However,are pride events truly inclusive for people to participate? This literature review will be answering these research questions through the segmentation of several topics and social theories.

Structuralism and Poststructuralism in the context of homosexuality

Sociological methods are to analyse and understand the occurrence of sociological phenomena. The emergence of sociological theories begins from the mid-1800s, and the development of the social theories is highly dependent on the social condition surrounding the theorists at the time, this indicates that the more recent social theories from 1900s and 2000s are even relevant and significant to the current sociological circumstance (Moebius, 2021; Ritzer and Stepnisky, 2021). In this literature review, structuralism and poststructuralism will be compared and analysed to understand the
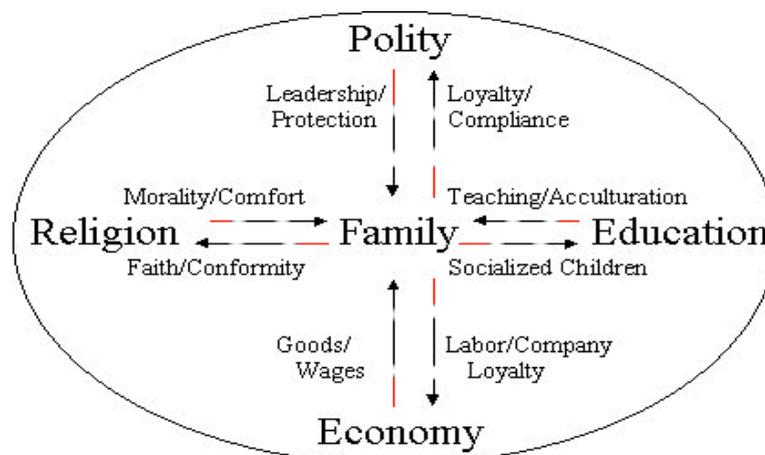
phenomenon of the increasing support of LGBTQcommunity from the public.

Diagram 1: Foucault's structural functionalism framework (Thompson, 2016).

The Parsons' Structural Functionalism Theory advocates order and balance of various aspects or parties to have a functional and civil community, and a collective of dysfunctional components that can tilt the balance and disrupt the society (Chotim, 2022; Ormerod, 2019; Parsons, 1951). A framework was constructed to illustrate the components of a society which are polity, religion, education, and economy and how their interaction can influence the family, which is the society (Diagram 1) (Thompson, 2016). In the ideology of functionalism, homosexuality is not to be encouraged as it defies the nature of the existence of human being, which is to reproduce. Heterosexual activities and procreation can strengthen the bond within a family and assure the offspring have the best opportunity to have normal socialization and fulfilled with basic needs, this suggests homosexuality is dysfunctional to a society (Griffiths et al., 2017; Parsons, 1951).

However, the structural functionalism theory has received many criticisms as there are many gaps and ignorance of other aspects that can change the perspective of how a society functions. The theory only assumed each part of society will harmoniously and voluntarily work together, which omitted many variables that can cause inequality and division in a society such as race, gender, income class and more (Chotim, 2022; Mahlert, 2021; Ormerod, 2019; Thompson, 2016). This shows the framework' lack of comprehensiveness and fatal ignorance of societal change and conflicts that may affect a society, and the mere existence of the ever- growing LGBTQ+ community is a textbook example of societal change. Structuralists never took in the consideration of the abundant variables that can influence a society. As an example, diverse sexual identity alone can be a variable that impacts a well-functioning society, as unfair treatment and discrimination exists among people who are not heterosexual, which is contradicting to the assumption of structuralists where all components of a society are wholesome and perfect.

As the LGBTQ+ community is gaining support from the public in the early 1990s, a new category of sociological theory called Queer Theory had been introduced by sociologists. The most prominent sociologist that contributed greatly the queer theories is Michel Foucault. Foucault was considered as a significant contributor and the catalyst of the research in homosexuality and Queer Theory, his publication, 'History of Sexuality' is the inspiration of many researchers in LGBTQ+ studies (Herzog, 2018; Callis, 2009; Spargo, 1999, Foucault, 1978). Michel Foucault is a poststructuralist, the characteristic of poststructuralism is to question and further explore structuralism, as poststructuralists believe there are more complex variables and factors that affects a society (Shen and Jiao, 2022; Radford and Radford, 2005). In essence, structuralism lays the research foundation for poststructuralism, the researchers are keen in questioning and criticising the previous studies through their research. Poststructuralists post questions for future researchers to discover a certain matter in depth, instead of framing theories and frameworks that can constrict and narrow down the factors or variables of the subject matter.

