EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Sexual Minority Youth Reporting SOGIE-Based Harassment to Adults at School: The Roles of Experienced Harassment, Outness, Safety, and Adult Support at School

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Abstract

Despite a proliferation of bullying prevention programs in recent time, limited work has investigated support-seeking behaviors in response to elevated bullying levels among sexual minority youth (SMY). To address this gap, the current study examined how harassment targeting SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression), sexual identity outness, school safety, and perceptions of teacher/staff support were associated with SMY talking to an adult at school about harassment. A large contemporary national sample of SMY ($N = 5538$) between the ages 13–18 ($M_{age} = 15.53$, $SD = 1.33$) who experienced at least one form of SOGIE-based harassment in the past year was leveraged for analyses. Hierarchical multivariable logistic regressions revealed more frequent SOGIE-based harassment was associated with greater odds of reporting harassment to school personnel, particularly among SMY who felt safe at school. Findings highlight the need for school-based interventions to foster school safety among SMY who experience peer harassment to promote their reporting of this behavior.

Introduction

Disparities in harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression (SOGIE) between sexual minority youth (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or another non-heterosexual identity; SMY) and their cisgender-heterosexual peers are well documented (Myers et al., 2020). In 2021, approximately 76% of sexual and gender diverse youth reported experiencing verbal harassment at school based on their SOGIE, and 31% experienced physical harassment (Kosciw et al., 2022). Although the number and quality of SOGIE-based harassment school-based prevention programs that target stigma-based harassment have increased, school personnel frequently underestimate the prevalence of harassment at school (Earnshaw et al., 2020) and are sometimes not present in the

locations it occurs (Kaufman & Baams, 2022). Given the unique position of teachers and staff members to intervene, many anti-bullying intervention programs stress the importance of empowering youth to seek help from them (e.g., Novick & Isaacs, 2010); however, little research has examined these strategies in the context of stigma-based bullying. Consequently, little is known about what factors may promote reporting behavior among SMY. Addressing this lack of research is particularly important for SMY as they are less likely to reach out for help when victimized compared to their cisgender heterosexual peers despite experiencing more frequent harassment (Kaufman & Baams, 2022) and have additional barriers specific to their identity, such as outness (i.e., the extent to which SMY have disclosed their identity in a given context; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Thus, drawing upon the general and stigma-based bullying literature, the current study examined factors associated with SMY reporting harassment to teachers and/or staff at school.

Reporting SOGIE-Based Harassment

SOGIE-based harassment is associated with numerous adverse health outcomes, such as elevated depressive and anxiety symptoms (Jackson et al., 2023), substance use (Watson et al., 2021), and sleep trouble (Lessard, Puhl,

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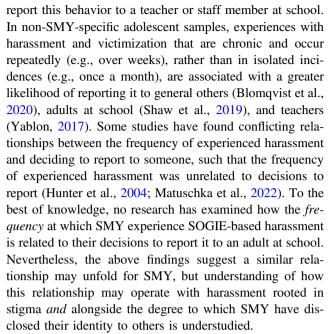
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et al., 2020), and is widespread in schools (Kosciw et al., 2022). Despite the health implications and pervasive nature of harassment, many adolescents who experience victimization are typically apprehensive about reporting it to adults at school (Bradshaw et al., 2007), partly due to concerns about safety, poorer trust in teachers, and the shame that may result from disclosure (deLara, 2012; Kosciw et al., 2022). Recent findings from a 2021 study of 22,298 youth showed that 39% of sexual and gender diverse youth who experienced SOGIE-based harassment reported it to an adult at school (Kosciw et al., 2022). SOGIE-based harassment is unique from general harassment (i.e., discriminatory; Gower et al., 2018) and tends to peak in schools at a developmental period when stressors tied to SGD identities (e.g., coming out) may occur at the same time as normative adolescent stressors (Russell & Fish, 2019). Thus, understanding how discriminatory harassment in the context of a SMY-specific identity developmental process (i.e., identity disclosure) may be related to perceptions of the school environment is crucial to understanding SMY's decisions to report harassment to adults at school.

It is also essential to consider other contributing factors, such as intersectionality in the social positions and experiences of SMY who report SOGIE-based harassment to adults at school. SMY are a heterogeneous group of individuals with intersecting identities (Watson et al., 2023); some SMY also hold gender-diverse (e.g., a non-cisgender identity) and/or racially minoritized identities. From an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1990), the reporting experiences of SMY who hold multiple minoritized identities may differ due to the synergetic influences of their intersecting identities. For example, transgender SMY report experiencing more frequent peer harassment based on their identity compared to cisgender SMY (Eisenberg et al., 2019), and racially minoritized SMY may experience additional forms of harassment (e.g., race-based harassment; Mallory & Russell, 2021). As such, it is plausible that reporting behavior may vary across diverse groups of SMY. Additionally, previous research has found socioeconomic status and grade level to be robust predictors of adolescents reporting peer harassment to adults, such that youth in higher grade levels (e.g., grade 11 versus grade 5) and who report lower socioeconomic status are less likely to report harassment to adults at school (Bauman et al., 2016). The research questions for this project were developed with consideration of potential meaningful differences across intersections of social positions among SMY.

Frequency of SOGIE-Based Harassment and Sexual Identity Outness at School

The frequency at which SMY experience SOGIE-based harassment may be an essential factor in their decisions to report this behavior to a teacher or staff member at school. In non-SMY-specific adolescent samples, experiences with harassment and victimization that are chronic and occur repeatedly (e.g., over weeks), rather than in isolated incidences (e.g., once a month), are associated with a greater likelihood of reporting it to general others (Blomqvist et al., 2020), adults at school (Shaw et al., 2019), and teachers (Yablon, 2017). Some studies have found conflicting relationships between the frequency of experienced harassment and deciding to report to someone, such that the frequency of experienced harassment was unrelated to decisions to report (Hunter et al., 2004; Matuschka et al., 2022). To the best of knowledge, no research has examined how the *frequency* at which SMY experience SOGIE-based harassment is related to their decisions to report it to an adult at school. Nevertheless, the above findings suggest a similar relationship may unfold for SMY, but understanding of how this relationship may operate with harassment rooted in stigma *and* alongside the degree to which SMY have disclosed their identity to others is understudied.

