



# Pride, but Is There Job Satisfaction for LGB Workers? Survey Based Evidence from the United States

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## Abstract

In recent years there have been significant victories for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) persons in the United States. These victories include legalizing same-sex marriage and increasing visibility and acceptance in popular media. However, legal rights and increased representation do not always translate to day-to-day lives and working conditions. While scholars have examined many aspects of the lives of LGB individuals, few studies have explored job satisfaction, a critical component of quality of life. This study addresses this limitation by exploring this vital relationship using nationally representative data. Using data from Wave 5 of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent and Adult Health, this study examined job satisfaction for LGB persons. Controlling for demographic and workplace contextual factors, LGB workers had lower levels of job satisfaction than their heterosexual counterparts. The results of the study suggest the implementation of policies and practices to ensure greater levels of job satisfaction for LGB workers.

**Keywords** Sexual orientation · Job satisfaction · Employment · Pride

## Introduction

Historically, worldwide, members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender communities (LGBT) have faced discrimination in multiple domains, including the right to marry, housing, and employment (Fuch & Potter, 2020). Over the last ten years, the LGBT community has achieved legal and social victories. Nevertheless,

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like many areas of social change, cultural acceptance can lag behind legal protections (Rosenstein, 2015). One such area where cultural acceptance may lag legal protections is in the job and labor market. Stated another way, even though LGBT individuals now have the right to marry, greater legal protections, and more representation in the media than in the past, they still face discrimination and dissatisfaction in their day-to-day lives.

Sexual orientation is a critical factor in labor market outcomes. Studies have consistently found that LGBT individuals experience adverse outcomes in the labor market, including discrimination in hiring, earning less than their heterosexual counterparts, and feeling discriminated against in the workplace (Alden et al., 2020). For example, Badgett et al. (2007), summarizing findings from numerous U. S. based studies, found that between 16 and 68% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons reported experiencing employment discrimination, between 12 and 30% of heterosexual coworkers of LGB workers reported witnessing discrimination against their LGBT peers, and gay males earning 10% to 32% less than their heterosexual counterparts.

Studies using surveys from outside the United States have reported similar findings; Gocmen and Yilmaz (2017), using a web-based survey in Turkey, found that LGBT persons felt discriminated against in education, employment, and healthcare. Other studies using broader surveys of the European Union have found high rates of LGBT individuals reporting discrimination in the workplace, running from 11% in Denmark to 30% in Cyprus (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2013). It should be noted that the data from the European Union is approximately a decade old, reflecting the state of affairs from that time-period, which is of value to help give a sense of context from the period in which we started to see and experience the aforementioned changes in rights and visibility of the LGBT population (e.g., legalized marriage, increased visibility in the media). These studies call attention to the need for greater focus on the role of sexual orientation in measures of well-being in the workplace, such as job satisfaction (Alden et al. 2020), the focus of the current study.

## Job Satisfaction

Research shows a consistent relationship between job satisfaction and employees' emotional and physical well-being (Wright et al., 2007). Job satisfaction has been linked to other critical factors for employers, such as company loyalty, turnover rates, and willingness to work hard, all crucial to a functional and productive workplace (Schur et al., 2009).

A key finding in this research is the role of demographic factors in influencing job satisfaction. For example, Brooks (2018) found that those with a disability had lower job satisfaction than those without a disability. Other studies, such as Clark and Oswald (1996), found gender is a key predictor of job satisfaction, with women reporting comparable or higher levels of job satisfaction than men. In general, job

satisfaction has been found to be influenced by demographic factors, such as disability status, gender, race, and sexuality.

### **Job Satisfaction and Sexuality**

Job satisfaction is a vital metric of a person's well-being; as such, it reflects how welfare is dispersed across various individuals and groups; by studying job satisfaction, we get insights into worker behavior. Higher job satisfaction has been linked with higher productivity (Patterson et al. 2004), while lower job satisfaction has been associated with adverse outcomes such as job mobility (Green, 2010). More succinctly, people that are happier with their jobs are more likely to be productive and stay in their position; people that are less satisfied accomplish less and are more likely to look for other employment opportunities.

