School-based Suicide Prevention Program for LGBTQ Students

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SCHOOL-BASED SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM
FOR LGBTQ STUDENTS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Ching Lok Tse
May 2023
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Approved by:

Brooklyn Sapozhnikov-Levine, Faculty Supervisor, Social Work

Yawen Li, M.S.W. Research Coordinator
ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The study focused on the school-based suicide prevention program for LGBTQ students. It aimed to identify risk factors facing LGBTQ students and examine the areas for improvements on the current suicide prevention program to better support LGBTQ students.

**Methods:** The study was conducted with the support of mental health professionals serving high school students. The study adopted post-positivism and utilized ecological systems theory as the theoretical orientation. Qualitative research instruments including one-on-one interviews were employed for data collection.

**Results:** Seven themes emerged from this study, including the lack of social support and acceptance, internal struggles with identity in heteronormative society, risk assessment as the main preventive measure, over-generic suicide prevention program, the need for support group for LGBTQ students, LGBTQ-inclusive school culture and the need for LGBTQ inclusivity training for school staff.

**Implications:** This study provides mental health professionals with the insights into risk factors facing LGBTQ students and this study is helpful for them to gain a better understanding of the current suicide prevention initiatives in school settings. It also identifies what improvements should be made to current suicide prevention program to better support the gender and sexual minorities in school settings to minimize and prevent suicide risk.
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CHAPTER ONE
ASSESSMENT

Introduction
Chapter one focuses on the assessment phase of this proposed study. It starts by explaining the research focus and questions. This is followed by the discussion on post-positivism, which is the chosen research paradigm of this study. Next, a literature review is conducted to provide the overview and importance of the existing literature. This chapter also discusses the theoretical orientation of this study. Lastly, the potential contributions of this study to social work practice are described.

Research Statement
This study examined the topic of school-based suicide prevention program for LGBTQ students. School-based prevention program is defined as a universal and structural program that aims to provide students and school staff with preventive education on youth suicide. This may include regular seminars, training workshops and curriculum throughout the academic year (Miller, 2011). LGBTQ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning, and it is a term used to describe sexual orientations and gender identities that are different from the mainstream (i.e. heterosexual and cisgender) society (Kirst-Ashman, 2017). Suicide is defined as having suicidal ideas and thoughts
as well as attempting to take one’s life with a well-elaborated plan (Spirito et al., 2011).

This study collaborated with mental health professionals who worked at high school settings and had experience providing suicide prevention services for students. The research focus covered three main areas, including 1. Understanding the need for a school-based suicide prevention program for LGBTQ students 2. Current suicide prevention initiatives at school setting to support LGBTQ students and 3. Areas of improvement for the current school-based suicide prevention program for the LGBTQ students. These are the important research areas to cover because they offer insights into the significance of school-based suicide prevention program for LGBTQ students.

The first research area helped identify the risk factors that LGBTQ students are currently facing in today’s society, and it shed light on the importance of having a suicide prevention program at school. The second research area allowed us to understand the suicide-preventive measures that the schools have been taking to minimize suicide risks for LGBTQ students. The last research area highlighted the deficits of the current school-based suicide prevention for LGBTQ students and explored ways to improve the current program to support LGBTQ students.
Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

This study adopted post-positivism as the research paradigm. Post positivism follows an inductive approach and assumes that there exists an objective reality, but this reality cannot be completely understood due to the “immutable laws and mechanisms” that drive the reality (Morris, 2014, n.p.). It suggests that in order to study the reality, researchers have to engage themselves in the human experience and it is important for them to be conscious about their own prejudice and biases to maintain the objectivity of their study (Morris, 2014). Post-positivism is committed to qualitative research methodologies for the data collection process, and researchers gather qualitative data in naturalistic settings. For example, researchers will collect data by consulting with existing literature, interviewing with key players and observing the research subject (Morris, 2014).

This study followed the abovementioned assumptions of post-positivist paradigm. The research journals were reviewed and studied to identify the knowledge gap of the existing literature with regard to school-based suicide prevention for LGBTQ students. Then, mental health professionals working at school setting including social workers, therapists, psychologists and mental health providers were interviewed to collect qualitative data regarding their experience and opinions with the current suicide prevention program at school.

A post-positivist paradigm was the best approach to address this research topic. First, this study required the mental health professionals to share their
personal experience and opinions about the current suicide prevention program and the research methodologies such as interviews suggested by post positivism were suitable for this. Second, this study required the researcher to examine the research topic from an outsider’s perspective so as to objectively evaluate the school-based suicide prevention program. This is in line with the post-positivist notion of collecting data in naturalistic setting and it matches with the research focus of this study. Finally, due to the inductive nature of post-positivism, the researcher had no pre-existing idea of what kind of findings would be collected. This allowed themes that the researcher had not considered before to emerge and open up different possibilities during the data collection and analysis process.

Literature Review

Introduction

Suicide is a serious public health crisis with more than 48,000 individuals taking their lives in 2018, and it ranks the tenth leading cause of death among all age groups and the second leading cause of death for the youths aged between 15 and 19 in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). LGBTQ youths are often confronted with severe mental health conditions, and they are therefore statistically more susceptible to suicide than their peers (Aranmolate et al., 2017; Marshal et al., 2011; Renaud et al., 2010; Savin-Williams, 2001; Garofalo et al., 1999). Hence, suicide among
LGBTQ youths is a pressing social issue that deserves more attention and discussion.

This literature review provides an overview of suicide among LGBTQ youths in the United States. The first section will describe the prevalence of the issue through the presentation of existing statistics. The next section will examine the factors that cause LGBTQ youths to have suicidal thoughts or even attempt suicide, and discuss the impacts and consequences of this issue. Finally, this literature review will investigate the effective interventions and prevention strategies that are currently employed to address this social issue.

Severity and Prevalence of Suicide among LGBTQ Youths in the United States

Suicide among LGBTQ youths did not garner public attention in American society until the late 1980s. Ever since, multiple research projects have been conducted to shed light on the severity and prevalence of this pressing social issue (Aranmolate et al., 2017; Savin-Williams, 2001). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1989) first completed a national study on homosexual (i.e. gay and lesbian) youths and suicide in 1989 and it found that they are three times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers. Later research in 1997 reported that suicide by homosexual youths makes up more than one-third of all youth’s suicide in the United States (Radkowsky & Siegel, 1997). These early research efforts encouraged subsequent researchers to further explore this topic and the scope
of the research has extended to include bisexual, transgender and queer youths.

Research from 2001 to 2020 shows that between 40% and 46% of the LGBTQ youths have seriously considered committing suicide (The Trevor Project, 2020; Hatchel et al., 2019; Kann et al, 2016; D'Augelli et al., 2001). It is further reported that on average, 33% of LGBTQ youths had at least one suicide attempt (The Trevor Project, 2020; Kann et al, 2016; D'Augelli et al., 2001). The existing research spanning over 20 years demonstrates that suicide is an alarming, significant issue that affects large proportions of LGBTQ youths in the United States.

