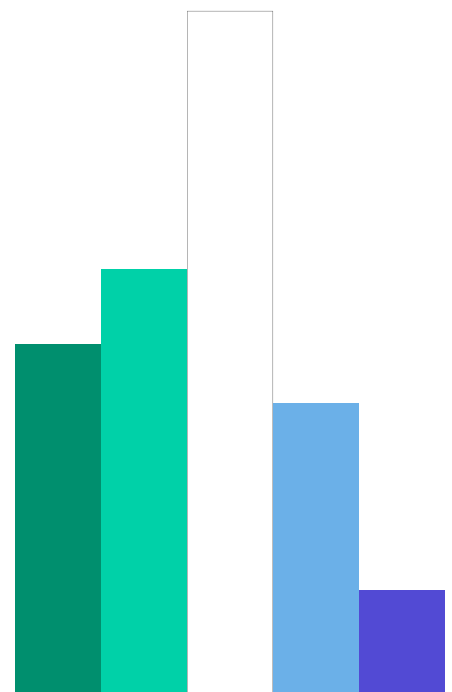


(un)safe spaces for the LGBTQIA+ community

- microaggressions in the spaces of public institutions and in cultural-artistic environments -



Project by:

+iE identity.
education



[introduction]

How do we see a safe space? In the context of the discussion about perceived safety of people belonging to the LGBTQAI+ community, the safety subject raises much more issues than mere physical safety. Goode-cross and Good (2008) defined a safe space as being those contexts in which people have the confidence to put themselves at risk, sincerely express their beliefs and share knowledge, attitudes and behaviors with others. In this case, we are not only talking about physical safety, but also about protection from psychological and emotional harm (Cisneros & Bracho, 2020). Lack of safety in certain areas may be associated with direct or indirect aggression aimed at vulnerable groups (e.g. ethnic groups, the LGBTQAI+ community).

As for the LGBTQAI+ community, although direct aggression (e.g. physical violence) is still present, the aggressions perceived by members of minority communities has made the transition to subtle forms of aggression called microaggression (Nadal, Whitman, Davis, Erazo & Davidoff, 2016). Microaggressions are subtle forms of discrimination, often unintentional or unconscious, manifested by subtle insults or forms of invalidation (e.g. improper use of pronouns, the use of the name people who transition were assigned at birth, asking intrusive questions about the transition process, referring people to facilities specific to the opposite gender), targeting individuals belonging to groups considered minority in the perception of the society (Nadal, Rivera, and corpus 2010; Parr and Howe 2019). These forms of aggression bring with them important mental health consequences for people in the LGBTQAI+ community, a series of quantitative and qualitative research indicated associations between experiencing

microaggression and low self-esteem, depression and trauma (Nadal, 2018; Nadal et al., 2016). For example, Parr and Howe (2019) suggest that frequent experience of gender identity invalidation (a form of microaggression) among transgender people is associated with a 150-240% higher chance of experiencing depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation in the previous year. Furthermore, social consequences resulting from microaggression such as marginalization and unequal opportunities in access to health services, education and employment were also observed (Sue, 2010).

Recent studies regarding microaggression indicate the importance of the context and environment in which these types of aggression occur (Kia, MacKinnon & Legge, 2016; Nadal et al., 2011; Woodford et al., 2017). For example, the FRA (2020) identified discrimination as being present in several life contexts such as cafes, restaurants and hospitals among the LGBTQAI+ population in Romania which was studied, with 45% of participants autoreporting levels of discrimination regarding at least one of the studied contexts. Sue (2010) states that subtle forms of aggression are not only manifested at interpersonal level, but also at institutional level by promoting public policies and practices that facilitate exclusion. For example, Kia, et al. (2017) notes that although there are some policies, regulations and protocols in the United States regarding the way public institutions should approach the LGBTQAI+ community, subtle forms of discrimination are still reported by members of the community.

The phenomenon of direct abuse is still present among the citizens of the LGBTQAI+ community in Romania, the report delivered by FRA in 2020 also suggests that 30% of the participants claim to have experienced forms of verbal abuse in the last 12 months and 24% of them report non-verbal forms of abuse (e.g. gestures). When requested to mention the context of the last incident that consisted of some form of abuse, participants reported that 33% of the declared spaces were open spaces (e.g. parks, public squares) and 8% were private social places (e.g. cafes, bars).

[present study]

Based on what we observed in the existing literature and the data identified regarding the forms of abuse experienced by the LGBTQAI+ community, **this study proposes to outline the extent to which the LGBTQAI+ community experiences subtle or direct forms of abuse compared to homosexual and cisgender citizens.** Regarding the phenomenon of subtle forms of abuse (e.g. microaggression), no representative studies have been identified targeting the LGBTQAI+ population from Romania. Considering the analysed literature, we note that microaggressions play an important role in mental health and social integration of LGBTQAI+ people (Nadal, 2018) so we attach great importance to identifying the frequency with which this phenomenon is present among community members. Evenmore, because microaggressions are related to the context in which they occur (Kia, MacKinnon & Legge, 2016), we aim to observe the frequency at which these types of abuse are reported in the context of interaction with public institutions (e.g. The Health System, The Judiciary System, etc.) and the development of social-cultural life (e.g. the attendance of bars, theaters, etc.). Due to the fact that we not only want to observe the presence of micro-aggressions among the LGBTQAI+ population, but also to observe whether the experiences of the community differ from those of the heterosexual-cisgender community, the present study proposes to identify the extent to which members of the LGBTQAI+ community experience more frequent micro-aggressions compared to the heterosexual-cisgender population in relation to their interaction with public institutions and spaces associated with social-cultural life.

