Formative research: Exploring the experiences, context, and drivers of mental health conditions among LBQ students

Code	Description	Sub code	Illustrative Quote
Theme 1 Experiences of mental health problems and resilience	Insights into lived experience of symptoms of mental health conditions in LBQ student life. Coping strategies enabling healthy responses and resilience to life challenges	Understanding of mental health Experiences of major depression, medication, therapy Experiences of anxiety Experiences of suicidal ideation, attempt Effects on functioning, academics, relationships Effects on self-care Coping and resilience - Social interaction, Self care Substance use - Alcohol/weed viewed as a helpful coping mechanism, but insights into harm	mental health is also the way in which you respond to things that happen in your life, be it good or bad and how you handle or how situations affect you mentally . FGD 2 I think to add on what Sne said about it being time consuming I feel like sometimes you end up isolating yourself from friends or family. You sit alone in the room and at school you can't concentrate... Like you are unproductive FGD 3 First thing that comes to mind is depression Understand. When I think of mental health, depression...FGD 3 Sometimes it gets so bad. It is too much to handle on your own. You are suffering. You have depression. You have anxiety. Something-something five, that you mentioned. Like it's a lot for one person to handle and you don't have anyone to talk to, especially

			sometimes you find that you can't even talk to your family because it's even worse on that side. And then when you expect to help at school, it's still just the same . So for some people it gets overwhelming. I for myself, I do have like clinically diagnosed depression and anxiety. So it gets overwhelming at times because you don't have anywhere where you are actually free to be yourself, because either side you are going to be judged. You are going to be looked at differently. The expectations from society and it just gets too overwhelming and it's just too much for one person to handle and then... yah FGD 2 When I think about it when you are talking about mental well-being, mental health, it's looking after your mental state. Taking psychological well-being, just... thinking and everything that involves anxiety, depression.. FGD1 Then there are people who are brave. Maybe one didn't really have suicidal thoughts, maybe it

			was... others isn't they hurt themselves, they cut. You find that one cuts a vein, the main vein and then ends up bleeding to death and it looks like it is suicide FGD1 Today I woke up. I am going to campus to study and so on, and when I sit down I just felt drained. I wanted to cry. Like I can't study anymore. I tried to concentrate but my mind was blocked. Like I can't do this! I needed up texting my friend, "I am not kay. I can't study." Like we have wasted three hours preparing, making food and walked to campus. We have to go back to the res/home. I need to be alone. FGD 3 Sometimes you have suicidal thoughts because of your sexuality. That comes... Or harming yourself just to escape the pain. Those are the two things I think i have experienced. The suicidal thoughts, depression and harming yourself just to escape FGD 1

			But I see that I am not functioning. I can tell I am not myself. I can tell I am just doing it because I can't mess with NSFAS. I can't mess with my family. I can't go all the way to third year and then fail. But emotionally I am numb. I don't care. FGD 1 that sometimes I procrastinate academic work just because I want to fill up my expectation to make myself feel better, but at the same time in my mind it hits me that 'Haibo, I am supposed to do what I came here for, what I am supposed to do." Procrastination shame, with academic work. You will be sitting and when it's a quarter to, all the issues come back (sibuy 'isigaqa). You find you were doing something, maybe luckily you know how to deal with it. For example, you go and sit outside or sleep. By the time you sleep the due dates are cropping up so end up in trouble most times and end up being stubborn. You end up having anger issues You see hygiene. Okay I get that you have to wake up and bath and brush your teeth but

			when it comes to how you dress or how you present yourself, if you have depression or have issues internally or mentally, I am telling you, you will not function correctly. You will tell yourself "Haibo Naledi, can you love yourself 28:37 " Because I don't agree that its right thing to do because I do not care But depression leads to self-neglect. You find that in my room shame it's so dirty but you are lazy, like you end up not even caring for yourself because you don't care about anything anymore.FGD 1
			Not that I am against to be in tears but I feel like we are focusing on that too much. Like it's now too comfortable like being in pain but it's like okay feel what you feel but life must move on. Find other things that you can go, heal at the same time. It mustn't reach a point that now this person is crying every day. Every day she is crying but there is counselling. There are friends.... Do something about your tears! FGD 3 I turn on my favourite song or feel good song, that's going to

