Research examining suicide among BDSM practitioners (BDSM-P) is limited but suggests increased risk for suicide ideation (SI; Roush, Brown, Mitchell, & Cukrowicz, 2016).

The interpersonal theory of suicide (Joiner, 2005; Van Orden et al., 2010) posits three key variables related to suicide risk (Van Orden et al., 2008).

Thwarted belonging (TB): Feelings of loneliness and a lack of reciprocal caring relationships.

Perceived burden (PB): Feelings of self-hate and liability on others.


TB and PB are associated with SI (Joiner, 2005; Van Orden et al., 2010).

The majority of BDSM-P belong to a BDSM organization for the purpose of entering and maintaining a sense of community (Sprott, 2010); therefore, the BDSM community may decrease TB.

“Some” BDSM-P report accepting experiences when disclosing their involvement (Bezreh et al., 2012), which may decrease TB.

However, the majority of BDSM-P reported being aware of the stigma toward BDSM (Bezreh et al., 2012), which may increase PB.

Moreover, individuals who engage with the LGB community are able to access support that may buffer against some minority stressors (Meyer, 2003).

However, individuals who engage with the LGB community are able to access support that may buffer against some minority stressors (Meyer, 2003).

The aim of the current study is to examine the role of theoretically-based risk factors (i.e., TB and PB) in the relation between disclosure of BDSM involvement and SI among LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ individuals.

Greater percentage of BDSM disclosure to others will be associated with lower TB and in turn lower SI.

Greater percentage of BDSM disclosure will be associated with higher PB and in turn higher SI.

These relations will be stronger for LGBTQ individuals compared to non-LGBTQ individuals.

Method

Participants: Participants were 327 BDSM-P who were recruited online from BDSM-related groups or forums on social networking websites (i.e., Facebook, Yahoo Groups, Reddit, Literotica).

Age: M = 29.42 (SD = 10.64 years)

Gender: Female (n = 110; 33.8%); Male (n = 202; 62.2%); Transgender (male to female: n = 7; 2.2%); Transgender (female to male: n = 2; 0.6%); Other (n = 4; 1.2%)

Race/ethnicity: White (n = 300, 92.3%); Hispanic or Latino (n = 14, 4.3%); Black or African American (n = 10, 3.1%); Asian or Asian American (n = 12, 3.7%); American Indian (n = 10, 3.1%); Other (n = 7, 2.2%). Participants were provided the option to identify as more than one race/ethnicity; therefore, the sum of the percentages exceeds 100%.

MEASURES

Demographic and Sexuality Questionnaire: Self-report of basic demographic information, suicide risk, mental health treatment history, sexuality and BDSM involvement and disclosure.

Positive and Negative Suicide Ideation Inventory (PANSI; Osman et al., 1998): Self-report assessment consisting of two scales: negative ideation (i.e., SI) and positive ideation (i.e., positive thoughts about life).

Interpersonal Needs Questionnaire (INQ; Van Orden et al., 2012): Self-report assessment of TB and PB.


RESULTS

Non-parametric bootstrapping mediation procedures were used to test the hypothesis (Hayes, 2013) where 95% CIs not containing zero are considered statistically significant.

After controlling for CES-D scores, the indirect effect of BDSM disclosure on SI through TB did not contain zero (95% CI = [-0.301, -0.008]), indicating that TB significantly mediated the relation between BDSM disclosure and SI.

After controlling for CES-D scores, the indirect effects of BDSM disclosure on SI through PB did not contain zero (95% CI = [-0.008, 0.015]), indicating that PB did not significantly mediate the relation between BDSM disclosure and SI; however, there was a significant positive association between PB and SI (95% CI = [0.260, 0.478]).

The direct effect of BDSM disclosure on SI was not significant (95% CI = [-0.013, 0.041]).

The Role of Thwarted Interpersonal Needs

MAIN FINDINGS

Disclosure of BDSM involvement may serve as a protective factor for SI, such that greater disclosure was associated with lower TB, and subsequently lower SI.

When analyzed separately in the LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ groups, there were not differences in these relations overall, suggesting that disclosure may serve as a protective factor through TB similarly for LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ individuals.

Disclosure of BDSM involvement was not associated with PB or SI; therefore, and SI through PB suggests that feelings of PB associated with disclosure are less important.

IMPLICATIONS

This information can provide clinicians with a better understanding of BDSM practices among clients and how these impact their emotional health.

This information can provide clinicians with a better understanding of how disclosure of BDSM practices can have a different relation to TB and PB.

Clinicians should assess BDSM disclosure and potentially help clients identify supportive others or communities that may facilitate disclosure to reduce SI through reducing feelings of TB.

Clinicians should assess and target feelings of TB and PB as these are associated with higher SI.