

Scoping Review Protocol

Title

School-based social safety among transgender and gender-diverse youth: a scoping review protocol

Authors

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Abstract

Objective:

The objective of this scoping review is to compile and synthesize the existing literature capturing the experiences and perspectives of transgender and gender-diverse youth regarding a sense of social safety within school settings.

Introduction:

Transgender and gender-diverse youth experience significant mental health inequities as compared to their cisgender peers. Social safety has been identified as a potentially valuable area of exploration in understanding and addressing the root causes of these inequities, but there is a need for further conceptual clarity and synthesis of existing knowledge regarding social safety in school settings for transgender and gender-diverse youth.

Inclusion criteria:

The scoping review will include data in which transgender and/or gender-diverse middle- and/or high-school students qualitatively describe their experiences and/or perspectives regarding social safety in school settings.

Methods:

The search strategy utilized PubMed, CINAHL, PsycInfo, LGBTQ+ Source, ERIC, Scopus, and Web of Science databases and was conducted in July 2024. Studies included will be limited to only those published in English. Data relevant to the review question and regarding the participants, concept of social safety or lack of social safety, middle- and high-school context, methods, and findings will be extracted. Results will be presented in tabular form with accompanying narrative.

Introduction

Transgender and gender-diverse youth have been recognized as having specific and pressing health needs. Among these are mental health needs, as transgender and gender-diverse youth have been shown to experience higher rates of decreased mental health as compared to their cisgender peers (Connolly et al., 2016; Wittlin et al., 2023). Although there have historically been measurement and sampling challenges to establishing representative incidence and prevalence data among transgender and gender-diverse youth (Connolly et al., 2016), existing findings have indicated that this group experiences an increased risk of depression, anxiety, and suicidality, among other adverse mental health outcomes (Pinna et al., 2022).

The term “transgender and gender-diverse” will be understood and used in this scoping review as an umbrella term to refer to the experiences of individuals whose gender identity does not correspond with their sex assigned at birth (Wittlin et al., 2023). This term includes individuals who may use identity labels such as transgender, nonbinary, two-spirit, and genderqueer, among others.

Recent scholarship examining mental health inequities affecting transgender and gender-diverse youth has established the need for novel approaches to understanding and addressing their root causes (Diamond et al., 2021). One area of inquiry that has been identified as potentially valuable and in need of further exploration is the concept of social safety. Diamond and Alley (2022) describe social safety as a valuable and novel approach to understanding and addressing health disparities among sexual- and gender-diverse people, specifically for its potential in preventing and disrupting health-harmful preparatory vigilance processes associated with social threats. Although social safety holds theoretical promise, the nascence of this area of scholarship indicates a need for further conceptual depth and clarity.

Social safety, for the purposes of this review, will be understood and operationalized as described by Diamond and Alley (2022), referring specifically to a personal sense of reliable social connection, belongingness, inclusion, recognition, and protection. Recognizing that not all scholarship will use this exact language, this review will also include work that discusses factors relevant to a general sense of psychological well-being or protectiveness tied to the specific settings of middle- and high-schools.

Schools have been selected as the setting of focus in this review due to their established importance in the lives of transgender and gender-diverse young people (McDermott et al., 2023). This is not only because youth spend a significant portion of their time in school environments; additionally, the literature shows that a lack of social safety in school, including bullying-related victimization and unsupportive or reaffirming school policies, has been shown to be associated with adverse mental health outcomes among transgender and gender-diverse youth (Austin et al., 2018).

An additional consideration in undertaking this review is recognizing the importance of capturing and recognizing the perspectives and experiences of transgender and gender-diverse youth themselves. Understanding and synthesizing what has already been gleaned about school-based social safety for transgender and gender-diverse youth, qualitatively and in their own words, will allow for a rich understanding of associated factors that facilitate and threaten social safety in school settings for these youth.

An initial limited review of JBI and PROSPERO was conducted and confirmed that there are not currently any published or in-process systematic or scoping reviews on this identified topic.

