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MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AMONG ETHNIC MINORITIES COLLEGE STUDENTS

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MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AMONG ETHNIC

MINORITIES COLLEGE STUDENTS

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A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

_____

by

Fiorella G. Vallés

Ruben Gonzalez

June 2020

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Approved by:

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Dr. Armando Barragán Jr., M.S.W. Research Coordinator

ABSTRACT

This research study explored the challenges of mental health-seeking services of college students of color in the San Bernardino area. College students of different ethnicities have unique needs and challenges that contrast with the general student population. Previous research stated that students of color deal with a greater number of unmet mental health needs and indicates a connection between mental health and attaining a college degree (Arria et al., 2013). To increase the utilization of mental health amongst students of color, this study aimed to identify the influencing factors that prevented students from help-seeking. The research design of this research study was a quantitative method approach. This research used demographic information, along with a survey. The findings of the research suggested that Latino students have a higher degree of perceived public stigma, thus presenting as a challenge for minority college students who are contemplating seeking mental health assistance. The findings of this study will assist social work practice with outreach interventions on seeking mental health services with greater cultural competence on college campuses. This study can help shape social work policy to focus on shifting how society views those receiving mental health treatment. The study contributed to the academic literature on minority student's views of help-seeking attitudes regarding mental health.

Keywords: stigma, college students, ethnic minorities, mental health

DEDICATION

To our families and friends. Thank you for your unconditional support.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Formulation

Higher education has been found to be one of the most stressful periods along with entering adulthood (Hales, 2009). These college students who are mostly in their late teens and early twenties face some challenges and struggles during their academic careers. Most students have dealt with different types of traditional stressors such as loan burden, tuition incrementation, financial issues, academic responsibilities, and balancing work and family (Kitzrow, 2009). Others have experienced anxiety, depression, trauma, and sleeping problems. These challenges can impair socialization, college performance, and living. The lack of stress tolerance, cultural factors, and drugs have caused student's mental health to deteriorate (Kitzrow, 2009). However, among colored college students, a set of unique needs and challenges differ from the general student population.

Studies have shown that students of color have a greater proportion of unmet mental health needs compared to their white counterparts. Evidence has suggested that there is a substantial link between both the mental well-being of an individual and college degree success (Arria et al., 2013). The prevalence of mental health illnesses is vastly different throughout the different races on a college campus. The American Psychological Association (2013) has identified that minorities deal with the weight of their own unique arrangement of stressors. In combination these stressors can impact students tremendously. One barrier to

these groups of individuals is often the stigma that they deal within their respective cultures. Mental health has become negatively stigmatized within which impedes progress in minorities in the college environment (Lipson, Kern, Eisenberg, & Breland-Noble, 2018). Thus, the attitudes towards mental health becomes challenging for minorities seeking services within a college environment. This leads to certain mental ailments like instability, lack of access to services, mistrust, etc. (Obasi & Leong, 2009). It is important to educate those that need services to the resources that they are entitled to on campus. It is startling that although the need for services is rather high, outreach has not been modified to utilize different tactics in order to aid more students who have stated they needed assistance (Lipson, Eisenberg, & Breland-Noble, 2018).

The college student demographic suffering from symptoms relating to a mental illness is increasing annually. In addition, the severity of these mental health illnesses is rising as well (Watkins, Hunt, & Eisenberg, 2012). This suggests that the realm of social needs to focus the profession's efforts toward recognizing the growth of mental illnesses that individuals face when dealing with mental health concerns. Also, it is important for the social work profession to unearth barriers that stand in the way of minority students seeking out mental health assistance. The current literature indicates that there are minority populations on college campuses nationwide that will need competent social workers in larger numbers to address the issues concerning mental health.

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Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to evaluate the distinctive challenges of mental health-seeking services of college students of color, specifically students from a university in Southern California. Evidence has suggested that there is a substantial link between both the mental well-being of an individual and college degree success (Arria et al., 2013). Students have many responsibilities to tend to daily, from the monitoring of their courses, the detailed homework given and the obligation to reach their professors' expectations. The obligations that higher education places on them put them into a position of intensive stress, not considering their mental health and/or taking the time to make sure that emotionally, their students are tended to.

Students of color deal with generational trauma which has been historically known in this realm of mental health with communities of color to be treated as non-existent. The stigmatization of mental health within cultures of color has displaced the need for services to a last impending option for individuals in these communities. Those that are ascribed to the status of being an ethnic minority are often living with a plethora of stressors. Prejudice and discrimination are two of the many risks that ethnic minorities deal with on a daily basis which also contributes to the decreasing rates of mental health. When programs can be formed to break down these barriers, then it will allow for students within these communities to heal and become better equipped in the higher educational system. This study aimed to identify influencers that stop

ethnic minorities seeking help in an effort to increase the use of mental health among communities of color.

