Analyzing *Yaariyan* - an internet-based e-safe space facilitating access to HIV prevention, treatment and care services among MSM and transgender youth in Mumbai, India

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Background

- Dearth of research regarding health supports for young adult sexual and gender minorities
- Social media platforms are increasingly becoming a source of community support for various groups
What is Yaariyan?
The *Yaariyan* Secret Facebook Group

- Created in 2011
- Over 8,000 members
- Ages 18 – 28
- Group guidelines
- Core team and admin
- Peer-led support model
Aims

- How does this social media group function as a social and mental health intervention for LGBTQ youth?

- How does this group facilitate crisis support for its members?
Methods - Analyzing the Posts

➢ Data collection
  • Downloading Facebook posts
  • Deidentification

➢ Qualitative analysis
  • Random sampling
  • Coding
  • Identifying themes

➢ Key informant interviews
Code Application
(N = 700)
Results – Code Application (N = 700)

- Ice-breakers (n = 200, 16%)
  - Lightening the mood - jokes, games

“Who would you want to represent the entire LGBTQ community in the next Big Boss season?”

“So someone recently posted a list of gay things to do before you die, but it was too Europe-centric. Here’s a list just for us – Things To Do Before You Die, For Indian Gay Guys! Feel free to add to it!”

“This might be scandalous, but... Who is your crush in this group? Comment with their name and the cutest thing about them!”
Results – Code Application (N = 700)

- Esteem, identity, and/or emotional support (n = 162, 13%)
  - Asking for and providing esteem/identity support
  - Coming out/disclosure support

“If you’re feeling down, go watch this movie. It’s the first mainstream movie about lesbian love!”

“I’m not feeling so good... Is anyone available to chat?”

“So my dad sat me down today because he wanted to talk about my sexuality. At first, he wanted me to see a therapist, but after a lot of conversation, he finally reached a place where he could say he supports my decision and right to love whoever I choose! I feel so good.”

“I’m 26 and my parents are so excited about getting me married off. They are desperately looking for a woman. How do I go about telling them that I’m gay? I’m so scared.”
Themes

- Lighthearted banter
- Psychosocial support
- Tangible support
- Difficult interpersonal experiences (including issues with family, friends, and partners)
- Current affairs
- Physical health and wellbeing
- Crises
Crises

- Psychosocial crises
- Tangible crises

"#Ranting #IGNOREME I feel so awful and there’s no exact reason for it. I feel guilty for feeling this way. I wish I could be happy. I don’t want to socialize with anyone. I feel like a phony. I don’t want to work or engage in any of my hobbies. I feel so scared. This isn’t the life that I want for myself." – Yaariyan member [paraphrased]

“Is anyone looking for a flatmate in Pink colony, or anywhere else in Bombay? I have to move out of my current place on May 1st because I came out to my current flatmates and they aren’t comfortable with my sexuality.” – Yaariyan member [paraphrased]
Varied Crisis Responses

Tangible Support

- Offering a resource or aid

Emotional Support

- Self-esteem support / providing empathy, compassion
- Suggesting new ways of thinking
- Providing analogies to personal or friend experiences
Limitations

- Short, online posts
- Inability to follow-up with members
- Relatively small sampling of huge data pool
- Only English posts were analyzed
Strengths

- Unsolicited user-generated online posts in a secret group
  - Self-motivated dialogue
  - Diverse and under-represented voices
  - Frequent interactions over time
  - Sensitive and nuanced dialogue

- Triangulation of results via key informant interviews
Summary

- Sharing positive messages and engaging in banter are key aspects to community-building

- Both psychosocial and tangible supports can be successfully requested for and provided online

- Diverse types of support are important in crisis, and author’s ability to self-select responses with which to engage appears to help create a more individualized model of care
Implications

Online spaces such as *Yaariyan* provide diverse types of critical support to young adult sexual and gender minorities in India.

Such intervention models should be supported and scaled up as they can efficiently engage otherwise isolated populations and address critical needs.
Varied Crisis Responses

- Analogy used
  - Personal or friend experience

- Appreciation for group/community

- Asking questions

- Blaming the author

- De-escalating prior responses

- Directive advice

- Distance from family/ prioritize living queer truth

- **Explicit self-esteem support, compassion, empathy**

- Joking

- Not English

- Offering a resource

- Outside dichotomy/ work with family

- Overly optimistic

- Polarizing/acknowledging dichotomy

- Suggesting new ways of thinking

- Supportive responses to crisis

- Original Poster (Author) responds, follows up

- OP or other responds with guilt
  - OP or other responds with worsening crisis or echoing crisis