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LGB-KASH and Shortened Workplace Incivility Among NCAA Division III Coaches

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Abstract

The current literature suggests that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) athletics staff members encounter difficulties in their workplace. Previous studies have examined the attitudes of high school coaches towards LGBTQIA student-athletes, but there is limited research on the attitudes of collegiate coaches. The purpose of this study was to describe the scores on the LGB-KASH and Shortened Workplace Incivility Scale among athletics staffs at the NCAA Division III. A total of 292 athletics staff members participated. Participants were emailed a survey that gathered demographics, LGB-KASH scores, and Shortened Workplace Incivility Scale scores. Pearson correlations were used to assess relationships between age, years of experiences, all subcategories of the LGB-KASH, and the Shortened Workplace Incivility Scale. An independent samples t-test was performed to determine differences

between responses from heterosexual participants and gay, lesbian, and bisexual participants. There were small negative correlations between the Hate subcategory and the Civil Rights Category, and the Hate subcategory and the Civil Internalized Affirmation subcategory. There was also a small positive correlation between the Knowledge subcategory and the Internalized Affirmation subcategory. There were also significant differences between groups in the Knowledge, Religious Conflicts, and Internalized Affirmation subcategories. There were no significant differences in the Hate or Civil Rights subcategories, or the Shortened Workplace Incivility Scale. The majority of heterosexual participants agreed that an increased understanding of the LGBTQIA community would make them more comfortable around LGBTQIA individuals. Future research should examine the causes of the correlations described in this study.

Keywords: LGBTQIA, Workplace Incivility, Intercollegiate Athletics

1. Introduction

It has been documented in the literature that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) athletic staff members and educators at institutions of higher learning encounter difficulties in their workplace given their status as minorities. ^[1-4] To date, there has been little research conducted to investigate the challenges and concerns of LGBTQIA collegiate athletics staff members. Previous research suggests collegiate coaches generally have a positive opinion of individuals who identified as LGBTQ. ^[5] Coaches that held more negative attitudes about LGBTQ+ individuals, and thus a greater intolerance for sexual prejudice, were male coaches and coaches ages 50 and older. ^[6] Cross-sectional studies have also explored the perceptions of high school coaches regarding their ability to work with LGBTQ student-athletes. ^[7, 8] These coaches generally expressed confidence in their ability to coach an LGBTQ student-athlete without prejudice. ^[7, 8] However, some coaches still demonstrated a lack of total understanding of the challenges facing LGBTQIA individuals. Specifically, some coaches involved in one of the studies viewed homonegative comments by their athletes and coaches to be innocent and “in jest”. ^[7] Even with these studies on high school coaches, there appears to be a lack of high-quality research on the attitudes of athletics staffs at the collegiate level.

One validated instrument for assessing the knowledge and attitudes of both LGBTQIA and heterosexual individuals toward LGBTQIA persons is the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Knowledge and Attitudes Scale for Homosexuals (LGB-KASH). ^[9, 10] The LGB-KASH was first developed and validated in 2005 through the collective findings of four studies. ^[9, 10] The LGB-KASH uses a series of multiple-choice questions to quantify the knowledge and attitudes held by individuals regarding

lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. [9] The LGB-KASH was further validated in 2019 and found to be a reliable instrument. [9]

Another survey tool that can potentially help describe and assess the experiences and work environments of LGBTQIA athletics staff members the Workplace Incivility Scale. This instrument has been used in several professions internationally to determine whether or not an individual was working in a setting that would allow them to be successful. [11-13] A shortened version of this scale was developed and validated in 2018 in order to create a more concise version of the instrument. [11]

Both the LGB-KASH and Workplace Incivility Scale have been used to assess attitudes in multiple fields. However, there does not appear to be any previous studies utilizing these instruments with an athletics staff population. Given the size and scope of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the number of athletics staff members is substantial. This led the authors to choose to begin this line of research on a division-by-division basis. Thus, the purpose of this study was to describe the knowledge and attitudes about LBGTOIA individuals as well as workplace incivility scores among athletics staff members at the NCAA Division III Level. A secondary purpose was to

examine the difference in scores between heterosexual athletics staff members and lesbian, gay, and bisexual athletics staff members.

