Exploring the Role of Perceived Social Support on Mental Help-Seeking Behavior among LGBTQ Young Adults

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Abstract: *The purpose of the current study is to explore the relationship between Perceived Social Support, and Mental Help - Seeking Behavior among LGBTQ young adults. The research design of choice was exploratory. The sample size comprised 65 young adults, from the LGBTQ community, within the age range of 21 - 25, residing in Bangalore. The participants were gathered via the convenience sampling method, due to the scarcity of the desired population. The inventories employed upon the participants were the Mental Help Seeking Attitudes Scale (Joseph H. Hammer.2018), and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (D. Zimet, Dahlem, G. Zimet and Farely.2018). The method of data analysis used was correlation, and the results revealed that there is a significant relationship between Perceived Social Support and Mental Help - Seeking Behavior among the participants. The findings further revealed that despite the participants lacking support from family, it was shown they were getting support from a reliable friend or a special person, which could possibly be insinuated as a romantic partner or a close friend. It also showcased that the lack of support from family leads to more Mental Help - Seeking Behaviors among LGBTQ young adults due to a lack of reliable people in their lives. The results of the present study play a vital role in showcasing the characteristics of how different types of relationships, play a significant function in influencing the manner in which LGGTQ young adults seek mental health help.*

Keywords: LGBTQ, Young Adults, Perceived Social Support, Mental Help - Seeking Behavior, Family support, Friend support

1. Introduction

The term LGBTQ is an abbreviation that stands for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Transgender and questioning or queer. It is an umbrella term to refer to the various labels of gender identity and sexual orientation as well as an inclusive acronym for individuals whose gender identity varies from socially and culturally defined gender roles based on assigned sex at birth (American Psychological Association, n. d). It is also meant to be a category that distinguishes those who identify as heterosexual or cisgender. A heterosexual refers to an individual who is attracted to the opposite gender, and cisgender refers to a person who identifies their gender with their assigned sex at birth. (LGBTQ+ Worldwide, 2023).

The LGBTQ community has had a long history of oppression and discrimination, be it on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and thus fits the prescribed requirements to fall into the category of a marginalized community. Statistics have shown that individuals from the LGBTQ community are four times more likely to experience violence as opposed to those who are not part of the community.

Mental Help - Seeking Behavior can be understood as communication with others in order to gain help with regards to information, advice and treatment, as well as general support when faced with a problem or distressing situation (Rickwood et al., 2005). Existing literature related to help - seeking behavior have documented that individuals from minority groups have shown higher levels of vulnerability, and are thus more likely to engage in Mental Help - Seeking Behavior depending on severity.

"Interpersonal relationships refer to reciprocal social and emotional interactions between the patient and other persons in the environment. Almost every mental disorder is accompanied by problems in this respect. Frequently, a basic cause of conflict with other people is the presence of some psychiatric disorder. Major areas in which these conflicts may occur include the following: relations" (Griffin, 1990). Taking into account the fact that persons from the LGBTQ community face discriminatory behavior, and have reduced access to resources, it is only natural to assume that these nihilistic experiences can take a toll on the interpersonal relationships shared by these individuals. This can be observed in the study by Reczek and Bosley-Smith (2021), which observed how LGBTQ adults maintained relationships with their parents despite being rejected by them.

The need for a study on Perceived Social Support, and its relationship between Mental Help - Seeking Behavior and interpersonal relationships among LGBTQ young adults stems from the fact that the chosen population is of a marginalized community, and studies on marginalized communities are not as common due to scarcity in participants or lack of participants. As of the time of this study, there is no existing research related to the LGBTQ community that has included theese variables of Perceived Social Support and Mental Help - Seeking Behavior among LGBTQ Young Adults

2. Methodology

Area of Research
The site of study was Bengaluru, Karnataka which harbors a population of 14, 008, 000. and is known as one of the queer

friendly cities in India, due to its diverse demographics and history of hosting queer events such as Namma Pride (Our Pride). The data was collected primarily from participants who are residents of the city.

Sample Size
The participants of the study consisted of 65 young adults, aged between 21 - 25, who identified as being part of the LGBTQ community. The participants in this sample are either students or working professionals.

Sampling Technique
The sample was collected using the convenience sampling technique, due to the fact that the participants identified as being part of the LGBTQ community, which is a marginalized community. Thus, it difficult to gather participants through the available other methods, such as the random sampling technique.

