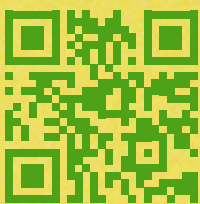


Becoming Community Managers

With Awareness of Digital
Minority Stress and
Mental Health

WORKSHOP

MODULE B2



www.queeresilience.eu

 Co-funded by
the European Union



Module B2

Becoming Community Managers with Awareness of Digital Minority Stress and Mental Health

Community management, LGBTQ+ inclusion, digital minority stress, mental health awareness, online wellbeing strategies

Overview

Topic

Community management, LGBTQ+ inclusion, digital minority stress, mental health awareness, online wellbeing strategies

Objectives

- » Understand the role of a community manager in fostering safe, inclusive digital spaces
- » Recognize signs of digital minority stress and its impact on mental health
- » Learn strategies for supporting members experiencing stress, burnout, or exclusion
- » Develop skills for balancing community moderation with self-care as a manager

Duration

75 - 90 minutes

Target Group

Youth leaders, community managers, moderators of online groups, LGBTQ+ peer mentors

Group Size

8 – 20 participants

Complexity and Context

Medium complexity

Context: digital wellbeing, safe online spaces, LGBTQ+ inclusion

Links to digital literacy, social-emotional learning, and human rights education

Competence areas: empathy, active listening, community moderation, emotional regulation

This workshop draws explicitly on the **DigComp (Digital Competence Framework for Citizens)** framework. In our module, we primarily develop competences in the following areas:

- **Communication and collaboration:** participants practice empathetic communication, active listening, and supportive dialogue in digital communities to promote inclusion and psychological safety.
- **Safety:** understanding how minority stress manifests online, setting healthy boundaries, maintaining digital well-being, and fostering emotionally safe spaces for oneself and others.
- **Problem solving:** applying moderation strategies in challenging community situations, resolving conflicts constructively, and balancing freedom of expression with protection from harm.
- **Personal development and self-regulation:** recognizing emotional triggers, managing stress, and using digital tools to support one's own and others' mental health.

By aligning the workshop to **DigComp** areas, we ensure that participants build not only practical skills in community management, but also **empathy-based digital competences** that support **inclusive, safe, and mentally healthy online environments**.

Triggers

Discussions of stress, burnout, exclusion, or online harassment can evoke strong emotional reactions, especially among LGBTQ+ participants or those with lived experiences of minority stress and mental health challenges.

Potential triggers may include:

- Personal stories of online exclusion, microaggressions, or harassment
- Descriptions of anxiety, depression, or burnout related to digital environments
- Scenarios depicting conflict, misgendering, or lack of community support
- Conversations about emotional exhaustion, self-doubt, or isolation
- Group reactions that downplay or question someone's experience of stress

If a participant becomes distressed, the facilitator should respond calmly, validating their feelings and ensuring they can step away if needed.

Facilitator Guidance for Managing Triggers

Before the session

- Begin with a clear trigger warning, noting that topics related to stress and mental health can be sensitive.
- Clarify that participants may skip or step out of an activity at any time without explanation.
- Establish group agreements promoting confidentiality, empathy, and respect for personal boundaries.
- Prepare a list of mental health support contacts (e.g., helplines, LGBTQ+ peer support).

During the session

- Monitor participants' body language and tone — signs of distress might include silence, withdrawal, or visible tension.
- If someone becomes upset:
 - Offer a short pause or a private check-in outside the group.
 - Use grounding or breathing techniques to restore calm.
 - Acknowledge the emotion without pressing for disclosure ("Thank you for sharing — take the time you need").
- Model empathetic responses and gently redirect debates or dismissive comments toward understanding and support.

After the session

- Allow time for debriefing and emotional processing.
- Encourage self-care and mutual support among participants.
- Share follow-up resources on digital wellbeing, mental health, and community care.

Materials

- » Projector or screen
- » Internet connection
- » Flipchart or whiteboard
- » Markers
- » Optional: printed handouts with stress management strategies & moderation guidelines

Additional recommendations

- » Include a trigger warning at the beginning
- » If possible, invite a community manager or mental health professional as a guest speaker
- » Ensure a supportive environment and allow opt-out for sensitive discussions

Instructions

Introduction and Ground Rules (10 minutes)

Purpose: Create a safe, respectful learning environment and set expectations.