In addition, suicide is more prevalent among LGBTQ youths than among heterosexual youths. Research in 1999 showed that LGBTQ youths were 3.41 times more likely to commit suicide than their heterosexual peers (Garofalo et al., 1999). Kann et al. (2016) subsequently noted an increasing prevalence of this issue, reporting data in 2016 that LGBTQ youths were 4 - 6 times more likely to have suicide attempts than heterosexual youths, and most attempts resulted in injurious conditions that require medical treatment. The most recent data show a trend that an increasing number of LGBTQ youths are susceptible to suicide and this issue is getting more prevalent over the years from 1999 to 2016.

This trend is not limited to the United States. di Giacomo et al. (2018) conducted a cross-national meta-analysis to show the prevalence of the issue
in different countries. This study analyzed all the available research data on the suicide rate among LGBTQ youths in each country and came up with a ratio representing the likelihood of LGBTQ youths to attempt suicide in relation to the non-LGBTQ youths. Of the 10 countries reviewed, the United States and Canada share the same ratio of 3.27, meaning that LGBTQ youths are 3.27 times more likely than non-LGBTQ youth to attempt suicide. The United States has a lower ratio than New Zealand (11.7), Iceland (3.81) and Norway (3.81), but higher than Ireland (2.69), Switzerland (2.69), China (3.0), Taiwan (3.0), and Korea (3.0). It is notable that the differences between United States and other countries are relatively small (+/- around 0.70) except New Zealand. New Zealand has the highest ratio largely due to the unfavorable school culture such as discrimination, bullying and violence and lack of legal protection for LGBTQ youths compared to other countries.

Existing research also finds differences among various social groups. First, young females have a higher likelihood of attempting suicide than young males, and research finds that young females are more susceptible to depression and other mental health crises that lead to suicidal thoughts and behavior (Kann et al, 2016; D’Augelli et al, 2005). Also, the incidence rates differ among different racial-ethnic groups, with Black, Latino and Asian LGBTQ youths having higher attempted suicide rates than their White peers in the United States. The possible reason is that LGBTQ youths of color are less accepted in their culture than their white peers. The cultural oppression against
LGBTQ youths of color is more significant and this leads to a higher likelihood of attempted suicide (Kann et al., 2016; Sutter & Perrin, 2016).

Causes and Consequences of Suicide among LGBTQ Youths

Suicide among LGBTQ youths is a complex issue with several contributing factors. Existing studies have grouped the causes for suicide among LGBTQ youths into two main categories: psychological factors and socio-cultural factors (Hong et al., 2011; Rivers et al., 2018). Psychological factors focus on the psychological development that leads to suicide while socio-cultural factors focus on the oppression experienced by the LGBTQ youths.

According to Erikson’s (1950, 1968) psychosocial theory, adolescence is characterized as a period of “identity versus role confusion” where young individuals explore and construct their own identity, and some might experience confusion and uncertainty due to the difficulty in coping with the conflicting roles (Zastrow, 2018). This notion of role confusion is particularly true for the LGBTQ individuals at this developmental stage because they experience many challenges and crises when negotiating their sexual and gender identities in heteronormative society (McCallum & McLaren, 2010). The process of coming to terms with their sexual and gender identity can be excruciating and stressful, and LGBTQ youths often deny and suppress emotions and feelings as their defense mechanism (D’Augelli et al., 2001; Rotheram-Borus & Fernandez, 1995; Russell, 2016). They might also feel shame for deviating from social and cultural expectations, which can lead to isolation, self-rejection and low esteem (Rivers et
al, 2018). This puts them in danger of depression and could eventually cause self-injurious and suicidal behavior (Hong et al, 2011). Fullagar (2005) argued that the shame of being “queer” leads the LGBTQ youths to perceive themselves as failed selves and suicidal thoughts and behavior enable them to escape from the negative feelings such as unworthiness and rejection.

Although the psychological development of LGBTQ youths plays a part in suicide, existing research contends that socio-cultural environments are more culpable in suicide among sexual minority youths owing to socio-cultural oppression (Hatzenbuehler, 2011; Hong et al., 2011; Rivers et al., 2018; Woodford et al., 2018). Meyer’s (2003) minority stress theory lends support to this argument and explains that society stigmatizes and marginalizes LGBTQ youths, and in turn poses an increased risk for poor mental health and suicide. Research also finds that heterosexism and cisgenderism create unfavorable social environments where LGBTQ youths often experience peer victimization, overt and subtle discrimination, hate crimes and ostracism (Corliss et al., 2009; Hatchel et al., 2018; Hatzenbuehler, 2011; Marshal et al., 2011; Martin-Storey & Crosnoe, 2012; Mustanski & Liu, 2013; Rankin et al., 2010). In school setting, LGBTQ youths who suffer from microaggression and violence are highly susceptible to suicidal behavior (Woodford et al., 2018). Family setting is also stressful for LGBTQ youths and many of them face rejection after coming out to their parents (Gnan et al., 2019). LGBTQ youths with no/low level of family
support are reportedly 8.4 times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers who have higher level of family support (Ryan et al., 2009).

In addition, suicide affects the psychosocial development of the LGBTQ youths in negative ways. Erikson (1950, 1968) asserted that peer relationship is an important developmental event during adolescence and youths actively seek friendships as well as romantic relationships. However, studies show that suicidal LGBTQ youths have a higher likelihood to withdraw themselves from social activities and they find it difficult to build meaningful peer relationships (Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Hong et al, 2011). Hanschmidt et al. (2016) explored the adverse consequences of suicide and indicated that LGBTQ youths who are known to have attempted suicides might experience social stigmatization in form of shame, blame and avoidance. Their family members and friends often blame and shame the victims for their suicidal behavior, particularly when they are from a religious background where suicide is considered immoral (Hong et al., 2011). Some of them might distance themselves from the victims and even forsake their relationships with them (Hanschmidt et al., 2016). This reveals that suicide exerts negative consequences on the LGBTQ youths, preventing them from building peer relationships as part of their developmental growth.

Interventions against Suicide among LGBTQ Youths

A number of interventions have been explored at the micro and macro levels to tackle suicide among LGBTQ youths. For micro-practice, family-based interventions are found to be effective in alleviating the symptoms of depression
and decreasing the possibility of suicide attempts (Mustanski & Liu, 2012).