2. Methods

2.1 Design

This study was conducted using a cross-sectional design, with an electronic survey for data collection. Given the nature of the study, it was deemed exempt by the University of Texas at Tyler Institutional Review Board.

2.2 Participants

Participants were recruited for this study by emailing the athletics staffs at NCAA Division III institutions. A total of 292 athletics staff members opened and completed the survey (age= 41 ± 13 years, experience = 16 ± 21 years). The survey was sent to 10,000 athletics staff members, indicating 2.9% of the population opened and completed the survey. Demographic information for the participants is presented in Table 1. All participants were informed of the survey’s purpose and aims at the start of the survey. Informed consent was then obtained using the protocol approved by the University of Texas at Tyler Institutional Review Board.

Table 1: Totals and percentage for participant demographic information

Demographic Factor	Criteria	Responses
Gender	Male	159, 54.5%
	Female	128, 43.8%
	Third Gender/Non-Binary	3, 1.0%
	Prefer not to answer	2, 0.7%
Position	Athletics Director	16, 5.5%
	Assistant/Associate Athletics Director	29, 9.9%
	Head Coach	125, 42.8%
	Assistant/Associate Coach	86, 29.5%
	Graduate Assistant Coach	12, 4.1%
	Faculty Athletics Representative	14, 4.9%
	Other	10, 3.4%
Sport(s) Coached	Administrator	64, 21.9%
	Women’s Track & Field	39, 13.4%
	Men’s Track & Field	33, 11.3%
	Women’s Cross Country	27, 9.2%
	Women’s Volleyball	27, 9.2%
	Women’s Basketball	26, 8.9%
	Women’s Soccer	22, 7.5%
	Softball	21, 7.2%
	Men’s and Women’s Swimming & Diving	20, 6.8%
	Football	15, 5.1%
	Men’s Soccer	15, 5.1%
	Men’s Basketball	14, 4.8%
	Men’s Lacrosse	10, 3.4%
	Baseball	9, 3.1%
	Field Hockey	9, 3.1%
	Women’s Tennis	9, 3.1%
	Women’s Lacrosse	6, 2.1%
	Men’s Tennis	6, 2.1%
	Men’s Volleyball	3, 1.0%
	Wrestling	3, 1.0%
	Ice Hockey	2, 0.7%
	Women’s Bowling	1, 0.3%
Cheer	1, 0.3%	
Men’s & Women’s Squash	1, 0.3%	
Are you Hispanic/Latino(a)?	Yes	10, 3.4%
	No	278, 95.2%
	Prefer not to answer	4, 1.4%
What Race do you consider yourself?	White	251, 86.0%
	Black or African American	22, 7.5%

	Asian	6, 2.1%
	Native American	2, 0.7%
	Other	5, 1.7%
	Prefer not to answer	6, 2.1%
What is your sexual orientation?	Straight/Heterosexual	244, 83.6%
	Gay/Lesbian	27, 9.2%
	Bisexual	11, 3.8%
	Pansexual	5, 1.7%
	Prefer not to answer	5, 1.7%

2.3 Data collection

An email was sent to the athletics staffs of all NCAA Division III institutions. The staffs’ contact information was publicly available on their institutions’ websites. The email invited the athletics staffs to participate in an electronic survey via a link from a web-based server (Qualtrics Inc., Provo, UT) in July through September of 2021. The invitation contained information about the authors, the purpose of the study, and assurances that the participants could opt out of the survey at any time. A follow-up email was sent weekly after the initial email, and the survey was left open for two months prior to the survey being closed for statistical analysis to begin.