A relevant factor to consider alongside SOGIE-based harassment and SMY's decisions to report is the extent to which they are open with others about their sexual identities (i.e., outness) in schools. In adjacent literature, sexual identity outness has been identified as a significant barrier to accessing mental health-related services among sexual and gender diverse youth (McDermott, 2015) and help-seeking among adult victims of intimate partner violence (Pierre & Senn, 2010); this is partly influenced by the desire, or fear, to keep their identities hidden (Scheer et al., 2020). Although conceptually related yet different constructs (Jackson & Mohr, 2016), some scholars have suggested that identity concealment may be more salient during adolescence (e.g., Pachankis et al., 2020), which could make reporting harassment to adults at school more difficult for SMY with lower levels of outness in those contexts. For example, qualitative research has found that sexual and gender diverse youth who experience in-school victimization may cope by engaging in strategies to hide their identity from others in place of reporting (Sang et al., 2020)—yet they still often experience SOGIE-based harassment despite these efforts (Russell et al., 2014). Research has also found that some sexual and gender diverse youth attribute their fears over confidentiality and being outed to others (i.e., unintended disclosure) as reasons not to report their experiences with harassment to adults at school (Reisner et al., 2020). As such, outness at school is likely associated with SMY's decisions to report SOGIE-based harassment to their teachers or staff members. However, it remains unclear whether certain factors related to the school context can promote SMY to report their harassment regardless of their level of outness at school.

School Safety and Perceptions of Teacher and Staff Member Support

School safety and perceptions of teacher and staff support are two promotive factors that could be important for SMY's decision to report their harassment to adults at school. In non-SMY-specific adolescent samples, studies have shown that among youth who experience victimization, those who feel more socially connected to their school (Matuschka et al., 2022) and perceive their school environment as less tolerant of bullying (Unnever & Cornell, 2004) are more likely to report their victimization to others; however, one study found that greater *felt* safety at school was related to a lower likelihood of help-seeking (Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2013). Similarly, studies have found that youth who report higher closeness to, trust with (Yablon, 2017), and positive investment from (Eliot et al., 2010) their teachers demonstrate higher reporting behavior. A non-SMY-specific sample of Chilean adolescents revealed that youth were more likely to report harassment to their teachers when they had greater trust in them and witnessed them intervening against homophobic harassment (Berger et al., 2019). Although little work has examined reporting behavior among SMY specifically, school safety and perceptions of teacher and staff member support will likely impact their decisions to report through similar associations. Indeed, a national study of sexual and gender diverse youth found that 40% of youth described safety concerns, and 70% described fears that adults would not take them seriously at school as barriers to reporting (Kosciw et al., 2022).

Although bivariate relationships have been documented between school safety, adult support, and adolescents' decisions to report harassment, it is unclear how these constructs may operate for SMY when considered alongside SOGIE-based harassment and sexual identity outness at school. First, feeling safer at school may strengthen the extent to which the frequency of experienced SOGIE-based harassment is associated with reporting and may weaken the extent to which outness at school is associated with reporting. SMY who feel safer in their schools may have more LGBTQ+ in-school support systems (e.g., gender sexuality alliances; Lessard, Watson, et al., 2020), be in environments that are less tolerant of SOGIE-based harassment (e.g., presence of inclusive policies; Day et al., 2019), and be surrounded by greater pro-social norms (e.g., victim defending behavior; Schacter & Juvonen, 2018). To advance a growing literature base that has focused on in-school support systems, the current study examined the degree in the perceptions of safety youth felt in their school environment (e.g., how safe they *feel* in various school contexts). Given past research that has found various in-school support systems modify the relations between victimization and health outcomes (Poteat, et al., 2021a), the current study theorizes that feelings of school safety may be related to reports of harassment by SMY. For example, SMY who feel safe in their school but experience frequent SOGIE-based harassment or are less open with their sexual identity may be able to recognize the need for help *and* feel less constrained by characteristics in their environment—such as retaliation—to do so (Newman, 2008; Pachankis, 2007). Thus, SMY who frequently experience SOGIE-based harassment or are less open with their identity to others in school may be more likely to report their harassment to teachers and staff when they perceive their school environment as safe.

Second, greater feelings of support and care from teachers and staff at school may also strengthen the extent to which the frequency of experienced SOGIE-based harassment is associated with reporting and weaken the extent to which outness at school is associated with reporting. Perceptions of adult support have been found to buffer the effects of SOGIE-based harassment on academic outcomes broadly for SMY (Poteat, et al., 2021b) and school avoidance for bisexual boys (Darwich et al., 2012); however, the moderating role of support from school personnel has shown less consistent effects on depressive symptomology (Price et al., 2019) and internalized sexual prejudice (Zhao et al., 2022). Although past research has examined the role of perceived general social support from teachers and staff among SMY, virtually no research has examined the moderating role of support in the context of reporting SOGIE-based harassment specifically. Nonetheless, feeling more supported and cared for by teachers or staff members at school may foster greater trust in SMY to talk with them about their experiences with harassment (Berger et al., 2019). From a theoretical standpoint, after SMY decide help is needed, they may look at *who* in their school environment is less risky to report to and how valuable their support may be (Newman, 2008). Simply put, SMY deciding to report may be demonstrably less concerned about the potential possibilities of further social isolation or their level of outness if they have a closer social-emotional relationship with a teacher or staff member and perceive they are supported by them.

Current Study

Although a growing body of literature has identified factors associated with adolescents reporting their harassment to adults at school, little work has explored these associations among SMY and with unique forms of harassment (i.e., stigma-based bullying). Leveraging a large contemporary national sample of SMY who have experienced SOGIE-based harassment, the current study posed two questions:

(1) at an individual level, how are SOGIE-based harassment and sexual identity outness at school associated with SMY reporting their experienced harassment to adults at their school? (2) do perceptions of teacher/staff support at school and feelings of school safety moderate these associations? It was hypothesized that SMY who experienced more frequent SOGIE-based harassment and who reported higher sexual identity outness at school would be more likely to report having talked to a teacher or staff member at school about their harassment. It was also hypothesized that school safety and perceptions of adult support would moderate these associations. Specifically, it was predicted that higher school safety and higher teacher and staff support would strengthen the relationship between SOGIE-based harassment and reporting it to adults at school. In contrast, it was predicted that higher school safety and higher teacher and staff support would weaken the relationship between outness at school and reporting harassment to a teacher or staff member.

Methods

Procedure

Data from the *2022 LGBTQ National Teen Survey* were collected between February and October 2022 in partnership with the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). Youth between the ages 13–18, who identified as LGBTQ+, and resided in the United States were eligible to complete the study survey. Participants were recruited online and in-person, via word of mouth, and with the help of targeted ads for LGBTQ+ youth and posts by social media influencers on various social media platforms. The research team took multiple steps to deter fraudulent responses. Automatic verification was provided for youth who provided a valid K–12 or college school e-mail address (Watson et al., 2023). Youth without a school e-mail address were asked to send a verified photo ID (with the option to redact their photo) or video chat with one of two research assistants to verify their identity in a way that kept them anonymous (e.g., their name could be redacted from their video). All validated youth (i.e., with a school e-mail or ID) received a $5 Amazon or Starbucks gift card for their participation. Youth first responded to questions on demographics and then completed measures on gender, sexuality, family, school, and health experiences. A waiver of parental consent and all study protocols were approved by the University of Connecticut Institutional Review Board.