Diamond et al. (2013) proposed applying Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT) for LGBTQ youths. ABFT is a 16-week psychotherapy that utilizes emotion-focused techniques, and it aims to reduce suicide ideation by strengthening the parent-child relationship (O’Brien et al., 2016). An open trial with the use of a modified ABFT for LGBTQ youths was conducted and resulted in a decrease in suicide ideation from baseline to post-treatment (Diamond et al., 2013). Peer-led group intervention for parents, such as Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays and Parents of Transgender Individuals, and cognitive behavioral therapy are also proved to be effective in reducing depressive symptoms and preventing suicide behavior (Newcomb et al, 2019; O’Brien et al., 2016). In addition, school-based interventions are also found to be useful in helping the suicidal LGBTQ youths and the school nursing program is one of the successful interventions. The school nursing program aims to equip nurses with essential knowledge to work with suicidal LGBTQ students and make referrals to needed services after conducting psychiatric evaluation on each suicidal incident (Shattuck et al., 2020).

At the macro level, policy interventions are usually implemented to tackle suicide among LGBTQ youths and have proved to be an effective measure. Research suggests that inclusive anti-bullying policies, such as making gender sensitivity training compulsory for teachers and students as well as incorporating the anti-bullying and anti-discrimination education into school curriculum, could
protect the mental well-being of LGBTQ youths and reduce the risk of suicide ideation and attempts (Hatzenbuehler, 2011; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2009). LGBTQ youths who live in counties where school districts do not have inclusive anti-bullying policies are 2.25 times more likely to have attempted suicide than those who live in counties where school districts have policies in place to protect the LGBTQ youths (Hatzenbuehler & Keyes, 2013).

**Preventive Strategies for LGBTQ Youth’s Suicide**

Several preventive strategies have been formulated to keep suicide among the LGBTQ youths under control. The first effective strategy is to develop pro-LGBTQ organizations in school settings, including Gay-Straight Alliances and Pride Group (Heck et al., 2016; Ioverno et al., 2016; Willging et al., 2016). Gay-Straight Alliances (or some are now referred as Gender-Sexuality Alliances to include all sexual and gender minorities) aim to build a collaborative relationship with the cisgender heterosexual peers and create a safe and supportive school environment for LGBTQ youths through activism. Similarly, Pride Group is a peer support group that provides safe space for LGBTQ youths to share their struggles, concerns and experiences. The establishment of pro-LGBTQ organizations is considered as an effective approach to protect LGBTQ youths from depression and suicide (Willging et al., 2016). These organizations help increase social acceptance of LGBTQ youths and decrease suicide ideation with the reduction of discrimination, stigmatization, and victimization (Marx & Kettrey, 2016). Research also finds that LGBTQ youths whose schools have pro-LGBTQ
organizations experience less bullying and are at a lower risk of suicide compared to their peers whose schools have little or no presence of pro-LGBTQ organizations (Ioverno et al., 2016).

The second effective strategy is to promote comprehensive sexuality education in schools. Comprehensive sexuality education refers to LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum that aim to promote human’s sexual diversity and debunk stereotypes and discriminatory views around gender and sexual orientation (Baams et al., 2017). Snapp et al. (2015) contended that comprehensive sexuality education creates safer school climate for LGBTQ youths and helps lower bullying incidents. Baams et al. (2017) conducted research on the impacts of comprehensive sexuality education and indicated that in schools with comprehensive sexuality education, LGBTQ youths experience fewer microaggressions and their non-LGBTQ peers are more willing to intervene in cases of victimization and discrimination against LGBTQ students, when compared to schools without comprehensive sexuality education. In this regard, the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education creates more favorable and supportive social environment for LGBTQ youths, which helps improve their mental health and decrease the possibility of suicide ideation and attempts (Baams et al., 2017).

Both pro-LGBTQ organizations and comprehensive sexuality education are proven to be effective preventive strategies according to the existing research data and findings. However, it is important to note that these preventive
strategies, despite their effectiveness, are faced with obstacles in terms of their implementation. For example, in some states with strong conservative influence, the development of pro-LGBTQ organizations might be discouraged, and comprehensive sexuality education might not pass the school boards and districts. These strategies may also face backlash and opposition in Christian schools.

Conclusion

To conclude, this literature review provided a wealth of information and knowledge on the topic of suicidality among LGBTQ youths, and it laid a strong foundation for the researcher to develop this study on school-based suicide prevention for LGBTQ youths. The researcher consulted with the research data and information in this literature review to design and shape the research focus and framework. In addition, the causes and consequences of suicide among LGBTQ youths as discussed in this literature review offered important knowledge for the researcher to identify some of the risk factors that might affect the LGBTQ students and examine if the current school-based suicide prevention program was well-situated to minimize these risks. Finally, the preventive strategies explored in this literature review helped the researcher to examine if schools incorporated these strategies in their current suicide prevention program and if changes need to be made to improve the current program.
Theoretical Orientation

Morris (2014) explains that post-positivist research does not follow a particular theoretical orientation as a guiding framework due to the inductive nature of the research, but nonetheless the researcher needs to be aware of the theories that offer insights and understanding of the research topic and incorporate the theories into the development of the research focus. In this study, ecological systems theory is highly relevant to this research topic and was used to guide the development and understanding of the research focus.

Ecological systems theory is also called ecological model and it was established by Bronfenbrenner (1979) to explain the ecology of human development and offer a better understanding of the conditions, processes and factors contributing to the human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). It emphasizes how an individual comes in contact, interacts and functions within their physical and socio-cultural environments (Rimer et al., 2005; Zastrow et al., 2018). In other words, this theory proposes that human development is conditioned within a complex, multi-layered system of relationships and interactions that are influenced by multiple levels of the surrounding environment (Berks, 2006).

Ecological systems theory was particularly useful for this study because it helped analyze the risk factors for suicide LGBTQ students and indicate the importance of implementing suicide prevention program in school. With the application of ecological systems theory, the researcher was able to place
LGBTQ students in the social context and identify how different social systems oppress LGBTQ students and increase their risks for suicide. The ecological theory was also used to examine how school-based suicide prevention program brings different social systems together to support LGBTQ students. For example, researcher looked into how the suicide prevention program encourages the family system and school system to work together to prevent suicide among LGBTQ students. Also, the ecological theory helped the researcher understand the limitations of suicide prevention program. For example, researcher placed school-based mental health professionals in different social contexts and looked into what difficulties they may encounter in each context when implementing the prevention program. Therefore, ecological theory helped develop and understand the research focus of this study by analyzing individuals’ contact with their surrounding environment.

Contribution of the Study to Micro and/or Macro Social Work Practice

This study has the potential to make valuable contributions for social work practice at the micro and macro levels. At the micro level, this study could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the risk factors that lead to the suicidal tendency of LGBTQ students. This allows school counselors and social workers to look into what specific and relevant preventive education and training can be provided in the suicide prevention program to better support LGBTQ students. At the macro level, this study could offer insights into the effectiveness and
limitations of school-based suicide prevention program for LGBTQ students. This study might be able to provide evidence-based research data for the social work practitioners to refine the current suicide prevention program being implemented in different school districts in California and put forward a policy change to incorporate components that are geared towards LGBTQ students into the current suicide prevention program. This study might also provide a solid ground for the educators and social work practitioners to advocate for allocation of more public funding to implement better-designed, more gender-inclusive suicide prevention program in high schools.

