

Distress due to Heterosexist Experiences and its Relationship with the Mental Help-Seeking Behavior of LGBT College Students

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Abstract

Progress has been made in reducing stigma in mental health, but some communities still lack the same level of de-stigmatization. As such, this research explores the relationship between heterosexist experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) college students and their mental health help-seeking behavior, aiming to fill a gap in existing literature on LGBT students' struggles and vulnerabilities. This correlational study recruited a total of 100 LGBT College Students studying within Metro Manila Universities. Distress from heterosexist experiences was measured using the Distress from Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ). While the mental help-seeking behavior was measured using the Actual Help-Seeking Questionnaire (AHSQ). The relationship between the two variables was tested using regression analysis. The data revealed in the study shows that LGBT college students do indeed experience distress due to heterosexism wherein they display an average distress of 2.10 (SD=0.67). This means that the LGBT college students experience a mild range of distress due to heterosexist experiences. Moreover, the result shows that the average mental help-seeking of the LGBT college students is 3.28 (SD=2.01). An average range could indicate that either LGBT college students do not seek much help or that LGBT college students only seek help from certain people. As a result, the relationship between distress due to heterosexism and help-seeking behavior reveals that there is a significant predictive relationship between the two variables, $F(1, 98) = 6.33, p = 0.013$. A 0.74 increase in mental help-seeking behavior for everyone (1) level increase in distress due to heterosexist experiences.

Keywords: distress, heterosexist experiences, mental help-seeking behavior, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)



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INTRODUCTION

Progress has evolved a great deal regarding reducing stigma in various aspects of mental health. However, certain communities are yet to experience de-stigmatization to the same degree. As such, providing an accurate depiction of the experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) individuals and how these ties into their mental health help-seeking behavior are crucial for addressing various social, cultural, political, and historical concerns. This topic delved deeper into how sexual and gender identities are intertwined with mental health, specifically the factors that may influence help-seeking behaviors, the barriers faced, and the role of the environment for individuals who are part of the LGBT community. Moreover, the resources used to provide insight on this topic aim to address

concerns that include equity, inclusivity, and the overall stigmatization of not only the LGBT community but also the entirety of the mental health-related community. With that, in-depth research on this topic can allow for the betterment of available mental health care that suits everyone's specific needs, whether within or outside of the LGBT community. In recent times, the increasing number of LGBT issues and concerns has garnered the attention of various researchers, mental health professionals, policymakers, and the like. University of Utah (2021), in their article that quotes the National Alliance on Mental Health, states that members of the LGBT community are more probable to develop a mental health condition than cisgender individuals. Additionally, according to a statistic provided by Mental Health America (2023), of the 4.5% of the United States of America's population that

identifies as LGBT, over 39% of them were reported as having some kind of mental illness. In the Philippines, a study that utilized the Daily Discrimination Scale, and the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21) revealed that there is also a higher rate of experiencing mental health problems, with depression being 92.0%, anxiety being 93.8%, and stress being 81.3%, among LGBTQ+ members when compared to those who are not part of the community (Alibudbud, 2023). In relation to this, Alibudbud (2023) found that there are members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer plus (LGBTQ+) community who are experiencing higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress when compared to non-LGBTQ+ members. For decades, the LGBT community in the Philippines has been a prominent force in the country's socio-cultural and political sectors. It is no surprise that the community is expanding across the country. However, as the community grows and more youth explore their sexual orientations and identities, there is also an influx in the number of mental health issues they face due to heteronormative attitudes in the country. Research also suggests a "correlation between Filipino members of the LGBT community who are at risk of experiencing mental health problems and minority stressors" (Tan & Saw, 2022).

The Philippines, being a predominantly Catholic country, strongly affected the way individuals perceive and approach issues regarding sexuality or gender identity, especially generations prior to the present time. These cultural and religious influences have significantly contributed to the stigma, discrimination, and prejudice faced by LGBT in the country. Various societal norms, including traditional views of marriage and gender roles, have reinforced heterosexual attitudes, creating a heteronormative society and environment that is often oppressive toward LGBT individuals.