The general research methods used in this study was a quantitative approach. For the quantitative component, a self-administered survey questionnaire was implemented. This was selected because of the rapidness, low-cost, and enhanced understanding of the issue.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

The findings of this paper can be used to support shaping policies and interventions that will provide college students of color the ability to seek mental health services. For the success of a minority college student, college campuses will need to adopt an active role in confronting barriers. Along with developing an environment that will give minority students a sense of community (Weng & Gray, 2017). In addition, policy that hires mental health professionals and faculty on campus that reflect ethnic minorities staff can increase the insufficient enlistment of minority students who are considering mental health services (Dei et al., 2010). Lastly, the findings of this research can be utilized to increase services on college campuses (Watkins, Hunt, & Eisenberg, 2012). Meaning that, if more minority students are identified needing mental health assistance, then expansion of services will be correspondingly necessary.

The merit of this study will improve practitioner's utilization of the principal method of practice that is the Generalist model. The foundation of the Generalist

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Model relies on engagement. Social workers that are culturally competent of

barriers that hinder mental health seeking will enhance student engagement

(Dixon, Holoshitz, & Nossel, 2016). Furthermore, this study will play a vital

instrumental role in guiding diagnosis and treatment plans, by way of

acknowledging and evaluating an individual's cultural standpoint. With that said,

the research question for this project is as follows: What are the unique

challenges of Latino and non-Latino college students when seeking mental

health services?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter contains an exploration of current research that

encompasses some of the major facets involving barriers that hinder college

students of color from receiving mental health services. The following

subsections will examine the relationship between mental health and ethnic

minority students. The chapter will also investigate the prevalence of the problem

and will review the stigma associated with mental health care. In addition, the

subsections will entail research into awareness and attitudes with seeking mental

health. Lastly, Andersen and Newman's framework of Health Services Utilization

and the Ecological Model will be examined regarding this issue.

Mental Health Aspects of Ethnic Minority College Students

Individuals in college are faced with many unmet needs concerning their

mental health. Ethnic minorities students have an even greater struggle with

unmet mental health needs compared to students who are considered white.

Policies that focus on mental health are in place given that 75% of individuals

develop an onset of a mental health disorder in their early 20s (Kessler et al.,

2007). An increasing body of evidence demonstrates the link between the mental

well-being of an individual and college degree success (Arria et al., 2013).

Acknowledging and understanding the challenges of ethnic minorities will be

crucial in ensuring their completion, motivation, and retention in the realm in academia.

<u>Prevalence</u>

According to SAMHSA (2015), the rates of mental health illness is different across different categories of ethnic groups. For example, for whites the rate is 19%, African Americans have rates of 16.8%, Asian are at 22.7%, and Hispanics are at 15.3% of those who disclosed a mental disorder. There are many factors that come into play when describing the rates of prevalence. For Instance, such influences are genetic, family dynamics, socio-cultural factors, geographic location, diet, and stressful life events. Most importantly, ethnic minorities are burdened with their own unique array of stressors (American Psychological Association, 2013). The experience of college is a stressful life event and being a person of color exponentially increases the risk of developing a mental disorder. Eisenberg, Hunt, & Speer (2013) suggested that the occurrence of mental disorders like anxiety and depression are higher for ethnic minorities and have found higher impairments to function. By being an ethnic minority, one is at risk for prejudice and discrimination. The combination of these stressors contributes to the decrease of mental health well-being. Ethnic minorities that find it difficult assimilating to cultural norms is not as harmful as bigotry but can still damage social interaction and connectedness (Twentyman & Frank, 2017).

<u>Stigma</u>

In terms of help-seeking there are about three fundamental components. The first one is recognizing the need for help, making a choice to receive help, and continuing to seek help. Many of these components are related to cultural perceptions which are represented by stigma (Hwang, Myers, & Ting, 2008). Stigma comes in the form of negative thoughts and beliefs that stop an individual from seeking help in fear of being rejected or persecuted. A few studies have suggested that the reason why mental health treatment for ethnic minorities are lower could be due to stigma. This is especially true among African American and Asian academia students (Masuda, Anderson, & Edmonds, 2012). Lipson, Kern, Eisenberg, & Breland-Noble (2018) conducted a national study about the existence of mental health assistance amid college students from different ethnic backgrounds. They found that those that meet mental disorder criteria 54% have endorsed apparent stigma, 9% recognized personal stigma. Of those in the study, stigma ranged from 52% of whites, and 63% among African Americans. Personal stigma was at 6% for African Americans and for Asians 23%, international Asian students had the highest with 35% (Lipson, Kern, Eisenberg, & Breland-Noble, 2018). This is extremely important to acknowledge due to the fact stigma can prevent ethnic minorities from accessing mental treatment on college campuses. This study aims to find if and how stigma plays a role for students in the San Bernardino area.