A total of 17,578 respondents met all inclusion criteria. For the current study, only youth who reported experiencing at least one form of SOGIE-based harassment (further described in measures section) in the past 12 months, who

responded that they had or had not reported this harassment to their teachers, who were in grades 6–12, and who were non-heterosexual (transgender youth who identified as heterosexual $n = 83$) were included in the analysis ($N = 8000$). Transgender youth who identified as heterosexual were not provided the measure of sexual identity outness and were thus not included in the analytic sample. From this sample, missing data on all modeled variables ranged from 0.1 to 8.8% and was primarily from the school safety (6.5%) and caregiver education (8.8%) variables. Most participants who were excluded from the analytic sample only responded to the demographic items (Watson et al., 2023). To avoid imputing large amounts of health-related data solely based on demographic information, listwise deletion was used ($N = 6799$). From this sample, an additional 1241 youth were excluded for selecting "Not sure," on the measure of perceptions of teacher and staff support; thus, the final sample was 5538 SMY.

Participants

Table 1 presents detailed characteristics of the final analytic sample stratified by youth who have versus have not reported their SOGIE-based harassment to teachers/staff at school. On average, youth were 15.53 years old ($SD = 1.33$) and were primarily in grades 11–12 (45.4%) and 9–10 (42.8%). The majority of youth were White (74.5%), 10% multiracial (youth who selected more than one racial identity), 5.4% something else not listed, and 1.4% Native American (combined due to low cell sizes), 5.2% Black, and 3.5% Asian/Pacific islander. In regards to sexual orientation, 32.5% of youth identified as gay or lesbian, 26.9% as bisexual, 14.9% as pansexual, 10.5% as queer, 7.8% as asexual, and 7.5% as something else. Youth also self-reported their gender identity and were largely gender diverse with 34% identifying as nonbinary, 20.3% as transgender boys, 17.6% as cisgender boys, 13.7% as cisgender girls, 8.2% as something else, and 6.2% as transgender girls.

Measures

Demographics

To assess grade level, youth were asked to report what grade they were in, with a range of grades 5–12 provided. Due to unique developmental differences across phases of adolescence (e.g., changes in adherence to social norms from middle to late adolescence; Turiel, 1983), grade level was split into several levels, which, although not exclusive, are commonly referred to as middle school, early high school, and late high school. Grade level was included in models instead of age given the important developmental

Table 1 Demographic information, means, and standard deviations for the full sample and stratified by group

	Total Sample (N = 5538)		Never-Reported (n = 3877)		Reported (n = 1661)		Statistic (t)
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Sexual Orientation							
Gay or lesbian	1801	32.5	1230	31.7	571	34.4	
Bisexual	1492	26.9	1109	28.6	383	23.1	
Queer	579	10.5	372	9.6	207	12.5	
Pansexual	823	14.9	569	14.7	254	15.3	
Asexual	430	7.8	317	8.2	113	6.8	
Something else	413	7.5	280	7.2	133	8.0	
Gender Identity							
Cis boy	977	17.6	744	19.2	233	14.0	
Cis girl	756	13.7	621	16.0	135	8.1	
Trans girl	343	6.2	233	6.0	110	6.6	
Trans boy	1124	20.3	627	16.2	497	29.9	
Nonbinary	1882	34.0	1298	33.5	584	35.2	
Something else	456	8.2	354	9.1	102	6.1	
Race/Ethnicity							
Asian	193	3.5	152	3.9	41	2.5	
Black	288	5.2	208	5.4	80	4.8	
White	4125	74.5	2863	73.8	1262	76.0	
Native Amer./Other	378	6.8	282	7.3	96	5.8	
Multiracial	554	10.0	372	9.6	182	11.0	
Grade Level							
Middle school	655	11.8	424	10.9	231	13.9	
Early high school	2370	42.8	1704	44.0	666	40.1	
Late high school	2513	45.4	1749	45.1	764	46.0	
Caregiver Education							
Less than high school	164	3.0	110	2.8	54	3.3	
High school or GED	695	12.5	464	12.0	231	13.9	
Vocational/technical	159	2.9	111	2.9	48	2.9	
Some college	748	13.5	514	13.3	234	14.1	
College graduate	2190	39.5	1534	39.6	656	39.5	
Postgraduate degree	1582	28.6	1144	29.5	438	26.4	
Variables							
SOGIE-based harassment	$M = 1.47$	$SD = 0.93$	$M = 1.26$	$SD = 0.82$	$M = 1.96$	$SD = 0.96$	-27.38***
School safety	$M = 3.59$	$SD = 0.77$	$M = 3.68$	$SD = 0.74$	$M = 3.35$	$SD = 0.77$	15.00***
TS support	$M = 2.74$	$SD = 0.81$	$M = 2.75$	$SD = 0.79$	$M = 2.71$	$SD = 0.84$	1.93
Outness at school	$M = 3.11$	$SD = 0.95$	$M = 2.95$	$SD = 0.92$	$M = 3.49$	$SD = 0.92$	-19.79***

TS support Teacher/Staff support, *SOGIE* Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression

***$p < 0.001$

transitions from middle- to high-school contexts (Brown & Larson, 2009), and since not all SMY of the same ages are necessarily in the same grade level, meaning a 13-year-old could potentially either be in middle school or high school, depending on their birthdate and date of survey collection. Specifically, grade level was coded such that youth in grades 6–8 were categorized as middle schoolers, youth in grades 9–10 categorized as early high schoolers, and youth in grades 11–12 categorized as late high schoolers. Youth who indicated that they were in grade 5 ($n = 7$), college/trade school, or that they were not in school were excluded from the analysis. Two separate questions were used for
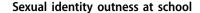
youth to report their racial/ethnic identity. To assess ethnicity, youth were asked "Are you Hispanic or Latina/e/o/x?" The response options were "No" and "Yes." To assess racial identity, youth were asked "What is your race (select all that apply)?" For the current study, due to small sample sizes, Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander were combined as one group and Native American and youth whose racial identity was other were combined as one group.

Youth were also asked to report their sexual orientation with the following question: "Which of the following best describes you? Check one." Response options were "gay or lesbian," "bisexual," "straight/heterosexual," "queer," "pansexual," "asexual," "questioning," and "something not listed." Youth who wrote in an identity that matched a category listed were back coded into that category. For the current analysis, questioning, and youth identifying as something not listed were combined into one group. To assess gender identity, youth were asked to check all that apply to them with following options: "cisgender boy," "cisgender girl," "transgender girl," "transgender boy," "gender non-conforming," "gender queer," "gender fluid," "nonbinary," "questioning," and "different identity not listed." Participants who selected "different identity not listed," were given the option to write-in their gender identity and youth who selected multiple options were asked to indicate which identity best described them. For the current study, youth who identified as "gender fluid," "gender non-conforming," "gender queer," or who wrote-in "demiboy," "demigirl," and "bigender," were recoded as "nonbinary," and "questioning" youth were recoded as "something else."

