

Relationship between disability, sexual orientation, and suicidal ideation among Oregon teens

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Public Health Practitioners, Social Workers, Primary Care Team, Educators, Public Health Students.

ABSTRACT:

Background: Suicide is the second leading cause of death among US youth. Prevention efforts require identification of at-risk groups of teens. However, little attention has been paid to the multiplicative effects of belonging to more than one risk category. The purpose of this study was to analyze the intersection between disability and sexual minority status, and its association with suicidal ideation among high school students.

Methods: We analyzed cross-sectional data from the 2015 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey, using logistic regression to estimate the relationship between the disability and sexual orientation interaction effect and the dependent variable of suicidal ideation.

Results: After adjusting for covariates, sexual minority teenagers with disabilities had higher odds of suicidal ideation (adjusted odds ratio [AOR]: 5.48; 95% confidence interval [CI]: 4.48 - 6.70, p-value <0.0001) compared to heterosexual teenagers without disabilities. These odds were markedly higher than those for heterosexual youth with disabilities (AOR=2.30, 95% CI: 2.07-2.56) and sexual minority youth without disabilities (AOR=2.68, 95% CI: 2.33-3.09).

Conclusion: Our study suggests belonging to multiple socially marginalized groups is associated with greater risk than membership in just one of these groups. This has important implications for public health efforts to protect especially marginalized and vulnerable teens.

OBJECTIVE(S): Discuss the multiplicative effect approach used to understand the intersectionality between disability and sexual orientation
Describe how traditional methods of epidemiologic research can be used for the assessment of intersectionality

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