The presence of heterosexism, prejudice

[hypotheses]

and discrimination among society are aspects that create a permissive climate in which direct abuse is being permissively exercised (Dragowski, Halkitis, Grossman & D'Augelli, 2011). According to a report released in 2020 by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 43% of LGBTQAI+ participants in Romania say they have experienced some form of direct abuse (e.g. verbal/physical abuse), while the overall estimated percentage at the European Union level is 38%. The same report addresses the experience of the LGBTQAI+ community in the family, educational, medical and social context, but does not relate to the context of general public institutions or social-cultural life. Also, differences between LGBTQAI+ and heterosexual cisgender groups were not addressed. This study also aims to identify differences between LGBTQAI+ and heterosexual-cisgender groups in the frequency with which direct forms of verbal and physical abuse are experienced in the two types of contexts analysed.

Hypothesis 1: Participants in the LGBTQAI+ group experience micro-aggressions with a higher frequency than the heterosexual-cisgender group in relation to their interaction with public institutions.

Hypothesis 2: Participants in the LGBTQAI+ group experience micro-aggressions with a higher frequency than the heterosexual-cisgender group in relation to their interaction with the social-cultural sites.

Hypothesis 3: Participants in the LGBTQAI+ group experience direct verbal abuse at a higher frequency than the heterosexual-cisgender group in relation to their interaction with public institutions.

Hypothesis 4: Participants in the LGBTQAI+ group experience direct physical abuse at a higher frequency than the heterosexual-cisgender group in relation to their interaction with public institutions.

Hypothesis 5: Participants in the LGBTQAI+ group experience direct verbal abuse at a higher frequency than the heterosexual-cisgender group in relation to their interaction with social-cultural spaces.

Hypothesis 6: Participants in the LGBTQAI+ group experience direct physical abuse at a higher frequency than the heterosexual-cisgender group in relation to their interaction with social-cultural spaces.

[methodology]

The present study targeted the **members of the LGBTQAI+ community** considering varied characteristics of their population such as sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, education, economic status and background.

In order to be selected to participate in this study, participants required to be at least 18 years old and identify with at least one category of sexual orientation or gender identity under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella.

Requirements necessary for the data to be processed were that participants would complete the questionnaire provided in full and that there was variation in their responses. Participants were divided into two groups, the interest group of people who are part of the LGBTQAI+ community and a control group of people who identify as heterosexual and/ or cisgender.

Data collected for the purpose of analysis indicate a number of **163 participants, of whom 76.69% affirmed they are part of the LGBTQIA+ community and 23.31% claimed to identify as heterosexual and cisgender.**

In the group of participants confirming that they are part of the LGBTQIA+ community, 68.71% of the individuals identified as having a gender identity other than cisgender and 31.29% of them said they identify as cisgender. Also, 72.4% of participants identify with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, and 27.6% of respondents identify as heterosexual.

The data regarding the characteristics of the participants suggest that 89.57% identify themselves as Romanian citizens, and 10.43% as having other nationalities or

ethnic backgrounds.

Of the 163 participants, 34.35% affirm to be living in urban areas, 17.18% in rural areas and 48.47% live in a city that has the status of county seat. The level of education of respondents is mainly marked by high school graduates 59.5%, followed by bachelor graduates 25.16%, master graduates 12.28%, 2.45% graduated as the last form of secondary education and 0.6% are PDH graduates. At the time of the evaluation, 62.58% of the participants were enrolled in a form of higher educational programme. The economic status of the participants was assessed in relation to their monthly income, noting that 47.24% of them have incomes below 1300 RON / month, followed by 20.24% falling between 1300-2000 RON / month, 13.5% over 5000 RON / month, 11.04% between 3000-5000 RON /month and 7.98% between 2000-3000 RON /month.

Note that RON is the Romanian currency.

[instruments]

The data obtained from this study was collected through an online questionnaire with an estimated duration of 25 minutes.

The data obtained from this study was collected through an online questionnaire with an estimated duration of 25 minutes. The questionnaire was distributed via online platforms dedicated to the LGBTQIA+ community and was also promoted at cultural events. At the same time, the questionnaire covers two sections specific to the studied contexts, namely the experience on public services and the experience on cultural and recreational activities, each of these two sections recording the data through 2 sexual orientation: **Sexual Orientation Microaggression Inventory - SOMI and Sexual Orientation Victimization - SOV.** The first part of the questionnaire collects the demographic data of the participants followed by the two sections on the experience of aggression in the two studied contexts.

