

Research Challenges in Understanding the Impacts of Disasters on Queer Youth

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COLLEGE

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Background

- Today's youth are expected to experience more frequent and intense disasters, placing them at greater risk for developing adverse mental health outcomes in their aftermath (Thiery et al., 2021).
- Queer youth, who already bear the burden of social vulnerability due to a long history of stigma, violence, and discrimination against queer communities, are particularly susceptible to developing symptoms of posttraumatic stress, depression, and anxiety following exposure to disasters (Goldsmith & Mendez, 2022).
- It is estimated that 9.5% (1,994,000) of youth ages 13-17 in the United States are queer (Conron, 2020).
- Despite the importance of understanding the consequences of disasters, to the best of our knowledge, there is currently no research that explores disasters' impacts on queer youth.

Purpose

This poster aims to bring awareness of challenges in researching the impacts of disasters on queer youth and open conversation toward needed diversification in our understanding of the consequences of disasters.

Research Challenges

Issue	Impact
Data on sexual and gender identity are not consistently collected.	This gap in data collection hinders our understanding of the specific challenges and vulnerabilities faced by queer youth in disaster situations.
Fragmentation of data sources and lack of specific disaster impact information.	The absence of detailed information regarding how disasters have impacted surveyed individuals restricts our ability to determine the influence of additional stressors on queer youth.

Significance

- The Sendai Framework emphasizes human rights-based approaches in Disaster Risk Reduction, including addressing the vulnerabilities of queer populations (UNDRR, 2015).
- Inclusive data collection is crucial for understanding the experiences of queer youth during disasters and developing tailored interventions and support services.
- Promoting inclusivity and meeting the specific needs of queer individuals enhances their resilience, reduces vulnerability, and fosters equality in disaster management.



Case Example

- The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a biennial school-based survey (grades 9-12) conducted since 1991, providing publicly accessible data on health-related behaviors (Underwood et al., 2020).
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers open data on FEMA Disaster Declarations, including information on the frequency, location, type, declaration, and severity of disasters (CDC, n.d.).
- YRBS and FEMA surveillance data have successfully been combined to investigate the impact of weather-related disaster exposure on youth mental health (Riobueno et al., 2022).
- However, applying this method to understand the impact of weather-related disaster exposure on the mental health of queer youth encountered challenges.
 - One reason for the challenges faced is the small sample size for studying queer youth mental health in YRBS data.
 - The assessment of sexual identity in the YRBS has been inconsistent, with optional questions about sexual identity and the sex of sexual contacts added only since 2015.
 - Gender identity assessment is also inconsistent, as the national YRBS in 2021 did not include a question specifically addressing gender identity.
 - Additionally, the fragmentation of data sources makes it challenging to determine the influence of additional stressors, such as disasters, when existing data lack specific information on how those disasters affected the individuals surveyed.



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