SOGIE-based harassment

Three items were used to examine experiences with SOGIE-based harassment (Poteat, et al., 2021b). Youth first read a brief description about bullying and were then asked how often in the past year they had been teased, bullied, or treated badly by other students at their school because of their: (1) sexual identity, (2) gender identity, and (3) gender expression. The original scale ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*); however, given that the current study is focused on how victimized youth report their SOGIE-based harassment to their teachers and staff at school, only youth who reported experiencing at least one of these three forms of harassment in the past 12 months were included in the analysis. Thus, the scale was rescored as 0–4 with youth who selected "never" on all three items excluded from the analysis, resulting in a new range from 1 (*rarely*) to 4 (*very often*). The mean of the three items was calculated such that higher scores indicated more frequent SOGIE-based harassment with scores ranging from 0.33–4. Internal consistency, after excluding youth who had not experienced harassment in the last 12 months, was acceptable ($\alpha = 0.68$).

Sexual identity outness at school

To assess sexual identity outness, participants responded to an adapted version of the 12-item Outness Inventory (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Youth were specifically asked, "For each of the following groups, how many people have you told about your sexual orientation (have you come out to)?" and provided response options on a scale of 1 (*none*) to 5 (*all*). Similar to others (Poteat, et al., 2021b), only five of the original 12 items that were most similar to the school context were included in the analysis: (1) LGBTQ friends, (2) non-LGBTQ friends, (3) classmates at school, (4) teachers and adults at school, and (5) athletic coaches. The mean was calculated such that higher scores indicated greater sexual identity outness at school. Internal consistency was good ($\alpha = 0.80$).

School safety

To examine perceptions of school safety, youth responded to a 9-item measure adapted from the longitudinal British Columbia Adolescent Health Survey (Li et al., 2019). Youth were asked to report how often they felt safe in various locations at school (e.g., cafeteria, outside on the school grounds, bathroom) on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Means were calculated such that higher scores indicated greater perceptions of felt safety at school. Internal consistency was excellent ($\alpha = 0.89$).

Perceptions of teacher/staff support

To assess perceptions of teacher and staff support, youth were asked, "Do you agree or disagree that your teachers and/or staff at school really care about you?" Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Youth selecting "Not sure," on this item were scored as missing.

Reporting harassment to teachers/staff

To assess whether youth have reported their harassment to teachers or staff at school they were asked: "Have you ever talked to a teacher and/or staff member at school about being bullied, teased, threatened or harassed for being LGBTQ?" Response options were 0 (*no*) and 1 (*yes*).

Analysis Plan

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS (version 28). Means, and standard deviations were computed for the analytic sample and stratified by reporting group (see Table 1). Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to examine mean differences across youth who have versus have not

reported their harassment and bivariate correlations were computed for the full sample. A series of two-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) with Bonferroni corrections were also conducted to assess demographic differences between youth who have versus have not reported their harassment on measures of SOGIE-based harassment, teacher/staff support, school safety, and outness at school. Tukey post-hoc tests were conducted where necessary and demographic main effects are reported in Table 3.

For the primary analysis, a hierarchical multivariable logistic regression was used to assess factors associated with the odds of SMY reporting their harassment to teachers. A hierarchical approach was used to examine the unique contributions and changes in model estimates when adding harassment, school environment, and sexual identity outness variables, and their product terms. In the first step, dummy coded demographic variables (i.e., grade level, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual identity) were entered. SOGIE-based harassment, perceptions of teacher/staff support, school safety, and outness at school were entered into the second step. Importantly, to test the moderation hypotheses that the associations between SOGIE-based harassment, outness at school, and reporting harassment to teachers/staff would vary as a function of school safety and teacher/staff support, the interaction terms were entered into the last step. Initial analyses also adjusted for country region and tested three-way interactions in separate models with a collapsed grade level variable, a continuous grade level variable, and a continuous age variable; however, given there were no main and interactive effect differences found when including region, and because all three three-way interactive terms were non-significant, they were excluded from the final models for parsimony. Results are reported as adjusted odds ratios (AOR) with 95% confidence intervals (CI), and simple slopes are reported as log odds. Variables were mean centered prior to computing product terms and entered into the model as such to facilitate interpretation. To probe significant interactions, the final model was entered into the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017) to obtain simple slopes at low (−1SD from mean), average, and high (+1 SD) values of the moderators (i.e., school safety and teacher/staff support). No evidence of multicollinearity was detected.

Results

Descriptive Results

Overall, 30% ($n = 1661$) of youth who experienced SOGIE-based harassment in the past year reported that they had told a teacher or staff member at school about

their harassment. The sample reported somewhat often experiences of SOGIE-based harassment ($M = 1.47$, $SD = 1.47$), high levels of school safety ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.77$), medium amounts of teacher/staff support ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 0.81$), and being somewhat out at school ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.95$). Independent samples t-tests with Bonferroni corrections revealed that youth who had reported their harassment to teachers/staff at school reported significantly higher SOGIE-based harassment, outness at school, and lower school safety compared to youth who had not reported their harassment. No significant differences were found between groups on perceptions of teacher/staff support. See Table 2 for bivariate correlations.

A series of 2 (Demographics) X 2 (Reported harassment) ANOVAs were conducted to examine mean differences in SOGIE-based harassment, school safety, teacher/staff support, and outness at school (for means see Table 3). Across grade level, gender identity, and sexual identity, no interactions were significant; however, significant main effects across all three demographic variables were found for SOGIE-based harassment, school safety, teacher/staff support, and sexual identity outness at school. For race/ethnicity, a significant interaction for SOGIE-based harassment was found, $F(4, 5528) = 3.27$, $p < 0.05$, η^2 partial $= 0.002$. Tests of simple effects indicated that multiracial youth ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 0.99$) who had told a teacher/staff member at school about their harassment reported significantly higher amounts of SOGIE-based harassment compared to Asian American/ Pacific Islander ($M = 1.77$, $SD = 0.88$), Black ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 0.85$), and White ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 0.96$) youth who had also reported their harassment. No other significant interactions emerged; however, the main effects of race/ ethnicity for SOGIE-based harassment, teacher/staff support, and sexual identity outness at school were significant.