Attitudes Towards Mental Health

Attitude towards mental health is another challenge for ethnic minorities seeking mental health in a college environment. Masuda, Anderson, Twohig, Feinstein, Chou, Wendell, & Stormo (2009) revealed in their study that college students with African American heritage are more likely to embrace higher rates of stigma when confronted with mental health. Also, when compared to Caucasian fellow students, African American students in the study had lower rates of benevolent attitudes regarding help-seeking. Obasi and Leong (2009) findings revealed that African American college students are faced with psychosocial features such as financial instability, transportation issues, lack of access to services, and mistrust of providers were instances of attitudes towards seeking mental health services. Understanding these influencers of help-seeking attitudes, colleges can enable better approaches in retaining more ethnic minority groups for usage of mental treatments. DeFreitas, Crone, DeLeon, & Ajayi (2018) suggests that African American and Latino college students both hold negative views about receiving mental health services, and of those who hold negative opinions often will deal with negative outcomes that include the avoidance of help-seeking. Leong, Kim, & Gupta (2011) conducted a study to examine the culture barriers and mental health attitudes of Asian American college students. They found that acculturation, loss of face, and other culture barriers hinder attitudes towards seeking treatment for mental health. Although these studies have found factors of attitude, there were gaps in the research that explored

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minorities other than Asians, African, and Latino Americans. This study will seek to understand challenges such as mental health attitudes from multiple ethnic groups as possible.

Mental Health Awareness

In the Lipson, Kern, Eisenberg, & Breland-Noble (2018) study that sampled 43,375 undergraduate and graduate college students from 60 colleges around the nation, in which 13,000 were individuals of an ethnic minority, found some interesting insights of mental health awareness. Those surveyed that had criteria associated with a mental health disorder, 87% stated that they seek treatment from family and friends. Sixty-one percent of students reported that they need some mental health assistance. Most participants reported that they know that their campus has services for mental health. In addition, the study found that Arab and Arab Americans had the lowest levels of knowledge pertaining to mental health. The results show the need of outreach to students from different backgrounds. The goal of this study will not just examine awareness but other influencers that impede ethnic minorities seeking help in effort to increase utilization of mental health. Although the topic has been explored, this study will understand what are the challenges in seeking mental health for ethnic minorities in a more local region of San Bernardino, California.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

One specific theory can be applied to form the thoughts in this study was Andersen and Newman's framework of Health Services Utilization. The theory outlined by both Andersen and Newman (2008), presents a framework for understanding health services use by concentrating on contextual and individual factors in its last revised phase. This framework has adapted over time through five phases, with the last phase taking a more centered approach on the individual and considering the behavior of providers interacting with the students (Anderson, 2008). The initial phase was utilized to describe and measure equal access to health care, to help comprehend why families use health services and to promote the expansion of policies to foster equal access (Anderson, 2008). Phase two focused on establishing the population's health service use while the third phase recognized personal health practices as a type of health behavior which influences health outcomes (Anderson, 2008). The fourth phase focused more specifically on predisposing factors, enabling factors and need factors of the individual. What is to be noted more importantly within this framework is that it can bring more understanding to the factors and circumstances of those in this population, which will present a better visual of why services are not being sought after allowing us to combat the problem.

This theory aids in framing the different challenges that individuals from different races experience when seeking mental health services on college campuses. This needs to be addressed because of the negative stigma of mental

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health lingering in other communities. In addition, this theory allows for the understanding of behaviors that are encountered by individuals of ethnic minorities which may very well be the result of the low rates of utilization. This theory would help to break the culturally stigmatized views of mental health allowing those ethnic minorities attending college.

Ethnic minorities do not seek mental health services and figuring out the challenges that deter them from doing so is important. The ecological model is a prime instrument that can be utilized in the college setting to determine what challenges exist for ethnic minority students. According to Zastro and Kirst-Ashman (2016), the ecological perspective gravitates to put greater importance on individuals and individual family systems. It is detailed that the four components within this model which are considered are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Obtaining information from ethnic minorities on a micro, meso, exo and macro level enables for the determination of the challenges that these students face. This can range observing the individual characteristics of these individuals to a more meso approach, involving the family and college setting which impact the student the most. Consideration of these students exosystem is also valued in that it expands on the community services, extended family and the workplace which can all lead to challenges. Lastly, the macrosystem of these students would further open up an explanation for the values, laws, and customs that these students may encounter further

creating barriers internally and externally disallowing them to participate in mental health services on campus and outside in the community.