Queer Theory is an unorthodox innovative approach in grasping the idea of sexuality. The Queer Theory is not to be defined as a framework, but a collective effort from intellectual literatures to understand gender and sex, it deconstructs and breakdowns the naturalisation of sexuality (Green, 2010; Callis, 2009; Spargo, 1999; Namaste, 1994). From Foucault's standpoint, the 19th century, the difference between heterosexual and homosexual were dissected through knowledge and research from medical experts, psychiatrists, juridical systems and more; it was to be determined that homosexuality as a pathological or abnormal 'species' due to the knowledge of 'experts' (Crespo et al., 2016; Green, 2010; Spargo, 1999; Foucault, 1976). This means due to the presence of the dominating powers of officials, the public in the 19th century had been educated that homosexuals

are bazaar and shall receivetreatment to alter their sexuality, it was also taboo subject that shall not be discussed.

Yet, in the 1960s, people are starting to protest regarding the oppression of the idea of homosexuality and unfair treatment to homosexuals. These movements were to help LGBTQ+people to regain power for their own lives instead of seeking power, this is aligned with Foucault's' point of view in the existence of disciplinary power. Disciplinary power a type of power that normalise individuals to be docile and obedient, when under oppression, the disciplinary coercion of the docile individuals increases to resist normalisation; Foucault suggested that problematizing the formation of subject can disseminate the effect of normalisation (Ghosh, 2021; Crespo et al., 2016; Spargo, 1999; Foucault, 1978). In other words, the people who supports the LGBTQ+ community had been questioning the normalization of heterosexuality, as the people had been supressed to hinder their sexuality, they begin to regain power in a society through protests and fighting for inclusivity and equality for the LGBTQ+ people.

Degree of acceptance and the mental health of LGBTQ+ people in different regions

Before venturing into 'what' is the degree the acceptance towards the LGBTQ+ peoplein diverse regions, 'why' is the mental health of the LGBTQ+ people are more fragile is to beunderstood to begin with. As mentioned in the introduction, people perceive and follow the social norms by observing others' behaviours or interactions; violating the norms can lead to negative consequences such as compromised personal image, punishment or miscoordination (Gross and Vostroknutov, 2022; Legros and Cislaghi, 2019). Back in the days, sexual acts between same sex had been criminalized as it is a common belief that homosexuality is againsthuman nature and shall be punished. As an example, in the early 1950s, the United Kingdom (UK) reinforced sexual offence acts to prosecute people who were discovered as homosexual,it was to be seen as a sin, and psychological and physical treatments shall be sought to 'cure' homosexuality (Suffee, 2015). One of the most infamous homosexual prosecutions ever datedwas Alan Turing, the father of computer science, the hero who help the UK to decode Germanmilitary intelligence in World War II, being chemically castrated to avoid being sentenced to jail in 1952. Due to his homosexuality, he was convicted with six counts of 'gross indecency',he took his own life with an apple full of cyanide two years later (Huws and Finnis, 2017; Castillo, 2013). Turing died being a criminal because he was homosexual, this precedent precisely reflected the utter mentality and physical torture for homosexuals during the period,they were to be seen as outcasts, and were isolated and detested by the society.

To exacerbate the matter, in the 1980s, the outbreak of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) had further concreted the misconceptions of homosexuality as unethical and immoral. The early findings of the spread HIV/AIDS indicates that homosexual men are more likely to be infected due to sodomy. Yet, the truth is blood, breast milk, semen and vaginal fluids can all transmit HIV, it was simply the fact that unprotected sex was common for homosexuals, which exposed them in higher risk ofinfecting HIV (Nyman and Jellesma, 2022; Zhuoma et al., 2022; Huynh and Gulick, 2022). Additionally, gay men have 28 times higher chance to acquire HIV than men in general between the age of 15 to 49 (United Nation AIDS, 2022). The AIDS/HIV misinterpretation had led to further discrimination, hatred to even violence and hate crime to the LGBTQ+ people,the public blame homosexuals as the cause of transmitting the uncurable disease. Hence, many people chose to conceal their sexuality to others for the fear of being bullied, discriminated against, or rejected by family, friends, and others.

