



Sexual harassment, sexual assault, violence, self-esteem, and the role of LGBTQ-specific parental support in a sample of Latinx sexual and gender minority youth

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Funding information

National Institute of Drug Abuse

Abstract

Introduction: Oftentimes as result of racism, cissexism, and heterosexism, many Latinx and sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth are victims of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence. These experiences of victimization are in part related to increased negative mental health outcomes such as decreased self-esteem. Some research links LGBTQ-specific parental support to mental health outcomes among Latinx SGM youth, yet, no research has explored the role of LGBTQ-specific parental support with self-esteem among Latinx SGM youth.

Methods: In a sample of 1,012 Latinx SGM youth (ages 13–17), we assessed: (a) associations between sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence and self-esteem, (b) association between LGBTQ-specific parental support and self-esteem, and (c) whether LGBTQ-specific parental support moderated the relation between sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence and self-esteem. Main effect and moderation analyses examined interactions between LGBTQ-specific parental support with sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence on self-esteem.

Results: Latinx SGM youth experienced low levels of LGBTQ-specific parental support and various degrees of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence. Also, transgender and nonbinary/genderqueer Latinx youth experienced lower self-esteem than their Latinx cisgender counterparts. Increased LGBTQ-specific parental support was related to increased self-esteem. We also identified a significant interaction between sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence and LGBTQ-specific parental support, such that parental support was more protective at low levels rather than high levels of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence among Latinx SGM youth.

Conclusions: Findings add to a growing body of research about the importance of LGBTQ-specific parental support for Latinx SGM youth, and the need to examine culturally appropriate approaches to understand parent-child relationship among these communities.

KEYWORDS

harassment, Latinx, parental support, sexual and gender minority, violence

1 | INTRODUCTION

Research shows that sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth experience higher levels of victimization and sexual exploitation compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts (Russell et al., 2014). Specific to ethnicity, Latinx SGM youth are particularly vulnerable victimization as a result of intersectional systemic oppression due to sexual, gender, racial, and ethnic identities (Mora et al., 2022; Toomey et al., 2018; Zongrone et al., 2020). Little research to date has

documented Latinx SGM youth's experiences with sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence, nor the impact that these experiences may have on the self-esteem of these communities (e.g., Boyas et al., 2019; Zongrone et al., 2020). In addition, research shows that parental figures play a crucial role in the developmental milestones and mental health of SGM youth (e.g., see review in Nakamura et al., 2022), including Latinx SGM youth (Abreu, Lefevor et al., 2022; Ryan et al., 2010, 2020). However, little research to date has explored the role of LGBTQ-specific parental support in Latinx SGM youth's self-esteem as a result of victimization. The present study sought to explore the impact of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence on the self-esteem of Latinx SGM youth. Further, we examined the potential role of LGBTQ-specific parental support as a protective factor that may ameliorate low self-esteem. Below, we explore the available literature about Latinx SGM youth experiences of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence, the mental health consequences (including self-esteem) as a result of being exposed to these forms of victimization, and discuss the role of LGBTQ-specific parental support on mental health outcomes (including self-esteem) for Latinx SGM youth.

2 | SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SEXUAL ASSAULT, VIOLENCE, AND LATINX SGM YOUTH

Sexual harassment consists of unsolicited verbal or nonverbal sexual advances including sexual jokes, comments, gestures, or touching (Mora et al., 2022). Research shows that youth experience sexual harassment in multiple settings, and it is specifically a concern within the school system (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; Clear et al., 2014; Crowley & Cornell, 2020; Hill & Kearn, 2011; Siller et al., 2021). Sexual harassment among youth is generally never an isolated experience, and by the time they report experiencing sexual harassment they have likely experienced it on multiple occasions (Felix & McMahon, 2007; Mora et al., 2022). In addition, many SGM students experience harassment in schools as a result of discrimination and oppression because of their sexual orientation, gender, and/or gender expression (e.g., Zongrone et al., 2020). Furthermore, some studies indicate that both Black and Latinx youth experience higher levels of sexual harassment compared to their White counterparts (e.g., Clear et al., 2014). Although research has been slow to explore the prevalence and impact of sexual harassment on Latinx SGM youth, some studies show that these communities experience identity-based harassment (Sabina et al., 2022).

Sexual assault refers to unwanted sexual activity that happens when one is pressured, tricked, threatened, or forced in a physical or nonphysical way (US Department of Health & Human Services, 2021). Although the literature on the impact of sexual assault on Latinx SGM youth is limited, research shows that people with marginalized identities are significantly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and assault (Dank et al., 2015; Rees, 2010). For example, research has found that SGM youth are at increased risk of being sex trafficked compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts (Dank et al., 2015). Moreover, SGM youth who engage in survival sex work often report racial and gender-based discrimination and economic limitations as a result of racism and sexism (Dank et al., 2015; Gwadz et al., 2009; Rees, 2010). Although the United Nations Human Rights Office has called for legislative protections and further resources to better understand how marginalized communities such as SGM are affected by sexual assault (Estrada et al., 2022), there continues to be paucity of research related to the impact of this form of victimization for Latinx SGM youth.