Table 2 Bivariate correlations among variables of interest for the full sample

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Reporting	–	–	–	–	–
2. School safety	−0.20**	–	–	–	–
3. Teacher/Staff support	−0.03	0.40**	–	–	–
4. Outness at school	0.26**	0.07**	0.13**	–	–
5. SOGIE-based harassment	0.35**	−0.46**	−0.24**	0.14**	–

Reporting = Reporting SOGIE-based harassment to teachers/staff at school. SOGIE = Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression

**p < 0.01

Table 3 Means, standard deviations, and group differences across demographics

	SOGIE-based harassment		Teacher/Staff support		School safety		Outness at school	
	M(SD)	F	M(SD)	F	M(SD)	F	M(SD)	F
Sexual Orientation		4.47***		3.85**		7.81***		11.25***
Gay or lesbian	1.47 (0.90)$_{a, b}$		2.78 (0.81)$_a$		3.61 (0.78)$_{a, b}$		3.22 (0.95)$_a$	
Bisexual	1.39 (0.92)$_a$		2.76 (0.80)$_a$		3.68 (0.76)$_a$		2.99 (0.94)$_b$	
Queer	1.53 (0.92)$_b$		2.71 (0.79)$_{a,b}$		3.53 (0.69)$_{b, c}$		3.28 (0.96)$_a$	
Pansexual	1.56 (0.96)$_b$		2.66 (0.83)$_b$		3.52 (0.77)$_c$		3.17 (0.89)$_a$	
Asexual	1.37 (0.92)$_a$		2.70 (0.79)$_{a, b}$		3.48 (0.79)$_c$		2.92 (0.92)$_b$	
Something else	1.59 (0.98)$_b$		2.72 (0.81)$_{a, b}$		3.47 (0.74)$_c$		2.96 (1.05)$_b$	
Gender Identity		61.89***		17.41***		70.54***		9.03***
Cis boy	1.22 (0.78)$_a$		2.92 (0.77)$_a$		3.88 (0.73)$_a$		2.97 (1.02)$_{a, b}$	
Cis girl	1.05 (0.72)$_b$		2.89 (0.74)$_a$		3.91 (0.67)$_a$		2.96 (0.85)$_{a, b}$	
Trans girl	1.58 (0.99)$_c$		2.73 (0.81)$_b$		3.36 (0.74)$_b$		3.12 (1.02)$_{b, c}$	
Trans boy	1.84 (1.01)$_d$		2.62 (0.81)$_b$		3.29 (0.77)$_b$		3.31 (0.96)$_d$	
Nonbinary	1.56 (0.92)$_c$		2.66 (0.81)$_b$		3.51 (0.73)$_c$		3.18 (0.92)$_c$	
Something else	1.31 (0.85)$_a$		2.72 (0.83)$_b$		3.61 (0.74)$_c$		2.89 (0.91)$_a$	
Race/Ethnicity		6.41***		3.18*		2.25		5.22***
Asian	1.19 (0.77)$_a$		2.80 (0.79)$_a$		3.65 (0.73)$_a$		2.83 (0.86)$_a$	
Black	1.51 (0.93)$_{b, c}$		2.81 (0.84)$_a$		3.67 (0.77)$_a$		2.95 (1.01)$_{a, b}$	
White	1.46 (0.93)$_b$		2.74 (0.80)$_a$		3.58 (0.77)$_a$		3.14 (0.95)$_c$	
Native Amer./Other	1.43 (0.92)$_b$		2.73 (0.83)$_a$		3.58 (0.79)$_a$		3.06 (0.98)$_{b, c}$	
Multiracial	1.62 (0.98)$_c$		2.65 (0.84)$_a$		3.53 (0.75)$_a$		3.13 (0.92)$_{b, c}$	
Grade Level		43.28***		7.65***		11.32***		13.12***
Middle school	1.76 (0.98)$_a$		2.68 (0.86)$_a$		3.46 (0.81)$_a$		2.99 (0.94)$_a$	
Early high school	1.50 (0.93)$_b$		2.71 (0.80)$_a$		3.57 (0.75)$_b$		3.09 (0.94)$_a$	
Late high school	1.37 (0.89)$_c$		2.78 (0.80)$_b$		3.63 (0.76)$_c$		3.17 (0.96)$_b$	

Only the main effects for demographics from two-way ANOVAs are presented. Main effects of reporting harassment to teachers/staff (yes/no) on SOGIE-based harassment, school safety, and outness at school were significant. Groups in the same column who do not share a subscript are significantly different from one another. SOGIE = Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression

$*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$

Associations with Reporting SOGIE-Based Harassment to Teachers/Staff at School

Table 4 displays the results of the hierarchical logistic regression predicting odds of reporting harassment to teachers/staff at school as a function of demographic characteristics, SOGIE-based harassment, teacher/staff support, school safety, and outness at school. In the main effects model (model 2), over and above the demographic predictors, frequency of SOGIE-based harassment, teacher/staff support, school safety, and outness at school were significantly associated with reporting harassment to teachers/staff (block $\chi^2 = 786.00$, $p < 0.001$). SMY who reported experiencing more frequent SOGIE-based harassment were more likely to report it to their teachers/staff at school (AOR = 1.97, 95% CI [1.82, 2.13]). SMY who perceived greater care and support from their teachers/staff were also more likely to tell them about their harassment (AOR = 1.20, 95% CI [1.09, 1.30];

however, SMY who reported higher school safety were less likely to report their harassment to their teachers/staff at school (AOR = 0.72, 95% CI [0.65, 0.80]). Lastly, SMY who reported higher sexual identity outness at school were more likely to report their harassment to teachers/staff (AOR = 1.76, 95% CI [1.63, 1.89]).

The interactive model (model 3) fit the data best (block $\chi^2 = 23.33$, $p < 0.001$). Only one significant interaction emerged: SOGIE-based harassment and perceptions of school safety (AOR = 1.23, 95% CI [1.11, 1.35]). A test of simple slopes indicated that the association between the frequency of SOGIE-based harassment and reporting harassment to teachers/staff at school were strongest for youth who reported high levels of school safety (i.e., + 1 SD; log odds = 0.89, $p < 0.001$), followed by average levels of school safety (i.e., at mean; log odds = 0.73, $p < 0.001$), and weakest for youth who reported low levels of school safety (i.e., −1 SD; log odds = 0.58, $p < 0.001$). In other words,

Table 4 Hierarchical multivariable logistic regression of the odds of reporting harassment to teachers/staff at school