As a result, members of the LGBT community particularly those with mental health issues may find it difficult to seek help for themselves due to the stigma associated with their

identities. Some individuals may uphold the belief that others will judge them for seeking help and treatment. While identifying as LGBT may no longer be taboo in the Philippines (any author to cite), it is still frowned upon by other people.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (2023) claims that LGBTQ+ youth experience a variety of mental health issues ranging from feelings of hopelessness and depressive symptoms to suicidal ideation twice as likely as the heterosexual youth. This is probably due to stressors such as discrimination, which falls under the heterosexist experiences they may encounter daily, creating a perpetual cycle of stigma and discrimination.

Mental health help seeking behavior in the context of heterosexist issues is a significant discussion point in the field of psychology. This provides psychologists and mental health professionals crucial information that will validate the connection between heterosexist experience and mental health help seeking behavior. In broadening the understanding of queer experiences in the country especially in the aspect of mental help seeking behavior, the growing concerns of the LGBT community were illustrated in this research. As a result, this study is relevant in the advancement of psychological research that can aid in the development of solutions, particularly encouraging help-seeking behaviors, to address the growing concerns of the LGBT youth in the country regarding mental health issues.

Social Cognitive Theory was presented by Albert Bandura in 1986 as an expansion of his earlier theory (Social Learning Theory). It suggests that several factors, namely, personal, environmental, and behavioral factors all influence one another to shape the behavior of an individual. In this study, Social Cognitive Theory was used to know what factors contribute to the help-seeking behavior of a person. More specifically, this study explored how environmental factors such as heterosexist stigma influence the mental help-seeking behavior of LGBT college students. In a

heterosexist society, individuals often learn norms, attitudes, and behaviors related to sexual orientation from observing the behaviors and experiences of others. This includes how heterosexual relationships are often modeled as the "standard," and how non-heteronormative identities or experiences (such as LGBTQ+ experiences) are marginalized or stigmatized. Social Cognitive Theory highlights the importance of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to execute actions that will achieve specific outcomes. In a heterosexist society, individuals who are not heterosexual may develop low self-efficacy, believing they are less able to navigate social systems or advocate for themselves, particularly when faced with discrimination or bias.

Environmental Factors and Behavioral Factors consider the environmental factors as the heterosexist experiences of LGBT individuals which can affect their behavioral patterns, more specifically their help-seeking behavior and vice versa.

Environmental and Personal Factors consider the bilateral effects of environmental factors namely, the heterosexist experiences, and the personal factors such as the cognitive, affective, and biological factors affecting members of the LGBT community, particularly the distress they are getting from environmental factors.

Personal Factors and Behavioral Patterns consider the bilateral relationship between the behavioral patterns of LGBT individuals, more specifically their help-seeking behavior, and the personal factors affecting them such as the cognitive, affective, and biological factors.

Social Cognitive Theory is best to explain this study because it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the interaction between personal, environmental, and behavioral factors, which is used to explain the focus of this study on the help-seeking behavior of LGBT college students and the factors that influence it.

With all that mentioned, this study aims to understand the relationship between exposure to heterosexist experiences and the mental help-seeking behavior of LGBT college students. More precisely, it aims to investigate answers to the following questions:

1. What is the average level of LGBT college students' distress from heterosexist experiences?
2. What is the average level of LGBT college students' mental help-seeking behavior?
3. Is there a significant predictive relationship between distress from heterosexist experiences and the help-seeking behavior of LGBT college students?

To be able to answer the question, the researcher will utilize the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1.

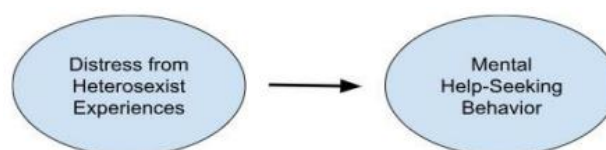


Figure 1
Conceptual paradigm

The conceptual framework of the research study shows that the distress from heterosexist experiences is the independent variable, and the mental help-seeking behavior is the dependent variable. As such, distress due to heterosexist experiences are considered to directly affect the mental help-seeking behavior of LGBT individuals.

