

## **DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT TO REDUCE STEREOTYPES AND DISCRIMINATION IN SOCIETY**

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### **Abstract**

Globalization, increasing mobility and migration, and the entry of new generations into the labour market have made the modern work environment very diverse, different people have to live together and cooperate in it. The working environment in Latvia is also significantly affected by demographic changes (the “ageing” of society), which in the near future may have a negative impact on companies' chances of finding and attracting labor. It should be mentioned that in Latvia members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (hereinafter - LGBTQ+) communities are avoided or not talked about at all. This topic is still considered a taboo not only in Latvia but also in many parts of the world (especially in the eastern part of Europe). However, modern society cannot ignore the fact that representatives of these groups exist.

The aim of the study is to investigate the attitude and stereotypes of the working society towards homosexual people in the working environment, thus finding out whether this group of society can feel respected in the working environment.

To achieve the goal of the work and to answer the research questions, the author of the work surveyed the able-bodied part of society on attitudes (which included three scales: emotional, cognitive and behavioural) and stereotypes (one scale) towards homosexual people in the work environment. 252 respondents who were part of the able-bodied population took part in the survey. Analyzing the data, it was concluded that the stereotypes residing in an individual can strengthen both their emotions and behavior. Research data also shows that emotions have the greatest influence on people's stereotypes. The majority (76%) of respondents do not find homosexual people unpleasant, which can be considered a very positive aspect of the work environment.

**Keywords:** *Diversity, attitudes, stereotypes, homosexuality.*

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### **1. Introduction**

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals represent a significant yet relatively understudied minority group in the workforce (Ragins, 2004). It is important to understand and address the stereotypes that exist about homosexual individuals in the workplace. These stereotypes can impact how gay men and lesbians are perceived when it comes to their suitability for specific occupations (Clarke & Arnold, 2018).

In Latvia, only in recent years have issues of diversity become more and more relevant. In the period from 2017 to 2022, the Society Integration Fund implemented the project "Diversity is Strength" with the support of the European Social Fund. The aim of the project is to promote the employment and socio-economic inclusion of persons exposed to the risks of social exclusion and discrimination, while promoting public awareness and general understanding of the prevention of discrimination and an inclusive society. Within the framework of the project, an assessment of the promotion of diversity in companies was carried out annually, presenting an award in five categories: employee diversity, diversity and inclusion management, inclusive work environment, diversity and inclusion in labor relations and promotion of diversity and inclusion (Dažādībā ir spēks, 2022). It should be mentioned that there is an LGBT movement in Latvia with the aim of improving the legal status of LGBTQ+ people in Latvia, but its efforts have not resulted in success so far. The bill "Life partners" can be mentioned as the last one, the most widely discussed in Latvian society. The purpose of the bill is to recognize the legal protection of unmarried couples, including protection for same-sex relationships (Dzīvesbiedri, 2019). In 2019, this draft law was rejected in the Saeima, only on December 10, 2021, did the Supreme Court pass a verdict in the case in which it was determined that same-sex partnerships should be registered as marital status, and also determined that same-sex partnerships can be recognized as family.

Stereotypes refer to widely held and oversimplified beliefs or generalizations about a particular group of people or things. Stereotypes are collective achievements that are formed and shaped by societal norms, cultural influences, and individual experiences. These beliefs or generalizations are often based on limited information or preconceived notions, rather than individual characteristics or personal experiences (Klein, et al., 2015). One way to reduce the impact of stereotypes is by teaching growth mindsets (Melson-Silimon, et al., 2023). A growth mindset is the belief that abilities and traits can be developed and improved through effort, rather than being fixed or innate (Hecht, et al., 2023). Stereotypes about homosexuality have been prevalent in society for a long time. These stereotypes often depict individuals within the LGBTQ+ community in a narrow and one-dimensional way, ignoring the diversity and complexity of their experiences. Common stereotypes include assumptions about gender expression, relationship dynamics, and behavioral traits. These stereotypes can have damaging effects on the mental health and well-being of the LGBTQ+ community, contributing to stigma and discrimination. It's important to challenge and debunk these stereotypes by promoting understanding, empathy, and inclusivity. By educating ourselves and others about the diverse and multifaceted nature of human sexuality, we can work towards creating a more accepting and supportive society for everyone. The effects of an LGBTQ+ identity and support systems on mental health are complex and influenced by various factors (Madireddy, Madireddy, 2020). These factors can include societal acceptance, access to supportive resources and communities, and the individual's own process of self-acceptance (Glazzard, et al., 2020).