Violence is exposure to behaviors such as verbal insults, threats of physical violence, physical violence (e.g., objects thrown at you, punched, kicked, beaten), rape, and unwanted sexual contact (Kann et al., 2018; National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2010). Research with SGM youth highlight heightened experiences of various forms of violence, such that SGM youth report higher levels of violence than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts (see review in Abreu, Audette et al., 2022; Kann et al., 2018; Poteat et al., 2015). In addition, research shows that Latinx youth are also disproportionately exposed to violence (see review in Dawkins & Rodriguez, 2016; Santacrose et al., 2021). An emerging small body of research has found that Latinx SGM youth experience violence at a high rate (e.g., Lardier et al., 2017; Sabina et al., 2022; Zongrone et al., 2020). For example, as part of the *National School Climate Survey*, a sample of 3352 Latinx SGM youth reported experiences of physical assault (e.g., punched, kicked, injured with weapon) as a result of intersectional discrimination and harassment based on their sexual orientation, gender expression, and race and ethnicity (Zongrone et al., 2020). Similarly, in a recent study with 1,525 Latinx youths shows that sexual minority youth reported higher incidents of sexual violence compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Sabina et al., 2022). Exploring the impact (e.g., self-esteem) of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence on Latinx SGM youth is important for understanding the unique experiences of these communities.

3 | SELF-ESTEEM, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SEXUAL ASSAULT, AND VIOLENCE AMONG LATINX SGM YOUTH

Experiences of harassment and victimization are associated with negative mental health outcomes for Latinx and SGM youth. For example, research with Latinx youth shows that experience of violence is associated with greater negative mental health outcomes such as depression and posttraumatic stress symptoms (Hardaway et al., 2012; Javdani et al., 2014;

Rasmussen et al., 2004). Similarly, regarding SGM youth, exposure to victimization is related to higher rates of anxiety, depression, suicidality, substance abuse, risky sexual behaviors, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), among other outcomes (e.g., see review in Abreu et al., 2022; Espelage et al., 2016; Feinstein & Dyar, 2017; Kosciw et al., 2018; Truong & Zongrone, 2022). Furthermore, regarding the intersectional experiences of victimization on Latinx SGM youth's mental health, research shows that increased exposure to various forms of victimization (e.g., harassment, physical violence) increases depression, anxiety, and suicidality, among other outcomes, for these communities (e.g., Sabina et al., 2022; Vance et al., 2021; Zongrone et al., 2020).

Self-esteem refers to person's evaluation of one's own sense of worth and one's sense of mastery and control of their life and environment (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Rosenberg, 1965). Research shows that self-esteem is associated with several mental health outcomes among adolescents, such as depressive symptoms and anxiety (see review in Sowislo & Orth, 2013). Specific to Latinx youth, research shows an association between victimization and lower self-esteem (e.g., Behnke et al., 2011; Delgado et al., 2011; Edwards & Romero, 2008; Stein et al., 2012). Similarly, studies show that various forms of victimization contribute to lower self-esteem among SGM youth (e.g., Watson et al., 2019). However, the association between victimization and self-esteem among Latinx SGM remains largely unstudied. Considering the ways in which Latinx SGM youth experience negative mental health outcomes related to their intersectional experiences of racism, xenophobia, heterosexism, and cissexism (see review in Abreu et al., 2022), it's imperative to explore further the effects of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence on self-esteem among Latinx SGM youth.

4 | MINORITY STRESS, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND LGBTQ-SPECIFIC PARENTAL SUPPORT AMONG LATINX SGM YOUTH

The role of parental support in the well-being of Latinx SGM youth can be conceptualized through the frameworks of minority stress and intersectionality. Minority stress model presents two dimensions of stressors: distal and proximal (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2003). Distal stressors are objective and external stressors (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2003), such as experiencing lack of support from one's parental figure (e.g., Abreu et al., 2022; Friedman et al., 2011; Newcomb et al., 2019). Proximal stressors refer to negative perceptions about one's SGM identity (e.g., internalized heterosexism, internalized cissexism), and is the result of exposure to distal stressors. Studies show that SGM youth experience unique stressors as a result of minority stress (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2003), including lack of LGBTQ-specific parental support. In addition, intersectionality theory provides a framework from which to understand how interlocking systems of oppression (e.g., racism, xenophobia, heterosexism) affect people who hold multiple oppressed identities (Crenshaw, 1989). Because Latinx parental figures interact with their SGM child within multiple systems of oppression that influence their own understanding of what it means to be a SGM person, both within Latinx culture and mainstream United States culture, they may interact in a manner that directly or indirectly communicates to their SGM child lack of support (Abreu et al., 2022).

For many SGM youth, research has documented that lack of LGBTQ-specific parental support is associated with negative mental health outcomes such as increased depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and anxiety, among other outcomes (e.g., Abreu et al., 2022; Friedman et al., 2011; Hall, 2018; Katz-Wise et al., 2016; McDonald, 2018; Pollitt et al., 2017; Puckett et al., 2015; Snapp et al., 2015; Tankersley et al., 2021; Watson et al., 2019). For example, in a study with 6837 SGM youth, researchers found that LGBTQ-specific parental support was related to depressive symptoms among SGM youth, with transgender youth and non-monosexual youth (e.g., bisexual, plurisexual) reporting less parental support than their cisgender and monosexual counterparts (Abreu et al., 2022). This study also found that LGBTQ-specific parental support was more strongly related to depressive symptoms among transgender youth compared to their cisgender counterparts, such that less LGBTQ-specific parental support was related to more depressive symptoms for transgender youth (Abreu et al., 2022). Specific to self-esteem, in a systematic review of 44 studies, researchers found that increased family functioning (e.g., communication, satisfaction) was related to higher self-esteem among transgender and gender diverse youth (Tankersley et al., 2021). Similarly, in a study of 835 sexual minority youth (Watson et al., 2019) and in a study of 245 SGM youth (Snapp et al., 2015), researchers found that increased LGBTQ-specific parental support was related to higher self-esteem. Similar to their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts, SGM youth may need to rely on their parental figures for support when they experience life difficulties such as harassment and violence. Thus, when SGM youth do not feel supported by their parental figures, they may experience greater difficulties managing stress, leading to negative mental health outcomes such as decreased self-esteem (Meyer, 2003).