Recommended Facilitator Script:

“Welcome everyone! Today, we’re going to explore what it means to be a community manager who’s aware of digital minority stress and mental health. We’ll look at how stress can show up in online spaces, how to support others, and how to take care of ourselves while managing communities.”

“Because we’ll be discussing sensitive topics like stress, burnout, and online exclusion, let’s agree on some ground rules to help make this a supportive and safe space.”

Suggested Ground Rules (write on flipchart):

- **Respect:** Listen without interrupting or judging.
- **Confidentiality:** What’s shared here stays here.
- **Care:** Take breaks if you need them — it’s okay to step out.
- **Empathy:** Assume good intent, but be mindful of impact.
- **Participation:** Everyone’s voice matters; no one is forced to share.

Ask: “Would anyone like to add another rule?”

Then briefly outline the session flow: “We’ll start by exploring what makes an online community feel safe, learn about digital minority stress, practice real-life scenarios, and finish with some self-care tools.”

Facilitator Tip:

You don’t have to have all the answers. Focus on guiding reflection, validating feelings, and keeping the space emotionally safe.

Warm-Up: “What Makes a Good Community?” (10 minutes)

Purpose: Activate prior knowledge and build comfort through shared experiences.

Recommended Facilitator Script:

“When you think of an online space that felt safe and supportive — what made it that way?”

Steps:

- Ask participants to brainstorm words or short phrases.
- Write their inputs on a flipchart (e.g., respect, kindness, active moderation, clear rules).
- Facilitate reflection with questions:
 - “What roles do moderators or managers play in maintaining this atmosphere?”
 - “When have you personally felt safe — or unsafe — in an online community?”

Facilitator Tip:

Validate all answers; highlight both emotional and practical aspects of safe spaces.

Reality Check: Understanding Digital Minority Stress (15 minutes)

Purpose: Build awareness of how minority stress appears in digital environments and its impact on wellbeing.

Recommended Facilitator Script:

“Digital minority stress refers to the ongoing stress LGBTQ+ and other marginalized people can experience online — from microaggressions, exclusion, or harassment. These experiences can accumulate and affect mental health over time.”

Steps:

- Present 2–3 anonymized, fictionalized examples (e.g., subtle exclusion in a group chat, misgendering in a forum, burnout in a peer group).
- After each, invite discussion:
 - “How does this example reflect minority stress?”
 - “What impact could repeated exposure have on someone’s mental health or engagement?”
 - “How might a community manager recognize and respond to these signs?”

Facilitator Tips:

- Keep examples de-escalated and anonymized.
- Pause between stories; allow emotional space.
- Redirect from debate to empathy: "Let's focus on understanding the stress behind this situation."

Group Activity: "Skills for Community Managers" (25 minutes)

Purpose: Practice empathetic communication and moderation strategies.

Recommended Facilitator Script:

"Community managers play a key role in setting the tone. Let's explore how we can respond to challenges with empathy and awareness."

Steps:

- Divide participants into small groups (3–5 people).
- Give each group a scenario (e.g., a member expressing burnout; subtle exclusion in a chat; conflict over pronouns; someone dominating conversations).
- Ask groups to discuss and role-play how a manager could respond.
 - "What tone or language helps?"
 - "When should you step in publicly vs. privately?"
 - "How do you balance enforcing rules with showing empathy?"
- Each group presents one key takeaway.

Facilitator Tips:

- Move between groups to support reflection.
- Encourage participants to note emotions as well as actions.
- If someone suggests punitive or defensive moderation, reframe toward supportive and restorative approaches.

Reflection and Self-Care: “Support Circle Mapping” (15 minutes)

Purpose: Strengthen emotional regulation and highlight the importance of self-care for community managers.

Recommended Facilitator Script:

“Supporting others can be rewarding — but it can also be draining. You can’t pour from an empty cup. Let’s look at how we take care of ourselves as community managers.”

Steps:

- Ask participants to draw a small “support circle” diagram — themselves in the center, surrounded by sources of support (friends, peers, hobbies, professional help, digital wellbeing tools).
- Reflect through prompts:
 - “What helps you recharge after stressful situations?”
 - “Where can you seek support when feeling overwhelmed?”
- Invite short voluntary sharing.

Facilitator Tips:

- Emphasize that self-care is a professional skill, not a luxury.
- Normalize the need to set boundaries and say no.
- Offer a short grounding or breathing exercise if time allows.