Studies to date have suggested that LGBT workers experience discrimination in the workplace, but the literature on job satisfaction is more mixed. For example, Drydakis (2011, 2015) examined job satisfaction in lesbian and gay employees in Greece, finding they have lower levels of job satisfaction than their heterosexual counterparts, with bisexual employees having the lowest levels of job satisfaction. Examining evidence from Canada, Leppel (2014) found gay and lesbian employees had lower levels of job satisfaction relative to their heterosexual counterparts, and bisexual workers reported the highest levels of job satisfaction. In a study of Australian females found that lesbians were less satisfied with their jobs than heterosexual females (Carpenter, 2008). Other studies have found that factors such as the perception of diversity impact job satisfaction. For example, Pink-Harper et al. (2017) conducted a survey examining job satisfaction in LGBT federal workers in the United States; results suggested that when LGBT individuals perceived a greater culture of diversity, they also reported higher levels of job satisfaction. Higher levels of skill utilization also increased job satisfaction. More recently, studies such as Alden et al. (2020) found that while job satisfaction may be high for some members of the LGBT community, they still face higher stress levels than heterosexual workers.

Research focusing on sexuality and job satisfaction has increased but is still limited. The inconsistent findings above demonstrate the role of national context as a potential factor, and the overall inconsistent findings call for more empirical studies exploring the relationship between sexual orientation and job satisfaction. As existing research has established that there are job satisfaction disparities between LGBT and non-LGBT individuals, two issues need more study. First, examinations of this relationship in the U.S. are limited. Much of the available research has been conducted in other countries (e.g., Greece, Canada). Second, existing U.S.-based research is more dated, and recent legal protections for LGB individuals may have altered the LGB job satisfaction relationship.

## How do we Explain Variance in Job Satisfaction with Sexual Orientation?

There are a variety of explanations as to why we would expect sexual minorities to experience lower levels of job satisfaction compared to sexual majority groups. The most frequently cited explanation is that of sexual prejudice and discrimination. Studies mainly from social psychology have found evidence of sexual prejudices (Ahmad & Bhugra, 2010; Alden et al., 2020). When these prejudices are acted upon, they may lead to discrimination against sexual minorities in the workplace, leading to lower job satisfaction levels for gays and lesbians (Alden et al., 2020). Previous studies have found discrimination in hiring against gays and lesbians (Weichselbaumer, 2003; Drysakis, 2011), and as noted previously, survey-based research has found support for discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation. As such, we may expect lower levels of job satisfaction for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals relative to heterosexuals. Further, studies in social psychology have found more hostility toward gay men than lesbians; as such, we may expect to find differing levels of job satisfaction with gay and bisexual males compared to lesbian and bisexual females (Alden et al. 2020).

Another explanation that may explain why LGBT workers are the role of the environment in the workplace. An increasing number of studies have found that LGBT workers experience hostile work environments (Holman et al., 2019). Prior studies have found that gender and sexual minorities have been subjected to hostile behaviors in the workplace, including demeaning jokes and comments and physical and verbal aggression (Badgett et al., 2007; Embrick et al., 2007; Herek, 2009). Prior studies have found support for the influence of hostile work environments on LGBT workers. For example, Badgett et al. (2007) reported that 40% of LGBT persons surveyed experience work-related harassment or abuse based on their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Hostile work environments have implications for various mental and physical health outcomes for LGBT employees, including lower levels of job satisfaction (Holman et al., 2019).

The final explanation for the variance expected in job satisfaction for LGBT workers is the role of heteronormativity in the workplace. Scholars have argued that workplaces are environments where heterosexuality is seen as the norm, and non-heterosexuals may face stigmatization (Bayrakdar & King, 2022). Defined as attitudes and views where heterosexuality is seen as the norm and sexual minorities are viewed as deviant or stigmatized (Bayrakdar & King, 2022). Due to the dominance of heteronormativity in the workplace, we expect LGBT workers to experience challenges to their workplace well-being and job satisfaction which may be experienced as discrimination and prejudice (Ozturk & Rumens, 2014).

### The Current Study

As discussed below, the present study is focused on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) individuals. Despite recent legal victories for the LGBT community, there is evidence that these gains are not universal. For example, in 2016, over 200 laws aimed at limiting the rights of LGBT persons were introduced at local, state, and

federal levels. In addition, high-profile hate crimes such as the Pulse Nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida, have contributed to an environment that can range from uncertainty to direct hostility (Durso et al. 2017). Career attainment deserves greater study for LGBT individuals because it relates directly to economic and social stability (Schoon and Polek, 2011).