Doubtless to say, socialization and support from family and friends are essential for LGBTQ+

people who are emotionally vulnerable. Disclosing their sexual identity to others canbe challenging and stressful as it is highly influential for the mental health of the LGBTQ+ people, it can bring negative or positive affect depending on how others react to it (Hall et al.,2021; Maniago, 2018). If the LGBTQ+ people were rejected by their own family and friends, the feeling of alienation can lead to anxiety and depression as they are dejected and believe noone understands them. Festering the feeling of loneliness and leave mental health issues untreated can heighten self-harm and suicidal rate. Specifically, Asian, African, and Latino descent who are sexual minorities have a higher rate in reports of self-harm and suicidal attempts due to the stress of aftermath of coming out (disclose their sexual minority), such as homelessness (banished by parents), discriminated by heterosexuals or even assaulted by homophobias (Quarshie et al., 2020; Haas et al., 2011).
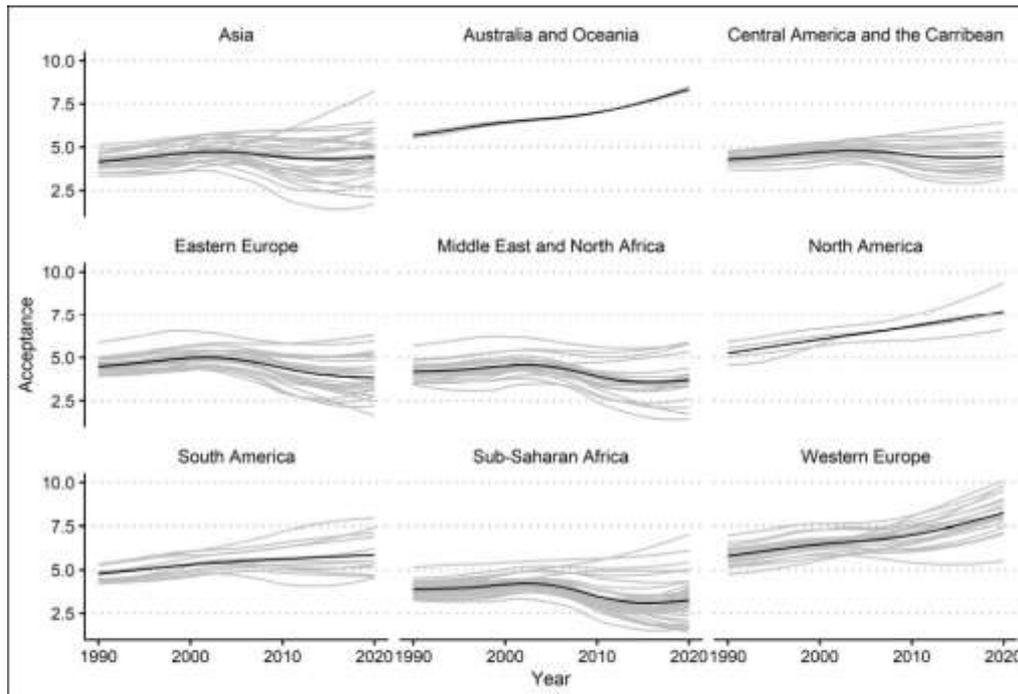
Note: Gray lines are each country, and the black line is the regional average.

Diagram 2: Regional trend in accepting the LGBTQ+ people (1990-2020) (Flores, 2021).

In the context of different regions and countries, the degree of acceptance to the LGBTQ+ community can highly vary based on the cultural and religious background of the local community. As a matter of fact, findings on diagram 2 shows the Global Acceptance Index (GAI) of LGBTQ+ community, Western Europe, North and South America, Australia and Oceania have positively increased patterns from 1990 to 2020 compared to other regions like Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa which had no change or slightly negative trend (Flores, 2021). The most notable differences between these regions are the impact and infiltration of traditional culture and beliefs for Asia and Africa countries are much more profound and are ingrained in the perspective of the native citizens toward the LGBTQ+ people. Specifically, most of the Muslims and Christians in Malaysia rejects LGBTQ+ people due to their religion upbringing, but some do accept the sexual minorities on the basis of all human ought to be respected (Yeo et al., 2021). As a case example of cultural and religious aspects influencing perspective towards homosexuality, the authorities in the 2022 Qatar FIFA World Cup had explicitly prohibit European teams to wear armbands with rainbow flags as a sign of supporting LGBTQ+ rights. To protest the country's criminalisation of homosexual acts, the entire Germany team chose to cover their mouths with their right hand during the photo session, it represents the social

