

Associations between Anxiety, Depression & Community connection

Roberto Alor Soto

1. Community-Based Research Centre

Background

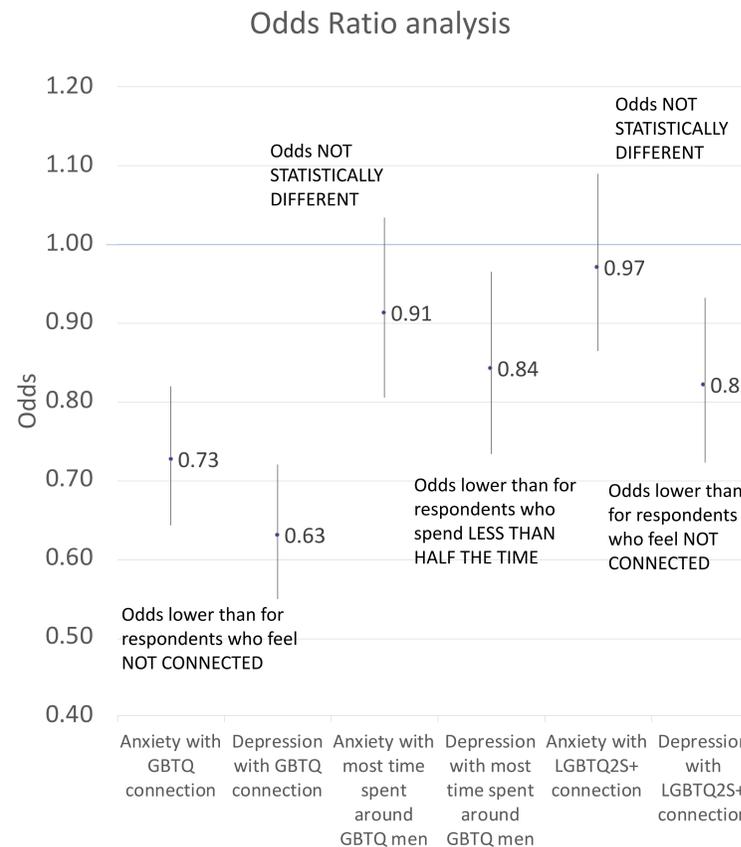
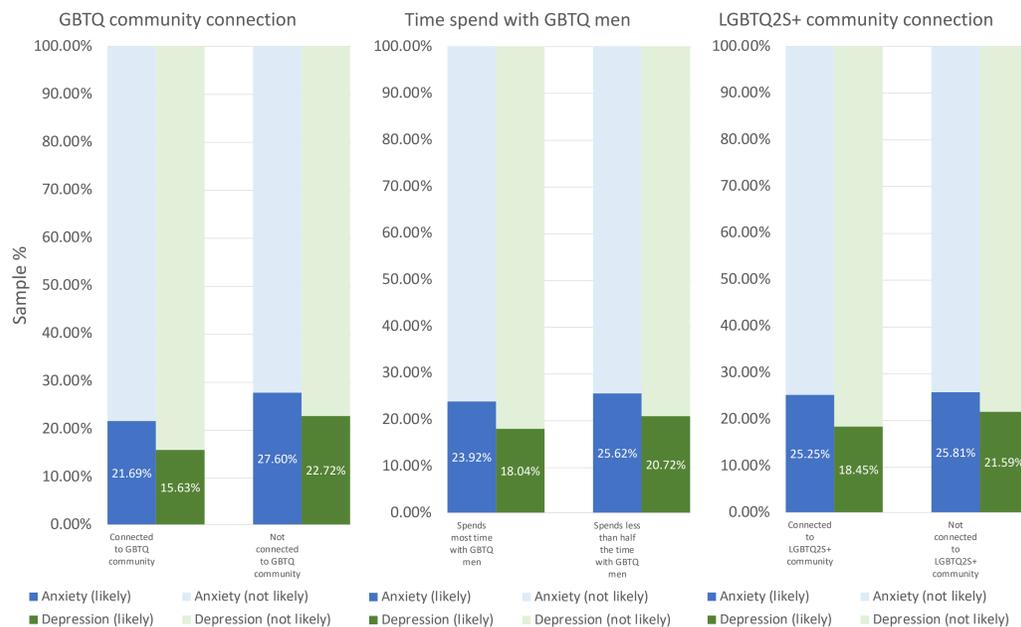
- LGBTQ2S+ communities, at a national level, have historically faced, and are still facing challenges to their mental health (Wilson & Cariola, 2019).
- To help measure this dimension of health, Sex now 2019 included items from the PHQ-2 and GAD-2 (National HIV curriculum, 2020) to measure the likelihood of a person experiencing anxiety and depression (CBRC, 2019).
- This analysis examined the relationship between anxiety, depression and a sense of community connection in LGBTQ men and non-binary people. This is an association I've noticed in my work as a mental health & addictions graduate.