Summary

The goal of this study was to explore the challenges of college students in seeking mental health. There are a lot of students of color within the higher education system that struggle with unmet mental health needs. The barriers that prevent them from utilizing these services have been included in the literature. Andersen and Newman's framework of Health Services Utilization and the Ecological Model are expressed within and in relation to the specific population underlined throughout the literature. This study sought to understand challenges such as mental health attitudes from multiple ethnic groups as much as possible.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

The aim of this study was to define the challenges that college students of color face when seeking mental health services in the San Bernardino area. This chapter will discuss a clear description on how this study was conducted in order to investigate the purpose of this study. The methodology sections will articulate the rationale for the techniques implemented. The following sections include study design, sampling, data collection and instruments, procedures, protection of human subjects, and data analysis

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the barriers that students of color face when seeking help for issues involving mental health. The type of study that best addressed this research was the quantitative research approach. The quantitative approach allowed the researchers to distribute surveys which in turn was great to collect numerical data, as this caught the attention of those seeking numbers as a form of research.

The descriptive portion of the study was in the form of a survey questionnaire which attained an accurate description of the participants. The survey questionnaire offered a better picture (verbally and numerically) of certain characteristics as a percentage regarding the participants in the study. Lastly, the

descriptive approach enabled the researchers to document information that either confirmed or contradicted the beliefs about college students of color and offered information about what students of color faced in terms of mental health seeking in the San Bernardino area, where currently there is minuscule data on the topic.

The advantage of having a quantitative approach is that this method involves a greater number of subjects which enhances the generalization of the results. Also, it allows for better precision of results and objectivity. For example, quantitative research gathers and summarizes a great amount of information which facilitates the comparison of categories and over time. Consequently, interpreting and presenting data and findings is unambiguous and less open to error and subjectivity. The disadvantage of implementing a quantitative analysis to this study was that this approach does not provide an assortment of knowledge and information to the research. Furthermore, this type of study fails to aid in increasing reliability through the triangulation of the difference indication findings. For example, using a quantitative analysis, the survey provides close-ended questions which leads to a limited outcome.

Sampling

This study employed a non-probability purposive sample of college students in the Inland Empire. Participants were social work students from a university in Southern California who represented the study's target population.

Permission was requested from the Social Work Department. The study had 28 participants complete a survey questionnaire.

Data Collection and Instruments

Demographic information was collected before the start of each survey (Appendix A). The data for this study was collected with quantitative measures. The quantitative measures examined the dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable was the public health stigma and personal stigma. The dependent variable was measured by participant's scores on the Mental Health Stigma Scale (MHSS). The independent variable was the ethnicity of the participants. The level of measurement for the independent variable was whether participants were Latino/Latina or not.

The instrument used in this study was identified as the Mental Health Stigma Scale (MHSS) (DeFreitas, Crone, DeLeon, & Ajayi, 2018; Eisenberg, Downs, Golberstein, & Zivin, 2009) (Appendix B). The purpose of these questions was to measure perceived and personal stigma. Each question was answered by agreement of the participant in the form of a 6-point scale. Indication of stigma was reflected by the higher numbers on the scale. In a previous study, the scale was found reliable, with perceived stigma, $\alpha = 0.89$, and personal stigma, $\alpha = 0.78$ (Eisenberg, Downs, Golberstein, & Zivin, 2009). In a recent study the scale scored perceived stigma, $\alpha = 0.85$ and personal stigma, $\alpha = 0.70$ for African American college students, and perceived stigma, $\alpha = 0.83$

and personal stigma, α = 0.75 for Latino college students (DeFreitas, Crone, DeLeon, & Ajayi, 2018). The strength of the scale does seem to illustrate a sense of stigma, a limitation of the scale is that it does not quite explore mental health attitudes of family members.

Procedures

The director from the social work program from the master's level was contacted through electronic email (Appendix C). The email contained the purpose of the study and the need for participants. Along with that, a phone number and an email were attached in the electronic email for the Director to authorize researchers to conduct surveys. After authorization was granted, researchers started to input all necessary information and questions into Qualtrics. The Qualtrics system was used to administer surveys to participants at the School of Social Work from a university in Southern California. Each survey approximately lasted ten minutes and contained demographic questions and the Mental Health Stigma Scale (MHSS). Researchers with the help of an administrative assistant from the social work department recruited participants by sending a mass email to all graduate students (full-time, part-time, pathway). In the email, the researchers introduced themselves and provided a brief description of the study, and the need for participants to contribute to the study. A link to the Qualtrics survey was also provided. Researchers recorded approximately three weeks' worth of data. After those three weeks, the data

collected was downloaded into an Excel sheet and transcribed into SPSS to be analyzed. All information gathered from Qualtrics was stored on a single data storage device and all information was erased after the study was completed.