Recognizing the relevance and significance of the school environment in the lives of youth, both generally and as a potential site of intervention, as well as the need for the direct perspectives of transgender and gender-diverse youth, this scoping review will seek to compile and synthesize the existing literature qualitatively capturing the experiences and perspectives of transgender and gender-diverse youth regarding a sense of social safety within school settings.

Review question

This scoping review seeks to answer the following question:

How do transgender and gender-diverse youth understand and experience a sense of social safety in middle and high school settings?

Eligibility criteria

Participants

Inclusion:

- Participants are current middle or high school students or adults reflecting on their previous middle or high school experiences
- Participants self-identify as transgender and/or gender-diverse (e.g., not cisgender)

Exclusion:

- Participants are non-students, including administrators, teachers, other school staff, etc.

Concept

Inclusion:

- Experiences of and perspectives about school-based social safety, either as self-defined or in accordance with one or more facets of Diamond and Alley's (2022) definition of social safety, which includes social experiences and feelings of connection, belongingness, inclusion, recognition and protection. This may also include factors related to psychological safety and overall emotional well-being when specifically related to the social context of a school setting.
- Experiences and perspectives related to a lack of social safety and/or a lack of well-being, such as exclusion, rejection, vulnerability, and discrimination in school settings.

Exclusion:

- Conceptualizations of safety that are not directly related to the social school environment, such as gun safety, dating violence, sexual safety, etc.
- Safety and well-being factors that are not directly related to the school environment, such as family dynamics, parenting, clinical experiences, etc.

Context

Inclusion:

- Discussions must be relevant to factors affecting school settings or experiences in schools

Types of Sources

- Qualitative studies
- Qualitative results of mixed methods studies

Methods

The proposed review will follow the JBI framework for conducting scoping reviews.

Search strategy

The search strategy will utilize PubMed, CINAHL, PsycInfo, LGBTQ+ Source, ERIC, Scopus, and Web of Science databases to locate published and unpublished studies. The search strategy for these databases will be adapted for each source and will identify both text words in titles and abstracts as well as index terms for the articles' descriptions. Included studies will be published in English.

Study/Source of Evidence selection

All citations identified in the search will be uploaded into Covidence, and duplicates will be removed. Titles and abstracts will be screened by two reviewers independently to

ensure consistency in applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Sources that are assessed to be appropriate will then be retrieved in full. These retrieved full sources will then be assessed by two reviewers using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Disagreements between the reviewers in title and abstract review or full text review will be resolved through discussion. Reasons for exclusion will be documented and reported in the review for full-text review exclusions. Results will be reported in the review and presented using a Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses extension for scoping review (PRISMA-ScR) flow diagram.

Data Extraction

Data relevant to the review question and regarding the participants, concept, context, methods, and findings will be extracted.

The data extraction tool described in Appendix II will be used by the reviewers and will be modified as necessary throughout the process. Any changes to this tool will be discussed in the scoping review.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Data from this scoping review will be presented in tabular form to identify key findings with an accompanying narrative description and summary. The table and narrative will describe the value of the data gleaned in relation to this review's stated objective and question.

Acknowledgements

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Conflicts of interest

There is no conflict of interest in this project.

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<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-072220-020326>

Appendices

Appendix I: Search strategy

Search conducted July 17, 2024 and results limited to those published in English

Database	Search terms
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PubMed