Predictors	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	AOR	95% CI	AOR	95% CI	AOR	95% CI
Grade Level (Ref: Early HS)						
Middle School	1.40***	[1.16, 1.69]	1.27*	[1.03, 1.56]	1.26*	[1.03, 1.55]
Late High School	1.15*	[1.01, 1.30]	1.21**	[1.06, 1.39]	1.22**	[1.06, 1.40]
Racial-Ethnic Identity (Ref: White)						
Asian	0.66*	[0.46, 0.94]	0.87	[0.59, 1.27]	0.86	[0.59, 1.27]
Black	0.93	[0.71, 1.22]	0.95	[0.71, 1.28]	0.94	[0.70, 1.26]
Native Amer./Other	0.75*	[0.58, 0.96]	0.80	[0.61, 1.05]	0.80	[0.61, 1.05]
Multiracial	1.09	[0.90, 1.32]	1.04	[0.84, 1.28]	1.04	[0.84, 1.29]
Gender Identity (Ref: Cis boys)						
Cis girl	0.72**	[0.56, 0.91]	0.80	[0.62, 1.04]	0.80	[0.62, 1.04]
Trans girl	1.59**	[1.20, 2.10]	0.99	[0.73, 1.35]	0.96	[0.71, 1.31]
Trans boy	2.60***	[2.13, 3.16]	1.38**	[1.11, 1.72]	1.35**	[1.08, 1.69]
Nonbinary	1.50***	[1.24, 1.80]	0.98	[0.80, 1.21]	0.95	[0.78, 1.17]
Something else	0.96	[0.73, 1.25]	0.85	[0.64, 1.14]	0.84	[0.62, 1.12]
Sexual Orientation (Ref: Gay/lesbian)						
Bisexual	0.71***	[0.60, 0.83]	0.86	[0.72, 1.02]	0.86	[0.73, 1.03]
Queer	1.01	[0.82, 1.24]	1.08	[0.86, 1.35]	1.08	[0.86, 1.35]
Pansexual	0.85	[0.71, 1.03]	0.90	[0.74, 1.11]	0.90	[0.74, 1.11]
Asexual	0.64***	[0.50, 0.82]	0.87	[0.67, 1.14]	0.89	[0.68, 1.16]
Something else	0.85	[0.67, 1.08]	0.97	[0.74, 1.26]	0.96	[0.73, 1.24]
HCE	0.94**	[0.91, 0.99]	0.99	[0.94, 1.03]	0.99	[0.95, 1.04]
SOGIE-based harassment			1.97***	[1.82, 2.13]	2.08***	[1.91, 2.26]
Teacher/Staff support			1.20***	[1.09, 1.30]	1.18***	[1.07, 1.29]
School safety			0.72***	[0.65, 0.80]	0.68***	[0.61, 0.75]
Outness at school			1.76***	[1.63, 1.89]	1.76***	[1.64, 1.90]
Interaction effects						
Outness X Teacher/Staff support					0.99	[0.91, 1.09]
SOGIE-based harassment X Teacher/Staff support					1.01	[0.93, 1.11]
Outness X School safety					0.98	[0.89, 1.08]
SOGIE-based harassment X School safety					1.23***	[1.11, 1.35]
−2 LL	6512.39***		5726.39***		5703.05***	
Δχ²	252.87***		786.00***		23.33***	

HCE Highest caregiver education, SOGIE Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

increased frequency of SOGIE-based harassment was associated with increased odds of reporting harassment, especially among youth who feel safe at school; in addition, feeling less safe at school weakened the likelihood of reporting more frequent SOGIE-based harassment to teachers/staff at school.

Discussion

Sexual minority youth (SMY) experience more frequent harassment based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression relative to their cisgender heterosexual peers, yet they also report feeling less safe to report this harassment to their teachers (Kaufman & Baams, 2022). Despite these documented differences, there is limited understanding of when SMY decide to report their harassment to adults at their school. The current study addressed this gap by leveraging a large contemporary national sample of SMY to understand how the frequency of SOGIE-based harassment and sexual identity outness at school were associated with SMY talking to an adult at their school about their experiences with SOGIE-based harassment and whether school safety and perceptions of teacher/

staff support would serve as promotive factors. As hypothesized, SMY who experienced more frequent SOGIE-based harassment and who were more open with their sexual identities at school were more likely to report having talked to an adult at their school about their harassment. School safety moderated the association between the frequency of SOGIE-based harassment and reporting harassment to adults at school; however, contrary to expectations, the association between outness at school and reporting to adults at school was not moderated by school safety and perceptions of adult support at school.

Overall, in the current sample, most SMY (i.e., 70%) who experienced SOGIE-based harassment reported never talking to an adult at their school about it. These estimates are somewhat consistent with recent findings in the general (62.4%; Shaw et al., 2019) and stigma-based bullying literature (61%; Kosciw et al., 2022), showing that most adolescents who experience harassment from their peers do not report it to an adult at their school. On one hand, this finding is troubling as, compared to cisgender-heterosexual youth, some SMY's social support from their peers *and* family could already be limited (Katz-Wise et al., 2016). On the other hand, some research suggests that adolescents do not prefer to *first* report to formal (e.g., teachers), in place of informal (e.g., friends), sources of support for their harassment (Dowling & Carey, 2013). Further research is needed to better understand the trends and motivations in reporting SOGIE-based harassment to adults at school among SMY.

As hypothesized, the frequency in which SMY experienced SOGIE-based harassment was associated with the likelihood of reporting it to an adult at their school. Specifically, SMY who reported more frequent harassment based on their sexual identity, gender identity, and gender expression were more likely to report having talked to a teacher or staff member about their harassment. This relationship corroborates past findings in the general bullying literature, indicating that adolescents are more likely to seek help from adults at school when they recognize that their experiences with harassment are not merely one-off instances (Shaw et al., 2019; Yablon, 2017). The current research also extends extant research by considering discriminatory harassment, showing that similar decision patterns may unfold for SMY who experience SOGIE-based harassment. Theoretical models for adolescents who experience general harassment have suggested that decisions on when to report harassment may partly be informed by how necessary of a strategy it is perceived to be given situational demands (Newman, 2008). Consistent with these assertions, the findings suggest SMY were less likely to report harassment that was experienced infrequently to adults at school. It could be that SMY who experience more frequent SOGIE-based harassment recognize that it will

likely continue to happen despite their previous efforts to cope and, as a result, are more likely to seek help from an adult (Blomqvist et al., 2020; Yablon, 2017).

Findings from the interactive model indicated that the strength of the association between frequency of SOGIE-based harassment and reporting was moderated by school safety; specifically, when SMY felt safer at school, there was a higher likelihood of more frequent SOGIE-based harassment being reported, as compared to when SMY felt less safe at school. Top-down LGBTQ+ support systems, such as GSAs (Lessard, Watson, et al., 2020), inclusive curricula (Snapp et al., 2015), and SOGIE-focused policies (Day et al., 2019), may foster a greater degree of perceived safety in ways that minimize hesitancy to report experienced harassment. In contrast, when SMY feel less safe at school, they may be less likely to report frequent experienced harassment out of fear or uncertainty of the reporting implications. Importantly, teacher/staff support did not yield the same interactive effects as school safety. That is, the association between SOGIE-based harassment and reporting likelihood did not depend on the level of teacher/staff support students perceived; rather, regardless of how frequently SMY experienced SOGIE-based harassment, they were more likely to report this harassment when they perceived themselves as more cared for and supported by their teachers and staff at school. These findings extend the literature by considering the interactive relations of school safety, teacher/staff support, and SOGIE-based harassment, which have previously been assessed as separate factors that contribute to adolescents reporting *general* peer harassment. Ultimately, these findings provide evidence to suggest that school safety may be an important construct to consider alongside SMY's experienced SOGIE-based harassment, whereas teacher/staff support may contribute independently to the reporting experiences of SMY who have experienced SOGIE-based harassment.