Existing research supports the view that LGBT workers are less satisfied with their job than heterosexual counterparts (Badgett et al., 2007; Carpenter, 2008; Drysakis 2015). A large portion of this literature was conducted in countries such as Turkey, Sweden, and Australia. Research on sexuality and job satisfaction in the United States has yielded mixed results and used data prior to 2015 legislation providing marriage equality (see Pink-Harper et al., 2017). The present study examines the following research questions: (1) Do LGB individuals have lower levels of job satisfaction in the United States? (2) Do gay and bisexual males experience lower levels of job satisfaction compared with lesbians and female bisexuals? and (3) What factors contribute to LGB job satisfaction in the United States?

## Methods

### Data

This study uses data from wave V of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health). The Add Health study is a longitudinal panel survey of adolescents and young adults through adulthood who were enrolled from 7th through 12th grade during the 1994–1994 academic year (Harris et al. 2019). The Add Health project currently has five waves of publicly accessible data featuring multiple data components, including results from in-school surveys, in-home surveys, and parent interviews. Add Health data were chosen for several reasons: First, the data contains demographic information regarding gender, education, income, and key measures related to employment outcomes (e.g., variables measuring respondents' views taking part in decisions as work, number of hours worked per week (see Table 1). Second, the Add Health study is nationally representative, allowing for greater generalizability of findings. Finally, prior studies have utilized Add Health that examined labor-related outcomes, including job satisfaction and economic well-being (e.g., Salvatore & Taniguchi, 2012).

The sample includes 3592 heterosexuals (85.61 of the analytic sample) and 574 LGB individuals, or 13.68% of the analytic sample, identifying as LGB in the following ways:  $n=420$  (10.01%) of the sample, identifying as mostly heterosexual but somewhat attracted to same-sex individuals;  $n=60$  (1.43%) of the sample identified as bisexual that is, attracted to men and women equally;  $n=37$  (0.88) mostly homosexual (gay), but somewhat attracted to people of the opposite sex; and  $n=57$  (1.36%) identified as 100% homosexual). It should be noted that 11 individuals or 0.26% of the sample, identified as asexual (not attracted to males or females) see below. The popular perception that LGBT individuals are 10% of the population is

**Table 1** Descriptives of independent and dependent variables

Variable	Frequency	%	Min/Max	Mean/SD
<i>Job satisfaction (outcome variable)</i>				
Extremely dissatisfied	60	1.7		
Dissatisfied	227	6.5		
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	478	13.8		
Satisfied	1764	50.8		
Extremely satisfied	943	27.2		
<i>Sexual orientation</i>				
Heterosexual LGB	574	13.7		
<i>Sex</i>				
Male	1802	42.9		
Females	2394	57.1		
Educational attainment			2/16	8.16 (SD 3.41)
Employee benefits scale			0/1	2.38 (SD 1.07)
Inclusive decision making			1/4	2.93 (SD 0.879)
Hours worked per week			5/90	42.82 (SD 12.14)
Income			1/13	7.17 (SD 3.27)

based on the work of Alfred Kinsey in the 1940s (Gates, 2011). However, recent estimates of the number of LGBT persons in the U.S. conducted by Gallup estimate the number to be 5.6% of the U.S. population (Jones, 2021). As such, the 13.68% represented in the analytic sample more than approximates the current population estimates of LGB persons in the United States.

## Measures

### Outcome Variable

The wave 5 Add Health data employed in this study includes a global measure of job satisfaction: "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this job as a whole." Response options were on a five-point scale from: "very satisfied," to "extremely dissatisfied." The variable was reverse-coded so that higher values indicated higher levels of job satisfaction.

### Predictor Variable

Sexual orientation was measured by asking, "Please choose the description that best fits how you think about yourself?" Responses included: "100% heterosexual (straight)," "mostly heterosexual (straight), but somewhat attracted to people of your own sex," "bisexual that is, attracted to men and women equally," "mostly homosexual (gay), but somewhat attracted to people of the opposite sex," "100% homosexual

(gay)," and "not sexually attracted to either males or females." Since the present study isn't examining the role of individuals who are not attracted to either males or females, and the number of individuals was extremely low (11), they were removed from the sample, resulting in a total of 4166 in the sample. In order to examine the independent variables' influence on job satisfaction, the sexuality variable was recoded into a dichotomous sexual orientation variable LGB (0=heterosexual; 1=LGB). Wave V of the Add Health data did not include transgender with sexual orientation in the 2018 survey. Prior studies on job satisfaction issues (see, for example, Chai & Maroto, 2020 or Alden et al., 2020) have focused on LGB populations. Due to data limitations, the present study must adopt the same approach and set aside exploring the relationship between transgender and asexual persons and job satisfaction for future research.