A focus on race and ethnicity has been identified as a significant gap in the literature related to the influence of LGBTQ-specific parental support on SGM youth health outcomes (Abreu et al., 2022; Newcomb et al., 2019). However, some studies have suggested that racial, ethnic, sexual, and gender social positions interact to provide a unique parental support experience among SGM youth of color (e.g., Abreu & Gonzalez, 2020; Abreu et al., 2020; Heatherington & Lavner, 2008). Specific to Latinx SGM youth, some studies show that LGBTQ-specific parental support is crucial in the well-being of these communities (Abreu et al., 2022; Ryan et al., 2010, 2020). For example, in studies by Ryan and colleagues (2010, 2020),

Latinx participants reported less LGBTQ-specific parental support resulting in increased depressive symptoms when compared to their White, non-Latinx counterparts. Similarly, in the study by Abreu, Lefevor and colleagues (2022) described above with 6837 SGM youth, findings showed that Latinx SGM youth reported low levels of LGBTQ-specific parental support and higher levels of depressive symptoms. Specific to self-esteem, to the authors' knowledge, researchers have yet to explore the role of LGBTQ-specific parental support on sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence on self-esteem among Latinx SGM youth. From an intersectionality framework, it is plausible to believe that Latinx SGM youth's report of lack parental support might stem from their parental figure's reactions to concerns and/or fears of how their SGM child will be treated in a context that is hostile toward their intersecting identities because of racism, xenophobia, transphobia, and homophobia. Given the impact of various forms of victimization on Latinx and SGM youth and the importance of parental figure support on the well-being of Latinx SGM youth, it is imperative to explore the association between sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence on self-esteem among Latinx SGM youth and LGBTQ-specific parental support as a buffer on the effects of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence on self-esteem.

5 | CURRENT STUDY

Research shows that Latinx SGM youth report high levels of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence. These experiences of victimization have several negative mental health consequences such as increased anxiety and depression. In addition, although research has explored the role of LGBTQ-specific parental support in mental health outcomes of Latinx SGM youth, less is known about the impact of LGBTQ-specific parental support on Latinx SGM self-esteem. To address these research gaps, we used a subset of data from a large national survey of SGM youth in the United States to examine whether LGBTQ-specific parental support buffered the effects of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence on self-esteem among Latinx SGM youth. Our research questions are as follows:

R1: *What is the relation between sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence (respectively) and self-esteem among Latinx SGM youth?*

H1: *We expect that sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence will be negatively related to self-esteem among Latinx SGM youth.*

R2: *What is the relation between LGBTQ-specific parental support and self-esteem among Latinx SGM youth?*

H2: *We expect that LGBTQ-specific parental support will be positively related to self-esteem among Latinx SGM youth.*

R3: *Does LGBTQ-specific parental support buffer the relations between sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence (respectively) and self-esteem for Latinx SGM youth?*

H3: *We expect LGBTQ-specific parental support to buffer the effects of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence on self-esteem such that for Latinx SGM youth who experience higher degrees of LGBTQ-specific parental support, there will be a weaker relationship between sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence and self-esteem.*

6 | METHOD

6.1 | Procedures and participants

Participants for the current study were part of the *LGBTQ National Teen Survey*, an online anonymous survey collected between April and December, 2017 for LGBTQ+ adolescents. All participants had to live in the United States, identify as LGBTQ+, and be between 13 and 17 years old at the time of survey. Participants were recruited from a variety of sources, primarily through social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. The research team also partnered with the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), who advertised the study to their constituents via advertisements from social media influencers. Participants were compensated with HRC wristbands and were entered into a drawing to receive one of ten \$50 gift cards.

The study was approved by the University of Connecticut Review Board, who granted a parental waiver of consent for all participants. Given the risk of unintended disclosure by youth, all participants provided assent before taking the survey. Survey completion took an average of 43 min. Participants were first provided with demographic information, followed by

blocks with topically grouped questions that were randomized to reduce problematic patterns of missingness. See Watson et al. (2019) for additional information about recruitment.

To be included in the present study, participants must have: (a) identified as Latinx, (b) been out to at least one parent (it would be unclear about the meaning of parental support if youth were not out), and (c) completed all items of the focal variables. In total, 17,112 participants began the survey, with 9460 completing the entirety of the survey. Of participants who completed the survey, 1292 individuals were Latinx and reported being out to at least one parent. Finally, 1012 participants met all these criteria and completed each question regarding the current study's focal variables (parental support, sexual harassment, sexual assault, violence) and were included in our primary analytic sample. See Table 1 for participant demographics.

6.2 | Measures

6.2.1 | Demographic information

All participants indicated their age, race and ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual identity. We used one multiple-choice question to measure racial and ethnic identity: "How would you describe yourself?" Response options included, "White, non-Hispanic," "Non-Latino Black or African American," "Native American or Alaska Native," "Asian or Pacific Islander," "Latino, Hispanic, or Mexican- American," and "Other." Participants could select as many response options as applied to them. Everyone who selected "Latino, Hispanic, or Mexican- American" was included in the current study.