Study tools

1) Mental Help Seeking Attitudes Scale (Joseph H. Hammer.2018)
This is a 9 item scale which aims to evaluate the participants overall opinion when it comes to seeking help from a Mental Health professional, if they are in a situation that requires the aid of a Mental health professional. A higher score signifies a more positive attitude towards seeking help. In terms of reliability, the internal consistency of the scale was shown to have a cronbach alpha value of 0.93. The values for content validity are not available, construct validity was supported via an in unidimensional structure though exploratory factor analysis, and concurrent validity of the overall scale was shown to have a value of 0.80 in terms of Pearson's correlation coefficient.

2) Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (D. Zimet, Dahlem, G. Zimet and Farely.2018)
The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support is a tool that consists of 12 items. The scale aims to measure the level of Perceived Social Support the participants feel towards family, friends and significant others. In terms of reliability, the internal consistency of the scale has been shown to have Cronbach alpha Values that range between 0.85 - 0.91 among the subscales. The test - retest reliability coefficients were shown to range between 0.72 - 0.85. Through confirmatory factor analysis, the scale was shown to support the three - factor structure, thus indicating high construct validity. The scale also has high concurrent validity as it shows correlations with other scales related to social support which range from 0.60 - 0.75.

3) Objectives
a) To see the level of family support that is received by LGBTQ Young Adults.
b) To see the extent of friend support recieved by LGBTQ Young Adults.
c) To understand the relationship between perceived social support and Mental Help - Seeking Behavior among LGBTQ Young Adults.
d) To explore, the relationship between family support and help - seeking behavior among LGBTQ Young Adults.

4) Hypothesis
a) There will be a significant relationship between Perceived Social Support and help - seeking behavior among LGBTQ young adults.
b) There will be a significant relationship between family support and Mental Help - Seeking Behavior among LGBTQ young adults.
c) There will be a significant relationship between friend support and Mental Help - Seeking Behavior among LGBTQ young adults.

5) Data collection & analysis
The researcher utilized the convenience sampling technique to gather participants for the study, due to the fact that the studies require individuals who are from the LGBTQ community, which falls into the category of a marginalized group. Permission of the participants was obtained via the aid of a consent form, and a checkbox which had two options: Are you from the LGBTQ community, yes or no, was present to eliminate the responses of non - LGBTQ participants. The selected scales were administered via an online form.

3. Results

This section shows, the findings of the study, in tables and figures.

Table 1: Shows the demographic details of the sample

Demographic variables	Number	Percentage
Education	10th and above (10)	14.7
	12th (12)	17.7
	Under graduate (30)	44.12
	Post graduate (16)	23.53
Area	Rural 20	29.4
	Urban 48	70.5

From the table, it is found that almost 44% of the participants have an education status up to graduation. It also shows that more than 20% of the participants have a postgraduate degree.

Figure 1, 2 & 3
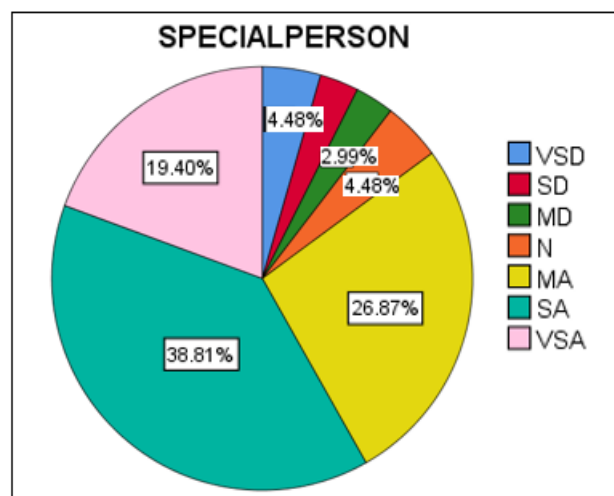Showing the support received by LGBTQ young adults.

Figure 1: Shows the percentage of participants who have a special someone.
VSD – Very strongly disagree
SD – Strongly disagree

MD – Midly disagree
N - Neautral
MA – Midly agree
SA – Strongly agree
VSA – Very strongly Agree

Figure 1 shows, that almost 10.4% of participants do not have a special person to share their problems with. The figure also reveals that only 19.4% very strongly agree that they have a special person.
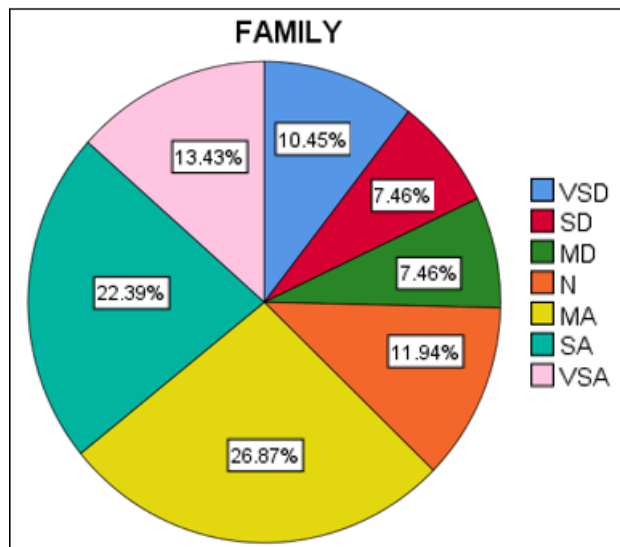

Figure 2: Shows the percentage of family support received by participants.