			make me feel good about myself, Cardi B vibes and everything. You see I am going to wake up. I am going to... not really pretend but just to push myself to wake up and get stuff done. Try to be productive even though I feel like I am feeling down. Just to push myself. Even if I have done a small thing like cleaning or doing laundry or cooking, but it is going to keep me... keep my mind off things. FGD 3 So I was most grateful for he honesty and having good friends that who are honest, "Friend you are getting lost now. Comb your hair when you are going out. Do this. Wear neatly. Don't show that this one has problems. Don't be your problems. Just be yourself and look good." FGD 1 Even going window shopping, and exclaiming on the prices of stuff and laugh and come back. Serious! It helps! Buy yourself, take your last R11 and buy yourself ice cream there at Mc Donald's, go with your crazy

			friend. It helps. You will come back feeling better I think talking to a friend also helps. But sometimes it doesn't help because you talk about something maybe with a friend and then maybe we laugh about it and I feel better for that particular moment. But as soon as I am alone it's the same. FGD 3 Affirmations. Try and convince yourself that ' no I am going to get through this day'. Keep on telling yourself. Take pictures, stand in front of a mirror. Things that they tell you to do, do it, do it. Things will come right FGD 3 Even going to the gym. You know, lifting weights. I would lift weights until I feel that yah, now I am lazy. Lifting weights, you have strength because you would be taking out all your frustrations on the weights. Hold it, make it sit on your back and squat, hold it... you know! You feel strong! You feel empowered! FGD 1

			The depression started again! Luckily the residences opened but the moment I got to res I used to buy capsules like, maybulin like, maybe three because I used them as sleeping pills. I would take eight tables. They would eat up my insides but I say because I wanted to sleep and escape all the problems. FGD1 As for alcohol. Usually with alcohol its' like "Mfethu, come. I have depression." and sometimes, I don't want to lie, we have friends who are bad company. The moment I say my friend I am depressed (ngiyagowa) lets go buy some alcohol, she will jump at the idea, instead of saying "Haibo XXXX, alcohol for what? Address your issue." FGD 1 I was going to say it's the same with heterosexuals. It's just the matter of buying alcohol, drinking, buying weed... It's nothing that I can say is different from the LGB and it's the same way. It's just that what differs is you now want to kill yourself with the pills, you want to drink yourself to death,

			because of the case you are facing. I can say for its one of my coping mechanisms that I use when I am facing problems because usually I smoke weed. So usually when i am stressed when i have smoked I don't care even about whatever is troubling me. All goes numb and I don't care about anything. It helps me. Yah, substances sometimes there are those who abuse them to escape their problems, maybe. Like if you are at home mostly, if at home they do not accept you, that is where you are more triggered to have mental health issues. So you end up using substances to forget that for the time being. FGD 3 I feel like I am more happy whenever I am drinking. That's my... what can I say? That's the way that I deal with my issues. There is nothing like.... Like now I am talking but there is no help I will get. There is no solution at all because I have a problem

			and there is no solution to that problem. Talking to everyone won't help. When I talk to you I feel like "Ok talk. Talk." Yes I will talk to you but you won't give me any solution so I will move on and drink and another person will come and say. "Haibo, talk. This will help you." There is no solution! I want a solution to my problem and there is no solution. So what am I going to do to move on, in order for me to not kill myself or anything, to move into the next day, so it's drinking for me. I feel like no drinking what makes me feel better because there is no solution to my problem FGD 3 Like maybe you get to spend time with yourself if you are not drunk. You introspect. Say you are sitting alone at home and you can introspect and say "Ok I went through this. fine. I can go to the beach tomorrow. I don't drink. Go to the beach. Buy ice cream. Look at the waves. Calming!" You see. Thinking to yourself what kind of person do I want, experience of life. FGD 3