Heterosexist experiences refer to the stigma, discrimination, and marginalization experienced by individuals who are not heterosexual. In this study, the distress from heterosexist experiences was measured through the Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ).

Mental help-seeking behavior refers to individuals actively seeking help and treatment for mental health issues. In this study, mental

help-seeking behavior was measured using the Actual Help-Seeking Questionnaire (AHSQ).

The variables presented in this framework are related to the theoretical framework, which is Social Cognitive Theory, wherein different factors such as the environment and biological factors affect the behavioral patterns of members of the LGBT community. In this case, an increase or decrease in the distress due to heterosexist experiences can be attributed to several other factors such as the environment and biological aspects, thereby affecting the mental health help-seeking behavior of LGBT individuals.

LITERATURES

Help-Seeking Behavior. Help-seeking behavior, as defined by the American Psychological Association (2018), is looking for assistance from others to deal with problems, including from formal and informal sources. Despite people generally exhibiting help-seeking behavior, albeit more from informal sources (Fang et al., 2019), there are many barriers to one's help-seeking behavior, especially for adolescents, and among them, stigma and discrimination are some of the top barriers to help-seeking (Shi et al., 2020). A study that sought to understand the "benefits and barriers to the help-seeking behavior of Filipino undergraduate students" by Villamor and Dy (2022) revealed that while the highest benefit for help-seeking was found to be personal growth, the highest perceived barrier was accepting that there is a problem at all. This reluctance to accept that there is a problem may be due to self and social stigma which, coincidentally, are on the list as one of the top barriers that cause Filipinos' reluctance to seek help, especially when it comes to the mental and emotional aspects of life, as Martinez et al. (2020) stated in their study. Aside from the self and social stigma, the financial impediment and lack of access to mental health help are also mentioned as the most endorsed barriers to help-seeking behavior in Filipino settings.

Stigma Towards Help-Seeking Behavior. Stigma toward help-seeking behavior comes in two main forms, namely self and social stigma (Liquid & Cuartero, 2022). A recent study that sought to identify the factors that predict the behavior of Filipino college students towards help-seeking found that one of the three factors that most predicted the intention of college students to seek help included the "weak-not-sick stigma" which meant that people who view having mental health problems as simply being weak instead of being ill are less likely to exhibit mental help-seeking behavior (Ines, 2020). The tendency of Filipinos to see illness as simply being weak, causes people to seek non-professional help such as from friends and family. In that regard, the self-stigma of people who consider mental illness as being weak view other people who do seek professional help as soft, causing the negative social stigma towards mental help-seeking behavior (Sheehan et al, 2016, as cited by Liquid & Cuartero, 2022).

Significantly, people who identify themselves as male or female are said to be much lower than people who identify themselves as gender non-conforming in terms of their likelihood of feeling stigmatized by society (Erin & Rohesetzer, 2020). This illustrates that stigma is more likely to persist in people who do not fit within the gender binary that society views and the degree to which people feel safe and at ease asking for help may be impacted by this stigma.

Stigma Towards the LGBTQ+ Community. "Significant progress in the recognition and acceptance of LGBTQ+- identifying individuals has indeed been made" (Poushter & Kent, 2020). From laws and policies protecting LGBTQ+ individuals, acceptance, and openness toward the recognition of sexual orientations grows in conjunction with the number of individuals openly identifying as LGBTQ+. Despite this, stigma towards the LGBTQ+ community remains a persistent and relevant issue, so much so that studies have been shown to reveal that "LGBTQ+ individuals who live in communities with high levels of stigma have faster death rates compared to those who live in communities with lower levels of stigma" (Moagi et al., 2021).

In religious countries such as the Philippines, individuals who stray from the gender norms of Christianity are often found to be the subject of discrimination and prejudice (Reyes et al., 2019). This stems from the deep-rooted Christian belief and teaching that being homosexual is a sin (Carlström, 2020) and is thus looked down upon.