Sexual identity was measured by asking participants how they describe their sexual identity from the following options: gay or lesbian, bisexual, straight/heterosexual, queer, pansexual, asexual, questioning, or something else. Participants who indicated "something else" were prompted to type in their sexual identity. Gender identity was measured using a checkbox approach—participants could select all options that applied to them. For gender, participants were given the following options: transgender boy, transgender girl, cisgender boy, cisgender girl, genderqueer, or other (participants were provided a text box). Visual inspection of the responses of participants who marked *something else* indicated these participants largely identified as genderqueer, agender, androgynous, and genderfluid. Consequently, these participants were recoded as nonbinary/genderqueer. To facilitate the analyses, we created separate variables: cisgender boy, cisgender girl, transgender boy, transgender girl, and nonbinary/genderqueer.

6.2.2 | LGBTQ-specific parental support

LGBTQ-specific parental support was measured using eight-items modified from the Family Acceptance Project (see Miller et al., 2020; Pollitt et al., 2023). To date, this multi-item scale is the most widely used scale to measure LGBTQ-specific parental support among LGBTQ youth (Pollitt et al., 2023; Watson et al., 2020). Participants responded to questions such as "How often do your parents say that they like you as you are in regard to being an LGBTQ person?," "How often do your parents say they were proud of you for being an LGBTQ person?," and "How often do your parents taunt or mock you because you are an LGBTQ person" (reverse coded), using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *never* (1) to *often* (4), with an option for *doesn't apply to me*, which was coded as missing. This measure has been used in multiple studies with large samples of Latinx SGMs youth and has been shown to have a high reliability (e.g., Abreu et al., 2022; Ryan et al., 2010). For this study, internal consistency was excellent ($\alpha = .90$).

6.2.3 | Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was measured using the 10-item Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Participants utilized a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (0) to *strongly agree* (3) to indicate their level of agreement with statements such as, "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself," and "I feel that I have a number of good qualities." Participant scores were summed to create an overall self-esteem score. This measure has been used in multiple studies with large samples of Latinx SGMs youth and has been shown to have a high reliability (e.g., Mereish et al., 2021). The original scale evidenced high ratings of reliability and validity for the scale (Rosenberg, 1965). For the present study, internal consistency was good ($\alpha = .87$).

6.2.4 | Sexual harassment

General sexual harassment was measured using five modified items from the *Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment at School* report from the American Association of University Woman (AAUW; Hill & Kearn, 2011). This measure asked participants

TABLE 1 Demographic frequencies ($n = 1012$).

| Demographic | <i>n</i> | % |
|-------------------------------------|----------|-------|
| Age | | |
| 13 years old | 69 | 6.8 |
| 14 years old | 125 | 12.4 |
| 15 years old | 212 | 20.9 |
| 16 years old | 274 | 27.1 |
| 17 years old | 332 | 32.8 |
| Gender | | |
| Cisgender boy | 330 | 32.6 |
| Cisgender girl | 456 | 45.0 |
| Transgender boy | 146 | 14.4 |
| Transgender girl | 11 | 1.1 |
| Gender nonbinary/Genderqueer | 183 | 18.1 |
| Sexual orientation | | |
| Gay/lesbian | 439 | 43.4 |
| Queer | 38 | 3.8 |
| Bisexual | 325 | 32.1 |
| Pansexual | 155 | 15.3 |
| Asexual | 20 | 2.0 |
| Other | 35 | 3.5 |
| Region of residence (United States) | | |
| West | 304 | 30.04 |
| Southwest | 243 | 24.01 |
| Midwest | 138 | 13.64 |
| Southeast | 163 | 16.11 |
| Northeast | 154 | 15.22 |
| Puerto Rico/Other | 10 | 0.99 |
| Parent education | | |
| Less than high school | 134 | 13.2 |
| High school or GED | 207 | 20.5 |
| Vocational/technical school | 35 | 3.5 |
| Some college | 185 | 18.3 |
| College graduate | 240 | 23.7 |
| Postgraduate degree or higher | 134 | 13.2 |
| Do not know/does not apply | 77 | 7.6 |
| Current religious affiliation | | |
| Atheist/Agnostic | 442 | 43.7 |
| Buddhist | 40 | 3.9 |
| Catholic | 166 | 16.4 |

TABLE 1 (Continued)

| Demographic | <i>n</i> | % |
|----------------------|----------|------|
| Christian-Protestant | 97 | 9.6 |
| Jewish | 15 | 1.5 |
| None | 361 | 35.7 |
| Other | 108 | 10.7 |

Note: Because participants could select multiple options, rows do not add to 100%.

to indicate how many times they experienced varying forms of harassment within the past 12 months. Items included the following five scenarios: had someone make unwelcome sexual comments, jokes, or gestures to or about you; been shown sexy or sexual pictures that you didn't want to see; being touched in an unwelcome sexual way; been physically intimidated in a sexual way; and having someone flash or expose themselves to you. Participants selected from the following responses: *0 times* (0), *1 time* (1), *2 or 3 times* (2), *4 or 5 times* (3), and *6 or more times* (4). This measure has been used in studies with samples of Latinx SGMs youth and has been shown to have good reliability (e.g., Scheer et al., 2021). For the present study, internal consistency was acceptable ($\alpha = .78$).

6.2.5 | Sexual assault

General sexual assault was assessed using two items from the 2017 *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System* (YRBSS) report by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Kann et al., 2018). This measure asked participants to indicate how many times in the past 12 months anybody had forced them to engage in sexual activities that they did not want to do and how many times somebody who they were dating or going out with forced them to engage in sexual activities that they did not want to do. Participants selected from the following responses: *0 times* (0), *1 time* (1), *2 or 3 times* (2), *4 or 5 times* (3), and *6 or more times* (4). This measure has been used in studies with samples of Latinx SGMs youth and has been shown to have good reliability (e.g., Kiekens et al., 2021). For the present study, the correlation between the two sexual assault items was high ($r = .65$).