Methods

- Data source: Sex Now 2019 Survey, conducted online on a voluntary basis, conducted in a sample of LGBTQ men and non-binary people across Canada (CBRC, 2019)
- Methodology: odds ratio analysis.
- Sample size: 5000-7000 survey respondents who provided answers to relevant items
- The analysis is limited to members of the LGBTQ community who responded to the following sections in Sex Now 2019:
 - Mental health and access to mental health services section
 - Social life and community involvement
- Odds ratios (95% CI) were calculated associating the results interpretation of the GAD-2 anxiety and PHQ-2 depression scales with the following:
 - Degree of self-assessed connection to the LGBTQ community
 - Degree of self-assessed connection to the LGBTQ2S+ community at large
 - Time spent with other LGBTQ men as a more quantifiable measure of community connection

Results

General odds of experiencing anxiety/depression for our sample by measured item:



Conclusions

- The assumption that community connections are associated with better mental health outcomes and lower odds of experiencing symptoms associated with depression and anxiety cannot be conclusively proven correct but were confirmed in some contexts and not in others. However, this analysis revealed several interesting points that merit further exploration:
 - LGBTQ people in this sample reported anxiety more often than they reported depression.
 - Anxiety was found to be less associated with community connection than depression, only one measure of community connection (for the LGBTQ community) was associated with decreased odds of anxiety.
 - A subjective sense of connection to the LGBTQ community was more strongly associated with anxiety/depression outcomes than the more objective measure of connection (time spent with LGBTQ men)
 - The sense of connection with the LGBTQ community had a more significant association with lower anxiety and depression odds than a sense of connection with the LGBTQ2S+ community at large.
- These results tell us there is no single easy answer to the question of "Is a strong community connection associated with better mental health outcomes?" Future studies should explore other factors impacting anxiety and depression, such as:
 - The size of the community.
 - The perceived closeness to its members.
 - The nature of the mental illness being examined.
 - Geographic and demographic factors involved.
- This body of evidence could be a promising avenue for mental health interventions aimed at LGBTQ people

References

- Wilson, C., & Cariola, L. A. (2019). Lgbtqi+ youth and mental health: A systematic review of qualitative research. *Adolescent Research Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-019-00118-w>
- CBRC(2019) Sex Now Survey. Community Based Research Center, Vancouver, BC.
- National HIV Curriculum (2020) Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ-2), retrieved from <https://www.hiv.uw.edu/page/mental-health-screening/phq-2>
- National HIV Curriculum (2020) Generalized Anxiety Disorder 2-item (GAD-2), retrieved from <https://www.hiv.uw.edu/page/mental-health-screening/gad-2>



University of Victoria

- For respondents who felt CONNECTED to the LGBTQ community, the odds of having anxiety are lower than for respondents who felt NOT CONNECTED to the LGBTQ community
- For respondents who felt CONNECTED to the LGBTQ community, the odds of having depression are lower than for respondents who felt NOT CONNECTED to the LGBTQ community
- For respondents who spent MORE THAN HALF THE TIME with LGBTQ men, the odds of having anxiety are NOT SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT than for respondents who spent LESS THAN HALF THE TIME with LGBTQ men
- For respondents who spent MORE THAN HALF THE TIME with LGBTQ men, the odds of having depression are LOWER than for respondents who spent LESS THAN HALF THE TIME with LGBTQ men
- For respondents who felt CONNECTED to the LGBTQ2S community, the odds of having anxiety are NOT SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT from the ones for respondents who felt NOT CONNECTED to the LGBTQ2S community
- For respondents who felt CONNECTED to the LGBTQ2S community, the odds of having depression are lower than for respondents who felt NOT CONNECTED to the LGBTQ2S community