Summary

This chapter discusses the assessment phase of this research project. The research focus is to evaluate the current school-based suicide prevention program for LGBTQ youths and this study worked with school-based mental health professionals to explore why suicide prevention program is important for LGBTQ students, what current suicide prevention programs are being conducted to support LGBTQ students and finally what improvements that need to be made for the current suicide prevention programs to better serve LGBTQ students. This research project adopted post-positivism as the chosen research paradigm. The literature review provided insight into the prevalence of LGBTQ suicide and existing interventions and the researcher can take advantage of some important data and information in the literature review to design research topics to be
covered in this study. The ecological systems theory served as the theoretical framework for this research project as it allowed the researchers to put the research subjects in different social contexts for analysis. Finally, the research could make a number of potential contributions to the micro and macro social work practice, such as offering valuable data and information for social work practitioners to design better suicide prevention program as well as affecting policy change to encourage more public funding for suicide prevention program for LGBTQ youths.
CHAPTER TWO

ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

This chapter discusses the engagement phase of this study. It begins by describing the research site with details such as services offered, characteristics of workers, and the region served. Then, it introduces the engagement strategies for gatekeepers at research site and explains how the researcher prepares for the data collection. It also discusses the diversity, ethical, and political issues of this research and suggests corresponding strategies to address them. Lastly, it discusses the role of technology in this research and provides a chapter summary.

Research Site

This study did not form an official partnership with any research site, but the participants of this study happened to come from the same school district serving high school students. The mental health professionals interviewed for this study offer comprehensive services to support the physical, mental, and psychological well-being of the students. They partner with and make referrals to local health agencies when their students need any health and medical support. They also offer professional mental wellness support services, including substance abuse programs, suicide prevention programs, and comprehensive
counseling and educationally related mental services for their students. They also have a foster and homeless youth center to help the at-risk youth.

San Gabriel Valley is their service region, and it is a racially diverse area with a predominant Hispanic or Latino and Asian population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The students they serve are usually youths with mental health needs such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. The students can be from different schools within the unified school district with a wide age range from 5 to 18 years old. The staff at the department are social workers with Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and Pupil Personnel Services Credential (PPSC) qualifications. The demographic information about the staff is unavailable. The staff are divided into different units according to the age groups and needs of the students.

To reiterate, this study did not partner with any school or institution and did not have an official research site; an approval letter was not required for this study for this reason. However, it occurred that the study participants were all from the same school district through the recruitment process and therefore information about this school district is provided in this section as all study participants were from the same work environment.

Engagement Strategies for Gatekeepers at Research Site

Gatekeepers refer to the individuals who provide access for researchers to conduct research, and they play an intermediary role between researchers and
participants in the research process (Clark, 2010; De Laine, 2000). In most cases, researchers need to obtain permissions from the gatekeepers to observe the research site and approach the participants, especially vulnerable populations, for data collection (Kay, 2019). It is crucial to develop a positive relationship with the gatekeepers so that the researchers can have more freedom and flexibility to spend adequate time at the field and generate usable data (Clark, 2010).

In this research, the gatekeeper was the researcher’s personal contact, and they were working as a mental health professional in a school district at the time of this study. They knew several school-based mental health professionals who have experience providing suicide prevention services for students. The researcher had to convince this gatekeeper to give permission to gain access to their personal contacts to conduct this research. Also, since this research did not partner with a research site, all the study participants were also gatekeepers themselves because each participant had the right to deny the researcher’s access to the research at any time.

To make the research process smooth and efficient, the researcher had to establish engagement strategies for gatekeepers. The first strategy was research co-development. There has been a negative perception about researchers being “takers” rather than “givers”, which means that the researchers usually conduct study at a research site, gather data, and leave without making much contribution. The strategy of research co-development was to engage the
gatekeepers in the research process. In this study, the researcher asked what the gatekeepers wanted to find out about suicide prevention for LGBTQ students at their school district and explored the possibility of incorporating their perspectives into the research questions. Also, the researcher proposed to organize a workshop or presentation at their school district at the end of the research. The researcher proposed to provide the gatekeepers with some valuable data upon the completion of the research project. Therefore, this strategy of research co-development garnered the support from the gatekeepers as they might deem this research project as constructive, beneficial, and valuable for their school district.

Another strategy was the production of promotional materials. The researcher created a promotional flyer to draw attention to this pressing issue of LGBTQ youth’s suicide and it was distributed during the recruitment process (See Appendix A). The researcher also used email to recruit mental health professionals to participate in this research study (See Appendix B). The production of promotional materials successfully gathered more support from the mental health professionals who were interested in the topic of suicide prevention for LGBTQ populations.

Self-Preparation

Morris (2014) indicates that it is crucial for researchers to engage in strategic planning and develop sensitivity at the engagement stage as a form of
preparation prior to data collection. For this study, the researcher produced a strategic plan to make sure the research process is as smooth as possible. The researcher conducted a thorough literature review to keep abreast of the information about suicide among LGBTQ youths and the current practices for suicide prevention program. Through a detailed literature review, the researcher can develop constructive and insightful interview questions. The researcher also consulted with their academic supervisor to make sure the design of the research questions was appropriate, and they had sought their advice before the fieldwork started.

In addition, the researcher developed a high level of sensitivity towards the participants through the process of self-reflection. The researcher had the most respectful way of asking interview questions, especially questions about sensitive topics. The researcher paid attention to the language and tone of the voice when asking questions to make the participants as comfortable as possible. The researcher set a boundary of what to ask and what not to ask in the interviews, and what topics to avoid. The researcher also conducted a rehearsal with colleagues, classmates, and their academic supervisor to practice asking questions and get valuable feedback from them. The researcher also conducted a mock interview to get familiar with the whole data collection process.
Diversity Issues

Morris (2014) points out that during the engagement phase of the study, it is important to be aware of the diversity issues at the research site and understand the differences between the researcher and the study participants. The first diversity issue arising from this research was the differences in age. There was some age difference between the researcher and the study participants, and the generation gap makes it difficult for the researcher to communicate freely and effectively with participants. In order to solve this issue, the researcher spent substantial time learning how to communicate with older generation and keep track of the relevant topics to create some common topics to break the ice.

