

# Participation in Gay Communities, Body Image, and Mental Health among Japanese Gay Men



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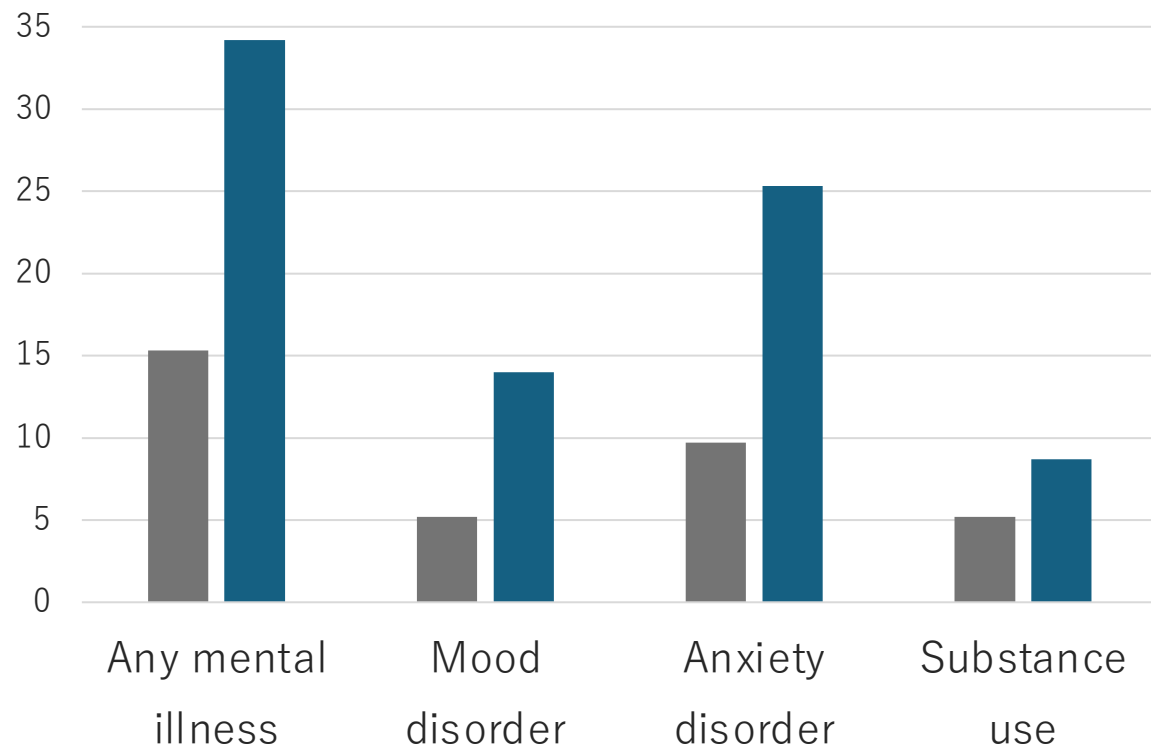
# Introduction

## Mental Health among Gay Men

### Mental Health

(past 12 months / 13 countries including Japan)

(%) ■ Heterosexual (N=19,530) ■ Gay / Bisexual (N=357)