Sexual Orientation Microaggression Inventory - SOMI (Swann, Minshew, Newcomb & Mustanski, 2016) is a tool that measures the experience of respondents with various forms of microaggression such as heterosexist attitudes and expressions, denial of sexual orientation/ gender identity, heterosexism and disapproval of the community experiences. The instrument has a total number of 19 items (e.g. you were told that you are not a “real” man/woman) that are most effectively grouped into a single factor according to the confirmatory analysis performed. The internal consistency of the instrument demonstrates an excellent rating having a Cronbach Alpha value of .95. The items were recorded on a Likert scale of 5, where 1 means never and 5 means always.

Sexual Orientation Victimization - SOV (Dragowski, Halkitis, Grossman, & D’Augelli, 2011) is a short tool composed of 6 items that capture the frequency with which participants experience two forms of direct aggression: verbal or physical. Regarding verbal aggression, the items concerned the frequency with which participants were insulted or threatened because of their sexual orientation or gender identity (e.g. how many times have you been threatened with physical violence because you are or were believed to be part of the LGBTQIA+ community?). Similarly, physical aggression was represented by assessing the frequency with which participants experienced blows or other forms of physical aggression (e.g. how many times were objects thrown at you because you are or were believed to be part of the LGBTQIA+ community?). Participants’ responses are recorded on a Likert scale of 4, where variants suggested 1 – never, 2 – once, 3 – twice, 4 – three or more times.

The questionnaire also proposes a series of open questions about the respondents’ experience regarding insecurity in the public space (e.g. share with us an experience where you did NOT feel safe in the spaces associated with social/cultural life) and a series of questions about how they would expect a safe space to be like in order for them to actually feel safe (e.g. if you were to think of public spaces in the city as a safe space, what would they look like?).

[results]

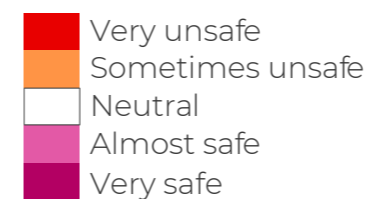
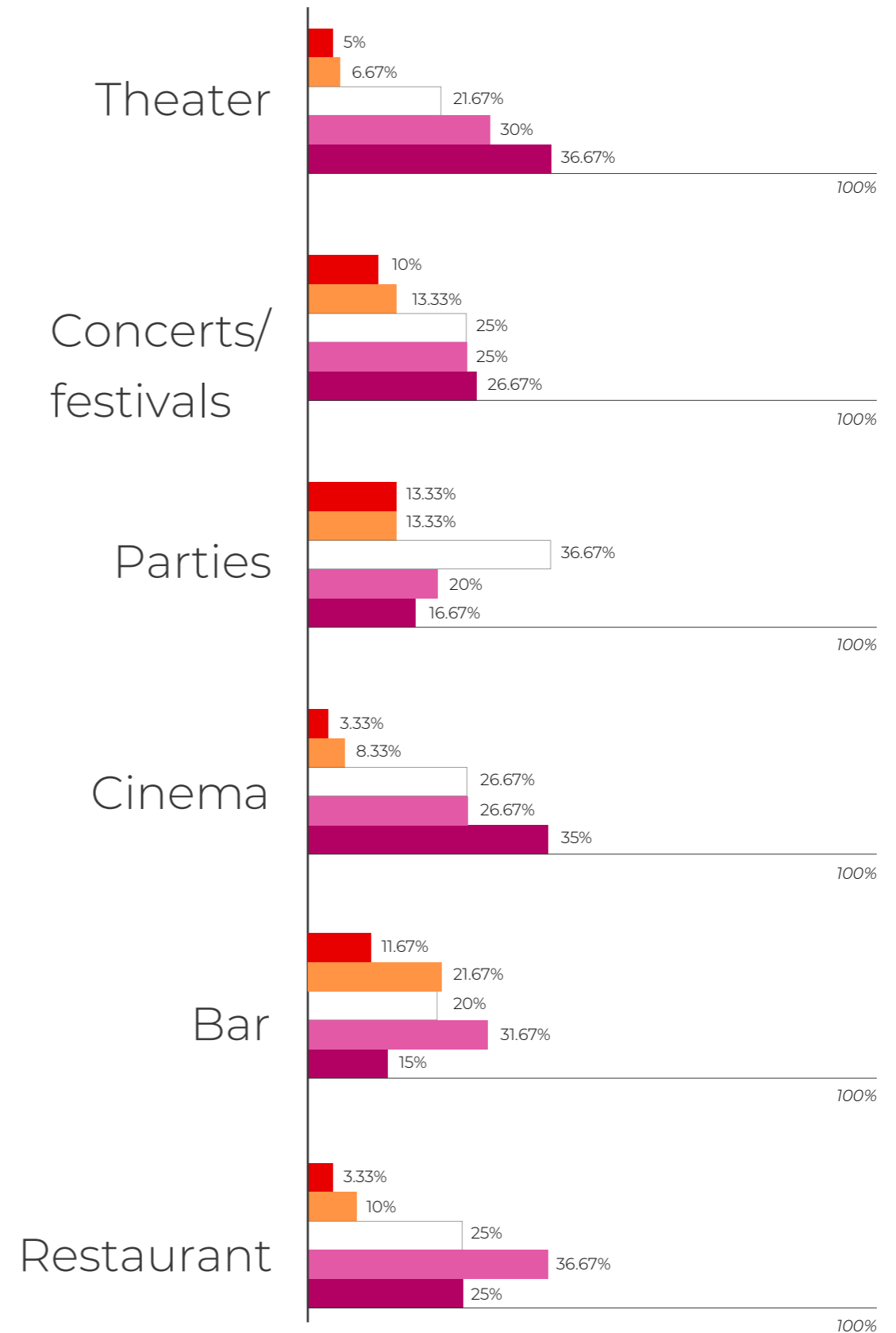
Descriptive data

