



Health and Wellbeing impact of Participation in the VPride Fashion Show among VPride members, 2022

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Abstract text

Background: VPride was founded in 2007 and established to educate, advocate and mobilise people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) in Vanuatu. Since 2019, VPride has hosted a fashion show to showcase the design skills of VPride members and to increase visibility of people with diverse SOGIE in Vanuatu and promoting the space of inclusivity. The objective of this study was to explore the impact that participation in the fashion show has on VPride members health and wellbeing.

Methods: A focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with VPride members that participated in the 2022 VPride Fashion Show within two weeks after the event. All VPride members that participated in the event as designers, models or crew were invited to participate. The FGD was facilitated by two experienced facilitators, including a VPride leader, and conducted in Bislama.

Results: Six people participated in the FGD and were designers (n=2) and models (n=4) in the 2022 show. The participants identified several overarching benefits including an improved sense of safety and wellbeing, increased confidence and empowerment, a feeling of belonging, and less stigma and discrimination. The need for mental health services for people with diverse SOGIE was highlighted by participants.

Discussion: This research highlighted several positive outcomes on mental health and wellbeing from participating in the VPride fashion show. Key recommendations from the session include the need for mental health services and support, such as through trained peer educators, group sessions or mental health professionals.