Notably, when considered independently in the model, school safety and perceptions of teacher support were associated with SMY talking to an adult at school about their harassment. Specifically, even after accounting for all variables, SMY who reported feeling safer in their schools were less likely to report having talked to an adult at their school about their experiences with SOGIE-based harassment. In comparison, SMY who perceived themselves as more cared for and supported by their teachers and staff at school were more likely to report talking to an adult at their school about their experiences with SOGIE-based harassment. This finding supports past research that has shown that adolescents with more positive social-emotional connections and trust in their teachers are also more inclined to seek help from them when they are a target of peer harassment (Eliot et al., 2010; Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2013). Additionally, unlike previous research that has focused on

social support from teachers related to trust in particular (Berger et al., 2019), the current study used an indicator of teacher/staff support that focused on a more general measure of support (i.e., do teachers care about you?). These findings extend past research and provide evidence that, in addition to fostering trust among students of teachers intervening in bias-based harassment, teachers establishing general supportive and caring relationships with SMY may be sufficient to promote SMY to talk with them about their SOGIE-based harassment. It could be that feeling supported or cared for by teachers and other adults at school may instill greater confidence in SMY that their reports of harassment will be taken seriously, handled adequately, and with more confidentiality when they do decide to report (Berger et al., 2019).

It is unclear why feelings of school safety alone were associated with lower odds of SMY talking to adults at school about their harassment. Although previous research has suggested in non-SMY-specific samples that adolescents who feel more connected to their schools and who perceive their broader school norms as being intolerant of bullying are more inclined to seek help from adults with their harassment (Shaw et al., 2019; Unnever & Cornell, 2004), one study has shown a comparable pattern of results with similar measures as used in the current study (Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2013). It is possible that SMY who have experienced SOGIE-based harassment yet who feel safer in their schools have a greater sense of self-efficacy or coping flexibility to manage their experiences with peer harassment (Henry et al., 2011; Sang et al., 2020). In other words, SMY who experience at least some SOGIE-based harassment but who feel safe in school may feel confident in their ability to successfully manage peer relationships, diminish their experienced harassment, and may have a greater availability of social support (e.g., from friends, siblings, and parents) they can turn to for help in place of an authority figure at school (Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2013). The possible explanations for this relation can only be speculated; however, this finding calls for further investigation on the impact of student perceptions of school safety on the likelihood of SMY reporting harassment.

As expected, sexual identity outness at school was also associated with the likelihood of SMY reporting their experiences with SOGIE-based harassment to an adult at their school. Specifically, even when experiences with SOGIE-based harassment were accounted for, SMY who were more open with their classmates, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ friends, teachers, and athletic coaches about their sexual identity were more likely to report having told a teacher or staff member at their school about their harassment. This finding corroborates similar qualitative and descriptive research, showing that SMY's level of outness with their sexual identities may partly underlie their

decisions to reach out for help with their harassment (Earnshaw et al., 2020; Sang et al., 2020). This finding also strengthens qualitative research by quantitatively investigating the association between sexual identity outness and reporting SOGIE-based harassment to adults at school with a national sample of SMY. It could be that SMY who experience SOGIE-based harassment yet who are also more open with their sexual identities in school may feel less constrained about the potential ramifications reporting to an adult could entail, such as their identities being discovered by their peers, parents/caregivers, or teachers (Pachankis, 2007). Notably, other factors related to outness (e.g., motivations to conceal identity) that were not captured by the current study may also influence coping strategies used to manage peer harassment. Further work should continue to untangle these relationships and provide greater clarity regarding the role of sexual identity outness on SMY reporting SOGIE-based harassment to adults at school.

Although sexual identity outness at school was associated with the likelihood of SMY reporting their harassment to adults at school, no evidence was found that this relationship was moderated by school safety or perceptions of support/care from teachers and staff members. In other words, the association between outness at school and the likelihood of SMY talking to an adult at their school about their experiences with harassment did not vary as a function of how safe they felt or how much they perceived their teachers cared about them at school. Instead, the findings suggest that sexual identity outness at school may independently contribute to SMY reporting SOGIE-based harassment to adults at school. Theoretically, it is unclear why there was no modifying effect of school safety and perceptions of teacher/staff support on this relationship. It could be that, although self-disclosure in particular is an important developmental milestone for identity development among SMY (Bishop et al., 2020), it coincides with a developmental period partly marked by a heightened state of self-awareness, peer harassment, and changing social landscapes (e.g., school transitions; Russell & Fish, 2019). Given these compounding factors, it could be that the measures used to assess school safety and perceptions of teacher or staff support alone are insufficient to weaken the relationship between outness at school and the likelihood of SMY talking to adults at school about their experiences with harassment. Thus, other environmental characteristics in schools - such as the presence of a GSA, LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, or witnessing teachers intervene against SOGIE-based harassment - that more clearly portray support for non-heterosexual identities may be essential factors to consider for future research to weaken this relationship.

Although not the focus of the current study, various noteworthy demographic differences are worth mentioning.

Regarding grade level, SMY in middle school and late high school were more likely to report having talked to an adult at their school about their experiences with SOGIE-based harassment compared to SMY in early high school. This finding is somewhat consistent with previous research, showing that older youth are less likely to reach out for help from adults than younger youth (Bauman et al., 2016; Matuschka et al., 2022); however, the current results suggest a non-linear relationship. SMY who enter early high school may encounter a shifting landscape of peer and adult relationships (Brown & Larson, 2009), which could hinder their ability to ask for help with their experienced harassment. For example, it could be that during the transition to early high school, SMY may not have had sufficient time to understand the social norms of reporting harassment in new peer groups, are not aware of school policies to report their harassment, or have not had time to develop trusting relationships with adults at school. Furthermore, across all models, SMY who identified as transgender boys were more likely to report their experienced SOGIE-based harassment to an adult at their school than cisgender boys. This finding may be due to the frequent peer harassment transgender boys experience in school, as evidenced in recent research (Watson et al., 2023) and the current study. Additionally, in the current study, SMY who identified as transgender boys reported greater levels of sexual identity outness at school compared to all other groups, which may have further contributed to a higher likelihood to report their experienced SOGIE-based harassment to adults at school. Interestingly, these gender differences persisted even after accounting for SOGIE-based harassment and sexual identity outness at school, which warrants further investigation to understand factors that contribute to the reporting experiences of transgender boys.

