

MetroHealth Medical Center

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Abstract Submission Form

Poster Title: Sampling the hard to find: A systematic review of recruitment strategies for parents of sexual and gender minority youth

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Background & Purpose: Parental support is a critical predictor of mental health outcomes for sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth. Low levels of parental support are associated with depression, suicide, substance abuse, and mental distress, whereas higher levels of perceived support result in better mental health outcomes among SGM youth. However, much of the existing research focuses on the children rather than their parents, and there is a lack of understanding on the body of existing research on parents, particularly in terms of sampling. Studies of parents of SGM youth often rely on non-probability sampling, introducing threats to validity and generalizability. This systematic review seeks to understand: 1) What are the primary recruitment strategies for parents of SGM youth in the research literature?, 2) How do research studies conceptualize and operationalize parental acceptance?, and 3) How do parental responses to their child's disclosure differ among studies with different sampling and recruitment strategies?

Methods: This systematic review included qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies published after 1980 that collected data from parents of SGM youth and identified through seven electronic databases. Studies that included data collection from parents of SGM youth and reported parental response to their child's SGM disclosure were included. Two independent researchers screened titles, abstracts, and full texts of identified studies to determine inclusion or exclusion. Data was extracted by the lead author, and subsequently summarized and collated.

Results: Overall, 607 studies were identified, 43 were included for full-text review, and 29 publications met inclusion criteria. All included studies used non-probability sampling; 55.1% of the publications used convenience sampling. Most studies recruited participants through SGM advocacy organizations. Of included publications, 51.7% utilized quantitative data, 34.5% were solely qualitative, and 13.8% used a mixed-methods approach. Of the convenience sampled quantitative and mixed-methods publications, 60% reported parental acceptance.

Conclusion & Implications: Parents of SGM youth are a hidden population, and non-probability sampling is necessary for gathering meaningful information. Future research should strive for more diverse and rigorous sampling approaches, including probability sampling, to increase generalizability. Parental acceptance of SGM youth is important for their child's mental health outcomes; therefore, studying these parents and families will help inform upstream prevention services for mental health outcomes.