Protection of Human Subjects

The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were kept private. The Qualtrics system ensured that the information was stored and protected by high-end firewall systems. Qualtrics also complies with data privacy laws in its role as a data controller. Qualtrics provides technology that enables researchers to be compliant with keeping participant data secured. Participants were instructed to read and 'sign' the consent form (Appendix E) before answering the survey. Participants were guided to write down in the consent form an X on the signature and name of the participant to keep participants anonymous. After participants were done with the surveys, their answers were automatically saved and encrypted. All types of information gathered from this study such as informed consent forms, surveys, External Hard Drive, and documentation will be secured in a locked desk and will be deleted after one-year completion of the study.

Data Analysis

Researchers collected data from participant surveys and then analyzed the data utilizing descriptive analysis. In this quantitative study, the research study administered the stigma survey which measured the unique challenges of

students of color when seeking mental health services. First, the data was examined to identify percentages and frequencies for the demographic data utilizing SPSS. All of the information gathered from the survey was also measured using this method. To have a better view of this data, researches recoded some of the survey questions to get a more accurate description. For this research, the dependent variable was the public health stigma and personal health stigma and the independent variable was whether the participant is Latino or not. Given that the level of measurement for the DV was interval and the IV was nominal dichotomous, the statistical measure used for these variables was independent sample t-test.

Summary

This study investigated the distinctive challenges that college students of color face when seeking mental health services. The study also aimed to find challenges that impede minority students from seeking out mental health assistance. Surveys provided a deeper understanding of minorities' mental health within the higher educational system. Quantitative methods applied in this research made this study process possible.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Demographic Description of Participants

All of the twenty-eight participants were Master of Social Work (MSW) students. Twenty-five percent of the MSW students were enrolled in the part-time program while 75% of students were enrolled in the full-time program. 46.4% of participants were in the 1st year of their MSW program whereas 53.6% of MSW students were in their second year. Of all the participants, 17.9% identified as male and 82.1% identified as female. Participants' average age was 33.61 years old (SD = 12.1). Latino was the predominant ethnic group at 50% followed by a combination of other ethnic groups: Anglo American (17.9%), African American (7.1%), and other (25%).

To complete a reliable t-test, researchers collapsed Latinos and other groups together to have an equal number of respondents between these two groups. The new re-coded demographic data was that 50% of participants identified as Latinos while the remaining 50% identified as other. Also, data was collected from all participants about the number of times in the past year they reach out to mental health services. It was found that 39.3% of participants did not seek out mental health services, 25% of participants reached out 1-2 times, and 35.7% of participants sought out mental health services 3 or more times.

Public Health Stigma

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the public health stigma scores for Latinos and non-Latinos. There was a significant difference in scores for Latinos (M = 44.2, SD = 11.1) and other (M = 35.1, SD = 9.1; t(23.1) = 2.3, *p* = 0.03, two-tailed). The scaled questionnaire included a total of twelve questions related to public health stigma.

The Public stigma was a theme captured from the scale which yielded substantial results. Participants responded to the following statement "Most people would willingly accept someone who has received mental health treatment as a close friend." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 7.7% chose "strongly agree" and 53.8% stated that they "somewhat agree." While those that identified as other, 23.1% "strongly agree" and 38.5% responded that they "somewhat agree." They were also asked to respond to the following statement "Most people believe that a person who has received mental health treatment is just as intelligent as the average person." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 30.8% stated that they "somewhat agree" and 15.4% of participants responded "somewhat disagree." Those that identified as other, 46.2% responded that they "somewhat agree" and none of these participants chose "somewhat disagree."

The scale also asked participants to respond to the following statement "Most people believe that someone who has received mental health treatment is just as trustworthy as the average person." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 23.1% stated that they "agree," 23.1% respondents stated that they "somewhat

disagree," and 15.4% "disagree." Those that identified as other, 46.2% responded that they "agree," 7.7% "somewhat disagree," and none of them chose "disagree." For the fourth statement, participants were asked to respond to the following statement "Most people would accept someone who has fully recovered from a mental illness as a teacher of young children in a public school." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 23.1% stated "somewhat agree" 15.4% participants responded "strongly disagree." Those that identified as other, 46.2% responded "somewhat agree" and "strongly disagree" was not chosen by these participants.

The fifth statement asked participants to respond to the following statement "Most people feel that receiving mental health treatment is a sign of personal failure." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 30.8% chose "agree" and none of these participants chose "strongly disagree." Those that identified as other, 23.1% responded "agree" and 23.1% responded that they "strongly disagree." For the sixth statement, participants were asked to respond to the following statement "Most people would not hire someone who has received mental health treatment to take care of their children, even if he or she had been well for some time." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 30.8% chose "agree" and none of these participants chose "strongly disagree." Those that identified as other, 23.1% stated that they "agree" and 15.4% chose "strongly disagree."

