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Gender & Social Support in Young Adults

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Gender & Social Support in Young Adults

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Introduction

Recent research by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has revealed a significant increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depressive symptoms during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, with three to four times the number of symptoms reported than the previous year in 2019. Our aim was to evaluate young adults' perception of social support in relation to mental health and examine the ways in which gender influences who and where young adults turn in times of increased emotional distress.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does gender affect perceived social support for mental health issues for young adults in the state of Utah?

METHODOLOGY

Data was accumulated in the form of semi-structured interviews with 9 young adults living in Utah.

RESULTS

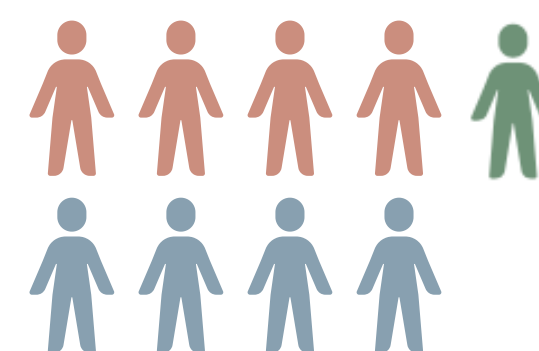
Many participants acknowledged perceived differences in how different genders express and seek help for emotional distress.

Analysis

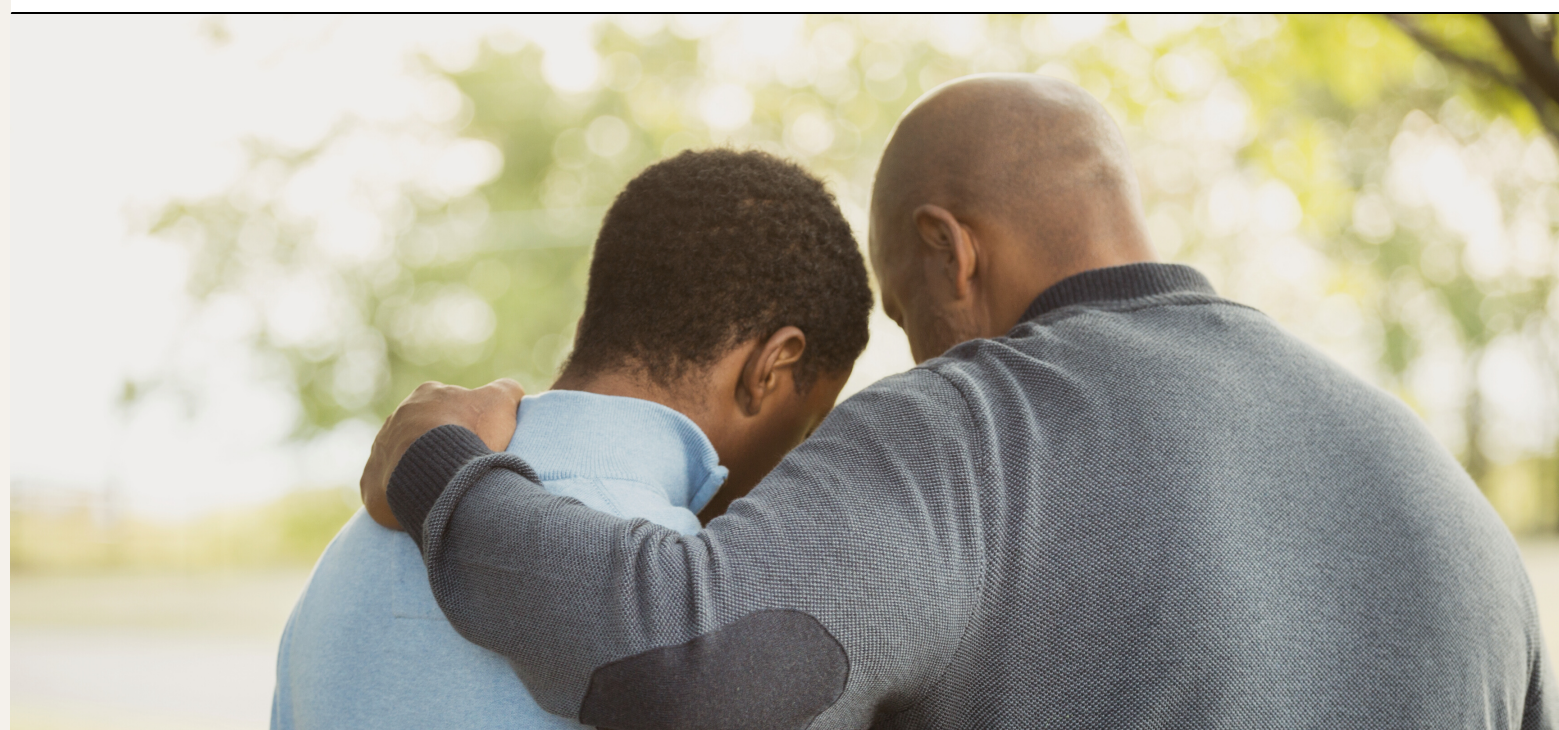
Parents, siblings, and partners were often referenced as the primary source of social support for interview participants, followed by close friends and professional mental health counselors. Feelings of trust, shared values, and empathy were key indicators of who a participant would turn to in times of emotional distress. Many participants mentioned social stigma associated with being open about mental health issues, particularly towards males. Participants frequently identified men as being less open about their emotions and less likely to reach out in times of distress than women.



Participants responded to a brief mental health survey as well as interview questions about their support systems.



Interview participants consisted of four males, four females, and one transgender individual.



Conclusion

Greater stigma is associated with men seeking mental health support, meaning that men are often less likely to seek help at all or reach out only in times of more severe distress. Comparatively, women are often more likely to express their emotions freely and more willingly seek out support. Understanding how and where men and women reach out to people close to them for support in times of mental and emotional distress can help us know how to support people in both personal and professional realms.