The second diversity issue was the differences in culture and ethnicity. The research participants were from a unified school district located in San Gabriel Valley and it is a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse region in Los Angeles County. The study participants came from diverse backgrounds, as opposed to the background of the researcher who is a Chinese immigrant from Hong Kong. The researcher equipped himself with a high level of racial and cultural sensitivity prior to data collection. The researcher attended sensitivity training courses to learn the taboos and cultural practices of different racial-ethnic groups. The researcher also avoided discussing sensitive topics that could potentially offend the participants of diverse backgrounds.
Ethical Issues

Morris (2014) suggests that researchers must prevent any harm from being done to the study participants during the research process. Researchers need to evaluate the potential negative impacts of the study and uphold anonymity and confidentiality for the study participants. The first ethical issue of this research was the suicide risks of the participants. This research dealt with sensitive issues such as sexuality and suicide. There was a possibility that at any time of the study, the participants might disclose their suicidal thoughts to the researcher, or the researcher might notice indicators of suicidal ideation in participants. The researcher was ethically obligated to report these risks to protect the participants, even if it is against their will. In order to solve this ethical dilemma, the researcher established safety guidelines to respond to emergency situations like suicide threats and claims. The researcher also produced a research participation agreement for the study participants to inform them of the researcher’s legal responsibilities to disclose and report suicide risks to the authority prior to their participation.

In addition, another ethical issue was anonymity and confidentiality. This research dealt with sensitive topic of sexual minorities, and it was the researcher’s ethical responsibility to maintain the anonymity of the participants and keep their information confidential. Some mental health professionals who identified themselves as LGBTQ might not be out of closet to their friends and family and could face harms if their sexual identity was revealed. The researcher
addressed this ethical issue by setting up strict confidential procedures at the research design stage. The researcher used pseudo names in the research project so that their identity was kept anonymous. The researcher would also destroy all the private confidential information of the participants after the research is concluded.

**Political Issues**

The common political issue in post-positivist research was the concerns from the gatekeepers who might worry that their reputation could be tarnished in case the research exposes something negative about their practices and procedures (Reeves, 2010). Some gatekeepers might deny researcher’s access to the participants in the middle of the research process. This political issue was also a concern for this research. To tackle this potential issue, the researcher actively engaged the gatekeepers in the research project and formed a partnership with them. For example, the researcher would contribute the research data to the study participants to improve the suicide prevention program at their school district. The researcher also promised to keep their information anonymous so that they would not worry about their school district being put in a bad light through this research.
The Role of Technology

This research project made extensive use of technology. First, the researcher used OneSearch and Google Scholar internet search engines to conduct literature review and keep track of the current information on suicide prevention for LGBTQ youths. During the engagement phase, an audio recorder was utilized in the interviews to collect data. Due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, the software ZOOM was used to conduct virtual interviews. The researcher also used Microsoft Office software programs such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint to organize data and produce infographics. The researcher also used emails to keep in touch with gatekeepers and participants for important updates and announcements.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter explains the details of the engagement phase of this research. First, this research did not officially partner with a study site but the study participants were from the Department of Student and Health Services of a school district in San Gabriel Valley region in Los Angeles County. To engage gatekeepers for this research, the researcher adopted two strategies – research co-development and production of promotional materials. The researcher prepared for the research through strategic planning, and the researcher developed a high level of sensitivity towards participants through constant practice and rehearsal prior to the data collection. The researcher also
identified differences in age, culture, and ethnicity as diversity issues and addressed these potential issues by learning more about the older generation and attending sensitivity courses. The researcher also identified suicide risks, anonymity, and confidentiality as ethical issues, and the researcher addressed these issues by establishing procedures, protocols, and agreements with the study participants prior to the collection of data. The political issue of this research was the gatekeepers’ concerns of reputation, and this researcher addressed this issue by forming partnership with gatekeepers and keeping the research site anonymous. Lastly, the researcher made use of technology such as Internet search engines, audio recorder, ZOOM software, Microsoft Office, emails, and social media platforms during the engagement phase.
CHAPTER THREE
IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the implementation phase of this study. It starts with discussing the characteristics of the study participants and the selection strategy. Next, it examines the qualitative research instruments that would be employed to gather data in this research. This chapter also identifies the phases of data collection and explains the procedures for data recording and stages of data analysis. Finally, this chapter provides a summary.

Study Participants

The study participants of this research were nine mental health professionals providing services for high school students and they worked in a school district in Los Angeles County. All the study participants held bachelor’s degree with mental health related majors including social work and psychology. Seven of them also held master’s degree in social work or marriage and family therapy with clinical licenses while two of them were currently enrolled in MSW program. They came from different racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. Six of them were of Hispanic descent while three of them were Caucasian. The study participants all identified themselves as female and they came from different religious backgrounds including Christianity, Catholicism and Atheism. The main
language spoken by the study participants was English, but some participants also spoke other languages such as Spanish. Lastly, most of the study participants did not disclose their sexual orientation but one of them identified themselves as part of the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) community.

Selection of Participants

This research employed a purposive sampling approach in the selection of study participants. Unlike random sampling approach, a purposive sampling approach aims to look for study participants who are likely to offer data that are most applicable and useful for the research focus, and it is intended for qualitative research (Morris, 2014). Since this research employed qualitative methodology, a purposive sampling approach was most suitable. In particular, criterion sampling was utilized for this study. Criterion sampling focuses on particular characteristics of the study participants and the researcher carefully selects participants who meet certain criteria to produce useful data for the research (Morris, 2014). Since this study focused on school-based suicide prevention program for LGBTQ students in high school setting, the participants could not be any school-based professional with mental health service background. Therefore, the study participants who were recruited for this research had to have experience working at school settings and offering suicide
prevention services for the LGBTQ students, so as to generate informative and useful data generated for this research.

Data Gathering

Qualitative research instruments including one-on-one interviews were utilized in this research. The researcher conducted nine one-on-one interviews. The researcher consulted with the research supervisor to develop and refine the interview questions and finalized a set of interview questions for one-on-one interviews (see Appendix C). The researcher also categorized the interview questions as descriptive questions. Descriptive questions aim to gather various public opinions of a phenomenon (Trochim, 2001). For example, in this research, the descriptive questions included “Do you think suicide prevention program is important for LGBTQ students? Why or why not?” and “Do you think improvements need to be made in the current preventive initiatives to better support LGBTQ students? What improvements need to be made?”. These questions could help find out the importance of suicide prevention program for LGBTQ students in school settings and the shortcomings of the current program that need to be improved.

Phases of Data Collection

The researcher took various steps in completing the one-on-one interviews. During one-on-one interviews, the researcher first made an
announcement to the study participants. The announcement included the purpose and importance of the study, the participants’ roles in the research, research expectations and ground rules, and disclosure on confidentiality. The researcher then obtained the participant’s consent to conduct and record the interviews. Next, the researcher organized some ice-breaking activities to familiarize themselves with the study participants and began asking them interview questions. The researcher took notes and highlighted important findings during the interview process. At the end of the interview session, the researcher had a question-and-answer session and provided the study participants with their personal contact information in case they had further questions about the study.