Theme 2 Drivers of poor mental health across the life course	Past life experiences and current experiences impact on mental health, including previous trauma, social role expectations of being female, other individual psychological factors around self acceptance	Family background – supportive/discriminating Family background Different experiences - abuse/supportive – can be the first point of discrimination, role of religion, culture, education/awareness Childhood/previous trauma Social norms, role expectations Social norms and social factors Internal strain – living up to the norms of society instead of what is, or how you actually are Religion causing lack of self acceptance Stigma causing poor self esteem Self acceptance Self stigma The impact of self hatred – not living your life as you want to live Emotional Impact of verbal abuse	When nobody cares about you at home and not getting the support from home. When you see... our homes are not the same, that you are young and they don't care about you whereas they cared for the older one. When she was studying they used to often call her, no week passed by without getting a call from home, in one week they would at least call four times. If she doesn't come home, let's say for a month, she doesn't get scolded. Every month she gets pocket money and they say it's for bread, when the bread is finished, this one maybe is for buying underwear, try and but pens; but when it's you, you come after, they don't care at home. They don't call They will discriminate against you, maybe not discriminate as such, but they will kind of distance themselves at home because they see that you are like this. I am side-lined because of my sexuality. So the only time I get support from my father because he does understands my sexuality and he does accept that he has a child who is a

		Strain caused by living a double life All factors compounding leading to a sense of overwhelm	lesbian, but as for my mum I feel like for her it's difficult to accept. FGD 1 Response: And also that in society you are expected to behave as a girl. Maybe you do not conform to the normal definitions of what is a woman or what is a female, you see. Then this contributes to your mental health issues because the way that people want you to live, think and dress it's not the way you feel you are like. FGD 3 Social media influence because we tend to see influences 05:42 in life, and as young as we are we think that okay, we supposed to be 05:47 exactly we should go through whatever we should go through as young adults. So I think social media influence is the biggest we have, it's the biggest barrier that we have. FGD 3 . Some people have ubungoma and so on, and spirituality issues whatsoever, you deal with this mentally because you have to accept. There are people who

			do not want to accept this, maybe someone ends up being depressed because she is are running away from her calling, and so on. So it is there in this context. Imagine maybe I fall under lesbians and find that I have a calling (ngingenwa ubungoma), this thing will affect me mentally because I have to think how I will handle the situation of and ancestor (idlozi) because they say ancestors (amadlozi) do not like this. This ends up affecting you somewhere somehow inside, this thing.FGD 2 It contributes at lot to people becoming suicidal because other people see how society is so if "I come out of the closet, obviously something bad will happen to me." So they choose not to come out of the closet and they stay in the closet because they don't want to be known as Lusanda the lesbian. They want to be known as Lusanda Ngcobo, that's all. As a result they don't come out. They stay in the closet. They see that, okay I am here in the closet, as much as it

			is a safe space but you are not fully yourself. So this also cause anxiety and depression, so you end up thinking that these people so these people who are dead are they really resting in peace because I want the peace. FGD 1 even pressure from your partner. Maybe let's say the relationship involves a stud and a fem, you find that a fem is expecting that the stud step it up, all the time. Like so you end up, the stud ends up being stressed, like "Why is it always me who is supposed to provide", whereas it's the same sex relationship. So this causes stress and unnecessary depression. FGD1 Response: Yes,. Even if... like if you have friends then you come out, other friends of yours if you say you are a lesbian, you see, they will ask you "So, this means you now see us as -- Response: -- We don't want to be around you because you want us (uyasifuna). FGD1