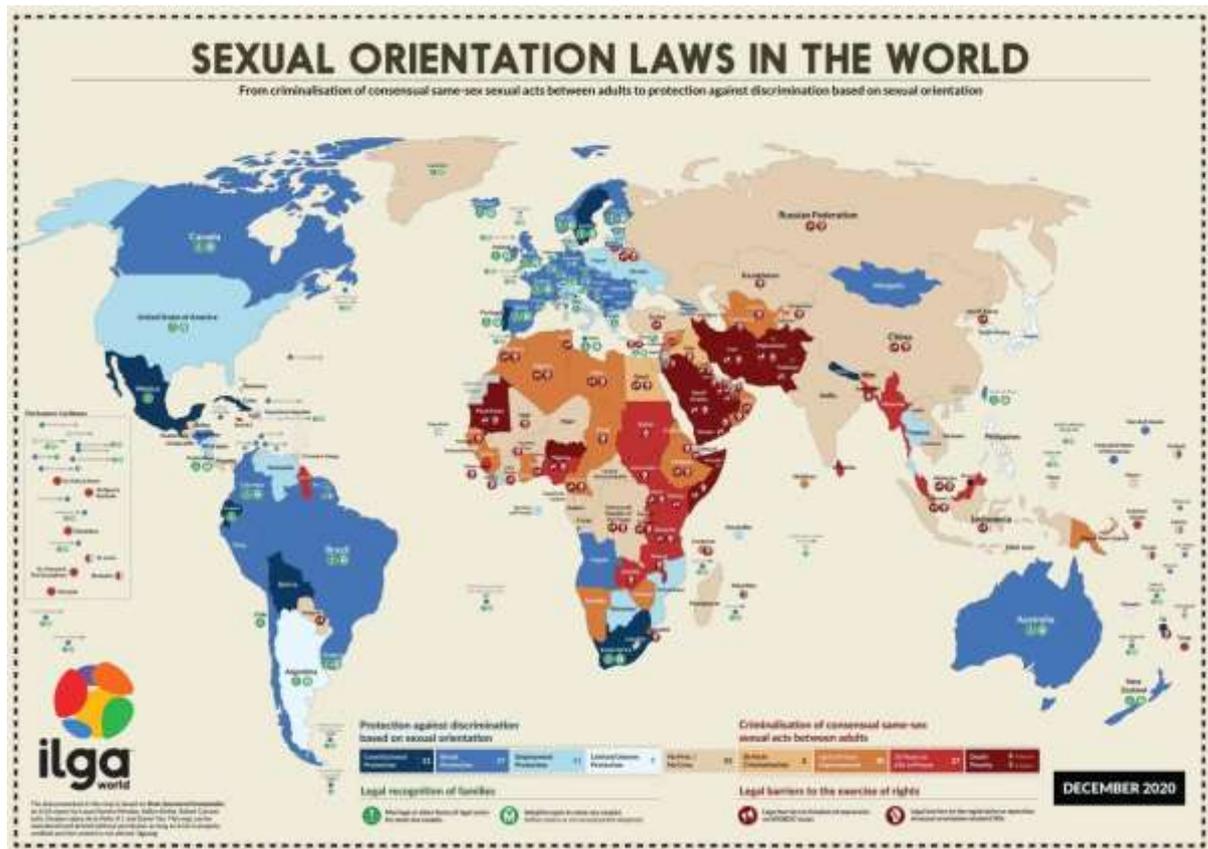justice campaign to fight against any unfair treatment (Morse and Riddell,2022).

Diagram 3: Sexual orientation laws map (ILGA, 2020).