When it comes to interaction with public institutions, **percentage differences can be observed between the perception of safety of the LGBTQAI+ community and the heterosexual-cisgender population.** The perception of health care safety scores 17.6% among the LGBTQAI+ group for the statement “very unsafe”, while the control group only mentions 5.26% for the same statement. Similarly, the LGBTQAI+ group mentions a percent of 24% of unsafeness in interaction with the administrative sector, while the heterosexual-cisgender group reports only 5.26%. The financial system is perceived to be very unsafe for 21.6% of the LGBTQAI+ population, while for the control group it scores a percentage of 5.26%. Interaction with the social welfare system is perceived to be very unsafe for 23.2% of the LGBTQAI+ group and only 13.16% for the control group. The highest share observed is found in the experience with the judiciary institutions, where 42.4% of LGBTQAI+ group members say they perceive this interaction as very unsafe, while the control group perceives it as 13.16% very unsafe.

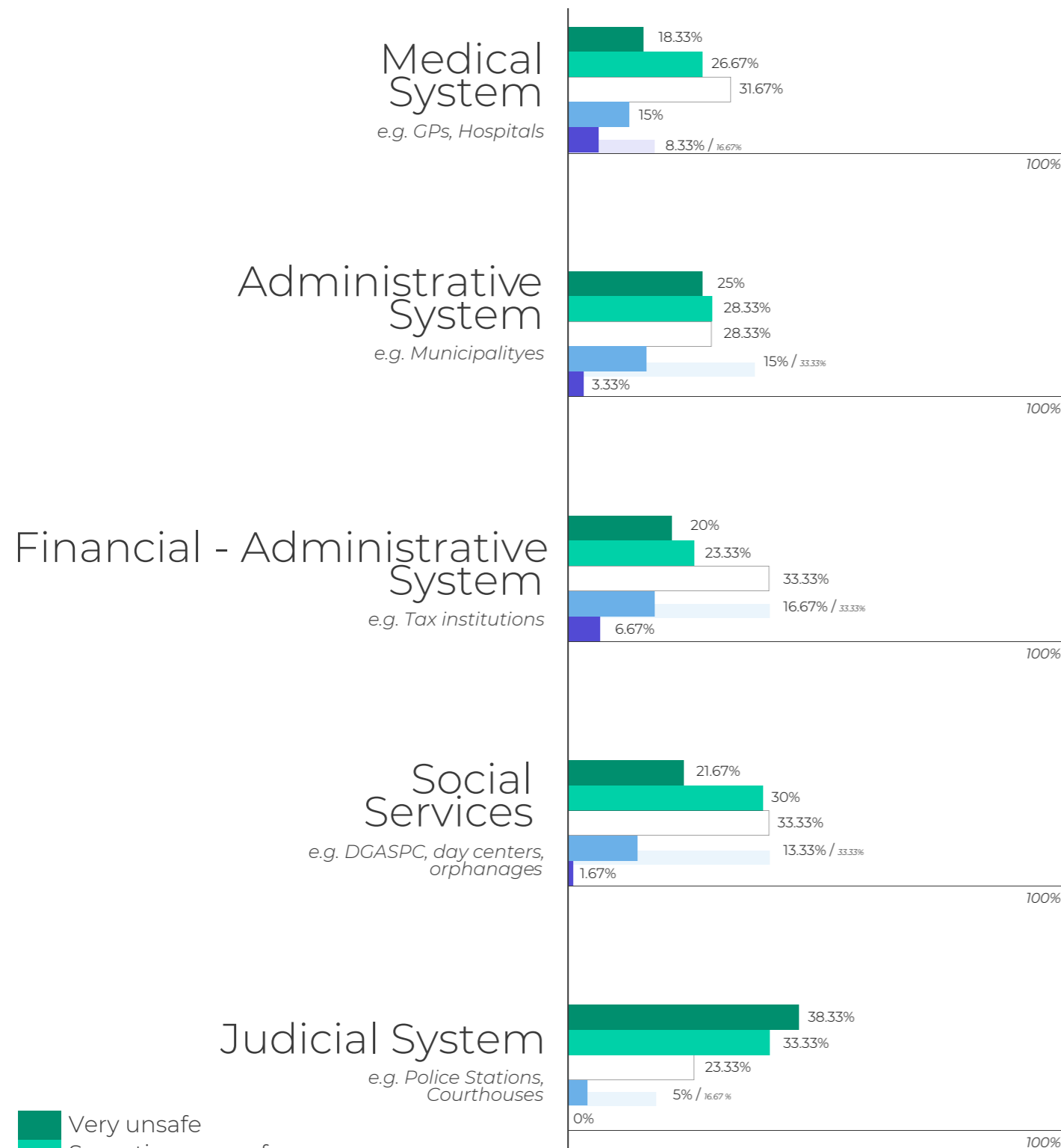
The differences in perception of safety in terms of interaction with social-cultural spaces are similar to the context of interaction with public institutions. The LGBTQAI+ group perceives these spaces as highly unsafe, but observable differences are not as large. For example, the biggest percentage difference is observed when participants evaluated bars, the LGBTQAI+ group declared that bars were very unsafe in proportion of 22.4%, while the control group thought of it as very unsafe in proportion of 2.6%. When evaluating the safety perceived while attending film screenings, this time the control group declared the space as being very unsafe