			But for me it was religion mostly that contributed to me wanting to commit suicide. As much as... the incident happened at home, so my mum said she wants to cleanse the homosexuality out. So that means this person obviously doesn't accept me. Fine! But now it was an issue of the fact that the whole family now says "This one needs a cleansing ceremony to remove the spirit of homosexuality from her and demons." So it started there that "Okay, i like the church", and at home we are Amanazaretha. "Okay, I like the church so what do I do in this case?" So you start questioning yourself that this means God doesn't love me . When they say God is love so why is it a sin for me to love another girl? Is that a demonic act, because it's still love, anyway? So that was that, in the beginning. I had to choose myself and my sexuality, accept myself and love myself regardless of what God and the Bible say. FGD1 Accepting your yourself and your sexuality, learning to come

			out the closet is not easy. So if you have not been accepted you are about to end up with depression. FGD 1 For me it's gender identity, where in other places they call it gender dysphoria FGD 3 I think depending on your relationship with your family and where you come from. Maybe is it important to you to come out of the closet to your family, or you feel like your mum should know or your father or anyone in your family? Do they have to know what kind of person you are because sometimes being in the closet is the hardest part because there are things you would like to share with your sister or mother just like introducing someone, like "I found someone and so on." But you can't tell them because you are .... you see. You find you are old, you are 27 by that time and then maybe at home there is an event you could be able to come with your person, but you can't. FGD 3

			Or loss of esteem, confidence as such. So you don't own up to who you are. Like learning to accept who you are. I feel like it starts there. When you accept yourself, that "I am this kind of person", and then going about to see, to tell other that "Okay, guys you can't do this to me because you know, I am this certain kind of person". As you own up to that thing it gets much easier for you to deal with anything because you accepted whatever FGD 3
Theme 3 Drivers of poor mental health in current student life	The strain caused by identifying as LBQ as a student - being in defense mode – fear of physical or verbal violence in addition to the academic and social stressors of student life Subthemes – stressors that are the same as non LBQ (e.g. academic, socioeconomic) Stressors that are specific for LBQ (including living in fear, campus safety for LBQ etc)	Academic stress Strain of socioeconomic circumstances leading to transactional relationships Relationship stressors Being used to 'explore', Conflict relating to how someone looks – too male/too female, or not enough Power dynamics – what happens when both want to dominate the relationship? Cycle of abuse from previous abusive relationships (e.g. by men, or from family)	We said yesterday that the management here doesn't give support towards LGBT, and we have this problem where you will get to a department, maybe find heterosexual people and I come and I am gay. I don't know there is this thing, I don't know what causes it, if a gay person or a lesbian, and they come to a female person, they feel intimidated, to an extent that sometimes where someone doesn't want to supervise your research! You find someone saying, "Oh I cannot supervise you. I am busy." FGD2

		Issues of dating more than one person (polyamory – esp for bi women) Toxic relationships with married closeted people (e.g. power relationships, money) Stressors related to the LGB community Living in fear - lack of physical safety in environment, fears of stigma, verbal abuse Fear of violence from male perpetrators Fear of violence from female perpetrators Campus factors Unsafe spaces, lack of support and representative structures, closeted people happy to have sex with them but then abusing in public	Time. Like trying to balance social life, school, other students are working, family.... all those things, I feel like... 12:19 Even being in a relationship, there is pressure that comes with that . Because sometimes you date a straight girl and it's like, yoh they expect.... it's like they treat you... not they treat you, they expect you to treat them like... and spoil them all the time. FGD 3 But I feel like when you meet people like they play a role in your life and become special to you and you grow to love them so when things are not good that can send you like through a very dark hole and I feel like most of people like they get dismissed when cry because of umjolo. FGD 3 Now you are in a... you are walking towards a group of people that you don't know and after having been judged before or having suffered those certain instances, you are anxious, even sometimes just walking past a

			group of people ... I too myself I know, even walking on campus like I don't know like how should I walk. Should I change the way I am walking?FGD 2 Another thing that I can say contributes to mental health, and stress, and depression, is relationship stress. You find that there is violence. There is GBV taking place. In that case you can't focus. The only that you will be thinking about is this abusive partner of yours and how resolve or how to get out of the relationship. It does happen a lot, in such a way that some know who you are dating but they still come to say "Haibo you, here is a man." So this affects you emotionally of which I think for me it turned me to a defensive and angry person because I end up saying "I'll beat you up! I'll report you." So it's not easy daily. It's not easy. You pray that "I hope today I won't get assaulted. I hope today I won't get insulted. I hope today will be a normal

			day." But it doesn't happen. FGD 1