Evidently, referring to the sexual orientation laws map from the International Lesbian,Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Association (ILGA) (2020) (Diagram 3), it isexceedingly apparent that Asia and Africa region either have no criminalisation nor protection towards homosexuals, criminalises consensual same-sex acts with prison or even death penalty;on the contrary, western countries had constitutional, broad and employment protectiontowards the LGBTQ+ people. This manifested those western countries provides LGBTQ+ basic rights and care that a typical citizen deserves, and they were not to be treated differently.Furthermore, research from Moskowitz et al. (2021) showed Black and Asian descents are lesslikely to reveal their sexual minority to their family compared Caucasians, and those who are religious have two to three times higher chance in not revealing their sexual minority; Amala et al. (2019) and Jerome et al. (2021) agreed with the findings that religious institutions play avital part in the estrangement of the LGBTQ+ people in an society, and cultural and religion are governing factors that influenced the publics' view in sexuality and gender. To conclude, all findings are aligned to indicate that Asia and Africa regions are less LGBTQ+ friendly thanthe Western European and Oceania regions. Primarily, religious, and cultural upbringing shaped the public's point of view to LGBTQ+ people and homosexuality.

Nevertheless, every coin has two sides, even though the western regions have higher acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community in terms of litigations and statistical data, these facts are not equivalent to the actual degree of acceptance in the public. Findings from Sani and Quaranta (2022) showed the public opinions in shifting towards the acceptance towards LGBTQ+ people are slower than the litigation changes in early adopting countries in decriminalising homosexuals. Vice versa, the cultural

conservative regions like Asia and Africadoes not necessarily represent the public's perspective in alienating the LGBTQ+ people. Namely, countries like Taiwan, Thailand, Nepal, and South Africa are beacons for the people seeking for LGBTQ+ rights, as the society in the countries are more open and welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community. Indisputably, even countries that are criminalising homosexual actslike Malaysia are showing significant signs of public support towards the LGBTQ+ community(Jerome et al., 2021; Mokhtar et al., 2019).

Influence of Inclusivity in pride events to the mental health of LGBTQ+ people

Companionship and camaraderie are doubtlessly crucial for an individuals' mental health, it is even more significant for the LGBTQ+ people, as they are the minority of a community, which are prone to the sense of isolation in a society. Emotional support systems are a combination of different parties that provide social, spiritual, and mental support to a person's life, such as family, friends, peers or people with identical interests and beliefs. To concrete the facts, studies from McConnell et al. (2015) shows LGBTQ+ people who have lower support systems have a higher outcome of mental wellbeing issues, including hopelessness, depression, anxiety, suicidality and many more. Particularly, findings revealed that LGBTQ+ peers, family and friends' supports are the most prevalent for LGBTQ+ peoples'mental health; agreeable with the previous study, the higher the social support is, the lesser theprobability of mental distress and suicidality in the LGBTQ+ people (Worrell et al., 2022; Watson et al., 2016). Therefore, a social support system is critical for LGBTQ+ people who felt insecure and lonely due to their sexual minority because acknowledgement and encouragement from others can solidify the normality of homosexuality; it soothes and diminishes the apprehensiveness of the LGBTQ+ people who intend to come out (reveal theirsexuality minority) to the people surrounding their lives.

Under the narrative of social and emotional support, pride events, as known as LGBTQevents are salient for the sanity and mental well-being for LGBTQ+ people. Pride events are generally movements or parades that celebrates and promotes LGBTQ+ rights to the public and fellow supporters. It is a sign of equality and inclusivity among all human beings and spread the ideology of 'love is love', which can be interpreted as, the pure essence of love is regardless of what sexuality or gender the person is. Research results shows the LGBTQ+ people rely heavily on pride community events to provide social connectedness and social support for the participants; it is fundamental for a LGBTQ+ persons' positive mental wellbeing and can act as a protective measure in reduction of substance use and suicidal rates (Madireddy and Madireddy, 2022; Watson et al., 2020; Ceatha et al., 2019; Painter et al., 2018).It is because pride events are a gateway for LGBTQ+ people to seek for people who have similar experience and struggles, it became a venting system and positive coping method for LGBTQ+ people to connect and gain a sense of belonging in a community.