### Independent Variables

Sex was included to address research question 2 (Do gay and bisexual males experience lower levels of job satisfaction compared with lesbians and female bisexuals?). Further, prior studies examining labor market outcomes for LGB populations have included various demographic controls, including gender, which was recorded in Add Health with the question, "What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?," and was recoded as sex, 0= male, 1=female). Since prior studies have found gay men have lower levels of job satisfaction than females, we expect males to have lower levels of job satisfaction.

Previous studies using national survey data to examine job satisfaction (see Brooks, 2018) have included education level as a mediating variable. Educational attainment was measured by asking respondents: "What is the highest level of education you have achieved to date?" Higher scores reflected a higher degree of education (2=some high school or lower, 3=high school diploma, 4=GED, 5=some vocational/technical training (after high school), 6=some community college, 7=completed vocational/technical training (after high school), 8=associate or junior college degree, 9=some college, 10=completed college (bachelor's degree), 11=some graduate school, 12=completed a master's degree, 13=some graduate training beyond a master's degree, 14=completed a doctoral degree, 15=some post-baccalaureate professional education (such as law school, medical school, nursing), 16=completed a post-baccalaureate professional degree (such as law, medicine, nursing). It is expected that LGB individuals would have lower levels of job satisfaction. However, as prior studies have argued (e.g., Salvatore & Taniguchi, 2012), education typically instills social capital, increasing earning potential, and higher occupational prestige, which may moderate the expected lower levels of job satisfaction with LGB individuals. As such, it is expected that higher levels of education would influence higher levels of job satisfaction.

### Workplace Characteristics

A series of variables gauging workplace benefits were included to examine these variables' relationship with job satisfaction for LGB individuals. These variables

have been used in prior studies using national survey data to examine job satisfaction in LGBT populations (see Brooks, 2018; Pink-Harper et al., 2017) or among general job satisfaction research (see Gouthier and Rhein, 2011). Workplace benefits were measured along the following dimensions:

- *Health Insurance* “Does your employer make the following available to you... health insurance” responses were measured as: 0 = no, 1 = yes.
- *Retirement Benefits* “Does your employer make the following available to you... retirement benefits (such as 401(k), 403b, or a company pension plan)?” responses were measured as: 0 = no, 1 = yes.
- *Vacation/Sick/Personal Leave* “Does your employer make the following available to you... paid vacation, sick, personal leave?” responses were measured as: 0 = no, 1 = yes.

The three workplace benefits variables were subjected to reliability analysis. The results revealed good internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha of 0.867. The “Employee Benefits Scale” was created using the three above-mentioned variables, with a higher score reflecting more benefits.

The following variable included was Inclusive Decision Making: Respondents were asked, “Overall, how often do you have the freedom to make important decisions about what you do at work and how you do it?” The response was on a 4-point scale (1 = none or almost none of the time, 2 = some of the time, 3 = most of the time, and 4 = all or almost all of the time). It was expected that higher scores on decision-making will predict a higher score on the job satisfaction scale.

Income was included in the study, as it is expected that those with higher incomes would score higher on job satisfaction. Respondents were asked, “in the last calendar year, how much income did you receive from personal earnings before taxes? Include wages or salaries, tips, bonuses, overtime pay, and income from self-employment?” Responses were scaled with 1 = \$500 or less through 13 = \$200,000 or more, with a higher score reflecting more income.

The final work-related variable included in this study was hours worked per week. Studies such as Holly and Mohen (2012) have found that working more hours and overtime generally do not lead to decreased job satisfaction. As such, we expect that those who work more hours will have higher levels of job satisfaction. Respondents were asked, “How many total hours a week do you usually spend at [your job/ all your jobs]?” Responses ranged from a low of 5 h per week to a high of 90 h per week, with higher scores reflecting more hours worked per week.

## Analysis

Univariate descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1 (additional tables separating univariate descriptions for all variables separated into LGB and non-LGB individuals are available by request). Bivariate correlation analyses were conducted to examine the direction and strength of the relationships between the outcome variable and the predictor, mediator, and independent variables. A series of regression models were constructed to explore more complex relationships. All regression models were



unweighted to avoid biasing coefficients due to sample weights being largely drawn from demographic variables used in the study (see Winship and Radbill, 1994). Prior studies examining job satisfaction using national survey data such as the General Social Survey (see Brooks, 2018) have also conducted analyses without weighing data. All models were estimated using SPSS version 26.