2.4 Instrument

The instrument began with an informed consent question and demographics section. After these sections, the instrument contained questions taken from the LGB-KASH to obtain data on the participants’ knowledge and attitudes

toward LGBTQIA persons. Participants answered 28 questions on a scale of 1 “Very uncharacteristic of me or my views” to 6 “Very characteristic of me or my views”. Participants then answered four questions taken from the Shortened Workplace Incivility Scale on a scale of 1 “Never” to 5 “Many Times”. The LGB-KASH responses were broken down into subcategories described in Table 2. [14]

The instrument contained 44 questions. These questions included: one question obtaining informed consent, five multiple-choice and two fill in the blank questions on demographics, 28 multiple choice questions from the LGB-KASH, four multiple choice questions from the Shortened Workplace Incivility Scale, one multiple choice question about the participants’ willingness to hire a qualified candidate who was openly LGBTQIA on a scale of “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” and three questions asking if more knowledge about the LGBTQIA community might affect their opinions.

Table 2: LGB-KASH subcategories and descriptions. [14]

Subcategory	Description
Hate	Higher scores indicate attitudes about avoidance, self-consciousness, hatred, and violence toward LGB individuals.
Knowledge	Higher scores indicate basic knowledge about the history, symbols, and organizations related to the LGB community.
Civil Rights	Higher scores indicate beliefs about the civil rights of LGB individuals with respect to marriage, child rearing, health care, and insurance benefits.
Religious Conflict	Higher scores indicate conflictual beliefs and ambivalent homonegativity with respect to LGB individuals, often of a religious nature.
Internalized Affirmation	Higher scores indicate a willingness to engage in proactive social activism for LGB issues and internalized sense of comfort with same-sex attractions.

2.5 Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using commercially available statistics software (SPSS Version 27, IBM, Armonk, NY). A total of 292 completed responses were included in the data analysis. Measures of central tendency (means, standard deviations, frequencies) were calculated where appropriate. Pearson correlations were used to assess relationships between age, years of experience, all subcategories of the LGB-KASH, and the Shortened Workplace Incivility Scale, and willingness to hire a candidate who identified as LGBTQIA. Independent samples t-tests were performed to assess differences between responses based on gender identity and

sexual orientation.

3. Results

3.1 LGB-KASH scores

Average scores and standard deviations for scores on LGB-KASH subcategories are included in Table 3. When looking at the responses of all participants, several correlations were statistically significant. Significant correlations from the entirety of the participant population are included in Table 4. Significant correlations for heterosexual participants are included in Table 5. Significant correlations for lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants are included in Table 6.

Table 3: LGB-KASH scores

Subcategory	Heterosexual (n=244)	LGBTQIA (n=43)	All Participants (n=292)
Hate	1.22 ± 0.42	1.18 ± 0.69	1.22 ± 0.47
Knowledge	2.42 ± 1.07	3.91 ± 1.23	2.64 ± 1.22
Civil Rights	5.45 ± 0.98	5.78 ± 0.71	5.49 ± 0.97
Religious Conflicts	2.65 ± 0.77	2.40 ± 0.63	2.62 ± 0.75
Internalized Affirmation	3.52 ± 1.13	5.38 ± 0.88	3.80 ± 1.29

Table 4: Significant correlations in all participants

Factors	Correlation	Effect Size	Strength
Age and Knowledge	$r(290) = .134, p = .022$	0.02	Negligible Positive
Age and Civil Rights	$r(290) = -.186, p = .001$	0.03	Negligible Negative
Age and Internalized Affirmation	$r(290) = -.175, p = .003$	0.03	Negligible Negative
Strength of Spirituality and Civil Rights	$r(290) = -.380, p < .001$	0.14	Small Negative
Strength of Spirituality and Religious Conflicts	$r(290) = .331, p < .001$	0.11	Small Positive
Strength of Spirituality and Internalized Affirmation	$r(290) = -.356, p < .001$	0.13	Small Negative
Hate and Civil Rights	$r(290) = -.477, p < .001$	0.23	Small Negative
Hate and Religious Conflicts	$r(290) = .151, p = .010$	0.02	Negligible Positive
Hate and Internalized Affirmation	$r(290) = -.321, p < .001$	0.10	Small Negative
Knowledge and Civil Rights	$r(290) = .193, p < .001$	0.04	Negligible Positive
Knowledge and Religious Conflicts	$r(290) = -.233, p < .001$	0.05	Negligible Negative
Knowledge and Internalized Affirmation	$r(290) = .539, p < .001$	0.29	Small Positive
Civil Rights and Internalized Affirmation	$r(290) = .546, p < .001$	0.30	Medium Positive
Religious Conflicts and Internalized Affirmation	$r(290) = -.347, p < .001$	0.12	Small Negative