LGBTQ+ Community and Mental Health. A statistical report by Mental Health America (2023) on “LGBTQ+ Communities and Mental Health” revealed that nearly 5.8 million U.S. residents, identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, were reported to be afflicted with mental illness. This data does not account for other people outside of the US, nor does it account for the people who have yet to seek help regarding any mental health problems they may struggle with. Although it can be argued that according to the findings of a study published by Allen (2023), identity and sexual identity on their own are not predictors of help-seeking behaviors for college-aged individuals. This result was due to the numerous limitations of the study and despite this, the study can still serve as a catalyst in further research and exploration of the topic, especially in terms of understanding the specific nuances in the mental health and treatment received by LGBTQ individuals as compared to those who are not a part of the community.

The vulnerability to experiencing fear and shame due to discrimination as well as possible exposure to adverse and traumatic events (Mental Health America, 2023) that is unique to people within the LGBTQ community are all factors that can bring them distress and consequently severely affect their mental health alongside their wellbeing as high levels of distress has been known to be indicative of impaired mental health (Viertio et al., 2021). While people everywhere do indeed experience distress in many different forms, the LGBTQ+ community in particular faces situations that are unique to them, from confusion on understanding self, coming out, to transitioning, and their limited access to healthcare (Erin & Rohrsetzer, 2020). These situations can be considered stressors that worsen the mental

health of LGBTQ+ members and consequently, may be the cause for the increase in the suicidal ideation of these individuals (Alibudbud, 2023). A prime example of this is the ongoing debate that has sparked controversy in various areas of the world, namely transgender rights.

Bagagli et al. (2021) emphasized that the lack of access to public restrooms for transgender members not only negatively affects their physical health, but also significantly affects their mental health. With that in mind, an article by the National Center for Transgender Equality (2016) that sought to respond to concerns regarding transgender individuals’ usage of bathrooms revealed that one of the concerns commonly mentioned is the safety risk. More specifically, the main concern is that people may pretend to be transgender to gain access to bathrooms. In this regard, although the problem is not necessarily due to concern or fear of transgender individuals, the continued rejection of their desire for gender affirmation that results from this fear only works to amplify their symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress (Hughto et al., 2020).

Mental Health Literacy. When it was first introduced, Mental Health Literacy was defined as “the knowledge and beliefs that people may have about mental disorders” which, according to an article by Bahrami et al. (2019) “includes everything that affects their recognition, management, and prevention of mental disorders”. In relation to this, although several studies have revealed the possible attribution of a reduction in stigma and an increase in help-seeking behavior to higher rates of mental health literacy in communities (Sweileh, 2021), a considerable part of the population is still either struggling to figure out an appropriate way to communicate with people who have mental health disorders or is completely inept at recognizing the signs and symptoms that are consistent with certain mental health disorders (Hurley et al., 2019). To address this, a number of school-based mental health interventions have been made, with a number of these interventions focusing on the adolescent population in the hopes that it will “lead to the early detection and recognition of mental health

problems” (Seedaket et al., 2020). However, a review by Ma, Anderson, and Burn (2022) revealed that although there is moderate evidence to show the effectiveness of these interventions, there is yet to be sufficient evidence for its effectiveness in the long term as most studies were unable to conduct follow-up assessments.

In the Philippines, a study on the “Mental Health Literacy and Mental Health of Filipino College Students” found that when it comes to mental health, while college students in the Philippines display an average level of literacy on the Mental Health Literacy Scale, they also show below-average scores on the Mental Health Inventory (Reyes et al., 2021). Additionally, a study made on the Mental Health Literacy of college students from the Philippines found that among 797 examined college students, a little over half (55.2%) of the sample, when provided a description, was able to recognize depression (Ines, 2019). This implies that although more than half of the population of college students presents as being literate when it comes to mental health, there is still a relatively large portion of the population that is unable to recognize mental health problems or illnesses.

