

Member Experiences of the MAP Support Club

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Background

- Formal community therapeutic services targeted towards individuals with a sexual attraction to children do exist however, service users often face multiple barriers to accessing these (Lievesley et al., 2025; Levenson & Grady, 2019).
- Online support forums therefore exist with the aim of providing users with peer support without the barriers present in formal therapy / services (Roche et al., 2022).
- “MAP Support Club (MSC) is a community for minor attracted people (MAPs) who are fundamentally against child sexual abuse and committed to never harm children.”
- Has over 800 members.
- Has a number of unique features in comparison to others support forums:
 - Combines peer support with formal support by offering bi-monthly online group therapy sessions.
 - Live chat function.
 - Allows minors (13 years+) to join.

Method

Quantitative Strand: Participants

- Sample of 74: 61 male (82%); Mean age of 35.32 (SD=13.31)

Quantitative Strand: Design

- Cross sectional / correlational design

- Measures:
 - Demographics (age, sex, parental status, education)
 - Wellbeing (depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-esteem)
 - Coping strategies (suppression, emotion focused, problem focused, dysfunctional)
 - Offence related (offending willingness, offending behaviours)

Qualitative Strand: Participants

- 11 members of MSC who have a sexual attraction to children.
- Recruited internationally including the UK, USA, Russia & Brazil.
- Age range: 21-42 years

Qualitative Strand: Data collection

- Collected through online, anonymous, semi-structured interviews.
- Interviews lasted an average of 68 minutes (range = 45 – 112 minutes).

| Participant | Gender | Member duration | Other forums? |
|-------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 | Trans-fem | 2 months | Yes |
| 2 | Male | 1 year+ | Yes |
| 3 | Male | 8 years | Yes |
| 4 | Non-binary | 2 years | Yes |
| 5 | Non-binary | 6 years | Yes |
| 6 | Male | 2 years | Yes |
| 7 | Male | 4/5 years | Yes |
| 8 | Male | 10 years | Yes |
| 9 | Male | 2 years | Yes |
| 10 | Male | 2 years | Yes |
| 11 | Male | 1 month | No |

Analysis & Findings

| Superordinate Themes | Subordinate Themes |
|---|--|
| 1. Claiming a moral identity | 1.1 Shifting morality markers 1.2 Becoming a ‘wounded healer’ |
| 2. Peer support as a therapeutic stand-in | 2.1 Overcoming barriers to support 2.2 Immediate support for issues |
| 3. Experiencing social normality | 3.1 Escaping the ‘glass closet’ 3.3 Understanding and acceptance |
| 4. Blind spots in moderation | 4.1 MSC as an echo chamber 4.2 Protection of members |



Engagement with MSC

- Average time spent on MSC: 5.83 hours per week (SD = 4.89)
- 46% were members of other forums (mainly Virped)
- Themes of engagement centred around community building and seeking support.



Conclusions

- MAP Support Club may help members to distinguish between the moral status of their attractions and the act of engaging in child sexual abuse, while maintaining and enforcing a sense of behavioural accountability.
- Peer support was experienced as a viable alternative to formal treatment services, with some members adopting a 'wounded healer' role to support others in moments of distress.
- The forum offered members a sense of normal community by enabling members to escape the isolation of the 'glass closet' and manage the visibility of their attractions to children.
- Participants identified blind spots in moderation processes, including the risk of the platform becoming an echo chamber and potential concerns around safeguarding for younger members.
- Elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness among MAP Support Club members suggest that people with attractions to children still have these unmet mental health needs, even within supportive online environments