Table 5: Significant correlations in heterosexual participants

Factors	Correlation	Effect Size	Strength
Age and Knowledge	$r(242) = .229, p < .001$	0.05	Negligible Positive
Age and Civil Rights	$r(242) = -.172, p = .007$	0.03	Negligible Negative
Years Experience and Knowledge	$r(242) = .214, p < .001$	0.05	Negligible Positive
Years Experience and Civil Rights	$r(242) = -.206, p = .001$	0.04	Negligible Negative
Hate and Knowledge	$r(242) = -.498, p = .004$	0.25	Small Negative
Hate and Civil Rights	$r(242) = -.436, p < .001$	0.19	Small Negative
Hate and Religious Conflicts	$r(242) = .193, p = .002$	0.04	Negligible Positive
Hate and Internalized Affirmation	$r(242) = -.370, p < .001$	0.14	Small Negative
Knowledge and Civil Rights	$r(242) = .217, p < .001$	0.05	Negligible Positive
Knowledge and Religious Conflicts	$r(242) = -.249, p < .001$	0.06	Negligible Negative
Knowledge and Internalized Affirmation	$r(242) = .446, p < .001$	0.20	Small Positive
Civil Rights and Religious Conflicts	$r(242) = -.246, p < .001$	0.06	Negligible Negative
Civil Rights and Internalized Affirmation	$r(242) = .574, p < .001$	0.33	Medium Positive
Religious Conflicts and Internalized Affirmation	$r(242) = -.395, p < .001$	0.16	Small Negative

Table 6: Significant correlations in lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants

Factors	Correlation	Effect Size	Strength
Age and Knowledge	$r(41) = .353, p = .020$	0.12	Small Positive
Hate and Civil Rights	$r(41) = -.759, p < .001$	0.58	Large Negative
Hate and Internalized Affirmation	$r(41) = -.514, p < .001$	0.26	Small Negative
Civil Rights and Internalized Affirmation	$r(41) = .514, p < .001$	0.26	Small Positive

When assessing differences in scores on the LGB-KASH between heterosexual participants and lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants, there was a significant difference in the Knowledge subcategory (Heterosexual = 2.19 ± 0.92 , LGB = 3.64 ± 1.28), $t(40) = -3.95, p < .001$. A significant difference was also found in the Religious Conflicts subcategory (Heterosexual = 3.02 ± 1.08 , LGB = 2.03 ± 1.18), $t(40) = 1.12, p = .016$. There was also a significant difference in the Internalized Affirmation subcategory (Heterosexual = 3.32 ± 1.46 , LGB = 5.28 ± 1.34), $t(40) = -3.78, p = .001$. There were no other subcategories that had a significant difference between groups.

3.2 Shortened workplace Incivility Scale

On the Shortened Workplace Incivility Scale, there were no correlations found between age and years of experience and scores on the scale. Furthermore, there were no significant differences found between heterosexual participants (1.87 ± 0.78), and LGBTQIA participants (1.77 ± 0.65).

3.3 Hiring practices

When looking at the responses of all participants regarding their willingness to hire a candidate who identified as LGBTQIA, several correlations were statistically significant. Significant correlations are included in Table 7.