## Results

Correlational analyses were conducted for two purposes: (1) to test for multicollinearity between the continuous independent variables and (2) to examine strength and relationship between the independent variables as the Job Satisfaction outcome variable. Results of the correlation suggested that multicollinearity would not inhibit further analyses. Significant relationships existed between job satisfaction and some the predictor, control, mediating, and independent variables in the expected directions). The findings of the correlational analyses supported further investigation of the research questions and proposed hypotheses of the present study (see Table 2).

Independent sample t-tests were conducted to test for differences in the individual dichotomous independent variables to see if there were differences between these groups on the Job Satisfaction outcome. The results (available upon request) revealed no significant differences between males and females on the Job Satisfaction outcome.

To address research question 1 1) Do LGB individuals have lower levels of job satisfaction in the United States, an independent sample t-test revealed a mean score difference between LGB ( $M=3.85$ ,  $S.D.=0.900$ ) and all other groups ( $M=3.97$ ,  $S.D.=0.938$ ),  $t(3457)=2.70$  on the job satisfaction scale;  $p<0.05$ . Results of this analysis suggest there is a difference in job satisfaction based on sexual orientation, with LGBs having a lower mean score compared to other groups.

To address research question 2, Do gay and bisexual males experience lower job satisfaction levels than lesbians and female bisexuals? LGBs were selected, and an independent sample t-test compared male and female LGBs on the Job Satisfaction Outcome. An independent sample t-test revealed there was not a statistically significant mean score difference between LGB males ( $M=3.83$ ,  $S.D.=0.909$ ) and LGB females ( $M=3.85$ ,  $S.D.=0.947$ ),  $t(3470)=0.129$  on the job satisfaction scale;  $p>0.05$ . Results of this analysis suggest there is no difference on job satisfaction based on gender for LGBs.

**Table 2** Correlations with job satisfaction

	Job satisfaction	Income	High. level of Ed.	Total hours worked	Decision making at work	Employee benefit scale
Job Satisfaction	1.0	0.103**	0.026	-0.006	0.357**	-0.007

**Table 3** Results of fully specified model

	Unstd. B	Std. Error	Std. B	t	Sig
(Constant)	2.993	0.080		37.239	0.000
Sexual orientation	-0.114	0.043	-0.043	-2.685	0.007
Sex	-100	0.032	-0.054	-3.166	0.002
Highest level of education	-0.007	0.005	-0.026	-1.441	0.150
Inclusive decision making	0.374	0.017	0.363	21.616	0.000
Employee benefits scale	0.027	0.015	0.032	1.778	0.075
Income	0.015	0.006	0.053	2.617	0.009
Hours worked per week	-0.005	0.001	-0.061	-3.388	0.001

R square=0.137; Adjusted R Square 0.135; F (7, 3398)=76.70;  $p < 0.05$

A linear regression model was used to assess the relationship between sexual orientation and job satisfaction controlling for demographics and workplace characteristics (see Table 3). The overall model was significant (R square=0.137, F (7, 3398)=76.70,  $p < 0.01$ ). Beginning with the sexual orientation variable (0=heterosexual; 1=LGB), results revealed that being LGB was associated with a -0.043-point reduction on the job satisfaction scale ( $p < 0.01$ ). These results support our general research question and are largely reflective of the prior literature. Next, we looked at the influence of sex (0=male, 1=female), with being female associated with a -0.054-point reduction on job satisfaction. This finding supports the general literature that while there has been progress for women when it comes to job satisfaction, there still seems to be some differences between males and females when it comes to job satisfaction. The next demographic factor examined, the highest level of education, was not found to be significant. We hypothesized that higher levels of education would predict higher levels of job satisfaction; the findings of this study did not support this.

Turning our attention to the workplace characteristics variables, the linear regression results revealed all variables were significant. To begin, inclusive decision-making was found to be significant in the expected direction, with a 0.363 unit increase in job satisfaction for every one-unit increase in inclusive decision-making. We next examined the Employee Benefits Scale which was not found to be significant at a  $p < 0.05$  level, though results were in the hypothesized direction (that an increase on the employee benefits scale influencing increases job satisfaction). The third variable examining workplace characteristics is income. Results of our analysis revealed 0.053 unit increase in job satisfaction associated with higher earnings; this supported our hypothesized relationship and reflects the overall literature looking at the influence of income on job satisfaction. The final workplace characteristic examined was total hours currently working; results found that for every one-unit increase in total hours worked, there was a -0.061 decrease in job satisfaction ( $p < 0.01$ ). The decrease in job satisfaction predicted by increases in total hours worked was in contrast to the hypothesized relationship expected.

