

Measuring Impact for LGBTQ+ Youth: Need for LGBTQ+ Inclusive Scales in Sex Ed Evaluations

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About the Study

SafeSpace (SS) is an app-based program for adolescents assigned female or intersex at birth, tailored to youth of color, LGBTQ youth, and youth in the southeast who are aged 14-18.

This study is a randomized control trial examining SafeSpace's impact on adolescents' sexual health behaviors, attitudes, self-efficacy, and intentions.

Why Inclusive Scales

Survey measures that reliably measure sexual health constructs of all program participants help evaluators accurately assess the impact of programming.

Given the limited evidence-based programming tailored to LGBTQ youth, reliable scales used to reflect LGBTQ youth's experiences are all the more important.

Methods

We conducted an Exploratory Factor Analysis to identify the survey items related to each construct or idea (eg: contraceptive attitudes) and calculated Cronbach Alphas to assess how reliably the combination of variables represent the construct, among the full sample and by LGBTQ status. Reliable scales had an alpha of ≥ 0.7 for both LGBTQ and cis-straight youth.

Discussion

Contraceptive Attitudes, and Sexual Health Intentions scales are not as reliable for LGBTQ youth as they are for cis-straight youth. In part, this may be because many of the questions regard penile-vaginal sex and pregnancy prevention, which are not always relevant for LGBTQ youth. Using non-traditional self-efficacy and attitudes measures – such as Communication about Sexual Topics and Attitudes Toward Sexual Pleasure – and tailoring existing attitudes and intentions measures, is necessary for the field to reliably measure these constructs for LGBTQ youth. Researchers should incorporate LGBTQ youth in developing and validating scales.

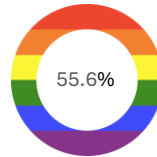
Scales Used

Outcome	Examples of Items Included
Contraceptive Attitudes (4 items)	How much do you agree with the following statements? 1. It is important to use a condom during penis-vagina sex. 2. Condoms are easy to get. 3. Birth control is safe for teens to use.
Sexual Health Intentions (4 items)	If you were to have PV/any type of sex in the next year, do you intend to... 1. Get tested for sexually transmitted infections? 2. Use an internal or external condom with your partner? 3. Make an appointment with a provider for sexual and reproductive health services?
Perceived Sexual Agency (3 items)	If you had a partner, would you feel comfortable... 1. Asking for what you want sexually. 2. Asking them what they want sexually. 3. Asking for or giving consent to my partner during sexual activity.
Communication about sexual topics, self-efficacy (7 items)	If you had a partner, how confident are you that you could... 1. Tell them if you had an STI? 2. Talk about whether or not you want to have sex with them? 3. Tell them you wanted to use protection to prevent infection or pregnancy?
Attitudes Toward Sexual Pleasure (3 items)	How much do you agree with the following statements? 1. My sexual needs and desires are important. 2. I think it would be important to focus on my own pleasure as well as my partner's during sexual experiences.

All items were asked on a 4-point Likert scale, with responses regarding agreement, confidence, or comfort, depending on the question format. Items were pulled from existing and previously validated scales.

Results

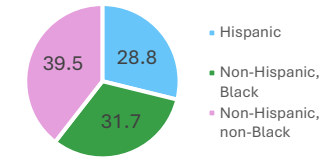
LGBTQ Identity



SS Mean Age

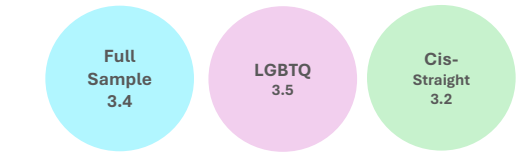


Race and Ethnicity

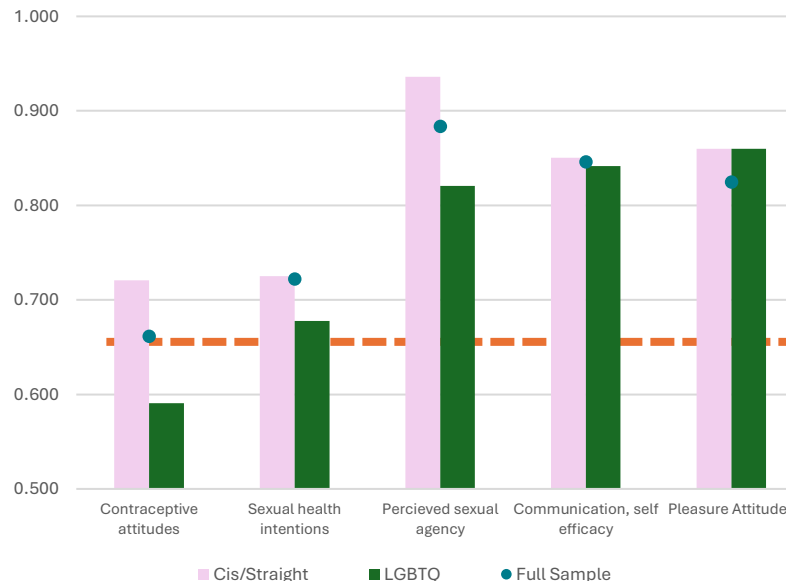


Average Score of Attitudes Toward Sexual Pleasure

Average of 4-point Likert scale responses to 3 items of sexual pleasure scale

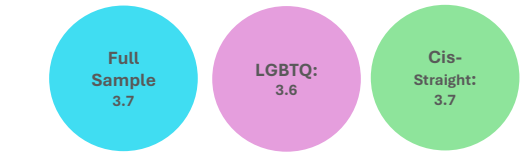


Alphas from Reliability Testing of Secondary Outcome Measures



Average Number of Sexual Topics Participants Would Communicate with a Partner

Count of topics participants would feel 'very confident' discussing with a partner



Proportion of Participants with Perceived Sexual Agency

Proportion who responded 'very comfortable' to all 3 sexual agency items