(MH "Gender Dysphoria") OR (MH "Gender Transition") OR (MH "Gender-Nonconforming Persons+") OR (MH "Gender Affirmation Procedures+") OR (MH "Gender Affirming Care+") OR (MH "Gender Identity") OR (MH "Androgyny (Psychology)") OR (MH "Nonbinary Persons") OR (MH "Hijras") OR (MH "Transgender Persons+") OR (MH "Sexual and Gender Minorities") OR (MH "Gender Affirmation Surgery") OR TI("2 spirit" OR "bi-gender" OR "bottom surgery" OR "breast masculi*" OR "changing gender*" OR "chest masculi*" OR "chest wall contouring" OR "cross dress*" OR "drag king*" OR "drag queen*" OR "feminisation surger*" OR "feminising surger*" OR "feminization surger*" OR "feminizing surger*" OR "flexible gender" OR "gender affirm*" OR "gender assignment" OR "gender atypical" OR "gender binar*" OR "gender change" OR "gender confirm*" OR "gender confusion" OR "gender continuum" OR "gender creative" OR "gender cross*" OR "gender dimorph*" OR "gender disorder*" OR "gender distress" OR "gender divers*" OR "gender dysphor*" OR "gender expansive" OR "gender expression" OR "gender flex*" OR "gender fluid*" OR "gender free" OR "gender identity" OR "gender incongruen*" OR "gender minorit*" OR "gender non-binar*" OR "gender non-conform*" OR "gender nonbinar*" OR "gender nonconform*" OR "gender pathology" OR "gender queer" OR "gender questioning" OR "gender reassignment*" OR "gender schema" OR "gender self concept" OR "gender self-concept" OR "gender transform*" OR "gender transition*" OR "gender varian*" OR "genital affirm*" OR "genital construction" OR "genital reassignment" OR "genital reconfiguration" OR "genital reconstructi*" OR "inframammary skin resection*" OR "internal gender" OR "introitus plasty" OR "male female binar*" OR "masculinization surgery" OR "masculinizing surgery" OR "neo penis" OR "neo scrotum" OR "neo urethra" OR "neo vagina" OR "nipple graft" OR "non-binary gender*" OR "non-cisgender" OR "non-gender" OR "non-normative gender" OR "penile skin inversion" OR "penoscrotal inversion" OR "perceived gender" OR "phallic construction" OR "psychological gender" OR "sex change" OR "sex dimorphism" OR "sex reassignment*" OR "sex transformation"

OR "sex transition*" OR "sexual reassignment"
OR "third gender*" OR "top surgery" OR "trans
adolescen*" OR "trans adult*" OR "trans child*"
OR "trans client*" OR "trans communit*" OR "trans
female*" OR "trans feminine" OR "trans
identification" OR "trans identit*" OR "trans
individual*" OR "trans male*" OR "trans man" OR
"trans masculine" OR "trans men" OR "trans
participant*" OR "trans patient*" OR "trans
people*" OR "trans person*" OR "trans
population*" OR "trans sexual" OR "trans specific"
OR "trans teen*" OR "trans woman" OR "trans
women" OR "trans youth" OR "transforming
gender" OR "two spirit" OR "urethral lengthening"
OR afab OR agender OR amab OR androgyne
OR androgyny OR androphilic OR bi-gender OR
bigender OR cisgender OR cross-dress* OR
crossdress* OR gender-fluid OR genderfluid OR
genderfree OR genderqueer OR hijra OR kothi
OR metoidioplast* OR neoclitor* OR
neocolporrhaphy OR neolabia OR neopenis OR
neophall* OR neophalloplast* OR neoscrotum OR
neourethra OR neovagin* OR neovaginopexy OR
neutrois OR non-binary OR nonbinary OR
pangender OR polygender OR transexual* OR
transfemini* OR transgender* OR transman OR
transmasculine OR transmen OR transpeople OR
transphob* OR transsexual* OR transvestite* OR
transwoman OR transwomen OR two-spirit OR
vaginoplast*) OR AB("2 spirit" OR "bi-gender" OR
"bottom surgery" OR "breast masculi*" OR
"changing gender*" OR "chest masculi*" OR
"chest wall contouring" OR "cross dress*" OR
"drag king*" OR "drag queen*" OR "feminisation
surger*" OR "feminising surger*" OR "feminization
surger*" OR "feminizing surger*" OR "flexible
gender" OR "gender affirm*" OR "gender
assignment" OR "gender atypical" OR "gender
binar*" OR "gender change" OR "gender confirm*"
OR "gender confusion" OR "gender continuum"
OR "gender creative" OR "gender cross*" OR
"gender dimorph*" OR "gender disorder*" OR
"gender distress" OR "gender divers*" OR "gender
dysphor*" OR "gender expansive" OR "gender
expression" OR "gender flex*" OR "gender fluid*"
OR "gender free" OR "gender identity" OR
"gender incongruen*" OR "gender minorit*" OR
"gender non-binar*" OR "gender non-conform*"