## Discussion

Prior research has shown that LGB workers report lower levels of job satisfaction than heterosexual workers. This study contributes to this existing research by exploring this relationship using a large, nationally representative study from a U.S.-based survey of adults aged 18 and older. The results provide new insights into how sexuality impacts job satisfaction in the United States.

Results from both bivariate and multivariate analyses suggest that LGB's have lower levels of job satisfaction when compared to heterosexuals. These findings suggest that despite progress for LGB's in U.S. society, LGB's may still face the lingering effects of stigma and discrimination in the workplace. As with the Civil Rights Movement and racial-ethnic minorities' increased rights and progress, there is both forward momentum and stagnation for LGBs in the workplace. Even though we have seen more legal protections and the general societal call for greater equality that have occurred for sexual minorities in the United States over the last decade, LGB's may still be subjected to working conditions that are not equal to heterosexual colleagues. A potential explanation for this finding is the notion of cultural lag, as defined by Ogburn (1957), as occurring when a societal change happens, and there is a period of adjustment for some components of society to adjust to the change. It is possible that as time goes on, future studies examining job satisfaction in sexual minorities will find comparable levels of job satisfaction with heterosexual workers as the cultural lag fades and society catches up with the rights of sexual minorities. However, as mentioned above, we have seen multiple generations of racial/ethnic minorities experience the post-Civil Rights workplace, and there are still equity challenges, so there may continue to be inequalities in the workplace for sexual minorities for generations to come.

Despite progress, the satisfaction of LGB individuals in specific areas may still be lower compared to heterosexuals. For example, even though greater legal protections exist to protect the rights of LGB's, including the right to marry, their satisfaction with the day-to-day arenas, such as the workplace, may still need to be higher, this could be the result of the aforementioned cultural lag or organizational cultures of specific fields historically dominated by heteronormative ideologies such as health-care (see Beagan et al., 2022). The findings of this study reflect those of studies conducted with international samples, such as Carpenter (2008) and Drysakis (2015), as well as older studies conducted in the United States (e.g., Badgett et al., 2007).

We further explored the relationship between sexual orientation and job satisfaction by modeling the impact of various measures of the job environment. Even after controlling for various individuals (e.g., gender, level of education) and job factors (e.g., employee benefits, decision-making), LGB individuals were still less satisfied with their job than their heterosexual counterparts. Adding these other variables attenuated this relationship somewhat, but regardless of model specification, the relationship remained substantial.

The call for greater workplace equality for women has been ongoing in the United States for decades, yet it may still need to be fully realized. Two demographic variables, sex and educational attainment, were included in the regression analysis. As

discussed above, sex was found to be significant, with females having lower levels of job satisfaction. However, some studies suggest that occupation may be a critical metric when examining job satisfaction. For example, in their study of university educators, Okpara et al. (2005) found that women were more satisfied with their work and coworkers than their male counterparts.

Interestingly, the highest level of education was not significantly associated with job satisfaction. The lack of a statistically significant relationship is reflected in recent studies such as Solomon et al. (2022) which conducted a two-part study to examine the relationship between education and job satisfaction. Part one of the study was a meta-analysis to examine the relationship between the level of education and job satisfaction and did not find a significant relationship. However, in part two of Solomon et al.'s study, a two-stage mediation model used a nationally representative sample to examine the relationship between job satisfaction and education. Their study found that those with higher levels of education have more job resources (income, job autonomy, and job variety). However, they also had more job demands, such as work hours, task pressure, job intensity, and time urgency. The job demands were associated with increased job stress and decreased job satisfaction on average, more or less offsetting the positive gains associated with greater resources. These findings were not reflected in the present study. However, it should be noted that the Add Health data does not contain the same variables, other national studies, including the same measures as Solomon et al.'s study could find similar results.

