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Self-esteem and depression of employed versus unemployed male homosexuals in long-term monogamous partnerships

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ABSTRACT

The relation between self-esteem and depression with regard to employment status of gay men in long-term monogamous partnerships was investigated, specifically to determine if a relation exists between employment status and self-esteem, and between employment status and depression in these men. The relation between eleven biographical and psychosocial variables with self-esteem and depression were also investigated. Non-probability snowball and purposive sampling were used to gather the sample of 56 gay male couples who were predominantly white; middle-class; well-educated; urban-dwelling South Africans; that had been involved for a mean length of 7.3 years. Each couple consisted of an employed partner and an unemployed partner, who had a mean length of 3.4 years of unemployment. Five couples (10 subjects) formed a pilot study and completed only the Revised Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale (R-JFFIS), while the remaining 51 couples (102 subjects) completed both the R-JFFIS and the Revised Beck Depression Inventory (R-BDI). An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) computed for the mixed effect model with fixed factor of employment status nested within the random factor of couple, controlling for the effects of the possible covariates revealed a significant difference between self-esteem of employed and unemployed partners. The difference is not significant for depression. Confirmatory evidence for the importance of age as a significant predictor of self-esteem was found for the whole sample; while perceived health and education were found to be significant predictors of depression. Self-esteem and depression were found to be inversely related in both employed and unemployed partners individually and collectively, while a positive correlation was found between self-esteem of employed and unemployed partners. Multiple

regression analysis revealed that the eleven variables investigated were poor correlates of self-esteem in both partners. Only perceived health was found to be a significant predictor of depression in employed and unemployed partners respectively. No known existing studies investigate these particular dimensions of gay life. The disparity of self-esteem scores between employed and unemployed partners and the inverse relation between perceived health and depression provide a proactive position, from which primary prevention of depression could be achieved.