in proportion of 2.63% while the LGBTQAI+ group estimated a 2.4% level of unsafeness.

Socio - Cultural Spaces



Public Services



Differences between the LGBTQAI+ group and the heterosexual cisgender group in the frequency with which microaggressions are experienced

In order to identify whether there is a difference between the group of respondents belonging to the LGBTQAI+ community and the heterosexual-cisgender group, independent samples t tests were conducted. Statistically significant differences were observed between the LGBTQAI+ group and the heterosexual cisgender group $t(71.241)=3.511, p=.001$. More specifically, participants in the LGBTQAI+ group $M=2.84, SD=1.03$ experienced more frequent microaggressions in this context compared to heterosexual-cisgender group $M=2.24, SD=.87$. However, the observed effect size is average $d=.62$ which indicates a reduced practical utility. Participants experience with spaces

associated with social and cultural life also brings with it significant statistical differences between the two groups $t(161)=3.618, p=.000$, the LGBTQAI+ group experimenting with a higher frequency $M=2.79, SD=1.06$ microaggressions in spaces associated with cultural social life than the non-LGBTQAI+ group $M=2.08, SD=1.07$. These results can be seen in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Comparative results between LGBTQAI+ and cisgender and heterosexual groups on the frequency with which they experience micro-aggression.

Results	Group						t	df	p	d
	LGBTQIA+			Non-LGBTQIA+						
	M	AS	n	M	AS	n				
Microaggressions in public institutions	2.84	1.03	125	2.24	.873	8	3.511	71.241	.001	
Microaggressions in socio-cultural spaces	2.79	1.06	125	2.08	1.07	38	3.618	161	.000	

Differences between LGBTQAI+ and heterosexual cisgender groups in the frequency with which direct forms of physical and verbal aggression are experienced

T-tests for independent samples were also conducted to see if there is a statistically significant difference between the LGBTQAI+ and heterosexual-cisgender groups regarding the frequency with which they experience physical and verbal aggression in the two contexts addressed. The results associated with the observed differences between the LGBTQAI+ group and the control group on the experience of interacting with public institutions mark significant differences between the two groups for both forms of aggression. Regarding the frequency with which participants experienced verbal abuse in public institutions, a statistically significant difference $t(121.506)=6.438, p=.000$ was observed between the LGBTQAI+ $M=1.84, SD=.89$ which experienced

abuse with a higher frequency compared to control group $M=1.14, SD=.46$. However, the effect size has a medium value $d=.71$ and the data should be used with caution. The frequency with which the LGBTQAI+ group experienced physical abuse in public institutions is higher $M=1.23, SD=.53$ than among the heterosexual-cisgender group $M=1.05, SD=.32$, the observed difference being statistically significant $t(102.293)=2.562, p=.01$. However, the effect size is $d=.41$ which represents a low value, suggesting a low practical value of the results **(Table 2)**.

Table 2. Comparative results between LGBTQAI+ and cisgender-heterosexual groups on the frequency with which they experience physical and verbal abuse in their interaction with public institutions

Results	Group						t	df	p	d
	LGBTQIA+			Non-LGBTQIA+						
	M	AS	n	M	AS	n				
Verbal abuse	1.84	.89	125	1.14	.463	86	.438	121.506	.000	.71
Physical abuse	1.23	.53	125	1.05	.323	82	.562	102.293	.01	.41

Regarding the experience with social-cultural life, the differences between the two groups studied are statistically significant only with regard to verbal abuse $t(74.687)=3.193, p=.002$. The LGBTQAI+ group $M=1.63, SD=.79$ experienced verbal abuse to a greater extent compared to heterosexual-cisgender $M=1.23, SD=.63$. When participants reported physical abuse differences the results were not statistically significant $t(161)=.645, p=.520$ between the two studied groups **(Table 3)**.

Tabelul 3. Comparative results between LGBTQAI+ and cisgender-heterosexual groups on the frequency with which they experience physical and verbal abuse in their interaction with social and cultural spaces.