The data of the 2019 Eurobarometer report of the European Commission show that among the respondents surveyed in the European Union, the following is seen as a very common form of discrimination: Belonging to the Roma nationality - 61%; Ethnicity and skin color - 59%; Sexual orientation - 53%; Religion and philosophical beliefs - 47%; Disability - 44%; Age - 40%; Discrimination due to gender - 35%. (European Commission, 2003). LGBTQ+ employees face unique challenges in the workplace due to stereotypes and biases, but by promoting inclusive practices and fostering a supportive environment, organizations can empower these employees to thrive and succeed. -LGBTQ+ employees bring valuable perspectives and experiences to the table, and it is essential to create an inclusive work environment that recognizes and celebrates their diversity (Tinoco-Giraldo & Voorhies, 2020).

Attitudes play a crucial role in social psychology, as they shape our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards people, objects, and situations. They are formed through a combination of personal experiences, socialization processes, and cultural influences. Attitudes are evaluative assessments or judgments that we hold about something or someone, and they can range from positive to negative. Attitudes influence our perceptions and interpretations of the world around us, as well as guide our actions and decisions (McGuire, 1986). Attitudes are composed of three main components: emotions, cognitions, and behavior. Emotions refer to the affective aspect of attitudes, involving our feelings and reactions towards the attitude object. Cognitions represent the beliefs, thoughts, and knowledge we hold about the attitude object (Zalesny & Ford, 1990). Finally, behavior encompasses our actions and responses about the attitude object. These components work together to shape and influence our attitudes, ultimately impacting our interactions and relationships with others. Understanding the interplay of emotions, cognitions, and behavior within attitudes provides insight into how attitudes are formed, maintained, and changed over time. In addition to being influenced by personal experiences, socialization processes, and cultural influences, attitudes are also shaped by individual values and beliefs. Some attitudes are more important than others because they are more useful to us and thus have a greater impact on our daily lives. As such, attitudes are changeable (Bonsteel, 2012). In conclusion, attitudes are a vital aspect of social psychology, influencing our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards the world around us. By understanding the components of attitudes - emotions, cognitions, and behavior - and how they interact, we gain insight into how attitudes are formed, maintained, and altered over time. Additionally, recognizing the influence of personal experiences, socialization processes, cultural factors, values, and beliefs on attitudes helps us comprehend their complexity and changeability. Ultimately, attitudes play a significant role in shaping our interactions and relationships with others, highlighting their importance in the field of social psychology.

## 2. Objectives

**The aim of the study** is to investigate the attitude and stereotypes of the working society towards homosexual people in the working environment, thus finding out whether this group of society can feel respected in the working environment. 252 respondents who were part of the working population took part in the survey.

**The research questions are:** 1. What is the attitude of the able-bodied society towards homosexual people in the working environment? 2. What are the stereotypes of the able-bodied part of society about homosexual people in the working environment? 3. Is there a statistically significant relationship between stereotypes about homosexual people and attitudes towards homosexual people in

the work environment? 4. Does the attitude of the able-bodied society affect stereotypes towards homosexual people? The study was conducted from May 1 to May 30, 2023.