Additionally, it was found that multiracial SMY who had reported harassment to an adult at school experienced some of the highest levels of SOGIE-based harassment. Intersectional research has found multiracial SMY to be among the highest prevalence of experienced sexuality-based harassment (Gower et al., 2022). This finding may suggest that differences between multiracial SMY and other SMY subgroups may partly vary as a function of whether or not they had reported their harassment to an adult at school. It could be that multiracial SMY who reported harassment to an adult at school felt more hesitant about reaching out for help than other non-multiracial SMY and, thus, experienced more prolonged and frequent SOGIE-based harassment before reporting. Indeed, other factors not captured by the current study, such as multiracial SMY's heightened experiences of racial bias from teachers or staff (Truong et al., 2020), could have deterred multiracial SMY from reporting SOGIE-based harassment. It could also be plausible that multiracial SMY who reported their harassment experienced more frequent SOGIE-based harassment *after* reporting it to an adult. Given the current research is cross-sectional, these inferences should be tested using longitudinal research to better understand multiracial SMY's intersectional experiences of reporting harassment to adults at school.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the current study adds novel findings to the stigma-based harassment literature, there are several limitations. The sexual and gender identities of the participants were quite diverse; however, participants were predominately White. SMY of color may experience unique manifestations of stress and co-occurring forms of victimization (e.g., harassment that targets gender expression *and* ethnic identity) at the intersections of their non-heterosexual and racial/ethnic identities (Crenshaw, 1990), which may contribute to distinct experiences with reporting harassment to adults at school that were not captured by this study (Mendez et al., 2016). Future work should seek further data collection from non-white SMY. Furthermore, although the sample included non-heterosexual gender diverse youth, the current study assessed how reporting harassment to adults at school varied across a measure of *sexual* identity outness. Given the unique salience of disclosing a non-cisgender identity (e.g., social transition; Abreu et al., 2019), it is possible that these findings may operate differently when considering outness with *gender* identity in school. Future work should investigate reporting behavior among gender diverse youth with measures that assess multiple forms of outness. Teacher support was also assessed with a single-item measure that was focused on social-emotional relationships. Although the measure of teacher support that was used suggested that feeling cared for by teachers may independently contribute to SMY reporting SOGIE-based harassment, other dimensions of teacher support, such as instrumental support, were not asked in this survey. Future work should incorporate multi-item measures to assess the unique and interactive relations of various dimensions of teacher support on SMY's reporting behavior in school.

Additionally, caregiver's level of education was used as a proxy for socioeconomic status (SES), where the average SES was middle to lower upper class. This may indicate a need for further data collection from lower SES SMY to investigate whether differences in school resources and personnel moderate these relationships. Another limitation of this study was the lack of qualitative data. Qualitative data may provide insight into the experiences of SMY, such as why youth in middle school and upper high school were more likely to report SOGIE-based harassment compared to SMY in early high school. SMY's self-reported responses were also not able to be aggregated at the school-level. For

example, these data were unable to examine outness at the school-level (i.e., how many SMY were open with their identities in a particular school). Future work should examine these relationships with multilevel models. Lastly, this study was cross-sectional and does not offer a time frame of when SMY reported their harassment to an adult at school, nor the outcome of reporting. It is possible that SMY decided to report when they were experiencing moderate levels of harassment but now experience more frequent harassment as a result; the inverse may also be true. Future research should consider utilizing longitudinal data to address these gaps and provide more comprehensive findings.

Practice Implications

These findings suggest several potential strategies that may encourage the reporting of SOGIE-based harassment more effectively. The current findings suggest that perceptions of teacher/staff support were associated with a higher likelihood of SMY talking to school personnel about their SOGIE-based harassment. Prevention and educational programs geared toward training school staff and teachers should provide information on the importance of social-emotional support for SMY who experience SOGIE-based harassment, such as how to best support students with non-heterosexual identities (e.g., being observant of their peer relations and intervening with forms of harassment that target social identities). Additionally, although these findings suggest that higher school safety independently contributed to a lower likelihood of SMY reporting their SOGIE-based harassment to school personnel, the relation between SOGIE-based harassment and SMY's likelihood of reporting it to school personnel was more robust at high levels of school safety. Researchers should investigate the coping strategies of SMY who feel highly safe in their school yet have experienced SOGIE-based harassment and continue to examine ways to foster feelings of school safety in SMY students who experience frequent SOGIE-based harassment to promote their reporting of such harassment when they feel it is needed. For teachers and staff members, instilling school safety may take the form of additional school extracurriculars focused on developing community and belonging among sexual minority students (e.g., GSAs) or establishing visible and apparent support for non-cis-gender/heterosexual students in the school environment (e.g., pride posters showing support in school hallways).

In addition to developing educational protocols to support SMY who have experienced SOGIE-based harassment, schools can spread awareness among the younger student body. Students new to the high school environment, especially SMY who have not joined social networks of other SMY, may not be aware of teachers/staff protocols and may

be hesitant to report harassment due to concerns of not receiving proper support or having not yet disclosed their identity to various groups in their school (deLara, 2012; Kosciw et al., 2022). As such, it is likely beneficial for teachers and staff members to communicate to SMY in early high school the support options available after reporting harassment. Lastly, schools can develop secure methods for SMY to access support, especially among youth who are less open with their sexual identities in school contexts, who were unlikely to report their harassment even after accounting for feelings of school safety or perceptions of how much their teachers and staff cared for them. One potential solution is the development of anonymous and confidential online harassment reporting systems that minimize the number of individuals the student must alert to receive intervention (Asplund & Ordway, 2018).

Conclusion

Despite a growing body of research that continues to identify the frequencies and motivations for adolescent reporting of peer harassment to adults at school, there is limited understanding of how reporting unfolds across sexual minority youth of diverse social positions who experience elevated rates of stigma-based harassment and who report various levels of identity disclosure in school. This study found that most SMY did not report their SOGIE-based harassment to an adult at school; however, SMY with higher perceived levels of support and school safety were more likely to report SOGIE-based harassment to school staff and teachers. Notably, transgender boys had the highest odds of reporting harassment across all models in comparison to their cisgender counterparts. The extent to which SMY were out about their sexual identities at school was also found to be associated with the probability of reporting harassment, leaving youth who were less open with their identities particularly vulnerable. These findings suggest that offering school supports for SMY and continuing research that explores topics such as bullying, SOGIE-based harassment, and perceived levels of school safety may be critical for SMY's well-being.

Authors' contributions P.M. drafted a substantial portion of the manuscript, conducted the formal analysis, conceptualized overall study questions, and led the author team in the development of the manuscript; L.L. assisted in conducting the analyses, drafted portions of the manuscript, and provided feedback on study questions and writing process; N.B. and N.S. drafted portions of the manuscript and provided feedback throughout the writing process; L.E. helped frame

the overall structure of the manuscript, edited portions of the manuscript, and provided feedback on the writing process; R.W. conceptualized overall study data collection, provided feedback on the overall framing of the study and edited a substantial portion of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards ofthe institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendmentsor comparable ethical standards. All study procedures were approved by the University of Connecticut IRB board, protocol H21-0087.

Informed Consent Informed assent was obtained from all youth participants included in the study. A waiver of parental consent was obtained from the IRB related to this study given the sensitive nature of questions asked related to sexual and gender identity.

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