6.2.6 | Violence

General violence was measured using five items that assessed various ways in which participants were exposed to violence or threats of violence due to their sexual and/or gender identity (Mereish et al., 2022). Participants were asked to indicate how many times they had experience each form of violence throughout their lifetime, with the following five scenarios: verbal insults; threats of physical violence; objects thrown at you; punched, kicked, or beaten; and threats with knife/gun/other weapon. For each question, participants responded with *never* (0), *once* (1), *twice* (2), or *three or more times* (3). This measure has been used in studies with large samples of Latinx SGMs youth and has been shown to have good reliability (e.g., Gamarel et al., 2020). For the present study, internal consistency was acceptable ($\alpha = .77$).

6.3 | Analysis plan

Before data analysis, we examined frequencies to determine how often Latinx SGM youth reported experiencing general sexual harassment, violence, and sexual assault. We then conducted three multiple regressions to determine how well LGBTQ-specific parental support and each of the independent variables (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence) predicted self-esteem. To assess the unique effects of our three independent variables, we conducted three separate regressions. These regressions allowed us to determine whether LGBTQ-specific parental support moderated the relationships between each of the three independent variables and self-esteem. We conducted the regressions in SPSS version 26, using the PROCESS macro for moderation analyses. We standardized all continuous terms before doing interaction analyses. All variables except for Sexual Assault evidenced acceptable skewness and kurtosis (between -2 , 2). We consequently employed a natural logarithmic transformation for Sexual Assault in analyses, which yielded acceptable skewness and kurtosis. See Supporting Information: Figure 4 for a depiction of regression analyses.

7 | RESULTS

7.1 | The prevalence of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence and LGBTQ-specific parental support

Our sample included primarily mid-teen ($M_{Age} = 15.67, SD = 1.24$), cisgender girls (45.0%), and cisgender boys (32.6%); however, 33.6% of the sample identified as transgender, including 18.1% of the sample who identified as gender nonbinary/genderqueer. On average, participants reported that they “rarely” or “sometimes” ($M_{Parental\ Support} = 2.40, SD = 0.78$) felt supported by their parental figures based on their LGBTQ-identity. Participants reported slight agreement on average with self-esteem items ($M_{Self-esteem} = 2.60, SD = 1.01$). Participants on average reported experiencing instances of violence due to their sexual and/or gender identity at least twice in their lifetimes ($M = 3.53, SD = 3.57$), in addition to reporting an average of four to five instances of general sexual harassment ($M = 4.64, SD = 4.45$). However, almost three-fourths of our sample did not endorse any instances of sexual assault (73.5%).

7.2 | The effects of support, violence, and harassment on self-esteem

We conducted three hierarchical multiple regressions to understand the influence of Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, and Violence on Self-Esteem and to examine whether the relationship between Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Violence, and Self-Esteem was moderated by LGBTQ-specific Parental Support. We included Age, Gender Identity (expressed as the following dichotomous variables: cisgender boy, cisgender girl, transgender boy, transgender girl, gender nonbinary/genderqueer), and Sexual Identity (expressed as the following dichotomous variable: monosexual [sexual attraction to one gender] vs. polysexual [sexual attraction to multiple genders]) as covariates in step one of each model. In each regression model, we included LGBTQ-specific Parental Support and either Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, or Violence as main effects in step two. Finally, we included the interaction term between Parental Support and either Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, or Violence in step three. See Table 2 for multiple regression among study variables.

Each of the three final models were significant and explained between 18% and 19% of the variation in Self-Esteem (see Table 2 for fit statistics for each model). Results indicated that individuals who identified as a cisgender boy ($b = 0.43$,

TABLE 2 Multiple regression among study variables.