The seventh statement asked participants to respond to the following statement "Most people think less of a person who has received mental health

treatment." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 46.2% of them answered that they "agree" and 15.4% stated that they "somewhat disagree." Those that identified as other, 15.4% stated that they "agree," and 30.8% responded that they "somewhat disagree." For the eighth statement, participants were asked to respond to the following statement "Most employers will hire someone who has received mental health treatment if he or she is qualified for the job." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 0% chose "strongly agree," 23.1% stated that they "agree," and 61.5% respondents stated that they "somewhat disagree." Those that identified as other, 23.1% chose "strongly agree," 53.8% chose "agree", and 0% responded "somewhat disagree."

The ninth statement asked participants to respond to the following statement "Most employers will pass over the application of someone who has received mental health treatment in favor of another applicant." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 38.5% stated that they "somewhat agree" and 7.7% answered that they "disagree." Those that identified as other, 30.8% responded that they "somewhat agree" and 15.4% stated that they "disagree." For the tenth statement, participants were asked to respond to the following statement "Most people in my community would treat someone who has received mental health treatment just as they would treat anyone." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 23.1% stated that they "agree," 23.1% chose "somewhat disagree," and 30.8% of respondents stated that they "disagree." Those that identified as other, 38.5%

responded that they "agree," 0% chose "somewhat disagree," and 15.4% stated that they "disagree."

The eleventh statement asked participants to respond to the following statement "Most young adults would be reluctant to date someone who has been hospitalized for a serious mental disorder." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 30.8% of the participants answered that they "somewhat agree" and 15.4% chose "somewhat disagree." Those that identified as other, 15.4% stated that they "somewhat agree", and 23.1% responded that they "somewhat disagree." For the last public health statement, participants were asked to respond to the following statement "Once they know a person has received mental health treatment, most people will take that person's opinions less seriously." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 30.8% of them stated that they "agree", 30.8% stated that they "somewhat agree," and 15.4% chose "somewhat disagree." Those that identified as other, 7.7% stated that they "agree", 15.4% responded that they "somewhat agree," and 46.2% stated that they "somewhat disagree."

Personal Health Stigma

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the personal health stigma scores for Latinos and non-Latinos. There was no significant difference in scores for Latinos (M = 5.1, SD = 1.9) and other (M = 4.8, SD = 2.8; $t(24) = 0.24$, $p = 0.8$, two-tailed). There was a total of six response options to the statements which were "(1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) somewhat agree, (4)

somewhat disagree, (5) disagree (6) strongly disagree. There was a total of three questions within the questionnaire that were utilized to determine personal health stigma. The following is a more in-depth description of those results.

Participants were asked to respond to the following statement "I would willingly accept someone who has received mental health treatment as a close friend." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 53.8% of participants responded "strongly agree," and 46.2% stated that they "agree." Those that identified as other, 61.5% stated that they "strongly agree," and 30.8% chose "agree." The second statement asked participants to respond to the following statement "I would think less of a person who has received mental health treatment." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 53.8 % of participants answered that they "disagree" and 38.5% chose "strongly disagree." Those that identified as other, 30.8% "disagree," and 61.5% chose "strongly disagree." The last question which measured for personal stigma asked participants to respond to the following statement, "I believe that someone who has received mental health treatment is just as trustworthy as the average person." Those that identified as Latino/Latina, 53.8% stated that they "agree" and 38.5% chose "strongly agree." Those that identified as other, 7.7% stated that they "agree," and 69.2% chose "strongly agree."

Summary

This chapter aimed to present data that was collected through the demographic questions and the stigma scale. The study assessed the participants' level of stigma, in specific, public health stigma, and personal health stigma. The findings from the demographic questions revealed that the majority of participants were Latinos, females, and between the ages of twenty-two and sixty-two. For the results of the Mental Health Stigma Scale (MHSS), researchers divided the survey into two categories: public health stigma and personal health stigma. For each category, researchers conducted independent sample t-tests. The public health stigma results showed a significant score about Latinos and public stigma. Further explanation for this and other results will be provided in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The content of this chapter will examine the significance of the results

collected from the respondents of the survey administered for the purpose of this

research study. The following chapter will discuss the significant findings as it

relates to stigma among Latino college students. Furthermore, the chapter will

address the limitations of the research results. This chapter will also provide

implications and recommendations for social work practice, policy, and research.

The chapter will end with a conclusion of the overall research study.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to find the challenges that college minority

students face when seeking mental health services. Although the way data was

collected, the research was modified to the challenges of Latino and non-Latino

students. This study was able to collect data on one of the potential barriers of

seeking services, which was the topic on stigma.