Table 7: Significant correlations between LGB-KASH Categories and willingness to hire an LGBTQIA candidate

Factor	Correlation	Effect Size	Strength
Strength of Spirituality	$r(290) = -.174, p = .004$	0.03	Negligible Negative
Hate	$r(290) = -.282, p < .001$	0.08	Negligible Negative
Knowledge	$r(290) = .141, p = .016$	0.02	Negligible Positive
Civil Rights	$r(290) = .357, p < .001$	0.13	Small Positive
Religious Conflict	$r(290) = -.176, p = .003$	0.03	Negligible Negative
Internalized Affirmation	$r(290) = .351, p < .001$	0.12	Small Positive

3.4 Impact of further education

The final questions of the survey asked participants if more knowledge and understanding would impact their feelings toward the LGBTQIA community. In this section, 216 participants (74.0%) provided responses. Two hundred and three heterosexual participants responded (83.2%), while 10 LGBTQIA participants responded (23.3%). The majority of participants agreed on some level that a better understanding of the LGBTQ+ community would make them more comfortable around LGBTQ+ people (n=148, 68.6%). When separated, the majority of heterosexual participants were still in agreement (n=139, 68.4%). The majority of

participants agreed on some level that a better understanding of the LGBTQ+ community’s history would make them more comfortable around LGBTQ+ people (n=141, 65.2%). When separated, the majority of heterosexual participants were still in agreement (n=132, 65.0%). The majority of participants agreed, on some level, that a better understanding of the issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community would make them more comfortable around LGBTQ+ people (n=158, 73.1%). When separated, the majority of heterosexual participants were still in agreement (n=149, 73.4%). The most common response for each question is included in Table 8.

Table 8: Questions on improving understanding of LGBTQIA populations and most common responses

Question	Heterosexual (n=203)	LGBTQIA (n=10)	All Participants (n=216)
I would be more comfortable around LGBTQ+ people if I understood more about their community.	Somewhat Agree (n=66) Agree (n=54) Disagree (n=29)	Strongly Agree (n=4) Agree (n=3) Strongly Disagree (n=2)	Somewhat Agree (n=66) Agree (n=54) Disagree (n=30)
I would be more comfortable around LGBTQ+ people if I understood more about the history of their community.	Somewhat Agree (n=60) Agree (n=48) Disagree (n=29)	Agree (n=4) Strongly Agree (n=3) Strongly Disagree (n=2)	Somewhat Agree (n=61) Agree (n=53) Disagree (n=30)
I would be more comfortable around LGBTQ+ people if I understood more about the issues they face.	Agree (n=65) Somewhat Agree (n=53) Strongly Agree (n=31)	Agree (n=4) Strongly Agree (n=3) Strongly Disagree (n=2)	Agree (n=70) Somewhat Agree (n=54) Strongly Agree (n=34)

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to describe the knowledge and attitudes about LGBTQIA individuals as well as workplace incivility scores among athletics staff members at the NCAA Division III Level A secondary purpose was to examine the difference in scores between heterosexual athletics staff members and athletics staff members that identify as LGBTQ+.

Our findings indicated several significant correlations among all participants. There was a medium positive correlation between civil rights and internalized affirmation, as well as a small positive correlation between knowledge and internalized affirmation. These findings indicate that those with stronger beliefs for civil rights and a greater knowledge of the LGBTQ+ topics are more likely to engage in social activities for the LGBTQ+ community. When results were analyzed within groups, heterosexual participants had a small negative correlation between hate and knowledge, as well as hate and civil rights. Individuals in this group who were less self-conscious around LGB individuals were more likely to have more knowledge about LGBTQ+ topics about and support the civil rights of LGBTQ+ individuals. There was also a medium positive correlation between civil rights and internalized affirmation and a small positive correlation between knowledge and internalized affirmation for heterosexual participants, which was also previously described when examining all participants. Evidence is lacking to interpret the LGB-KASH in heterosexual individuals, which has limited the authors’ ability to draw comparisons to the findings in this study. LGBTQ+ participants’ responses yielded a large negative correlation between hate and civil rights, as well as a small negative correlation between hate and internalized affirmation. These findings demonstrate that less self-conscious and negative attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals would lead to greater beliefs in the need for civil rights and a greater effort to affect change for the LGBTQ+

population. While we anticipated a larger correlation with this finding, internalized sexual stigma and self-stigma can help explain LGBTQ+ participants’ responses towards others in the community. [14] Lastly, a small positive correlation between civil rights and internalized affirmation was recorded in this group, which indicates a stronger belief in civil rights for the LGBTQ+ community will lead to more activism.