| Sexual assault model | <i>b</i> (SE) | β | <i>p</i> | Sexual harassment model | <i>b</i> (SE) | β | <i>p</i> | Violence model | <i>b</i> (SE) | β | <i>p</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------|
| Model 1—Control | | | | Model 1—Control | | | | Model 1—Control | | | |
| Age | -0.01 (0.02) | | .845 | Age | -0.01 (0.02) | | .845 | Age | -0.01 (0.02) | | .845 |
| Cisgender boy | 0.43 (0.09) | .20 | <.001 | Cisgender boy | 0.43 (0.09) | .20 | <.001 | Cisgender boy | 0.43 (0.09) | .20 | <.001 |
| Cisgender girl | 0.01 (0.09) | | .989 | Cisgender girl | 0.01 (0.09) | | .989 | Cisgender girl | 0.01 (0.09) | | .989 |
| Transgender Boy | -0.61 (0.10) | -.21 | <.001 | Transgender boy | -0.61 (0.10) | -.21 | <.001 | Transgender boy | -0.61 (0.10) | -.21 | <.001 |
| Transgender girl | -0.52 (0.29) | | .073 | Transgender girl | -0.52 (0.29) | | .073 | Transgender girl | -0.52 (0.29) | | .073 |
| Gender nonbinary | -0.28 (0.10) | -.09 | <.001 | Gender nonbinary | -0.28 (0.10) | -.09 | <.001 | Gender nonbinary | -0.28 (0.10) | -.09 | <.001 |
| Plurisexual | -0.12 (0.07) | | .061 | Plurisexual | -0.12 (0.07) | | .061 | Plurisexual | -0.12 (0.07) | | .061 |
| Model 2—Main effect | | | | Model 2—Main effect | | | | Model 2—Main effect | | | |
| Parental support | 0.19 (0.03) | .19 | <.001 | Parental support | 0.18 (0.03) | .18 | <.001 | Parental support | 0.17 (0.03) | .17 | <.001 |
| Sexual assault | -0.11 (0.03) | -.11 | <.001 | Sexual Harassment | -0.13 (0.03) | -.13 | <.001 | Violence | -0.15 (0.03) | -.15 | <.001 |
| Model 3—Interaction | | | | Model 3—Interaction | | | | Model 3—Interaction | | | |
| PS × Sexual assault | -0.06 (0.03) | -.06 | .036 | PS × Sexual harassment | -0.07 (0.03) | -.07 | .011 | PS × Violence | -0.07 (0.03) | -.08 | .006 |
| Model fit statistics | R² | F | p | Model fit statistics | R² | F | p | Model fit statistics | R² | F | p |
| Model 1 | .12 | 20.17 | <.001 | Model 1 | .12 | 20.17 | <.001 | Model 1 | .12 | 19.41 | <.001 |
| Model 2 | .17 | 23.65 | <.001 | Model 2 | .18 | 24.51 | <.001 | Model 2 | .18 | 24.78 | <.001 |
| Model 3 | .18 | 21.80 | <.001 | Model 3 | .19 | 22.83 | <.001 | Model 3 | .19 | 22.85 | <.001 |

Abbreviation: PS, parental support.

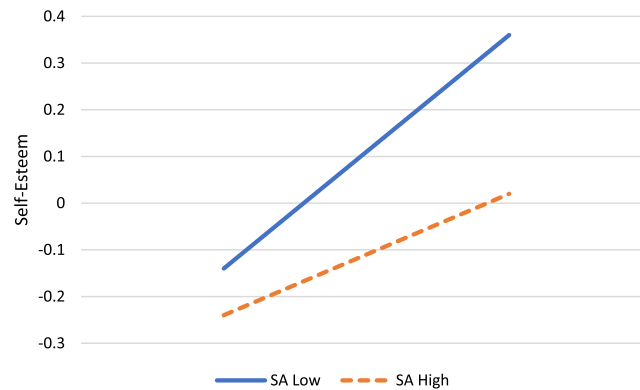


FIGURE 1 The moderating effect of LGBTQ-specific parental support (PS) on sexual assault (SA) and self-esteem. The left side of the figure indicates low parental support, and the right side of the figure indicates high parental support. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

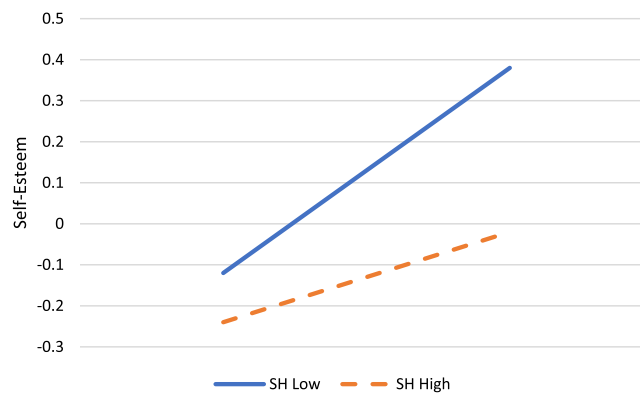


FIGURE 2 The moderating effect of LGBTQ-specific parental support (PS) on general sexual harassment (SH) and self-esteem. The left side of the figure indicates low parental support, and the right side of the figure indicates high parental support. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

$SE = 0.09$, $p < .001$) reported higher Self-Esteem than other participants, whereas those who identified as a transgender boy ($b = -0.61$, $SE = 0.10$, $p < .001$) and those who identified as nonbinary/genderqueer ($b = -0.28$, $SE = 0.10$, $p < .001$) reported lower Self-Esteem than other participants. Age and Sexual Identity were not related to Self-Esteem.

Results further indicated that LGBTQ-specific Parental Support was positively related to Self-Esteem in all three models ($b = 0.19$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$). In contrast, Sexual Harassment ($b = -0.13$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$), Sexual Assault ($b = -0.11$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$), and Violence ($b = -0.15$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$), were all negatively related to Self-Esteem. β values suggest that LGBTQ-specific Parental Support evidenced the strongest relationship with Self-Esteem of these variables ($\beta = .19$).

LGBTQ-specific Parental Support significantly moderated the association between all three independent variables and Self-Esteem. First, LGBTQ-specific Parental Support moderated the relationship between Sexual Assault and Self-Esteem ($b = -0.06$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .036$), such that when LGBTQ-specific Parental Support was high (+1 SD), Sexual Assault was more strongly related to Self-Esteem ($\beta = .36$) than when LGBTQ-specific Parental Support was low (-1 SD ; $\beta = -.14$; see Figure 1). Second, LGBTQ-specific Parental Support moderated the relationship between Sexual Harassment and Self-Esteem ($b = -0.07$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .011$), such that when LGBTQ-specific Parental Support was high (+1 SD), Sexual Harassment was more strongly related to Self-Esteem ($\beta = .38$) than when LGBTQ-specific Parental Support was low (-1 SD ; $\beta = -.12$; see Figure 2). Third, LGBTQ-specific Parental Support moderated the relationship between Violence and Self-Esteem ($b = -0.07$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .006$), such that when LGBTQ-specific Parental Support was high (+1 SD), Violence was more strongly related to Self-Esteem ($\beta = .40$) than when LGBTQ-specific Parental Support was low (-1 SD ; $\beta = -.10$; see Figure 3). These analyses suggest that if Latinx SGM youth experience low levels of sexual harassment, sexual assault, or violence (at least one standard deviation below the mean), the presence of LGBTQ-specific parental support boosts self-esteem; however, when these youth experience high levels of sexual harassment, sexual assault, or violence (at least one standard deviation above the mean), they have lower self-esteem regardless of LGBTQ-specific parental support, although parental support still provides a slight increase in self-esteem.