Heterosexist Attitudes and Experiences. The heterosexist experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals have time and again been a delicate topic for discourse. These heterosexist experiences have been said to also influence the personality development of individuals aside from just affecting their mental health (Collins & Levitt, 2021). Moreover, recurring instances wherein a person is subject to these experiences may lead to an internalization of the negative perceptions that people have, which leads to self-hate (Villines, 2021). Despite this, effective interventions that address the negative effects of internalized heterosexism have so far been hard to come by (Li et al., 2023). A qualitative study by Okanlawon (2019), sought to understand the “perceptions and attitudes of Nigerian heterosexual students towards homosexuality”. One of the emerging themes of the study was that homosexual individuals are sexual abusers and as such expressed their fear of them. The subsequent avoidance of all

homosexual people that comes from this fear, is what can be considered a hostile heterosexist attitude (Gredig & Bartelsen-Raemy, 2020).

Heterosexism and Stigma. Daily heterosexist experiences that LGBT individuals regularly encounter is inclusive of all forms of stigma, prejudice, and discrimination. As a result, heterosexism reinforces societal norms that further stigmatize other sexual orientations by excluding and silencing them as they do not meet society’s heteronormative standards (Smith et al., 2012). Subsequently, heterosexism and stigma influence the lives of LGBT individuals. Both have a negative impact on LGBT individuals’ health. Examples include high rates of mood and anxiety disorders, depression, suicide attempts, self-harm, and substance use (Brown et al., 2019). Furthermore, heterosexism and stigma that are experienced by queer students are reported to create a hostile environment, which then impacts their physical and psychological health negatively. Although it does not necessarily mean that it leads to death, it is more likely to damage their overall well-being (Christie, 2020).

METHODS

Research Design. Quantitative research design was used in this study. According to Bhandari (2020), “quantitative research is the method of gathering and interpreting numerical data”. This design allowed the researchers to gather statistical data from the participants using structured questionnaires, and to measure the variables of this study which are the distress from heterosexism and help-seeking behavior and analyze their relationship.

More specifically, the researchers employed correlational research design. Hassan (2023) explicated that “correlational research is a type of research that analyzes the statistical relationship between two or more variables without the manipulation of any variables”. The study aimed to describe the relationship between distress due to heterosexism and help-seeking behavior of LGBT college students without any manipulation. Hence, correlational

research design was considered the most appropriate for this study.

Instrumentation. The Daily Heterosexism Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ) is a 50-item self-report instrument created and developed by the members of the RISE Lab. It has served as a valuable tool for measuring experiences related to heterosexism in studies such as the “Daily Heterosexist Experiences in LGBTQ+ Adults from Spain: Measurement, Prevalence, and Clinical Implications” (Ronzón-Tirado et al., 2022) and the “Understanding the Healthcare Experiences of LGBTQ+ People: An Adaptation of the Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire” (Smith, 2021) that sought to further expand available research that sheds light on heterosexism and its effects on the individuals affected.

To measure and assess the stress of LGBT individuals in over nine distinct aspects of minority stress, the DHEQ was utilized by the researchers. Statements on the heterosexist experiences within the previous 12 months are to be responded to on a 5-point scale ranging from (0) not applicable to me, to (5) it bothered me extremely. Balsam et al. (2013) have shown that the DHEQ presents construct validity in that it has “moderate correlations with measures of psychological distress namely depression, anxiety, PTSD, and perceived stress”. The DHEQ also presents concurrent validity, evidenced by its “moderate correlations with two general LGB discrimination items”. Finally, it has an overall internal reliability score of .92, making the DHEQ reliable. As such, this instrument was considered a reliable and valid tool and was used to collect data on participants' distress due to heterosexism.

To get the daily heterosexism experiences score, the responses were summed, then the mean score was calculated across all 50 items, indicating the average distress from heterosexist behavior that the participant experiences.

To measure the help-seeking behavior of LGBT individuals, the Actual Help-Seeking Questionnaire (AHSQ) was adapted. The

instrument was developed by Rickwood and Braithwaite in 1994 to assess the respondent's help-seeking behavior in the past 2 weeks. Often used in conjunction with its partner questionnaire, the General Help Seeking Questionnaire, which aims to measure help-seeking intentions, the AHSQ has been utilized in multiple different studies that attempt to measure mental help seeking behavior such as Chandrasekara (2016) on “Help Seeking Attitudes towards Mental Health Problems and Actual Help Seeking Behavior,” Gebreegziabher et al. (2019) on “Help-seeking behavior of Jimma university students with common mental disorders: A cross-sectional study,” and Fang et al. (2019) on “Survey of Chinese persons managing depressive symptoms: Help-seeking behaviors and their influencing factors” among others.

