Abstract

Verbal/psychological homophobic bullying is widespread among youths of sexual minorities. Homophobic bullying has been associated with both high internalized homophobia and low self-esteem. The objectives were to document verbal/psychological homophobic bullying among youths of sexual minorities and model the relationships between homophobic bullying, internalized homophobia and self-esteem. A community sample of 300 youths of sexual minorities aged 14 to 22 years old was used. A structural equation model was tested using a nonlinear, robust estimator implemented in Mplus. The model postulated that homophobic bullying impacts self-esteem both directly and indirectly, via internalized homophobia. 60.7% of the sample reported at least one form of verbal/psychological homophobic bullying. The model explained 29% of the variance of self-esteem, 19.6% of the variance of internalized homophobia and 5.3% of the verbal/psychological homophobic bullying. The model suggests that the relationship between verbal/psychological homophobic bullying and self-esteem is partially mediated by internalized homophobia. The results underscore the importance of initiatives to prevent homophobic bullying in order to prevent its negative effects on the well-being of youths of sexual minorities.

Keywords

Internalized homophobia, Homophobic bullying, Self-esteem, Sexual minority