

*Brescia Outstanding
Scholar Showcase*



APRIL 3 2023

 **Brescia**
AT WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Featured Student Poster Presentations

Clara Baker

Title: Assessing the Relationships between Self-Compassion, Perfectionism, and the “Big Five”

Holly Clemas

Title: Queer Authentic Leadership in the Context of 21st Century Educational Environments

Beth Donchai

Title: Enacting Collective Leadership to Enhance the Roles of School Councils in Ontario Public Schools

Nya Elijah

Title: Highlighting the Role of Indigenous Leadership in the Opioid Epidemic

Easha Faisal

Title: Exploring Support Seeking Behaviours to Predict First-Year Students' Academic Performance

Tehreem Fatimah

Title: Effects of Social Skills on Spatial Perspective Taking

Bronwyn Lacey

Title: Childhood Activities and the Effects on Later Spatial Abilities

Foluke Olusegun-Emmanuel

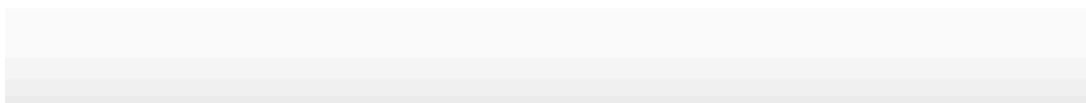
Title: Social Connectedness and its Relation to Perceived Stress and Loneliness

Mannat Sharma

Title: Housing as a Human Right: Working with Communities to Amplify the Voices of Women with Lived Experiences of Gender-Based Violence in London, Ontario

Sara Thuss & Sandy Koh

Title: Centering Youth Voices: Sexual Health and Wellbeing Needs of Diaspora Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Youth in Ontario



Centering Youth Voices: Sexual Health and Wellbeing Needs of Diaspora Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Youth in Ontario

Roula Hawa¹ PhD, Olesya Falenchuk² PhD, Bessma Momani³ PhD, Susan Bartels⁴ MD, Vijaya Chikermane⁵ MA, Fanta Ongoba⁶ MA, Tina Pahlevan⁷ MPH, Lina Hammad⁸ MA, Rama Eloulabi⁹ BSc, Ahmad Ezzeddine⁸ MBA, Anmar Al-Azzawi¹⁰ BA, Moe Akel¹¹ MA, Mona Loufy^{7,12} MD

¹ Brescia University College at Western; ² Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto; ³ University of Waterloo; ⁴ Queen's University; ⁵ 7.10 Stories; ⁶ Africans in Partnership Against AIDS; ⁷ University of Toronto; ⁸ YSMENA Study; ⁹ Western University; ¹⁰ Capital Rainbow Refuge; ¹¹ Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention; ¹² Women's College Hospital, University of Toronto

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

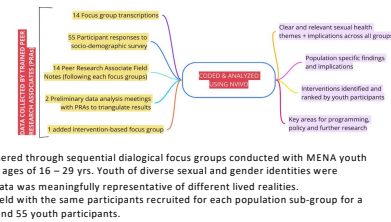
- A rise in new HIV infections in the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) region since 2001 has put the region among the top regions in the world with the fastest growing HIV epidemic.
- From a Canadian lens, recent trends indicate that immigrants from the MENA region are expected to increase the most rapidly between 2006 and 2031 and more than triple in the next 25 years.
- YSMENA is the first research study in Canada designed to determine HIV risk context and sexual health needs of MENA diaspora youth living in Canada.
- Youth, especially LGBTQ+ youth, immigrants and refugees bear a disproportionate burden of STIs and HIV due to structural barriers impacting young people who experience social and economic marginalization.
- There is a major gap in sexual health knowledge, tools and culturally relevant resources to this vulnerable group.

Study Objectives:

- To understand how the social environments and relationships of MENA youth in the contexts of their homes, schools, and communities, shape their identities and influence their sexual health.
- To engage youth participants in designing sexual health interventions that can inform relevant programming and planning
- To identify existing gaps in the literature and in services that apply to the MENA community
- To engage in developmental research that builds community and youth capacity in knowledge generation and sexual health
- To work with a multidisciplinary team to engage health practitioners, social service workers, policymakers and MENA youth on integrated knowledge exchange and sharing activities

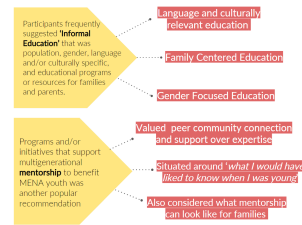
METHODS

- The YSMENA study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods that were administered through socio-demographic surveys and focus groups with MENA youth in Ontario
- Qualitative data was gathered through sequential dialogical focus groups conducted with MENA youth participants between the ages of 16 – 29 yrs. Youth of diverse sexual and gender identities were recruited to ensure the data was meaningfully representative of different lived realities.
- Two focus groups were held with the same participants recruited for each population sub-group for a total of 14 focus groups and 55 youth participants.



INTERVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS

BEHAVIOURAL INTERVENTIONS



Aside from having community groups for youth I think it's important to have them for parents as well. I think that sometimes, especially parents who migrate here, there's a huge disconnect between them and their children when they go to school and learn about everything. Any form of advice for mentoring that I've gotten in terms of sexually related topics, has always been from the purely Canadian perspective and our experiences are quite different. Having someone who could potentially have given me any advice... would be helpful at a younger age.

The top recommendation was ONLINE INTERACTIVE RESOURCES

- Raise awareness around sexual health, empower people to gain knowledge, and create a safe space that represents intersectionality
- Resources, education, and information online is more accessible, and allows them to be more anonymous, especially those who are not yet comfortable accessing this information in person, or not yet comfortable with their identity
- Online spaces with a focus on stigma reduction and sexual health in accessible language

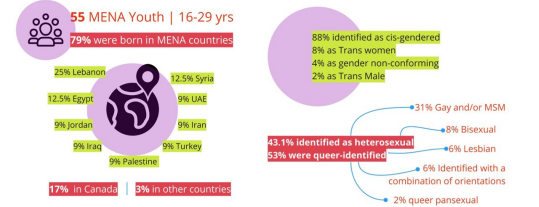
I think the online communities create a sense of safety, maybe or a sense of anonymity that a lot of us in the community crave

MEDIA/ONLINE PROGRAM INTERVENTIONS



I think it would be great if we can integrate a conversation with a family that recently immigrated to the country upon immigration when they're finding their new doctor or doing the tests that they need to do. Maybe they can have an independent conversation with the family members, about the resources available, about some of the stigmas or facts

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS & THEMATIC FINDINGS



Common Themes:

- Cultural identity
- A high regard for family and familial relationships
- Cultural comparisons with home countries
- Associations of shame and stigma relating to sexual health
- Difficulties navigating health service access
- Experiences of racism and Islamophobia
- A repeated theme across sessions was also one of self-acceptance and resiliency

GAY AND OTHER MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN GROUP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pressures related to dating and acceptance in the gay community More discussion on PrEP, HIV, STIs and HIV Stigma Sexual Activity and Practice Homophobia and stigma around race and sexuality Family and Home
HERETOSEXUAL MEN'S GROUP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conversations about Stigma and Lack of Education Media Interventions Family and Home
HERETOSEXUAL WOMEN'S GROUP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences with healthcare providers and gender-specific preferences Sexism and Pressures of 'Purity'
LESBIAN, BISSUAL AND QUEER GROUP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family, Community and Sexual Stigma Health Providers and Health Services
TRANS-IDENTIFIED WOMEN'S GROUP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transphobia and Systemic Exclusion Language, Health and Settlement-related Services Attachment to Family

CONCLUSIONS

- A significant and overarching theme across all the findings were varying representations of shame and stigma attached to sex, sexuality and any subsequent conversations of sexual health. It was interesting how shame manifested within different sub-groups.
- The findings from the study offer a crucial glimpse into the sexual health needs and resiliencies of diaspora MENA youth living in Ontario and have strong implications for health practice in the province.

Limitations:

- COVID 19 caused delays in the study. We were able to continue online however, the online environment posed its own limitations as well as advantages. Online implementation enabled some youth to participate who might not have been able to do so otherwise; nevertheless, the richness of in-person discussion was difficult to emulate on an online platform.
- Given the smaller sample required for qualitative data gathering, quantitative analysis was limited and served to provide a descriptive context to the data sample versus conducting regression analysis or comparisons between groups.
- Lastly, the varied facilitation styles of the PRAs may have influenced the level and depth of discussion which differs from one focus group to another.

I think it's the stigma, and the lack of proper education regarding PrEP, it's a new concept for so many people who recently moved to Canada because in the Middle East, it does not exist