The questionnaire is provided with a list of potential formal and informal sources of help and indicates whether the respondents sought help or advice from any of these sources. AHSQ responses include “yes” (scored as 1) and “no” (scored as 0). A higher score indicates a higher help-seeking behavior. Evidence provided by Rickwood et al. (2005) presents support for the questionnaire's convergent and discriminant validity when compared with other measures of social emotional wellbeing in Deane et al. (2001) prior counseling measures of help-seeking behavior (Wilson et al., 2005). For the current study, the instrument's instruction was minimally revised from the questionnaire's measurement of help-seeking behavior regarding personal and emotional problems to its measurement of help-seeking behavior regarding mental health problems instead. The reliability was assessed with a Cronbach's α of 0.706 demonstrating that the AHSQ met the minimum criteria for acceptable internal consistency which is 0.7.

To find the mental help-seeking behavior score, the responses were summed, then the mean score was calculated among all items, indicating the average mental help-seeking behavior of the participants.

Population and Sampling. The study's population were the LGBT college students enrolled in universities within Metro Manila. More specifically, students in Metro Manila who identify themselves as part of the LGBT community, and between 18 to 22 years of age. This is rationalized by an article on LGBTQI+ Youth and Mental Health (2019) that states the youth are the most "vulnerable groups of the LGBTQI+ community due to their increased risk of mental health problems" and their age range being between 12 to 24 years, which includes the age range of most undergraduate students in the country (Cleofas & Rocha, 2021).

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Variables	No. of participants (n=100)	Percentage
Age		
18 years old	2	2%
19 years old	6	6%
20 years old	22	22%
21 years old	27	27%
22 years old	43	43%
Sexual Orientation		
Lesbian	14	14%
Gay	12	12%
Bisexual	72	72%
Transgender	2	2%

In choosing the participants, the researchers used a non-probability sampling method which is the purposive sampling technique. By using the purposive sampling method, the population were purposefully chosen based on the characteristics they have. Within the purposive sampling techniques, the researchers utilized the homogenous sampling method. This entails selecting participants with similar characteristics and traits (Nikolopoulou, 2023). Homogenous sampling was applied by selecting participants who meet the criteria of the age group, universities, and identities within the LGBT community as these are the focal points of the study. By including these criteria, the researchers were able to obtain in-depth data and representative of the population being studied.

The researchers used G*Power version 3.1.9.7 and conducted a power analysis to calculate the

minimum sample size required to effectively test the study's given hypothesis. The minimum sample size for Simple Linear Regression to obtain 80% power when identifying an effect that is set to medium with a significance level of 0.05 was $N = 55$. As such, the resulting sample size of $N = 55$ is sufficient to test the hypothesis of the study. Moreover, the researchers used a total of 100 samples for this study.

Data Source. The data collection process was initiated with the utilization of various social media platforms. Websites and platforms, such as Facebook, Reddit, Messenger, Twitter, and more, were utilized by way of announcements and posts regarding a call for participants to reach the intended audience and obtain the required respondents. Several examples of groups, channels and discussion boards within the websites where the researchers intended to call for participants are LGBT Students & Youth Philippines (LGBT Chamber PH), The LGBT Youth Organization PH and College Philippines. The link or QR code for the google form containing the survey was attached to all postings. The survey itself was administered online through Google Forms. Upon conducting the online questionnaire, informed consent was obtained from the respondents as part of the questionnaire process. The respondents then proceeded to answer the DHEQ and AHSQ via Google Form. Following completion of the questionnaire, a resource section was included. This section included the contact information of the researchers as well as the option for respondents to retract their consent to participate or have their personal data removed from the study. In addition, the section included a list of resources and references that respondents can use if they experience any distress following the study. The data collected was then analyzed and presented. After the study, all personal data of the participants were safely terminated by completely deleting all electronic data that remains.

