

Single discrimination: A global challenge to mental health

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Background:

Research shows that single people tend to have higher mortality and poorer health condition compared with married couples. And many scholars believe it is due to single people's loneliness and anxiety without marital relations (Leung, 2022; Böger, 2018). However, could this stereotype and discrimination that regard the singles as lonely, tragic, or selfish people be the fundamental reason for their poorer health condition? While many people voluntarily choose to be single and enjoy it (DePaulo, 2007), psychotherapist points out that some single people are suffering from depression or other mental illness due to the discriminative social environment (Abrams, 2022). In the British, and China, more than 50% of respondents think they have experienced single discrimination, and such discrimination ubiquitously exists in the workplace, law, and social norms (BBC, 2022; Gong, 2018). Thus, more attention and aids need to be paid to the global mental struggles of the singles, and interdisciplinary efforts are required to empower the singles and safeguard their mental health.

Method:

This study first conducts a literature research method to understand the phenomenon of single discrimination, its effects on the singles' mental health, and the possible psychological methods to resist such discrimination. Then using institutional analysis to explore the possible methods to break single discrimination, and ensure their mental health through the law, policies, and cultural transformation.

Result:

This study finds that single discrimination exists wildly in different domains, such as employers' prioritization of single employees to work overtime, tax law's concession to married couples, and social assumptions of the singles as 'problematic'. The psychological strategy includes establishing positive self-perception, and staying away from negativity (etc.); while the reforms in laws, policies, and social discourses would break single discrimination and enhance the singles' mental health fundamentally.

Conclusion:

Being single should be respected as equal to getting married. Thus, to enhance the singles' mental health is not to eliminate singleness but to respect their wills, systematically break the single discrimination, and adopt psychological strategies to resist its negative effects.