OR "gender nonbinar*" OR "gender nonconform*" OR "gender pathology" OR "gender queer" OR "gender questioning" OR "gender reassignment*" OR "gender schema" OR "gender self concept" OR "gender self-concept" OR "gender transform*" OR "gender transition*" OR "gender varian*" OR "genital affirm*" OR "genital construction" OR "genital reassignment" OR "genital reconfiguration" OR "genital reconstructi*" OR "inframammary skin resection*" OR "internal gender" OR "introitus plasty" OR "male female binar*" OR "masculinization surgery" OR "masculinizing surgery" OR "neo penis" OR "neo scrotum" OR "neo urethra" OR "neo vagina" OR "nipple graft" OR "non-binary gender*" OR "non-cisgender" OR "non-gender" OR "non-normative gender" OR "penile skin inversion" OR "penoscrotal inversion" OR "perceived gender" OR "phallic construction" OR "psychological gender" OR "sex change" OR "sex dimorphism" OR "sex reassignment*" OR "sex transformation" OR "sex transition*" OR "sexual reassignment" OR "third gender*" OR "top surgery" OR "trans adolescen*" OR "trans adult*" OR "trans child*" OR "trans client*" OR "trans communit*" OR "trans female*" OR "trans feminine" OR "trans identification" OR "trans identit*" OR "trans individual*" OR "trans male*" OR "trans man" OR "trans masculine" OR "trans men" OR "trans participant*" OR "trans patient*" OR "trans people*" OR "trans person*" OR "trans population*" OR "trans sexual" OR "trans specific" OR "trans teen*" OR "trans woman" OR "trans women" OR "trans youth" OR "transforming gender" OR "two spirit" OR "urethral lengthening" OR afab OR agender OR amab OR androgyne OR androgyny OR androphilic OR bi-gender OR bigender OR cisgender OR cross-dress* OR crossdress* OR gender-fluid OR genderfluid OR genderfree OR genderqueer OR hijra OR kothi OR metoidioplast* OR neoclitor* OR neocolporrhaphy OR neolabia OR neopenis OR neophall* OR neophalloplast* OR neoscrotum OR neourethra OR neovagin* OR neovaginopexy OR neutrois OR non-binary OR nonbinary OR pangender OR polygender OR transexual* OR transfemini* OR transgender* OR transman OR transmasculine OR transmen OR transpeople OR

	<p>transphob* OR transsexual* OR transvestite* OR transwoman OR transwomen OR two-spirit OR vaginoplast*)</p> <p>AND</p> <p>(MH "Schools, Middle") OR (MH "Schools, Secondary") OR (MH "Students, Middle School") OR (MH "Students, High School") OR "Middle school*" OR "High school*" OR "Junior High*" OR "secondary school*" OR "intermediate school"</p>
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Appendix II: Data extraction instrument

Covidence #	
Study ID:	
Scoping review title:	
Review objective	
Review question	
Inclusion/exclusion criteria	
Population	
Concept	
Context	

Types of evidence source	
Evidence source details and characteristics	
Author(s)	
Date published	
Title	
Journal	
Volume	
Issue	
Context	
Study design	
Sampling method	
Sample	
Demographics	
Location(s)	
Details/results extracted	
Research objective/focus	
Defining characteristics of	

social safety/unsafety	
Major themes and insights	
Recommendations (if any)	