Results	Group						t	df	p	d
	LGBTQIA+			Non-LGBTQIA+						
	M	AS	n	M	AS	n				
Verbal abuse	1.63	.79	125	1.23	.63	38	3.193	74.697	.000	.71
Physical abuse	1.19	.44	125	1.14	.57	38	.560	50.854	.578	-

Differences between the group that declares a different sexual orientation other than the heterosexual one, the group that declares a gender identity different from the cisgender identity and the group that declares identifying with both

In order to observe these differences, a One-Way ANOVA test was carried out. When participants related to the interaction with public institutions, significant differences were observed between the three groups $F(1, 160) = 11.151, p = .000$. In order to highlight how the groups differ, a post-hoc Tukey analysis was conducted. The results indicate that the group that declares a different sexual orientation as well as a different gender identity $M = 3.23, SD = 1.06$ experience with a higher frequency microaggressions than the group that declares a different sexual orientation $M = 2.65, SD = .97$ and than the group declaring a different gender identity $M = 2.27, SD = .86$. No statistically significant differences were observed between the group declaring a different sexual orientation and the group declaring a different gender identity. The size of the observed effect is $\eta^2 = .121$.

When participants reported the frequency with which they experienced

microaggressions, in spaces intended for social-cultural life, statistically significant differences were also identified between the 3 groups studied $F(1, 160) = 10.646, p = .000$. A Tukey analysis was conducted to determine how the responses of these groups differed. The results suggest that the group that declares both a different sexual orientation and gender identity $M = 3.16, SD = 1.12$ experience microaggressions at a higher frequency than the group that declares a different sexual orientation $M = 2.64, SD = 1$, and the group that declares a different gender identity $M = 2.27, SD = .86$. This time it was also observed that the group that has a different sexual orientation from the heterosexual one $M = 2.64, SD = .97$ experience more frequent microaggressions than the group that has a different gender identity from the cisgender identity $M = 2.27, SD = .86$. The size of the observed effect is $\eta^2 = .117$.

Table 4. Comparative results between the three groups on the frequency with which they experience microaggressions

	Group						F	η
	Different sexual orientation N=74		Different gender identity N=45		Both N=44			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Microaggressions in public institutions	2.65	.97	2.27	.86	3.23	1.06	11.151	.121
Microaggressions in socio-cultural spaces	2.64	1	2.1	1.03	3.13	1.1	10.646	.117

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$; (a) Sexual orientation different from heterosexual, (b) gender identity different from cisgender, (c) both a sexual orientation different from heterosexual, and a gender identity different from cisgender.

[discussions]

This present research investigated the differences between the LGBTQAI+ and heterosexual-cisgender groups regarding the frequency with which they experience direct abuse and microaggression in two different contexts. The first hypothesis of the study is confirmed, with significant statistical differences between the LGBTQAI+ group and the heterosexual-cisgender one, in regard with the frequency with which microaggressions are experienced in interaction with public institutions.

The LGBTQAI+ group experienced microaggression with a higher rate than the control group. The trend of this result can also be seen in the way participants evaluated the level of their safety regarding certain public institutions in Romania, with the LGBTQAI+ group choosing the “very unsafe” response at a higher percentage than the control group for all 5 institutions addressed.

The open-ended questions also complement the results with specific examples of the experiences of LGBTQAI+ community members in their interaction with public institutions:

“I felt unsafe when the medical examiner brought religion into the conversation while in a examination I requested concerning me changing my sex in my legal documents. He went on to say that I would never be a “real man” if I didn’t have a penis and even if I had surgery, I still wouldn’t be.”;

“I felt unsafe when the mayor’s daughter, who is employed in the agriculture department of the town hall in my village, showed my Instagram account to those who were there, starting to laugh because I had pictures dressed in ‘feminine’ clothes

and wore makeup.”;

“I felt unsafe when I went to the endocrinologist to read some test results and the doctor was very invasive with questions about my sexuality, then he recommended a psychologist from the same hospital. That psychologist tried to convince me that my sexuality was due to trauma.”;

“I felt unsafe when I went to the police station and claimed that some people threatened to break me up if they see me on the street again because I was queer. I was told by the police officer that I am overreacting and that if I chose to show up in public I asked for it.”

Similar observations were also mentioned by Kia, et al. (2017), who argues that while national policies regarding how staff members of the public institutions should approach the LGBTQAI+ community exist in America, forms of abuse and discrimination are still present at the level of these institutions, particularly in the case of healthcare and social services. All the more so, such a result is to be expected because in Romania these policies regarding proper approach towards the LGBTQAI+ community are designed in a rudimentary form or sometimes non-existent, so that the legal consequences of discrimination are rare.

Also, in a study of 2000 medical students who identified themselves as heterosexual, it was observed that 47.8% reported direct forms of abuse and 81.5% reported indirect forms of abuse (microaggression) when referring to the LGBTQAI+ community (Burke et al., p. 2015). This argument indicates that discrimination and abuse, whether direct or indirect, can be recorded in a high percentage among specialists in state systems. Furthermore, Sue (2010) suggests that the way minority groups are exposed to interactions with the public institutions often brings with it inappropriate remarks from specialists and heteronormative speeches that lead to the exclusion of the realities of sexual and gender minorities.