Comparisons of results between heterosexual and LGBTQ+ staff members revealed the subcategories had significant differences in Knowledge, Religious Conflicts, and Internalized Affirmation. This suggested that LGBTQ+ coaches were more likely to be knowledgeable and comfortable with issues that the LGBTQIA+ community faces. Heterosexual coaches, on the other hand, were more likely to experience conflicts with their feelings toward the LGBTQ+ community based on their religious beliefs. Herek *et al.*, 2015 previously identified that heterosexual individuals manifest internalized stigma through negative attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals. [14] In a study of coaching efficacy with LGB athletes, young coaches were more likely to have positive perceptions of their coaching with these athletes if they had no religious affiliations, compared to those that identified as Baptist, Catholic, and Protestant Christian. [15]

Creating and maintaining an accepting environment is associated with higher levels of cohesion and better performance outcomes, which are critical in a team environment, as well as an athletics department. [16, 17] Scores on the Shortened Workplace Incivility Scale examining the environments at the Division III level of the coaches surveyed indicated there was no significant difference between heterosexual coaches and LGBTQ+ coaches. Moreover, the scores did not indicate the impact of age or years of experiences on these scores, which generally suggests that coaches in this setting do not experience incivility in the workplace. A civil work environment,

especially for LGBTQ+ employees, could potentially lead to more visibility of this community and help LGBTQ+ coaches navigate expressing their identities in the workplace and sport spaces.^[18]

Two small positive correlations emerged from the survey responses of all participants between willingness to hire an LGBTQIA+ candidate and civil rights, as well as internalized affirmation. This indicated that those willing to hire an employee who identifies in the LGBTQ+ community are more likely to have stronger beliefs towards the rights for LGBTQ+ individuals and are more likely to engage in social activities to support and promote these rights. These stronger beliefs could lead to the hiring of more LGBTQ+ employees and foster a safer space in the workplace for sexual and gender minorities, which have often had to navigate “how explicitly out they can be in sport spaces.”^[18] A majority of survey respondents identified that they would be more comfortable around LGBTQIA+ individuals if they had more knowledge and understanding about the community, their history, and issues they faced. When analyzed by group, a majority of heterosexual participants continued to acknowledge these sentiments. In a study by Halbrook, Watson & Voelker,^[19] few coaches reported having attended training on LGB issues and a majority felt least effective when having to identify and use resources regarding LGB athletes. These findings support the important notion that continued education is essential with vulnerable and marginalized populations and suggest that improvements in understanding and empathy towards LGBTQ+ individuals are a benefit for all individuals in an organization and community. Although we did not explore these variables, further education can be particularly important for collegiate coaches who are male and 50 and older, as these groups have been found to have more negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men.^[6]

A possible limitation of this study was the number of participants. Another limitation was that the data gathered did not allow the authors to determine causation for the findings. When performing this study, the authors were focused on determining correlations that warranted further examination in future research.

To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to use the LGB-KASH and Shortened Workplace Incivility Scale within a collegiate athletics staff. To this end, future research should examine the causes of the correlations described in this study. Future research should also be directed towards understanding the impact of education and resources about the LGBTQ+ community on coaches' efficacy and attitudes towards LGBTQ+ colleagues and athletes.

In conclusion, this study identified several correlations that aligned for both heterosexual and LGBTQ+ coaches regarding the LGB-KASH. There were, however, significant differences regarding the Knowledge, Religious Conflicts, and Internalized Affirmation subcategories when comparing the two groups. When examining the workplace environment, neither group of coaches reported incivility in their workplace. Heterosexual and LGBTQ+ coaches aligned with expressing a greater willingness to hire an employee that identified as LGBTQ+ based on reporting higher Civil Rights and Knowledge LGB-KASH scores. Lastly, coaches, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, expressed being more comfortable around LGBTQ+ individuals if they received further education on

LGBTQ+ topics and history.

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