### 3. Methods

The primary data collection methods were a survey designed by the author to find out attitudes and stereotypes, which had four scales: Emotion scale, Cognitive scale, Behaviors, Stereotypes. The survey was created on the <https://new.webropolsurveys.com/> platform. In the introductory part of the survey, respondents filled in demographic indicators about themselves: gender, age, education level, employment status and region of residence. The second part was compiled with the aim of finding out the respondents' attitudes and stereotypes: cognitive, emotional, behavioral and stereotypes towards homosexual people in the work environment. The survey uses a Likert scale.

The results of the study on the demographic indicators of the respondents allow us to conclude that 17% of men and 83% of women participated in the survey. Evaluating age, most young people were aged 18-25 (12%), able-bodied aged 26-32 were 33%, while aged 33-45 were 39% and aged 46-55 were 10% and in the age group 55 older people were 6%. When asked about their employment status, 16% of the study participants indicated that they were managers, the majority, or 77%, noted that they were in a subordinate position, while 7% were on parental leave. According to the education of the respondents of the study, one out of 252 respondents or 0.4% had basic education; secondary education is 23.8%, the majority of respondents 170 or 67.5% had higher education; and 8.3% indicated that they're currently studying.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculation is all  $\alpha >$  is 0.806, which indicates that the set of questions created is acceptable and the survey is reliable.

According to the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) Z test, it was concluded that the data do not correspond to the normal distribution, and the non-parametric data analysis method Spearman's correlation was used.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1. Results of a survey on the attitudes and stereotypes of the working-class community about homosexual people

In the survey, the respondents were asked the question, "I respect every person, regardless of their sexual orientation." Most of the 252 respondents 189 (75%) answered that they respect any person regardless of their orientation, and 21%, or 52 respondents, answered with the answer "I agree more." From these answers, it can be concluded that the absolute majority, i.e., 96% of the surveyed respondents, respect the other person, regardless of sexual orientation. Respondents were asked the question, "I don't care about homosexual people, but I don't want this topic to be popularized in wider society and the same-sex couple relationship model to be normalized." According to the collected results of the survey, the opinion of the respondents was divided, with 49%, or 124 respondents, agreeing or partially agreeing with the statement that they are indifferent to homosexual people, but still they do not want this topic to be popularized in the wider society and the same-sex couple relationship model to be normalized. Almost the same, or 127 respondents answered negatively. The survey data shows that the absolute majority of respondents would not change their attitude towards a colleague if they found out that he or she was homosexual. 94% of respondents answered affirmatively, or agreed more than disagreed to the question of where respondents were asked "My attitude towards a colleague would not change if I found out that he/she is homosexual." Only 15 respondents answered that their attitude towards a colleague would change if they found out that he or she was homosexual. Also, the survey data shows that the surveyed respondents would not have any problems working in the same organization with homosexual people. Only 3% or 7 respondents would have problems working in the same organization with homosexual people, while 231 respondents answered that they would have no problem working in the same organization with homosexual people. The survey shows that only 30 respondents have spoken disparagingly about homosexual people. Respondents were asked the question "I would like to support public events dedicated to same-sex families," to which 21% agreed and 28% of respondents marked the answer "more agree." On the other hand, 25% marked the answer "disagree" and 26% marked the answer "disagree more." Most of the respondents think that homosexuality is over-promoted nowadays. The data from the answers show that most of the respondents, or 64% of all respondents (36% answered that they agree with the statement, and 28% of the respondents noted that they agree more than disagree). On the other hand, 37% agree and agree more with the statement that homosexuality is a free choice of every person, which is quite a lot, but the remaining 63% do not believe that homosexuality is a free choice of every person. The research data revealed that a large part of the respondents have stereotypes about homosexual people being recognizable by their visual appearance.

According to the survey data, it can be concluded that there are enough respondents who think that homosexuality is a fake “fashion trend” today; 34% of all respondents more agree with the statement or agree that homosexuality is a “fashion trend” today.