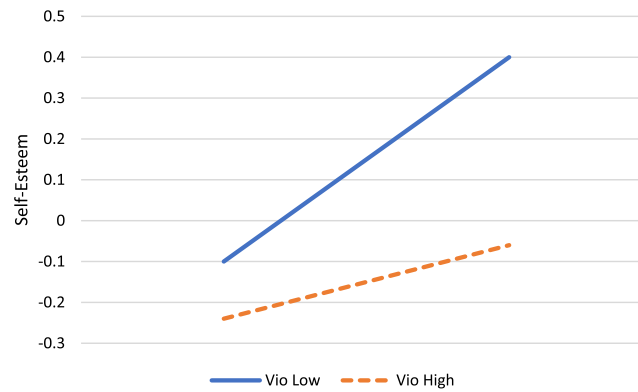


FIGURE 3 The moderating effect of LGBTQ-specific parental support (PS) on violence (Vio) and self-esteem. The left side of the figure indicates low parental support, and the right side of the figure indicates high parental support. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

8 | DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined the prevalence of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence (respectively) and LGBTQ-specific parental support, the role of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence on self-esteem, and the role of LGBTQ-specific parental support on sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence in a sample of Latinx SGM youth. The application of minority stress helped us conceptualize the crucial role of parental support in the mental health outcomes of Latinx SGM youth. In addition, intersectionality theory allowed us to contextualize how multiple systems of oppression (e.g., racism, xenophobia, heterosexism) may explain both Latinx parental figure's reaction to having an SGM child and how Latinx SGM youth are affected by such reactions. Our findings show: (a) Latinx SGM youth are experiencing low levels of LGBTQ-specific parental support and various degrees of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence, (b) transgender and nonbinary/genderqueer Latinx youth experience lower self-esteem than their cisgender counterparts, (c) higher LGBTQ-specific parental support is related to increased self-esteem among Latinx SGM youth, and (d) sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence is related to decreased self-esteem among Latinx SGM youths.

While some research shows that Latinx SGM youth experience overt forms of discrimination because of their intersectional minoritized identities (e.g., Truong & Zongrone, 2022), our study sheds light on other forms of victimization that Latinx SGM youth may experience (i.e., sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence), and that has not been previously explored in the literature. Also, previous research has shown that LGBTQ-specific parental support is crucial in the well-being of Latinx SGM youth (e.g., Abreu et al., 2022; Gattamorta et al., 2019; Lozano et al., 2021). Our findings highlight the impact that LGBTQ-specific parental support has on self-esteem when Latinx SGM youth experiences low levels of sexual assault, harassment, or violence.

We also found that sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence are significantly related to lower self-esteem for Latinx SGM youth. These findings shine light on the various forms of victimization that affect Latinx SGM youth. Specifically, while some research documents the prevalence of violence and its consequences on Latinx SGM youth's mental health outcomes (e.g., Sabina et al., 2022; Vance et al., 2021), we expand on these earlier findings by highlighting how other forms of victimization (i.e., sexual harassment and sexual assault) also significantly affect these communities. In addition, while current research shows that Latinx SGM youth experience negative mental health outcomes such as depression and anxiety as a result of different forms of victimization (e.g., Zongrone et al., 2020), our findings contribute to this research by showing that self-esteem may be important to focus on to improve the wellbeing of Latinx SGM youth.

The result of the tested interaction between LGBTQ-specific parental support and sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence suggests that LGBTQ-specific parental support might not always protect Latinx youth from experiencing these forms of victimization. Specifically, our results show that at low levels of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence, LGBTQ-specific parental support was protective of low self-esteem, but not at high levels of sexual harassment. This finding is consistent with the current literature showing that protective mechanisms do not serve as a buffer at high levels of stressors (Abreu et al., 2023; Sadika et al., 2020). In addition, an intersectional, systemic understanding of privilege and oppression (e.g., racism, cissexism, heterosexisms) is needed to contextualize the role of Latinx parental figures in the wellbeing of their SGM child. For example, Latinx parental figures may fear that their child will experience added layers of discrimination and oppression at the intersection of racism, xenophobia, and heterosexism (see Abreu et al., 2022 for a review). Therefore, it is important to differentiate between behaviors that communicate lack of support from behaviors meant to communicate fear and concern for their child. Furthermore, these results can also be explained based on the age of our participants in that younger adolescents might struggle more than older adolescents to understand that they are being victims of sexual

harassment, sexual assault, and/or violence; therefore, making it challenging for them to seek support from their parental figures. Finally, it is important to acknowledge and address other factors besides LGBTQ-specific parental support that contribute to Latinx SGM's youth self-esteem such as discrimination from peers (e.g., Vance et al., 2021; Zongrone et al., 2020).