Significant findings

The findings of the research suggest those who consider themselves as

Latino have a higher score of perceived public stigmas. The findings do verify

that Latinos have considerably stronger stigma assumptions of what they believe

most individuals' perceptions are towards receiving mental health services. The information from the results are congruent with the notion of public stigma and its relationship to Latino communities. Although, regarding the level of personal stigma an individual possesses, the data indicated there was no significant difference between Latino respondents and the other ethnicities. The analysis of the results describes Latinos as the minority with the higher sense of stigma associated with public perception; thus giving way to stigma of having the potential of presenting itself as a challenge for minority college students who are contemplating seeking assistance towards better mental health.

The results build on the existing evidence of how stigma is conceptualized and is ubiquitous with the Latino minority group. These findings contribute a clearer understanding of the literature research explaining higher percentages of perceived public stigma compared to personal stigma amongst minority groups. This study adds to the research of how Latinos mirror the same high results for perceived public stigma. The main component that makes this research unique is while previous research focused on overall stigma, these results demonstrate that Latino college students' conception of stigma is geared more towards other peoples' perceptions on seeking mental health services.

Limitations

The findings of this study must be seen in light of some limitations. One of the limitations of the study was the way the data was collected. There was a disproportionate number of Latinos in the study, so the researchers had to

collapse other groups to make equal comparisons and thus the research question had to be modified to be congruent to the analysis.

The generalizability of the results was limited by the sample size. The lack of having a larger sample in the study prevented the results from obtaining a significant representation of the college student body. Another limitation to the generalizability of the study involved the specific group of individuals who participated in the research study. The data was impacted by having only social work students in the research study. Further research will be needed to achieve the desired sample in order to better represent the population intended to be analyzed. Regardless of some the noted limitations observed in the research study, the data collected from the respondents was able to reasonably capture a minority group's perception on stigma.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research

Based on the significant findings in the study, the following recommendations are set out to improve social work practice, policy, and research.

Social Work Practice

The findings from this research study can assist social work practice on college campuses. Social workers practicing on college campuses will need to grasp the understanding that Latinos may be reluctant to seek out mental health services due to the associated amount of perceived public stigma. This

understanding will foster better rapport and empathy when working with this population. The acknowledgment of the potential barriers, such as stigma among Latino college students, will increase social work practice by being more culturally competent. The literature review indicated minority students are faced with unmet mental health needs, thus the findings from this study can shape social work practice to apply different outreach techniques in order assist clients in obtaining care and resources offered on campus. Implantation of improved outreach towards students of color in academia could promote seeking behaviors of those burdened by pubic stigma

Policy

In terms of policy, it would be advantageous for the field of social work to develop more agency procedures and trainings that are focused in tearing down the barriers of mental health attitudes and stigma, as it relates to college students of color. Practice development on the effects of stigma will contribute to social workers' ability to recognize the barriers of help seeking. From a macro standpoint, the findings of this study can be utilized to change how society views those receiving mental health treatment. This approach could prevent students of color from internalizing stigma, which in turn promotes the chances of an individual seeking help in time of mental health concern or crisis.

Research

Further research will need to measure perceived public stigma and personal stigma with a much larger sample size compared to this research study.

Future researchers can accomplish this by disturbing data collection instruments through not only all the college campuses but to all colleges across the San Bernardino area. This research study warrants further research by utilizing a mixed method research design. Incorporating the use of interviews with open-ended questions allows data to provide greater insight into the factors and decisions that influence students of color's choices. This type of research design proposes a more panoramic view of the stated issues through in-depth responses and a survey about minority college students' perceptions.

Conclusions

Initially, the aim of the research study was to find the challenges of seeking mental health services among college students of color. In reference to the approach towards data collection, the research shifted to the challenges of Latinos and non-Latinos. Based on the quantitative method analysis, it can be concluded that Latino college students have significant higher perceived public stigma when compared to other ethnicities. While the sample size and specific group respondents limits the generalizability of the results, this research study provided new insight into the perception of stigma amongst Latino college students. To better understand the implications of these findings, future research could address the extent of how stigma can act as a barrier for minority students complementing seeking mental health services. With the combination of stigma, high rate of unmet mental health needs within the Latino population, and the

stress associated with college, the field of social work must continue its efforts to

expand cultural competency in order to provide care.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics

1.What is your current age? _____

2. What is your gender?
      1. Female
      2. Male
      3. Other

3. What is your ethnicity?
      1. African American
      2. Anglo American
      3. Asian/Pacific Islander
      4. Latino
      5. Native American
      6. Other

4. What year are you in?
      1. Freshman
      2. Sophomore
      3. Junior
      4. Senior
      5. Master's degree 1st year
      6. Master's degree 2nd year
      7. Master's degree 3rd year