Gmelin et al., 2022

### Body Image

Body-related self-perceptions and self-attitudes *Cash, 2004*

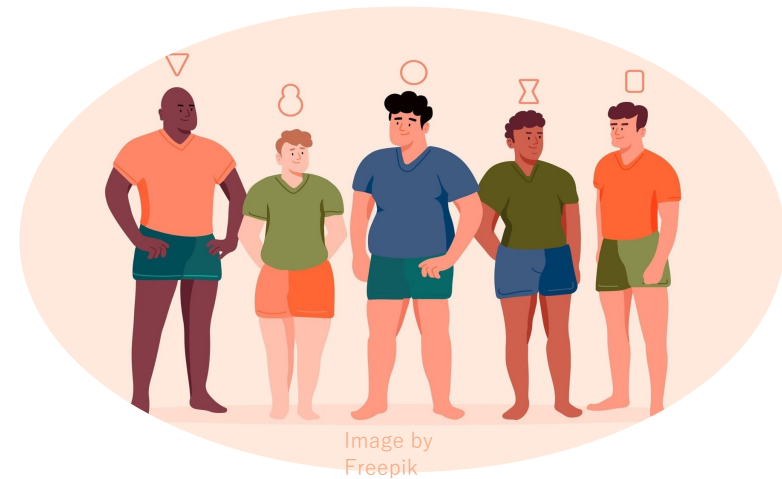


Image by Freepik

Gay men are at higher risk of negative body image

*He et al., 2020*  
*Dahlenburg et al., 2020*

### Benefits

- Better mental health  
*Salfas et al., 2020*
- Lower level of loneliness  
*Elmer et al., 2022*



- Emphasis on appearance  
*Morrison et al., 2004*
- Sexual objectification  
*Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997*
- Social comparison  
*Lanzieri & Hildebrandt, 2016*

### Detriments / Risks



### Social physique anxiety *Hart et al., 1989*

- influenced by perceived external evaluations

Is my body attractive enough?





- ✓ Most prior evidence originates from Western countries

*Dahlenburg et al., 2020*  
*He et al., 2020*



- ✓ Limited qualitative evidence
- ✓ No quantitative evidence

*Sato, 2018*  
*Tamaki, 2021*

## Objective

- To identify factors associated with body image and mental health among Japanese gay men
- Cross-sectional online survey

# Methods

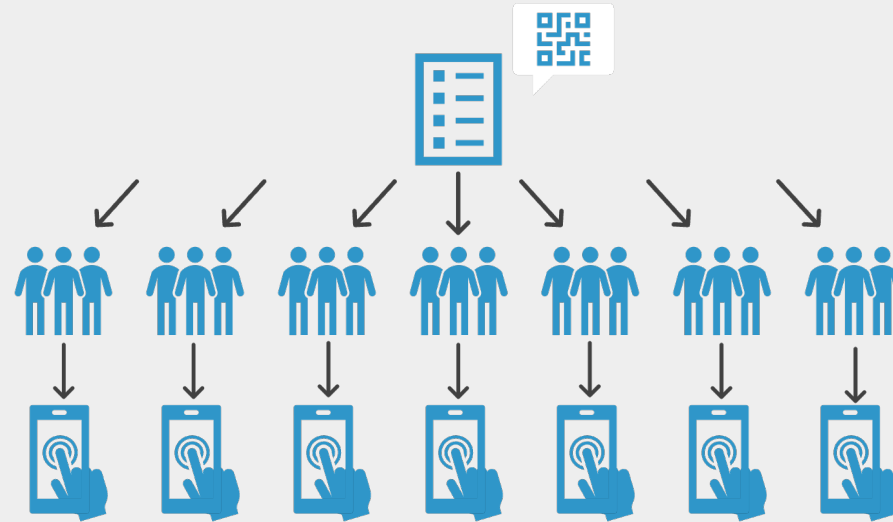
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## Data collection

- Anonymous questionnaire
- Jan to Aug 2024

## Sampling

- Seven gay community groups in Japan
- N = 200 *Kresbeck, 2014*



## Inclusion criteria

- Gay
- 18 y.o. or older
- Living in Japan

## Exclusion criteria

- Transgender

# Questionnaire content

# Participants' characteristics

N = 191

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## Body Image

- Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS)

*“There are times when I am bothered by thoughts that other people are evaluating my weight or muscular development negatively”*

## Related factors

- Depression (PHQ-9)
- Relationship seeking
- Gay community participation (past 6 months)
- Usage of social media
- Usage of gay dating apps
- Exercise habit/motivation



Age  
41.2 y.o. ( $\pm$  9.5)



Weight  
73.6 kg ( $\pm$  12.0)



Height  
170.4 cm ( $\pm$  5.7)



