

Homophobia in schools in Pietermaritzburg: research report

Pietermaritzburg: Gay and Lesbian Network, 2011. 50 p.

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Organizations:

Gay and Lesbian Network

Description:

A previous multi-site qualitative study commissioned by the Gay and Lesbian Network (GLN) explored the incidence of hate crime and homophobia in Pietermaritzburg. The continued attacks on the LGBT community and in particular, the attacks on women perceived to be lesbian, coupled with the xenophobic attacks on foreigners reported in Pietermaritzburg and elsewhere in South Africa formed the backdrop and the impetus of that study. Amongst other findings, the questionnaire survey component of that study revealed a general lack of knowledge of what constitutes hate crime and homophobia (Stephens, 2010). A high percentage of respondents belonged to the 'youth to young adults' age category. In addition the majority of attacks and homophobic incidents reported to the GLN involve youth and young adults. Given that youth and young adults featured prominently in the previous study and in incidents of homophobia that are reported to the GLN, this current study constitutes a follow-up to the 2010 study and aims to expand existing knowledge of homophobia as it pertains to the youth in Pietermaritzburg. Secondary schools in South Africa incorporate the General (Grades 8-9) and Further (Grades 10-12) Education and Training bands. Grade 10 learners represent an average age group for youth in secondary schools. Grade 10 learners were targeted from ten ordinary public co-educational secondary schools in the Pietermaritzburg region, allowing for race, gender and socio-economic differences. This report presents findings from a questionnaire survey administered to Grade 10 learners from the seven schools included in the final sample. It also considers the theoretical constructs of the concept homophobia and how it relates to cognitive, behavioural and affective processes that are engaged when homophobic learners interact with learners thought to be gay or lesbian. International and national trends are reflected upon in assessing the local context and recommendations for future interventions are proposed on the basis of such analysis.

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