Inclusivity is a core concept in the LGBTQ+ community, as the idea of LGBTQ+ is toempower and encourage equality in all genders to have the same rights as a human being deserves. Findings from Ong et al. (2020) shows the event industry are practising inclusivity towards LGBTQ+ community by using the pride flag in the event promotional materials, indicating the LGBTQ+ people are welcome to participate in the event. Inclusion is also a practice that businesses and corporates are starting to implement to ensure the LGBTQ+ peopleare nurtured and receiving fair treatment as others to diminish discrimination and stereotypicalimpressions towards the sexual minorities. However, studies indicated organisations have yet to grasp the idea of practising inclusivity, and businesses can be selective and opaque on the progress of these inclusivity implementations; these facts insinuated the inclusion policies might be partially fabricated to keep consumers under the illusion of a company's complete LGBTQ+ inclusivity (Rand et al., 2021; Hur, 2020).

Appallingly, the pride events are not as inclusive as it seemed to be too, racism, animosity and discrimination are still underlying matters that occurs in the LGBTQ+ events. Racism is a constant subject in many contexts, people who hold certain degrees of stereotypical opinions due to a persons' ethnicity and skin colour are always present under any circumstances,pride events are no exception. A survey result showed 50% of respondents who are minorities in ethnicity, such as Black and Asians, experienced discrimination due to their race in the LGBTQ+ community and pride events (Stonewall, 2018). This can be heart-breaking for the
LGBTQ+ people who are ethnic minorities, imagining attending an event to seek for social support and comfort in their own sexual minority, only to feel excluded once again due to racism and prejudice, the irony is palpable.

Furthermore, body image can be a stressor for the sexual minorities, as they can be socially anxious for the fear of judgement of LGBTQ+ peers regarding their attractiveness. Finding shows LGBTQ+ people can be apprehensive to go to pride events or occasions becauseconversations related to personal lifestyles such as what they eat or how often they exercise may arise, which are precedents for fellow LGBTQ+ people to judge or scrutinise their body image (Regan et al, 2021; Brennan et al., 2013). It may because people subconsciously expectindividuals who are homosexuals shall have a better body shape or be more visually appealingand stylish to 'make up' for their sexual minority, though it is understandable, but people shallbe comfortable in their own skin and love what they love unapologetically.

Inversely, referring to the previous findings where pride events are important for positive mental wellbeing, feeling excluded and not participating in pride events can be insinuated to correlate with negative mental health, due to the lack of social support in their sexual minority. Event organisers shall be aware of these discriminations and prioritise in advocating inclusion and equality in pride events, regardless of people's gender, body type or race, which was why pride events were organized in the first place. Nonetheless, social inclusion in pride events can have the issue of superficial support, where business sponsors andpoliticians participate in LGBTQ+ events with hidden agendas like enhancing brand and personal image (Schimanski and Treharne, 2018). This type of disingenuous can lead the LGBTQ+ people to feel exploited and taint the sacredness behind the meaning of pride events.

Conclusion

To conclude, the literature review gave a thorough examination on the LGBTQ+ peoples' mental wellbeing by answering the research questions. The dissimilarities in the narration of sexual minorities in structuralism and poststructuralism had been evaluated and highlighted. Moreover, different regions that vary in cultural and religious values hold distinctive opinions towards accepting the LGBTQ+ community. Asia and African descents can suffer more mental health issue as they are prone to rejection by friends and family if theyreveal their sexual minority. The last research question was achieved as inclusivity in pride events is not as transparent as it seemed, racism and body shame are still pressing issues in thepride community, which made sexual minorities reluctant, anxious and feel unsafe to participate in LGBTQ+ events. After reviewing the literature, most of them are literate reviewsand qualitative interviews, these research methods can be undermined in generating results and conclusions that can represent the entire population. Therefore, it is recommended for future researchers to use quantitative approaches and probability sampling to obtain a larger sample size for more accurate outcomes. Furthermore, since most of the literatures are prioritising theLGBTQ+ youth population, it is suggested to venture in researching the mental wellbeing of LGBTQ+ adults and older generations in the pride events for new discoveries. Finding showsLGBTQ+ consumers are more open to innovative products and favourable to businesses who advocate the LGBTQ+

community (Pinto et al., 2020; Eisend and Hermann, 2019). Irrefutably,the LGBTQ+ community is a crucial member in a society, and the economic contribution of the sexually minority consumers hold great potentials. Hence, the proposed implications for event organisers and businesses are by promoting innovative products and services, and advocating equality and support the LGBTQ+ community to penetrate the sexual minority market.

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