**4.2. Survey results on the relationship between the attitudes of the able-bodied community and stereotypes about homosexual people**

Evaluating Spearman’s correlation data between variables, it can be concluded that there is a moderately significant relationship between behavior and emotions, where the correlation coefficient is  $r = 0.464$  and  $sig = 0.000$ . This leads to the conclusion that emotions are related to behavior. The positive value of the correlation coefficient allows us to conclude that as the behavior factor increases, emotions also increase, and vice versa. A moderately close and significant relationship also exists between the behavioral and cognitive scales, where the correlation coefficients are  $r = 0.450$  and  $sig = 0.000$ ; therefore, it can be concluded that an individual’s thinking can change his behavior. Also, a moderately close correlation can be observed between the emotion scale and the cognitive scale ( $r = 0.430$ ;  $sig = 0.000$ ). Accordingly, it can be concluded that thinking is related to the emotions of the individual. According to the results, the results of a statistically significant correlation may indicate several mutually significant relationships: • as thinking increases, stereotypes can also increase, i.e., the more people think, the more they stereotype ( $r = 0.338$ ); • based on accepted stereotypes, emotions may increase ( $r = 0.304$ ); based on the existing stereotypes, the behavior of individuals can also change ( $r = 0.322$ ). So it could be assumed that the more a person thinks, the more he stereotypes, which in turn is related to both emotions and future behavior.

**4.3. Results of a survey on the influence of emotions and thinking on stereotyping of homosexual people**

With the help of linear regression, the influence of the independent variables (emotion Scale, Cognitive Scale) on the dependent variable Stereotypes was studied.

Table 1. Linear regression model summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.45	0.20	0.19	0.46141

a. Predictors: (Constant) Cognitive Scale, Emotion Scale

In table 1, it can be seen that the correlation coefficient is  $R=0.45$ , indicating a moderately close relationship,  $sig = 0.00$ , i.e.  $sig < 0.05$ , which means that the model is statistically significant and valid for interpretation. The coefficient of determination  $R^2 = 0.20$ , which indicates that all the indicated variables have a 20% influence and can explain the relationships of stereotypes in the linear regression model. And that means the remaining 80% depends on variables not included in the model.

Table 2. ANOVA<sup>a</sup> Summary.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.469	2	6.235	29.014	.00
	Residual	53.506	249	.215		
	Total	65.975	251			

a. Dependent Variable: Stereotypes

b. Predictors: (Constant), Cognitive Scale, Emotion Scale

Table 3. Linear regression coefficient<sup>a</sup>.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.353	.149		9.099	.000
	Cognitive Scale	.236	.073	.207	3.250	.001
	Emotion Scale	.222	.047	.302	4.749	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Stereotypes.

Table 3 shows that stereotypes (the dependent variable) and the p-values of the cognitive scale and the emotion scale of the independent variables are less than 0.00, so with a probability of 99% it can be said that these coefficients are different from 0. Cognitive and emotion scale affect the stereotype. Emotions have a greater influence on stereotypes (Beta=0.30). The beta shows how big the impact is.

Similar to correlation - if Beta is positive, then as the influence of emotions and cognitive scales increases, the influence of stereotypes will increase.

## 5. Conclusions

The research data revealed that a large number of respondents believe that homosexuals are recognizable by their visual appearance. The majority (76%) of respondents do not find homosexual people unpleasant, which can be considered a very positive aspect of the work environment. The survey data shows that the surveyed respondents would not have any problems working in the same organization with homosexual people. The most statistically significant correlations are formed between the independent variables: the cognitive scale and stereotypes, which means that stereotypes occur at the cognitive level. The linear regression model proved that the independent variables emotion and cognitive have the greatest influence on the variable stereotype. Stereotyping is influenced by the cognitive factor, which means that people come up with stereotypes and they arise directly by participating in a thought process that can create emotions. So stereotypes can be eradicated by changing the way of thinking. You can change the mindset by educating the public in workplaces on diversity issues, which employers should take care of.

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