8.1 | Strengths, limitations, and future research direction

This study has several strengths that are important to unpack. First, regarding the parental support literature and victimization literature, this study is among one of the first ones to explore the importance of the LGBTQ-specific parental support in experiences of various forms of victimization among Latinx SGM youth. Also, although some studies have established the importance of LGBTQ-specific parental support in mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and suicidality among Latinx SGM youth (e.g., Abreu et al., 2022), our study adds to this research by showing that LGBTQ-specific parental support is also crucial in the self-esteem of these communities. Second, although our findings show that only at low levels of sexual assault, harassment, or violence is LGBTQ-specific parental support a buffer to self-esteem, our findings are among one of the first ones to highlight this relationship. Third, our study utilized a multi-item LGBTQ-specific parental support scale that moves beyond the typical one-item scales commonly used to study parental support among SGM youth. Fourth, our study adds to the slow but growing literature that shows that transgender and gender diverse youth experience less parental acceptance and worse outcomes compared to their cisgender sexual minority counterparts. Given that we found that Latinx transgender boys and nonbinary/queer youth reported lower self-esteem than cisgender boys, these findings provide further evidence for the need to not analyze the experiences of Latinx SGM youth as a homogenous group. This study provides further evidence about the importance of contextualizing the experiences of Latinx SGM youth using an intersectional lens.

This study presents a few limitations that are important to note. First, although we found differences between transgender and nonbinary/genderqueer and cisgender participants, it is unclear why these differences exist. Future research should use qualitative research approaches (e.g., semi-structured interviews, focus groups) to better understand the experiences of gender diverse participants so we can better serve their needs. For example, in-depth interviews with Latinx nonbinary/genderqueer youth could provide insight about specific intersectional experiences to help design inclusive interventions that move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches geared toward White LGBTQ youth. Second, although we used a multi-item LGBTQ-specific parental support scale, there might be specific Latinx cultural aspects that this scale did not measure. Future research should consider using Latinx-specific measures to best capture the unique intersectional experiences of LGBTQ-specific parental support among Latinx SGM youth. Finally, because we used an online survey for our data collection, our findings are not representative of all of the diverse individuals who make up the SGM community. Specifically, we might have not reached the most vulnerable LGBTQ youth (e.g., Latinx SGM youth in rural areas). Future research efforts should include data collection from community organizations that provide services to hard-to-reach SGM youth.

8.2 | Implications for working with Latinx SGM and their parental figures

This study presents important implications for working with Latinx SGM youth and their parental figures. Findings support the use of culturally sensitive interventions that incorporate Latinx cultural values, beliefs, and traditions in working with Latinx SGM youth and their parental figures (Abreu, Gonzalez, et al., 2020; Abreu, Riggle, et al., 2020; Lozano et al., 2022). For example, *Familias con Orgullo* (Lozano et al., 2022) is an evidence-based, culturally sensitive intervention designed to work specifically with Latinx SGM youth and their parental figures. This intervention includes various components such as LGBTQ-specific parental support groups with the goal of providing psychoeducation for parental figures about the SGM community, including the importance of family support on the well-being of SGM youth. This intervention provides parental figures the tools to enhance their interpersonal relationships and, ultimately, enhance the well-being of Latinx SGM youth. Furthermore, asking parents to engage in creative and expressive writing interventions allow parental figures of Latinx SGM to explore the Latinx cultural factors (e.g., role of *familismo* and gender norms) that both facilitates and hinders their relationship with their SGM child. For example, Abreu, Riggle, et al. (2020) asked Latinx parental figures of Latinx SGM people to journal about the Latinx cultural values that present strengths and challenges in accepting their SGM child. This creative approach allows parental figures of Latinx SGM youth to understand and sort through their feelings and emotions as they struggle to accept their SGM child. Specifically, writing interventions may benefit parental figures who have difficulties expressing themselves verbally, as it offers a unique way to communicate and better understand themselves and their child's identity within the context of their culture (Abreu, Riggle, et al., 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2013).

While parental support is the goal, for many Latinx SGM youth this may not be possible, or might take some time for their parental figures to process their emotions and get to a place of support. Therefore, in working with Latinx SGM youth, it

is important to use evidence-based approaches such as Affirmative Supportive Safe and Empowering Talk (ASSET; Hobaica et al., 2018) to affirm their identity and decrease negative mental health outcomes. Furthermore, when working with Latinx SGM youth and/or their parental figures, it is important to also focus on positive stories about the relationship between Latinx parental figures and their SGM child. Research shows that parental figures can get to a place where they experience pride and joy about having an SGM child (e.g., Abreu et al., 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2013).

9 | CONCLUSION

In this study, Latinx SGM youth endorsed low levels of LGBTQ-specific parental support and levels of self-esteem. Also, we found that among Latinx SGM youth self-esteem was positively related to LGBTQ-specific parental support and negatively related to experiences of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence. Moreover, LGBTQ-specific parental support was found to have a protective effect for youth who endorsed low levels of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence but not for those who experienced high levels of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence. The relationship between parental support, self-esteem, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence should continue to be explored in future studies to uncover specific family dynamics and cultural aspects that are important to understand the relationship between Latinx SGM youths and their families and communities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Support for this project was provided by the National Institute of Drug Abuse through grant K01DA047918 awarded to Ryan J. Watson. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no data sets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

How to cite this article: Abreu, R. L., Skidmore, S. J., Badio, K. S., Lefevor, G. T., Gattamorta, K. A., & Watson, R. J. (2023). Sexual harassment, sexual assault, violence, self-esteem, and the role of LGBTQ-specific parental support in a sample of Latinx sexual and gender minority youth. *Journal of Adolescence*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jad.12210>