

Statement of the Psychological Association of the Philippines on Non-Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Filipinos continue to experience stigma, prejudice and discrimination in Philippine society. This stigma is manifested in actions such as: bullying, teasing and harassment of LGBT children and adolescents in families, schools and communities; media portrayal of LGBTs as frivolous, untrustworthy and even dangerous or predatory; denying transgender Filipinos entry into commercial establishments; pigeonholing LGBT Filipinos into particularly limited roles and occupations; or curtailing their rights to participate in the political sphere.

LGBT Filipinos often confront social pressures to hide, suppress or even attempt to change their identities and expressions as conditions for their social acceptance and enjoyment of rights. Although many LGBTs learn to cope with this social stigma, these experiences can cause serious psychological distress, including immediate consequences such as fear, sadness, alienation, anger and internalized stigma (Hatzenbuehler, 2009; Meyer, 2003). This anti-LGBT prejudice and discrimination tend to be based on a rhetoric of moral condemnation and are fueled by ignorance or unfounded beliefs associating these gender expressions and sexual orientations with psychopathology or maladjustment.

However, decades of scientific research have led mental health professional organizations worldwide to conclude that lesbian, gay and bisexual orientations are normal variants of human sexuality. These include: the American Psychiatric Association in 1973, the American Psychological Association in 1975, British Psychological Society, the Colombian Society of Psychology, Psychological Society of South Africa, the Australian Psychological Society, and the International Network on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Concerns and Transgender Issues in Psychology, among others.

The Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP) aligns itself with the global initiatives to remove the stigma of mental illness that has long been associated with diverse sexualities and to promote the wellbeing of LGBT people. Moreover, the PAP Code of Ethics (2010) is clear in its stance against discrimination. Filipino psychologists are called upon to recognize the unique worth and inherent dignity of all human beings; and to respect the diversity among persons and peoples (Principle I, a and b). This means that Filipino psychologists should not discriminate against or demean persons based on actual or perceived differences in characteristics including

gender identity and sexual orientation (Ethical Standard III-A and C; V-B.8).

In order to eliminate stigma, prejudice, discrimination and violence against LGBT, the PAP resolves to support efforts to:

- oppose all public and private discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and expression;
- repeal discriminatory laws and policies, and support the passage of legislation at the local and national levels that protect the rights and promote the welfare of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions;
- eliminate all forms of prejudice and discrimination against LGBTs in teaching, research, psychological interventions, assessment and other psychological programs;
- encourage psychological research that addresses the needs and concerns of LGBT Filipinos and their families and communities;
- disseminate and apply accurate and evidence-based information about sexual orientation and gender identity and expression to design interventions that foster mental health and wellbeing of LGBT Filipinos.

REFERENCES

- American Psychiatric Association. (1973). Position statement on homosexuality and civil rights. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 131; 497.
- Anton, B.S. (2009). Proceedings of the American Psychological Association for the legislative year 2008: Minutes of the annual meeting of the Council of Representatives, February 22-24, 2008, Washington, DC, and August 13 and 17, 2008, Boston, MA, and minutes of the February, June, August, and December 2008 meetings of the Board of Directors. *American Psychologist*, 64; 372-453.
- Conger, J.J. (1975). Proceedings of the American Psychological Association, Incorporated, for the year 1974: Minutes of the annual meeting of the Council of Representatives. *American Psychologist*, 30; 620-651.
- Hatzenbuehler, M. L. (2009). How does sexual minority stigma “get under the skin”? A psychological mediation framework. *Psychological Bulletin*, 135; 707-730.
- International Network for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Concerns and Transgender Issues in Psychology (2001). Sexual orientation and mental health: Toward global perspectives on practice and policy. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/international-meeting.pdf>
- Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129; 674-697.
- Psychological Association of the Philippines Scientific and Professional Ethics Committee. (2010). Code of Ethics for Philippine Psychologists. *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, 43; 195-217.