Data Analysis. To answer research question number 1, the weighted mean and standard deviation was obtained with reference to the DHEQ results. The mean of the participants'

answers was based on the distress from heterosexual experiences, with responses ranging from 0 (the situation presented is not applicable to me) to 5 (the situation bothered me extremely). The mean of the participants' answers was then considered as the average level of distress due to heterosexual experiences of college students. Meanwhile, the standard deviation was used to determine or measure the spread of the data. The larger the standard deviation, the larger the average distance of the values or responses to the mean.

To answer research question number 2, the weighted mean and standard deviation were used with reference to the AHSQ results. The average AHSQ score of each participant was calculated by obtaining the summation of each item score and dividing it by the number of items answered. The mean of the scores of all the participants was then regarded as the average mental health help-seeking behavior of college students. Meanwhile, the standard deviation was used to determine or measure the spread of the data. The larger the standard deviation, the larger the average distance of the values or responses to the mean.

To answer research question number 3, simple linear regression was used. If the p-value is lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis will be rejected. Simple linear regression is a statistical method that is used to study relationships between two quantitative variables (Pennsylvania State Eberly College of Science, 2018). The researchers wanted to find if there is a significant predictive relationship between the distress from heterosexual experiences (independent variable) and the help-seeking behavior (dependent variable) of LGBT college students, which are both numerical data and therefore, the application of the simple linear regression analysis is appropriate.

RESULTS

Level of LGBT College Students' Distress from Heterosexual Experiences. To test the average score of the participants' distress from

heterosexual experiences using descriptive statistics, Microsoft Excel 2016 was used.

Table 2
Results of the Measure of Central Tendency and Variability of the LGBT College Students' Distress from Heterosexual Experiences (N= 100)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Distress Due to Heterosexual Experiences (n=100)	2.10	0.67	Moderate range

The result shows that the average distress from heterosexual experiences of the participants is 2.10 (SD=0.67). This means that the LGBT college students experience a moderate range of distress due to heterosexual experiences. The mean of answers being 2.10, which equates to "bothered me a little bit" of reported distress on the DHEQ range, could indicate that there are mild levels of distress that are present although it is not in the extreme levels. Moreover, the moderate rates of general stress may reflect a variety of stressors that are unrelated to the participants' gender or sexual minority status (Smith, 2021). It also suggests that while the participants deal with the negative effects of heterosexual experiences, they are coping to some extent which could be the reason why a moderate range level of distress is the result. The result could also indicate that among the participants, some are experiencing more distress than others.

Level of LGBT College Students' Mental Help-Seeking Behavior. To test the average score of the participants' mental help-seeking behavior using descriptive statistics, Microsoft Excel 2016 was utilized.

Table 3
Results of the Measure of Central Tendency and Variability of the LGBT College Students' Mental Help-Seeking Behavior (N= 100)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Mental Help-Seeking Behavior (n=100)	3.28	2.01	Average

The result shows that the average mental help-seeking of the LGBT college students is 3.28

(SD=2.01). An average range could indicate that either LGBT college students do not seek much help or that LGBT college students only seek help from certain people.

Predictive Relationship Between Distress from Heterosexist Experiences and the Help-Seeking Behavior of LGBT College Students. To test the significant relationship between the distress from heterosexist experiences and mental help-seeking behavior of LGBT college students, Simple Linear Regression analysis using Jamovi version 2.3 was utilized.