Data Recording

A voice recorder was used to keep track of the data and the researcher generated the transcripts of the interview sessions by listening and typing them out using computer. The researcher obtained written consent from the study participants prior to recording the sessions. The researcher developed a note-taking template and used it as a tool to jot down some important findings and mark the timing where the important information was shared by the participants. The researcher also kept two different research journals - one for the research data collected through study participants and another one for researcher’s own reflections and perceptions on the interview sessions. The researcher also kept a
record of the materials provided by the mental health professionals for the current suicide prevention initiatives at their current school district.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis process for this research involved three main parts – transcribing, cleaning, and coding. The researcher first transcribed the audio recording into written texts by listening to the recording and manually typing out the interviews with the use of a computer. The researcher also organized the notes taken during the interview sessions into complete research summary and reports. After this, the researcher cleaned up the incomplete and erroneous data, such as the inaudible parts in the interview or some irrelevant information shared by the study participants. The final step was coding, which is a process where the researcher developed a framework of themes and patterns through interpretation and review of the narrative data (Gibbs, 2007).

This research followed a bottom-up analysis approach, which is an inductive and open-ended way to analyze data and is in line with the post-positivist paradigm adopted by this research (Morris, 2014). Morris (2014) identifies four stages of bottom-up analysis, including open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and conditional matrix. The researcher followed this framework to analyze the research data.

The first stage was open coding. The researcher analyzed the data with an open mind and explored all potential interpretations of the data (Morris, 2014).
The researcher reviewed chunks of data to capture some interesting and meaningful narrative segments and assigned codes to these segments. The second stage was axial coding. The researcher grouped the similar codes into categories and made statements that showed the connection and linkage between the categories (Morris, 2014). The third stage was selective coding. The researcher combined and refined the categories into one theme, and multiple themes were developed within the study (Morris, 2014). The final stage was conditional/consequential matrix. The researcher stated how the newly developed themes provided insights into the societal context of the research and discussed how they affect different levels of society (Morris, 2014).

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter discusses how this research was implemented. The study participants were mental health professionals serving high school students in a school district with diverse racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. They were selected through criterion sampling. Qualitative research instruments including one-on-one interviews were employed in this research and descriptive research questions were developed to gather data. A voice recorder, note-taking template, and research journals were utilized to keep a record of the data. Finally, this research adopted a bottom-up analysis approach, which is a four-stage approach that includes open coding, axial coding, selective coding and conditional/consequential matrix to analyze the data.
CHAPTER FOUR
EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the evaluation phase of this study. It starts with an analysis of the data collected from the study participants and it examines the themes that were developed from the findings. Next, it provides an interpretation of the data and discusses the implications for micro and macro practice. Finally, a chapter summary is provided.

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed the audio recordings for the purpose of data analysis. Through the process of open coding, axial coding and selective coding, a few themes were developed for this study.

Lack of Social Support and Acceptance

The first theme emerging from this study was lack of social support and acceptance. When asked about the importance of suicide prevention program for LGBTQ students, more than half of the participants responded that LGBTQ students need such program at school because they lack support from their social systems including their peers and families. Below is a table of direct quotes regarding the lack of social support and acceptance.
Table 1. Direct Quotes about the Lack of Social Support and Acceptance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Lack of Social Support and Acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I feel that they may be more vulnerable because some may not be accepted by their parents for who they are and I feel like parental support as a teenager is important” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel like they may not be accepted by their peers either. There are some students who are still not accepting or tolerant of different people” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because students in that population struggle with societal acceptance and sometimes even family acceptance” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Internal Struggles with Identity in Heteronormative Society

The second theme arising from this research was the internal struggles with identity in heteronormative society. Four out of nine participants indicated that LGBTQ students are more susceptible to suicide ideation because they realize that they are different than their peers when coming to terms with their gender identity and sexual orientation. This has made them doubt their self-worth and they are constantly worried how the others perceive them. This is another reason suicide prevention program is important for LGBTQ students as indicated by the study participants. Below is a table of direct quotes about internal struggles with identity in heteronormative society.
Table 2. Direct Quotes about Internal Struggles with Identity in Heteronormative Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Struggles with Identity in Heteronormative Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“If they think differently or do differently they think of them as maybe outsiders and then the individuals internalize that and that is then how they get to that type of conclusion. They forget about their self worth and then, yeah.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…because I’ve noticed in some of my clients that the feeling of acceptance is lower and I think a lot of that has to do with their gender identity and sexual orientation.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yeah, and I feel like they need to feel supported within the school setting because often times they feel ostracized or different.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It is also coming to terms with things themselves, internally. So any type of support that is available to help guide them through their self discovery or navigate through social and personal acceptance with their families or whatever.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Risk Assessment as the Main Preventive Measure

The third theme of this study was risk assessment as the main preventive measure in schools. When asked about the kind of preventive measure being taken at school to support LGBTQ students with suicidal ideation, all of the study participants shared that they would conduct risk assessments whenever students show signs of suicidal risks and they would establish a safety plan to prevent the students from committing suicide. Below is a table of direct quotes about risk assessment as main preventive measure.
Table 3. Direct Quotes about Risk Assessment as Main Preventive Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Assessment as Main Preventive Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I don't know if there is anything specifically for LGBTQ but there is specifically for just suicide in general. I know we provide suicide risk assessments and from there we assess if students are at risk of possibly attempting suicide and from there we take action.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I've never really done that besides risk assessments and stuff for an individual client. I don't think that counts though. I've never really participated in a program or anything like that.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Honestly my experience has more to do with the mandated reporting. So understanding my obligations and then on top of that just the education of risk assessments which I've conducted some. So really at this time my experience with suicide prevention is me on a singular level with my background from schooling and then resources in terms of the contacts I have with certain students.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because what we do is not specific to any type of race or gender or sexual orientation, what we do is a basic risk assessment.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over-generic Suicide Prevention Program

The fourth theme of this study was over-generic suicide prevention program. When asked about the whether there is a suicide prevention program that is specific towards supporting LGBTQ populations at the school setting, one-thirds of the study participants shared that the current suicide prevention appears to be over generic and stated that it is important to make such program more specific and inclusive to support LGBTQ students. Below is a table of the direct quotes about over-generic suicide prevention program.
Table 4. Direct Quotes about Over-generic Suicide Prevention Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Over-generic Suicide Prevention Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Maybe we could work on making it more specific toward minorities like what you were saying so that we can be more aware of the populations.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t think it’s directly related to one population I think it is just overall social skills and I don’t think it has anything to do directly with suicide or anything. I think it is just about getting along with others and getting along in society.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Need for Support Group for LGBTQ Students

The fifth theme of this study was the need for support group for LGBTQ students. When asked about the improvements or changes that need to be made for the current school-based suicide prevention program, two study participants indicated that the creation of support group at school setting would be helpful in preventing suicides among LGBTQ students. Below is a table of the direct quotes about the need for support group for LGBTQ students.
Table 5. Direct Quotes about the Need for Support Group for LGBTQ Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Need for Support Group for LGBTQ Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Maybe creating a program where a student could say anonymously that they need help and reach out so they feel safe and are getting that response back and then maybe little by little having them come to the person and once they feel safe to talk to an adult or person who is there to support.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There used to be but now there is no longer an ally group which I think kind of goes hand and hand with suicide prevention. The more strength and support that a student has the better.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LGBTQ-inclusive School Culture