Wrap-Up and Takeaways (10 minutes)

Purpose: Reinforce learning, provide practical resources, and close with encouragement.

Steps:

- Summarize key strategies discussed: empathy, active listening, early intervention, moderation balance, and self-care.
- Share a short resource list (e.g., LGBTQ+ mental health hotlines, moderation guides, digital wellbeing toolkits).
- Invite a quick reflection round: “One thing I’m taking away from today is...”
- Close with a positive statement: “By supporting others with empathy and awareness, we make online communities not only safer, but also more human.”

Facilitator Tip:

Provide printed or digital resources after the session and encourage participants to stay connected through peer networks.

Optional Add-Ons

- **Guest Speaker:** Invite an experienced community manager, digital wellbeing advocate, or mental health professional.
- **Follow-Up Module:** Pair with A1: Introduction to Digital Minority Stress for deeper context.
- **Creative Closing:** Invite participants to write a short “Community Care Manifesto” — one sentence on how they will contribute to inclusive and mentally healthy online spaces.

Annex: Theoretical Background – Digital Minority Stress & Community Management

Digital Minority Stress

- Ongoing stress from microaggressions, invisibility, harassment online. It includes both explicit discrimination (hate speech, slurs) and subtle exclusion (being ignored, misgendered, or stereotyped). Being constantly on guard can drain emotional energy and create a sense of isolation.

Mental Health Effects

- Anxiety, depression, withdrawal from community spaces, reduced self-esteem, and fear of online participation. For LGBTQ+ youth, repeated exposure can compound existing vulnerabilities, especially if they lack offline support.

Community Manager’s Role

- Community managers act as gatekeepers and facilitators of safe spaces. Their responsibilities include setting clear community guidelines, modeling respectful behavior, addressing violations quickly, and supporting members who may be struggling. Managers should also be attentive to minority stress signals such as members disengaging, expressing self-doubt, or withdrawing suddenly.

Boundaries & Self-care

- managers need to prevent burnout by setting limits on their availability, sharing responsibilities with co-moderators, and having their own support systems. Exposure to repeated conflict or

harassment can also harm managers' mental health, so reflection and peer supervision are crucial.

Intersectionality

- Digital minority stress often compounds with other identities (race, disability, migration background). Managers should remain sensitive to layered experiences of exclusion.

Trauma-Informed Moderation

- Using empathy, validating experiences, and avoiding retraumatization when handling disclosures or conflicts. Simple practices include content warnings, offering opt-outs, and focusing on empowerment rather than control.

Positive Reinforcement

- Community managers should highlight positive behaviors (e.g., members supporting each other, respectful dialogue). This helps set the tone of the group and counterbalance the focus on dealing only with negative incidents.

Further Reading & Resources

1. ILGA-Europe: LGBTQ+ Wellbeing Resource Hub

ILGA-Europe's online hub provides a curated collection of materials supporting the wellbeing, inclusion, and safety of LGBTQ+ people and communities across Europe and Central Asia. It offers guides, policy briefings, and practical tools for activists, educators, and mental health advocates working to build more supportive environments.

<https://hub.ilga-europe.org/>

2. GLAAD: Social Media Safety Index

GLAAD's Social Media Safety Index (SMSI) evaluates major social media platforms on their efforts to protect LGBTQ+ users. The report assesses policies related to harassment, privacy, and expression, providing recommendations for creating safer and more inclusive digital environments. Platforms analyzed include TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and Meta's Facebook, Instagram, and Threads.

<https://glaad.org/smsi/social-media-safety-index-2025/>

3. The Trevor Project: Guides on LGBTQ+ Mental Health Support

The Trevor Project offers evidence-based guides and educational materials focused on supporting LGBTQ+ youth mental health. These resources cover topics such as crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and inclusive peer support strategies. They are designed for educators, parents, and organizations seeking to create affirming environments for LGBTQ+ young people.

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/>

4. Digital Defenders Partnership: Holistic Security for Community Leaders

This guide provides comprehensive strategies for enhancing the digital and psychological security of activists, community leaders, and human rights defenders. It includes practical steps for data protection, secure communication, and self-care in high-risk environments, ensuring holistic safety for individuals and organizations working toward social change.

https://www.digitaldefenders.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/TechCare_Guide_en.pdf