The second hypothesis explored in the present study is also confirmed, with the LGBTQAI+ group experiencing more frequent microaggressions in regard with **social-cultural spaces than the heterosexual-cisgender group. Open-ended questions provide examples of such situations from the LGBTQAI+ group such as:**

“I went out with my girlfriend and decided to go to a coffee shop. Everything was fine and the moment we kissed the waiter came and told us he didn't want to see such thing and that it was unacceptable (asking what if there were kids and they would have seen us?) and he said to eat faster and leave. Everyone in the coffee shop looked at us and we were afraid to do anything after that incident”;

“I went with my partner to get food from a to-go restaurant. While I was waiting for the order, I kept hearing giggles from one of the tables. I looked and noticed that everyone was staring at me and laughing. My partner went to the bathroom. One of the boys at the table followed him and asked something like, “did you come with a girl or a boy?”.

Results on differences between LGBTQAI+ and heterosexual cisgender groups have been identified in the literature

(Robinson & Rubin, 2016), with members of the LGBTQAI+ community reporting higher frequencies of experience with microaggression than the control group. However, the specific classification of social-cultural spaces as a reference point has not been identified in the literature addressed. However, a common classification in the literature, is that of structural microaggressions (e.g. microaggressions that occur in public institutions, public policies) and interpersonal microaggressions (Woodford, Pacey, Kulick, Alex & Sung, 2015), the last being also manifested in informal contexts (e.g. coffee shops). Woodford et. Al. (2015) identified in their study the presence of microaggressions, both at structural and interpersonal level among LGBTQAI+ participants.

Regarding the frequency with which participants experience direct forms of abuse in their interaction with public institutions, the results of independent samples t-tests indicate that the LGBTQAI+ group reported more frequently experiences of direct forms of aggression, such as verbal and physical abuse, than the control group. **Hypothesis number three is confirmed**, with the LGBTQAI+ group experiencing direct verbal abuse more frequently than the heterosexual cisgender group. Similarly, **hypothesis number four is confirmed**, with LGBTQAI+ people reporting a higher frequency of experiences with physical abuse than the control group when they relate to interaction with public institutions. These results can also be observed in the descriptive results, where for each one of the public sectors addressed, the LGBTQAI+ community reported a higher percentage of perceived unsafety in interaction with these sectors.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2020) captures percentage results in this direction too, where 42% of the Romanian population report medical services as spaces where participants are afraid of experiencing physical or verbal abuse. The results obtained can be explained by the fact that at the social normative level stereotypes about the LGBTQAI+ community are perpetuated, leading to prejudices and discrimination regarding community members (Dragowski, et al., 2011). Balsam, Rothblum & Beauchaine, 2005; Rivers & D'Augelli, 2001) also attest in their research that members of the LGBTQAI+ community reported higher levels of abuse experience than the control group.

The data regarding the experiences related to social and cultural spaces reveals statistically significant differences only in the frequency with which the two groups experience verbal abuse but not physical abuse. **Hypothesis number five is confirmed**, with the LGBTQAI+ group experiencing direct verbal abuse more frequently than the heterosexual cisgender group. For example, participants mention in the open-ended questions claims such as “I was walking down the street and a group of guys started spitting me and telling me I was a dirty faggot.”

The last hypothesis of the study is not confirmed, as statistically significant differences between the two groups regarding the frequency with which they experience direct physical abuse in the spaces related to social and cultural life have not been identified. FRA (2020) suggests that members of the LGBTQAI+ community in Romania report in proportion of 23% that they feel fear of aggression when they attend certain spaces, identifying a percent of 70 when it comes to open spaces (e.g. parks) and 54% when it comes to restaurants, cafes and bars.

Additional analysis conducted in this study shows a difference between the group that identifies with both

a different sexual orientation and a different gender identity compared to the hetero-cisgender group. This category experiences microaggression to a greater extent than the group that identifies with only a different sexual orientation and the group that identifies with only a different gender identity for both contexts studied.

Such a result can be explained by the different experiences and distress that different types of identities experience. For example, Nadal, Whitman, Davis, Erazo & Davidoff, (2016) notes that when they particularly studied individual with a different sexual orientation, it was observed that the gay men group most frequently experiences microaggressions related to the language used in relation to them (e.g. faggot) to emphasize their non-gender-compliant particularities. Nadal, Rivera and corpus (2010) on the other hand, note that when investigating groups that identify with only a different gender identity, the transgender group more frequently experienced invalidation of their gender identity (e.g. misuse of pronouns). Therefore, different types of identities are associated with unique ways of experiencing microaggression, and identification with multiple identity patterns (e.g. sexual orientation and gender identity) brings with it significant variations in the manifestation and intensity of the forms of abuse and the psychological and social distress experienced.

[study limits]

One of the main limitations of this study is the small number of participants that do not allow the results to be generalized to the vast population of the LGBTQAI+ Community. The small number of participants could prevent the identification of certain effects, such as the experience of microaggression in places related to social-cultural life. It is therefore recommended for future studies to submit a replicability approach using a relevant number of participants.