The sixth theme derived from this study was LGBTQ-inclusive school culture. Four participants discussed the importance of creating LGBTQ-inclusive school culture as a major protective factor to support LGBTQ students. They expressed that the school leadership needs to take a proactive role in cultivating this inclusive and diverse culture in supporting LGBTQ populations at school. Below is the table of direct quotes about LGBTQ-inclusive school culture.
Table 6. Direct Quotes about LGBTQ-inclusive School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LGBTQ-inclusive School Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I think they could certainly be more appointed to students and not just LGBTQ but minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>population students like making sure things are in Spanish as well and making sure that the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>materials are showing LGBTQ people.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Maybe there can be programs in place in general for other students to learn about that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community because I feel that if they learn more about it, maybe it could help homophobic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attitudes.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Is this curriculum inclusive about population? Not so much so actually. I think what is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>needed and what we can do on our end to highlight that or make it a little more inclusive is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to add to that presentation piece of the current SOS curriculum and bring in that LGBTQ piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to the presentation and also present resources that are available for them like the Trevor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project and make them aware that there are other resources for that population.” (March,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LGBTQ Inclusivity Training for School Staff

The final theme found in this study was the need for LGBTQ inclusivity training for school staff. Around one-third of the study participants shared that it would be beneficial for school staff to have more education and training about LGBTQ issues so that they can have better understanding on how to support and prevent suicide ideation among LGBTQ populations. Below is a table of the direct quotes about LGBTQ inclusivity training for school staff.
Table 7. Direct Quotes about LGBTQ Inclusivity Training for School Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LGBTQ Inclusivity Training for School Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The only difference is that maybe the person giving the risk assessment whether it be myself or a supervisor can always learn more about the LGBTQ community and that will probably help our students better so I guess that is something I would change.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel like overall, the suicide prevention needs to be increased but I do feel like the LGBTQ community is a very special population that requires more training for professionals that are working with them to better suit their needs.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel like maybe we could be in-service a little bit better or have specific trainings on working with the LGBTQ community.” (March, 2022)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Interpretation

The intent of this study was to examine the risk factors for suicide facing LGBTQ students, the characteristics of current school-based suicide prevention program and what improvements need to be made for such program from mental health professionals’ perspectives. This study produced a lot of useful data that were translated into different themes that address the purpose of this research.

To begin with, most participants indicated that LGBTQ students are more susceptible to suicide risk because of the lack of social support and acceptance. This finding is in agreement with the current research conducted by Hatchel et al. (2018) and Gnan et al. (2019) that the lack of peer support and family acceptance are contributing factors for suicidal behavior among LGBTQ youths. In school setting, LGBTQ youths often experience microaggressions,
discrimination and victimization from their peers while at home some families may be rejected by their parents and family environment would be stressful for them (Hatchel et al., 2018; Gnan et al., 2019). Due to the lack of social support and acceptance, the study participants believe that it is important to have school-based suicide prevention program geared towards LGBTQ students.

In addition, study participants also found the internal struggles with identity in heteronormative society as another reason why suicide prevention program for LGBTQ youths. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Woodford et a. (2018), which discussed how socio-cultural factors, in particular heteronormative society and stigmatization of gender and sexual minorities, contribute to suicidality among LGBTQ youths. McCallum and McLaren (2010) further explained that LGBTQ youths may experience identity confusion and crisis when they notice that they are different from their peers in terms of their behavior and gender expressions, and this internal struggle that they experience when coming to terms with their gender and sexual identity could lead to mental health issues and even suicidality. Therefore, this is another reason the participants expressed that suicide prevention program is particularly important for LGBTQ students.

Apart from the importance of suicide prevention program for LGBTQ students, this study also explored how the current suicide prevention looks like at school setting. First, most participants stated that risk assessment is the main preventive measure at school setting. They explained that most of the time, they
would only conduct risk assessment on students who display signs of suicide risks and there is a lack of proactive preventive approach at school setting to support the at-risk students before something bad happens. Second, some study participants expressed that the current suicide prevention program is over-generic and it is not specific towards the vulnerable populations such as LGBTQ and racial minority students. Therefore, these findings show that the current school-based suicide prevention program takes a reactive approach, which means that the mental health staff would only implement some sort of preventive measures when something bad happens like students displaying suicidal symptoms, and it is not specific enough to address the needs for the diverse student populations including LGBTQ students.

The final part of the data was associated with the improvements for current suicide prevention program. The first area of improvement shared by the study participants was the need for support groups for LGBTQ students. This finding is consistent with the study of Heck et al. (2016) which explored the roles of pro-LGBTQ support groups such as Gay-Straight Alliance and Pride Group in protecting LGBTQ students from suicidal behavior and other mental health issues. This shows that the schools should consider establishing LGBTQ-specific support groups to offer LGBTQ students a safe space to support one another to minimize suicidal thoughts during the time of challenges and crisis.

The second area of improvement suggested by the participants was to create LGBTQ-inclusive school culture. Snapp et al. (2015) shared similar view
that supportive school climate provides a strong protective factor to prevent suicidality among LGBTQ students and this can be achieved through the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education to normalize and destigmatize gender and sexual minorities. It is important that schools cultivate a culture where LGBTQ students are respected and supported, and zero tolerance to LGBTQ discrimination is fostered.

The final area of improvement expressed by the participants was to the need for LGBTQ inclusivity training for school staff. It was shared that staff may lack knowledge and sensitivity when working with LGBTQ students. This finding agrees with the research by Hatzenbuehler and Keyes (2013) which examined the effectiveness of compulsory gender sensitivity training for school staff in minimizing overall suicide risk for LGBTQ students. It is important that schools' staff be equipped with knowledge and expertise on how to work with LGBTQ students and be a resource for them when they face difficulties and challenges in school settings.

Implication of Findings for Micro and Marco Practice

The research findings provide a lot of insights into the micro and macro practice for social workers. At the micro level, this study offers social workers a better understanding of the risk factors confronting the LGBTQ youth populations. As discussed in this study, the lack of social support and acceptance, and the internal struggles with identity in heteronormative society
are two risk factors contributing to the suicidality among LGBTQ students. School-based social workers and mental health professionals can pay particular attention to these risk factors when conducting assessment with suicidal LGBTQ students and explore corresponding therapeutic strategies that tackle these risk factors when formulating the intervention plan for their clients.

In addition, this study also found that there is a lack of proactive suicide prevention program other than risk assessment and the current program is too generic for LGBTQ students. Considering these findings, the school-based mental health professionals can consider implementing more preventive initiatives such as setting up regular counseling or therapy sessions and support groups with at-risk LGBTQ youths to support them and minimize their suicide risk. Also, they can also work on creating a more inclusive assessment and therapy materials for mental health staff to use when working with LGBTQ students.