Figure 2, shows that almost 1/4th of the study participants are lacking family support; it also reveals that 13.4% of the participants have significant family support.
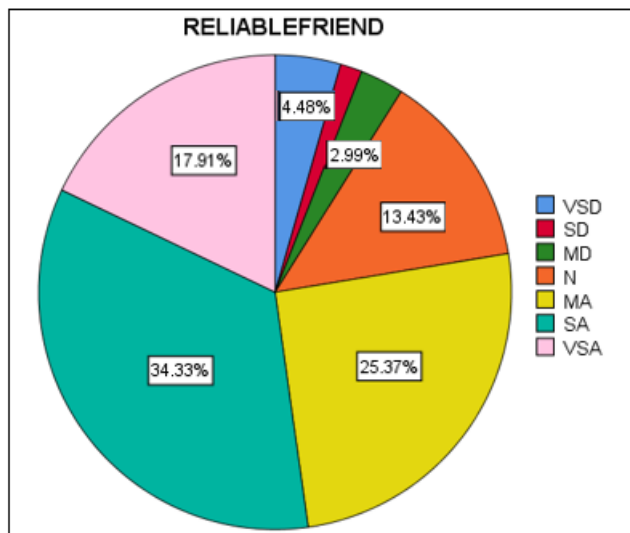

Figure 3: Shows the percentage of participants who have a reliable friend to share their problems with.

Figure 3, shows that 79% of participants had a reliable friend to share their problems with.

Table 2: Shows the correlation between Perceived Social Support and Mental Help Seeking - Behaviour Correlations

Variables	Pearsons r
Perceived Social Support	1
Mental Help - Seeking Behavior	.336**

** Indicates correlation at.001 level

Thus hypothesis 1: "There is a significant relationship between Perceived Social Support and Mental Help - Seeking Behavior" is accepted at the 0.001 level.

Table 3: Showing correlation of Perceived family support, friend support and Mental Help - Seeking Behavior

variables	1	2	3
1) Perceived family support	1	0.217	.327**
2) Perceived friend Support		1	0.055
3) Mental Help Seeking behavior			1

The table shows that there is a positive correlation between family support and Mental Help - Seeking Behavior; meanwhile, there is no significant relationship between friend support and Mental Help - Seeking Behavior.

Thus, the hypothesis 2: "There will be a significant relationship between family support and help - seeking behavior among LGBTQ young adults is accepted at 0.01 level of significance.

4. Discussion

The core problem faced by LGBTQ young adults stems from a lack of family support (Roe, 2016). The present study also indicates that 25% of the participants are lacking family support. Chang, Feinstein, Meanley, Flores, & Watson,. (2021) found that family rejection is a big problem that is associated with depressive symptoms among LGBTQ community and that leads to high help seeking behavior among them.

The lack of family support can lead to various problems, like mental health issues, including low self - esteem, less social support, and being more likely to fall victim to substance abuse and suicidal ideation (Ryan et al., 2010b).

Even though the participants lacked family support, the present study showed that 9% of them received support from friends, and 75% of them have a special person in their life. The study also reveals that there is a correlation between family support and help - seeking behavior; this shows that even with family support, they need some sort of help from the community. However, surprising enough, there is no significant relationship between Perceived Social Support and Mental Help - Seeking Behavior, This shows that LGBTQ young adults do not have to seek help from others if they have support from friends.

5. Conclusion

The study revealed that even though the participants were lacking support from family, they were getting support from a reliable friend or a special person, maybe a romantic partner or a close friend. It also narrated that the lack of support from

family leads to more Mental Help - Seeking Behavior among LGBTQ young adults due to a lack of reliable people in their lives.

6. Implication

The findings of the study can be used for policy implementations for gender minorities, focusing on building family support through gender and sexual sensitization as well as psychoeducation. This also sheds some much needed light on the problems and struggles faced by LGBTQ young adults, even in the year 2024, to gain acceptance from family and society.

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