The sample used also shows an uneven number of participants for the two groups addressed which may reduce the statistical power of the research and the risk of occurrence of type II error. Due to the way participants are grouped, there is a risk that the results obtained are random, thus requiring to be treated with caution and for informational purposes only.

The use of self-reporting tools can raise several limitations such as social desirability, incorrect assessment of situations and difficulties in understanding the wording of the statements. Although these are scientifically validated instruments, there is a risk that they will not record the data provided by the participants due to their self-reporting bias. Also, the scales used do not benefit from sub-scales that monitor social desirability and the level of understanding of the claims could not be assessed.

[practical implications]

Regarding the structural dimension of the context in which microaggressions are present, they are rooted in prejudices and discrimination transposed into the policies that govern public systems. In order to regulate these policies, it is necessary to refer to the evidence provided in specialized literature as a basis for establishing practice standards within public systems, with the aim of reducing structural microaggressions (Kia et al., 2016). An example of this could be the introduction of programs designed to assist representatives of these structures (e.g., doctors, officials) in raising awareness about microaggressions, their marginalizing effects, and proposing alternative behaviors.

Another aspect that can support the reduction of the frequency of microaggressions in these environments can be the involvement of professionals from the LGBTQIA+ community in the development of policies and operational standards within the public service system. With regard to direct contact with institutional representatives, it has been observed that the language and terminology they use when referring to members of the LGBTQIA+ community often convey discriminatory messages towards the recipients. For example, Kia et al. (2016) mention the term "transsexual" used in the American medical system to describe beneficiaries, a term that historically has been used to pathologize gender identity.

[future studies]

The context variable in addressing microaggressions has an important role in identifying microaggressions and their particularities. Although the present study addresses several variations of the structural and interpersonal facets, they are treated in a general manner. The risk of this approach is that it does not identify the particularities of each context studied, so it is recommended to investigate more types of services and recreational spaces in detail. For example, the study conducted by Kia, et al. (2016) addresses the phenomenon of microaggression in the medical and social services context, which allows errors in public policies targeting these areas to be captured and also permits the identification of the particular prejudices of professionals in this field. Studies on other relevant public institutions (e.g. the administrative system) have not been identified, thus remaining an unexplored informational niche that prevents the identification of specific needs of the community and the design of appropriate interventions. Also, although this study addressed several variations in the environment in which microaggressions occur, it failed to capture more relevant environments, such as the education system. According to FRA (2020) 17% of participants reported schools, high schools, and universities as contexts in which they experienced forms of abuse regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity. The topic of safety within educational campuses is extensively studied in the literature, but from what we know the experience of microaggressions in relation to the spaces related to the educational system are not studied at the level of the Romanian population.

One of the subjects studied in the field of microaggression is that of intersectionality. Nadal, Whitman, Davis,

[conclusion]

In conclusion, the perceived safety of the LGBTQAI+ community in relation to public institutions and spaces related to social-cultural life is assessed as low.

Participants report the presence of both subtle forms of abuse such as microaggression and direct forms such as verbal and physical abuse, even at a higher frequency than heterosexual-cisgender participants. These experiences may be correlated with mental health vulnerabilities such as high prevalence of depressive symptoms, low levels of self-esteem and psychological well-being, substance/alcohol consumption (Nadal, Whitman, Davis, Erazo & Davidoff, 2016). Considering the negative consequences of the LGBTQAI+ community experience with the studied spaces, we consider necessary systematic interventions to reduce discrimination both at the level of direct practices (e.g. language of specialists) and at the structural level (e.g. adjustment of public policies) (Kia, MacKinnon & Legge, 2016).

Erazo, & Davidoff (2016) emphasizes the importance of studying the intersectional type of microaggression by considering that individuals experience distress and discrimination relative to multiple types of identities (e.g. gender-sexual orientation-race). Studies investigating intersectional microaggressions attest that intersectional identities experience microaggression in a unique way that particularly influences mental health. For example, (Balsam, Rothblum, & Beauchaine, 2005) notes that Asian U.S. citizen participants who are part of the LGBTQAI+ community experience microaggression and distress at a higher frequency than African-American and Hispanic participants in the LGBTQAI+ community. Such nuances could identify specific needs of intersectional identities and appropriate ways of meeting those needs.

When we relate to the interpersonal context in which microaggressions are identified, they have been addressed in relation to the microaggressions perceived by the LGBTQAI+ group outside the community (e.g. members of the heterosexual-cisgender community). However, the presence of subtle forms of abuse has not been explored at the level of the intragroup, which in turn can have psychological and integration consequences among individuals. For example, Nadal (2011) identifies the presence of perceived microaggression by the lesbian women community toward the bisexual women community and vice versa. This observation indicates the need to study the occurrence of microaggressions in the LGBTQAI+ intragroup.

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[Spații sigure](#) aims to contribute to increasing the safety and inclusion of public spaces for LGBTQIA+ youth so that events and projects (regardless of the field: academic, artistic, cultural, educational, sports) take place free of discrimination and bullying.

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