5. Number of times in the past year you reach out to mental health services.
      1. 0 times
      2. 1-2 times
      3. 3 to 4 times
      4. 5 to 6 times
      5. 7 to 9 times
      6. 10 +

APPENDIX B

MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA SCALE

Perceived Public Stigma

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.
1. Most people would willingly accept someone who has received mental health treatment as a close friend.
2. Most people believe that a person who has received mental health treatment is just as intelligent as the average person.
3. Most people believe that someone who has received mental health treatment is just as trustworthy as the average person.
4. Most people would accept someone who has fully recovered from a mental illness as a teacher of young children in a public school.
5. Most people feel that receiving mental health treatment is a sign of personal failure.
6. Most people would not hire someone who has received mental health treatment to take care of their children, even if he or she had been well for some time.
7. Most people think less of a person who has received mental health treatment.
8. Most employers will hire someone who has received mental health treatment if he or she is qualified for the job.
9. Most employers will pass over the application of someone who has received mental health treatment in favor of another applicant.
10. Most people in my community would treat someone who has received mental health treatment just as they would treat anyone.
11. Most young adults would be reluctant to date someone who has been hospitalized for a serious mental disorder.
12. Once they know a person has received mental health treatment, most people will take that person's opinions less seriously.

Personal Stigma
Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.
1. I would willingly accept someone who has received mental health treatment as a close friend.
2. I would think less of a person who has received mental health treatment.
3. I believe that someone who has received mental health treatment is just as trustworthy as the average person.
Note: Answer choices for each item are: 0 = strongly agree, 1 = agree, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree.

APPENDIX C

EMAIL TO DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

Email to Director of the School of Social Work

Dear Dr. McAllister,

I hope this message finds you well. We are Fiorella G Valles and Ruben Gonzalez, social work graduate students from T/TH full time cohort. We are conducting an investigation on college students and we are asking for your help to be part of this exciting research. We are kindly asking you, if we can get permission to recruit master students for our research. They will be given a survey that will only take 10 minutes at the most. Our research is investigating what are the unique challenges that college students of color have that impedes them to seek for mental health.

If you kindly decide to help us out, please respond to this 006701481@csusb.coyote.edu or call us at this number 951-823-655* by this date 01/20/2020.

We are looking forward to hearing from you,

Fiorella Valles and Ruben Gonzalez

_____

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT – SURVEY

CSUSB

School of Social Work

WE DEFINE THE *Future*

INFORMED CONSENT

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407
909.537.5501 | fax: 909.537.7029
http://socialwork.csusb.edu

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to identify the challenges ethnic minority college students face when seeking mental health services in San Bernardino County. The study is being conducted by Fiorella Valles and Ruben Gonzalez, graduate students, under the supervision of Dr. Armando Barragán, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at CSUSB.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the challenges of seeking mental health services among ethnic minority college students.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked to complete a series of demographic questions and a survey on perceived public stigma and personal stigma.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All your responses will be strictly confidential. Your name will not be recorded with your data. Data will be stored in a password-protected hard drive and will be deleted after one-year completion of the study. Presentation of the results will be reported in a group format only.

DURATION: It will take 10 minutes to complete the survey.

BENEFITS AND RISKS: There are no known benefits or risks for you in this study.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Barragán at (909) 537- 3501.
****

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

_____   _____

Place an X mark here   Date

APPENDIX E

INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

IRB #: IRB-FY2020-132
Title: Mental Health Challenges Among Ethnic Minorities College Students
Creation Date: 11-19-2019
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Fiorella Valles
Review Board: Main IRB Designated Reviewers for School of Social Work
Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	Exempt

Key Study Contacts

Member	Armando Barragan Jr.	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	Armando.Barragan@csusb.edu
Member	Ruben Gonzalez	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	005343633@coyote.csusb.edu
Member	Fiorella Valles	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	006701481@coyote.csusb.edu
Member	Armando Barragan Jr.	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	Armando.Barragan@csusb.edu

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ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the investigators were equally divided. For chapter one, Investigator 1 did research on the problem formulation while investigator 2 took care of the purpose of the study and the significance of the project for social work. For chapter two, investigator 1 explored the mental health aspects of ethnic minority college students while investigator 2 researched the theories guiding conceptualization. For chapter three, investigator 1 focused on the study design, sampling, and data collection and investigator 2 devoted time on procedures, protection of human subjects, and data analysis. For chapter 4, results were collaborative work between the two investigators. For chapter 5, investigator 1 concentrated on the discussion section and investigator 2 focused on the recommendations for social work practice, policy and research. In addition to this, investigator 1 had the responsibility to oversee that all requirements from IRB were met and approved. Investigator 2 ensured that there were adequate resources for the research to be conducted safely, recruited professors, and ensured that the rights of human subjects involved in this research were protected.