

An exploration of diversity and wellbeing at UK drag events

Since 2008, there has been a significant increase in the promotion and integration of drag culture into mainstream society. Drag events have the ability to create a safe place for people from diverse backgrounds to celebrate and gather. What were once underground expressions of gender and political protest for the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer plus other identities) community, drag events have now transcended into a modern-day phenomenon, bringing people together to participate and feel a sense of enjoyment and wellbeing. The current literature on drag culture focuses on the performers' perspective rather than the audience's. This study aims to explore the diverse nature of attendees at UK drag events and to demonstrate how drag events create a sense of inclusivity and impact the wellbeing of those attending.

An online qualitative survey of participants (n=248) who had attended at least one drag event in the UK was carried out. This allowed for an in-depth understanding of how drag events create a sense of emotional wellbeing among those attending. This was a UK study which encompassed experiences from across the country. This focus on the UK is justified due to the dearth of literature in this geographical area.

The results indicate that drag events in the UK have become more mainstream, with the audience demographic becoming more diverse and inclusive. Drag events were considered by the attendees as a safe space, where they seek escapism from everyday life by immersing themselves in the drag experience. This enhanced their mental and emotional wellbeing. The study demonstrated that drag events provide an exciting, stimulating, and novel experience where individuals have a place for self-expression; where they can socialise, have fun, be accepted and feel a sense of freedom and happiness in a non-judgmental environment.

Key Words: Drag; Drag Events; Diversity; Inclusivity; Wellbeing