

The LGBTQ+ Population during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Special Case of Young Adults

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The COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with poor mental health symptoms, particularly among vulnerable populations such as young LGBTQ+ individuals. Results of two studies conducted in the context of the “Project Queerantime: An International Study on the Social Support Networks and Psychological Health of LGBTQ+ Individuals During the COVID-19 Pandemic”, involving 7 countries from Europe and South America (Brazil, Chile, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Sweden, and United Kingdom), were reported.

In the first study, we explored how the psychosocial effects of the pandemic affected the mental health of LGBTQ+ young adults who were confined with their parents during the lockdown period. South American participants experienced more negative psychosocial effects of the pandemic. Depression and anxiety were higher among participants who were younger, not working, living in Europe and who reported feeling more emotionally affected by the pandemic, uncomfortable at home, or isolated from non-LGBTQ friends. Not attending higher education predicted depression while not being totally confined at home, residing habitually with parents, and fearing more future infection predicted anxiety.

In the second study, we aimed to (i) identify different psychological adjustment profiles among LGBTQ+ young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic and compare LGBTQ+ young adults in relation to (ii) sociodemographic characteristics and COVID-19-related experiences and (iii) the internal and external protective resources associated with each adjustment profile. Four profiles of psychological adjustment were identified: Unchallenged, Resilient, Distressed, and At-risk. The at-risk cluster scored lowest in social support (particularly from family). The profiles of participants who experienced the highest levels of pandemic adversity (at-risk and resilient) comprised mostly South American participants, those under lockdown at the time of survey completion, those who self-identified as transgender and non-binary, and those with a plurisexual sexual orientation.

In sum, specific risk and protective factors, as well as specific cultural aspects, affected the well-being of LGBTQ+ populations during the pandemic. Interventions should consider strategies to help young adults maintain support systems and reinforce the value of positive family relationships. Specific groups within the LGBTQ+ community that seem to be in a particularly vulnerable situation may need additional tailored support.