

# The Real Deviance: Misrepresentation of Science and the Persistence of Homophobic Ideology - A Rebuttal to Daftari and Khaleghi

Gonzalo Renato Quintana<sup>1\*</sup>, Jaime Barrientos<sup>2</sup>

1. Departamento de Psicología, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Chile.

2. Facultad de Psicología, Universidad Alberto Hurtado.

**\*Corresponding Author:**

Address: 1045, Ignacio Carrera Pinto, 4th floor, Ñuñoa, Santiago, Postal Code: 7750000.

Tel: 56-229772474, Email: gonzalo.quintana@uchile.cl

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Dear Editor,

Daftari and Khaleghi's recent editorial (1) utterly misrepresents the peer-reviewed literature on sex, gender, and sexual orientation. In particular, they distort a key reference (2) to imply that any non-binary or same-sex identity is a pathological "anomaly." In reality, Quintana & Pfaus (2) explicitly emphasize that sex in humans is largely binary and based on genes, whereas gender is sociocultural and can span a multitude of expressions, a model in which diversity is not only expected but the default. They reaffirm that biological sex is determined at the chromosomal level but higher-order traits (gender, identity, orientation) are multidimensional. Far from pathologizing difference, they argue there is "no right or wrong" gender identity or sexual orientation. By cherry-picking a line about brain-sex correlations, Daftari and Khaleghi abuse this source: they cite Votinov *et al.* as evidence of "neurological anomalies," when in fact the study reports only subtle neuroanatomical differences linked to orientation (3), and perhaps more importantly, did not label homosexuality as disordered. This blatant distortion is intellectually dishonest.

Equally troublesome are the editorial's other pseudo-scientific claims. First, the naive evolutionary argument that natural selection somehow forbids homosexuality is contradicted by modern biology. As Gómez *et al.* document, same-sex sexual behavior is widespread in mammals, observed in 261 species spanning 62 families

and 12 orders (4). These animals reap social and reproductive benefits from non-reproductive sexual bonds, undermining any simplistic "maladaptation" narrative. Second, the editorial's neural-anomaly claim is refuted by contemporary neuroscience. Votinov *et al.* conclude that "sexual orientation is reflected in brain structure... [which] differs between the sexes" (3), which is a descriptive finding, not evidence of dysfunction. Neither this nor any credible study suggests that such differences imply disease.

Third, the idea that homosexuality itself is a psychiatric mental problem is scientifically untenable. All major health organizations have long rejected that view. As Kinney notes, both the American Psychiatric Association and APA have repeatedly declared homosexuality a normal variant of human sexuality, not a mental disorder (5). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual dropped homosexuality decades ago for good reason. Disparities in suicide or depression among LGB people are well-known and attributed to social stigma and minority stress, not intrinsic pathology (6). Psychological research shows that prejudice and stress "get under the skin" to harm mental health. Meta-analyses confirm elevated distress among sexual minorities but emphasize the explanatory role of discrimination (7). To portray these outcomes as proof of illness is a century-old trick discredited by modern psychology.



Finally, the editorial's moralizing tone betrays its true motivation. It repeatedly resorts to religious and ideological arguments to demonize LGBTQ lives. Such attitudes correlate overwhelmingly with religiosity. Westwood reviews the literature and finds a close connection between religious affiliation and negative attitudes towards LGBTQ people (8). The appeal to "natural" procreation or vaguely defined social "harm" is dogma masquerading as reason. That a professional journal would publish this in 2025, complete with baseless conspiracies about climate and population control, is less controversial than it is embarrassing.

Altogether, Daftari and Khaleghi's piece fails every criterion of rigorous sexology or psychiatry. It misquotes authorities, ignores the totality of evidence, and substitutes moral panic for data. We urge the *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry* to clarify that homosexuality is not a disorder and to uphold scientific standards by retracting or annotating this editorial. Modern sexology teaches that sexual orientation and gender diversity are natural human variations supported by extensive research (2, 8, 9).

### Conflict of Interest

None.

### References

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