Turning the focus to workplace characteristics, the results reflected studies (e.g., Pink-Harper et al., 2017) where workers feel coworkers care and value them. Understandably, where LGB (and other) workers feel valued, engaged, and appreciated in a workplace that allows using their skillset, they are naturally more likely to be happy. Looking specifically at the workplace characteristics, we found when LGB workers were included in decision-making; there were higher levels of job satisfaction. This finding reflects studies that suggest more inclusive workplace environments may increase job satisfaction for LGB workers (Pink-Harper et al., 2017). As expected, more inclusive environments, which allow LGB and other workers to participate in decision-making, may increase employee job satisfaction and a sense of belonging and worth. Other variables, such as communication openness in the workplace (as identified by Xia et al., 2016), may play a role in the relationship between inclusiveness and decision-making in the workplace. Next, the employee benefit scale was not found to be significantly related to job satisfaction; we expected, those with higher levels of employee benefits score would have higher scores on job satisfaction, this was not supported. It is possible that employee benefits may no longer be an important metric of compensation, or the specific benefits included in the Employee Benefit Scale failed to capture the full scope of benefits valued by employees as they may related to job satisfaction. The findings of the present study are not reflected in the findings of prior studies such as Frostin and Greenwald (2018), who used national data from the United States for the 2017 Health and Workplace Benefits Survey conducted by the Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI). Another potential issue is employee benefits needs to be examined on a more industry-specific basis. For example, in industries where compensation is traditionally lower than average such

as higher education or law enforcement, other benefits, such as medical insurance and retirement plans, may play a more prominent role in job satisfaction.

Conversely, in industries where compensation may be higher than average such as corporate finance, financial compensation is paramount and other benefits play a lesser role in job satisfaction. Finally, the total hours currently working was significant, with those working more hours having lower levels of job satisfaction. Working more hours increases stress, takes time away from other aspects of one's life, increases fatigue, and may impact other aspects of life, including quality of sleep. Recent research, such as Shao (2022), who used data from the European Social Survey, has found that working a shorter week increases overall life satisfaction.

### **Policy Perspective**

The present study examined the level of job satisfaction and the perception of various factors influencing job satisfaction. Findings were largely consistent with existing literature and suggest that sexuality is associated with job satisfaction, even in the modern workforce. LGBs reported lower levels of job satisfaction, suggesting that efforts still need to be made to provide greater protections for sexual minorities in the workplace. These findings, while on the surface may not seem groundbreaking, do reflect that despite legislation and cultural changes, there may be a cultural lag for sexual minorities in the workplace.

From a policy perspective, organizations may need to provide internal training and policies to ensure that workplace environments are inclusive to sexual minorities. Employers may need to consider the roles of decision-making, in particular when it comes to the needs of sexual minorities in scheduling and other areas. Some employers may assume sexual minorities are less likely to be parents, caregivers, or have other responsibilities outside of the workplace, resulting in the transference of workplace responsibilities to them from heteronormative coworkers. State and Federal level legislation should continue to expand the rights of sexual minorities in the workplace to protect these individuals' rights and ensure equitable and fair working conditions.

Further, although there have been definite improvements for members of the LGB community in society, more progress is still needed. Job satisfaction may act as a proxy for workplace diversity appreciation. The results of this study call attention to the need for increased and ongoing diversity training in the workplace, which may help increase overall job satisfaction within LGB and non-LGB individuals. Incentivized workplace diversity certifications and training could increase employee participation and engagement in these initiatives.

### **Limitations/Directions for Future Research**

This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between being Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual and job satisfaction in the United States. The findings here suggest that additional study is warranted. Future studies may want to consider building

on this area of inquiry in several ways. First, like any data, Add Health also has limitations. For instance, these data were collected for 2018 before the recent worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. While this will not negate the value of this student's findings, there is the possibility that, given the rapid changes COVID-19 brought to the workplace with millions transitioning to remote work, the results presented here may differ with the next available wave of Add Health data. The next wave of Add Health data would also capture the impact of the 2020 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, which banned employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. The forced implementation of remote work for many employers due to COVID-19 also offers an interesting avenue for exploring the sexuality-job satisfaction connection. Further, while the Add Health data has a relatively large sample size, this study's analytic sample includes only those who answered the sexual orientation question on the survey, and studies more directly focusing on LGBTQIA+ populations may yield more specific data.

Future studies should examine related measures of job satisfaction, including factors such as harassment and bullying at work, to help better understand the challenges of LGB's in the workplace. Next, scholars may also want to employ qualitative methods to explore key findings. Finally, studies need to examine specific occupations; this may help increase understanding of where LGB's are experiencing discrimination and hostility in the workplace.

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## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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