BMI  
25.3 ( $\pm$  3.8)



Education  
78.5% University or higher



Employment  
95.8% Currently employed



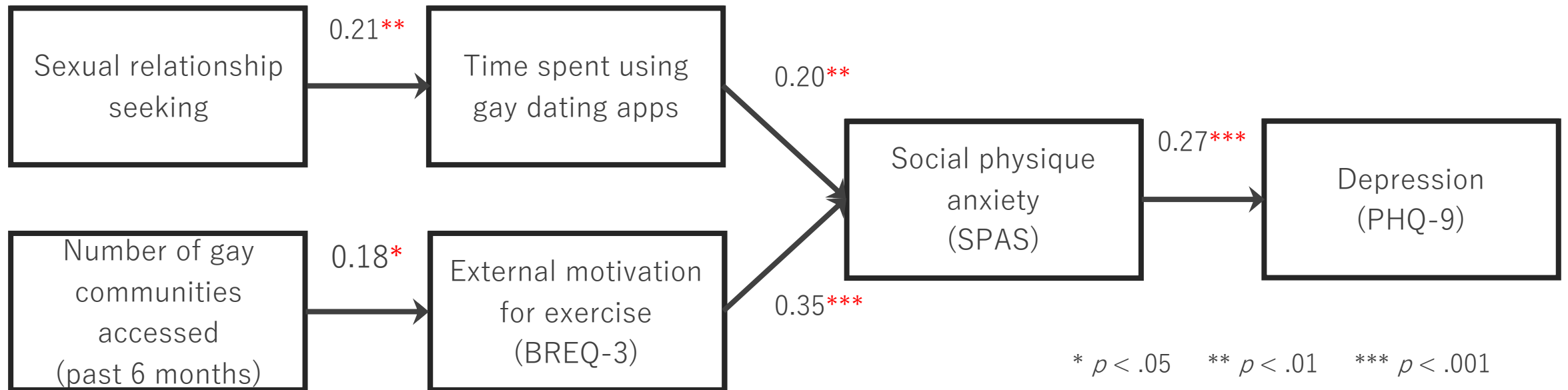
Income  
62.8%  $\geq$  ¥4M (\$25,000)



Exercise  
77.5% Having exercise habit

# Factors Related to Social Physique Anxiety and Mental Health among Gay Men

CMIN/DF = 1.14 AICc = 6445.7 BIC = 6497.5  $p$  (Prob>ChiSq) = 0.33 CFI = 0.98 RNI = 0.98  
TLI = 0.97 NFI = 0.85 adjusted AGFI = 0.99 RMSEA = 0.03 (90% CI: 0.00–0.09) SRMR = 0.05



Participation in gay communities and usage of gay apps predicted higher social physique anxiety and depressive symptoms

# Culture of the gay communities

In Japan, participation in the gay community has complex effects on body image and mental health – consistent with international evidence

## Gay dating apps:

Platform for connection/interaction, **BUT**

- Competition over sexual attractiveness

*Filice et al., 2020*

## Gay communities:

Valuable social resources, **BUT**

- Conversations and teasing about appearance/body

*Jankowski et al., 2014 Matera et al., 2019 Filice et al., 2020*

- Social pressure reinforcing external motivation for exercise

*Brennan et al., 2012 Grogan et al., 2006 Filice et al., 2020*



<https://ninemonsters.com/ja>

# Implication

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## What OT can do when working with gay clients

- Recognize the complex role of gay communities
- Assess gay community participation and its effect on gay clients

# Limitation

- Generalizability / Reproducibility
- Subgroup analysis may be necessary
  - Cultural and value-based differences across subgroups *Baudinette, 2017*
- Commitment to specific community activities *Alvarez et al., 2024*

# Summary



1. In Japan, gay dating apps and gay communities are linked to higher social physique anxiety
2. These findings are consistent with international evidence
3. Assessing community participation is important in gay men's mental health support



PhD Project:

“Norms and stress within gay communities”