Also, this study can offer insights for school-based mental health professionals to engage in macro-level advocacy work in school settings. First, they can advocate for the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education as part of school curriculum to create LGBTQ-inclusive school culture to enhance the protective factors for LGBTQ students and minimize their risks for suicide. For example, they can establish collaborative relationships with outside organizations such as Planned Parenthood and LGBTQ centers and invite their staff to host educational workshops in school to promote comprehensive
sexuality education and cultivate a culture where all students learn more about inclusivity and sensitivity for gender and sexual minorities.

In addition, school-based mental health professionals can also advocate for policy change in schools and foster the development of compulsory gender inclusivity training for all the staff. As indicated in this study, it is important that school staff have the knowledge on how to work with LGBTQ populations and provide appropriate support for them in case of crisis. Therefore, a regular mandatory training on LGBTQ inclusivity should be part of the staff orientation. For this policy to be implemented, school-based mental health professionals would need to work with school management and explain the importance of such training to better support their students who are part of LGBTQ community.

Summary

In summary, this chapter addresses the evaluation process of the study. The data analysis of this research is provided, and seven themes, including the lack of social support and acceptance, internal struggles with identity in heteronormative society, risk assessment as the main preventive measure, over-generic suicide prevention program, the need for support group for LGBTQ students, LGBTQ-inclusive school culture and the need for LGBTQ inclusivity training for school staff, emerge from this study. This chapter also provides an interpretation of these themes and offer insights on how the school-based mental
health professionals better support LGBTQ students to minimize suicide risks for micro and macro practice.
CHAPTER FIVE
TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

Introduction

This chapter discusses the termination and follow up phase of the study. First, it explains the termination process of this study and discusses how to communicate the findings to study site and study participants. Next, it addresses the ongoing relationships with study participants. Finally, this chapter provides a dissemination plan followed by a chapter summary.

Termination of Study

The researcher provided the gatekeepers and study participants with a research timeline so that they could keep track of each stage of the research and would roughly know the time when the research would end. The researcher verbally notified the participants when the research enters the termination stage and expressed gratitude and thanked the participants for their valuable input. At the termination stage, the researcher provided them with the contact information of the researcher should they have any follow-up inquiry.

Communication of Findings to Study Site and Study Participants

Regarding the communication of research findings, the researcher offered to organize a presentation to share the research findings, but the study
participants respectfully declined the offer. The researcher also intended to create a website with infographics of the study findings, but the study participants would like to keep the information confidential and declined this offer as well. In the end, the researcher produced a report with the research findings and shared with the study participants for the purpose of their future practice and reference.

Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants

The researcher provided study participants with their contact information. They are welcome to reach out to the researcher if they have any follow-up inquiry regarding this research. The researcher also personally reached out to the study participants 6 months after the research to see if they had any needs and further questions for this study.

Dissemination Plan

This study would be published at the university scholar works website of California State University, San Bernardino (https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu) and it would also be disseminated at the School of Social Work Research Symposium at the end of the academic year.

Summary

This chapter provides the details on termination and follow-up phase of this study. First, the termination process of this study is explained. For example,
verbal notification is provided to the participants at the end of the study with statement from the researcher to express gratitude. This chapter also discusses the communication of the findings. The offers to host a presentation and create website were declined by the study participants but the researcher provided the study participants with a research summary for their future reference. The researcher also provided contact information for the study participants for any inquiry and personally checked in with the study participants for any follow-up issues. The dissemination plan was also provided in this chapter and the findings would be published by California State University, San Bernardino.
APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER
Mental Health Professionals needed

If you are a mental health professional working in high school setting and providing suicide prevention support, you may be eligible to participate in this study.

Research on Suicide Prevention for LGBTQ Students

We’re looking for mental health professionals who are working in high school setting and providing suicide prevention support to participate in this study on school-based suicide prevention programs for LGBTQ students.

This study aims to examine suicide prevention support for LGBTQ students at high school setting. It also seeks to understand the impacts of the current program and what modifications should be made to better suit the sexual minorities in the high school settings.

Participants will be asked to participate in:

- Individual interview session (around 30 minutes)
- Virtual interviews (ZOOM/ other electronic means)

Interview questions will be about suicide prevention support or program at your school district and your experience in providing suicide prevention support for LGBTQ students.

Location

- Virtual interview via ZOOM or other other electronic means

Are you eligible?

- Mental health professional working in high school (e.g. school social worker, school psychologist, social work/MFT interns, behavioral interventionist, school counselors)
- Have experience in providing suicide prevention support

If you’re unsure if you meet the requirements, or you would like to participate in this research, please email Jacky Tse (He/Him) at 007413820@coyote.csusb.edu

This study has been approved by the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407
909.537.5501 | fax: 909.537.7029
http://socialwork.csusb.edu
APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT EMAIL
Dear all,

**Study Participants Needed for Research Study on Suicide Prevention for LGBTQIA students**

My name is Chinglok “Jacky” Tse and I am a second-year Master of Social Work (MSW) student at the California State University, San Bernardino in the Department of Social Work. I am conducting research on suicide prevention for LGBTQ students at high school setting for my Master’s research project.

Research has shown that LGBTQ youths are at a higher risk of committing suicide than the non-LGBTQ peers and there has been an increasing trend in recent years. Suicide prevention programs are one effective strategy that can be implemented in a school setting to lower the risks of suicide among LGBTQ youths. Therefore, this study aims to examine suicide prevention support for LGBTQ students from mental health professionals’ perspectives. It also seeks to understand the impacts of the current suicide prevention program in high school and what modifications should be made to better meet the needs of LGBTQ students.

Therefore, we sincerely invite you to participate in this study if you are:

- Mental Health professionals (including school social worker, school psychologist, social work/MFT interns, behavioral interventionist, school counselors) working or having worked in high school settings and
- Have Experience in providing suicide prevention support for students

For this study, you are expected to participate in:
• Individual interview (around 30 minutes)
• Virtual interviews through ZOOM or other electronic means

This study has been approved by the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please feel free to contact me Jacky Tse at 007413829@coyote.csusb.edu.

Thanks for your kind consideration and your support is much appreciated!

Sincerely,

Jacky Tse
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
1. What is your education background? How long have you been working in high school settings? What kind of mental health support you are providing for the students at your school district?

2. Do you think suicide prevention program is important for LGBTQ students? Why or why not?

3. What are the current suicide prevention programs or initiatives at your school?

4. Have you been involved in any of preventive initiatives? What have you participated in and what is your experience?

5. Do you think these preventive initiatives are helpful for LGBTQ students from your perspective? Why or why not?

6. Do you think improvements need to be made in the current preventive initiatives to better support LGBTQ students? What improvements need to be made?
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