Table 4
Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Predictive Relationship Between the Distress from Heterosexist Experiences and Mental Help-Seeking Behavior of LGBT College Students (N= 100)

Model Fit Measures

Overall Model Test							
Model	R	R ²	F	df1	df2	p-value	Interpretation
1	0.25	0.06	6.33	1	98	0.013	Significant

Model Coefficients – AHSQ

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p-value	Interpretation
Intercept	1.723	0.649	2.66	0.009	Significant
DHEQ	0.742	0.295	2.52	0.013	Significant

The results show that there is a significant predictive relationship between the two variables, $R^2 = 0.06$, $F(1, 98) = 6.33$, $p = 0.013$. This indicates that in every one (1) level increase in distress due to heterosexist experiences, there is a 0.74 increase in their mental help-seeking behavior.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to analyze the distress due to the heterosexist experiences of LGBT college students and its predictive relationship to their mental help-seeking behavior. This descriptive study surveyed 100 LGBT college students recruited from universities in Manila. Based on the demographics of the participants, most of them are bisexual ($n=100$, 72%) and 22 years of age ($n=100$, 43%). Findings were analyzed using

descriptive statistics and simple linear regression.

The data shows that LGBT college students do indeed experience distress due to heterosexism wherein they display an average distress of 2.10 (SD=0.67), which is moderate. This is relatively similar to the results of other studies such as Smith's (2021) adaptation of the DHEQ, wherein the mean for the distress experienced by the participants on particular subscales such as Vigilance was revealed to be 2.32 which is within a moderate range and the mean total distress being 1.98 which is within the mild-moderate range. The results, also indicating that heterosexism does cause symptoms of distress in LGBT college students, are consistent with other studies suggesting that the rejection of LGBT individuals increases symptoms such as stress, anxiety, and even depression (Hughto et al., 2020). Additionally, other studies have noted that the Filipino LGBT community is at most risk of experiencing mental health problems due to unique stressors that are not experienced by their heterosexual counterparts (Tan & Saw, 2022).

The help-seeking behavior of LGBT college students exist with an average of 3.28 (SD=2.01). This could suggest that LGBT individuals are not extremely likely to seek help or that they are more inclined to seek help from only specific sources. A study by Fang et al. (2019) revealed that most people would prefer to seek informal forms of help such as from friends or family. This is supported by the existing data on stigma when it comes to help-seeking behavior, especially in the Philippines wherein people who view mental health problems as simply being weak and not ill (Ines, 2020), could perpetuate negative feelings of individuals toward help-seeking, particularly from professionals, and lead them to avoid seeking non-professional help (Sheehan et al, 2016, as cited by Liguin & Cuartero, 2022). This suggests that LGBT individuals experiencing distress due to heterosexism could be likely to seek help from friends as evidenced by Alberts and Rohesetzer (2020) stating that gender non-conforming individuals are more likely to seek support from people they feel safest with, their

friends and peers, as opposed to “a stranger” or a professional in mental health. This avoidance of professional help could be an area of concern due to the target population of this study being college students within Metro Manila, who at majority, have been revealed to be unable to recognize symptoms of depression (Ines, 2019) and thus could be unreliable as sources of mental help.

A 0.74 increase in mental help-seeking behavior for everyone (1) level increase in distress due to heterosexist experiences also means a positive relationship exists between heterosexist experiences and mental help-seeking behavior wherein higher levels of distress experienced due to heterosexism leads to more mental help-seeking behavior.

This is supported by the Social Cognitive Theory which states that environmental factors, personal factors, and behavioral patterns all affect one another. In this case, there is a positive relationship between them wherein the heterosexist experiences or the environmental factors positively affects the distress or the personal factors affecting LGBT individuals. This then positively affects their help-seeking behavior, or their behavioral patterns as higher distress is linked to higher help-seeking behavior.

This is further evidenced by studies that reveal the outness of an individual as having a significant and positive relationship with help-seeking behavior and outness is a predictor of fear of being stigmatized (Erin & Rohesetzer, 2020). As stigma and discrimination have been regarded as one of the top barriers to help-seeking of individuals (Shi et al., 2020), this fear of being stigmatized experienced by LGBT individuals who are open about their sexual identity, when coupled with heterosexist experiences, could also be one of the contributors to the poor mental health of LGBT Filipinos (Alibudbud, 2023). This then further increases their distress and thus increases their help-seeking behavior from trusted individuals instead of professionals due to fear of being stigmatized as being weak for seeking

professional help (Sheehan et al, 2016, as cited by Liquid & Cuartero, 2022).

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