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Examining the Marketing Strategies of Campus Mental Health on a Minority Student Population

Rochelle Bernarte

EXAMINING THE MARKETING STRATEGIES OF CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH

ON A MINORITY STUDENT POPULATION

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A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Public Health

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by

Rochelle Bernarte

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ABSTRACT

Background: Public health, particularly mental health services aimed at making a positive impact can be difficult to market to populations. Promoting mental health services to a target demographic of predominantly minority students at a university comes with its own set of unique variables making the task especially tough. This can be concerning as studies have shown that minority students experience greater amounts of stress than their White counterparts but are less likely to seek mental health services (DeFreitas et al., 2018; Duffy, 2019; Lipson, et al., 2022). The purpose of this study was to gauge the *Attitudes* and *Practices* of minority students at a public university in Southern California and to analyze the marketing techniques employed by the institution's mental health services.

Methods: This study involved a mixed method approach using both quantitative as well as qualitative data to answer its research questions. For the quantitative portion of the study, a 9-question survey was created and distributed to all enrolled students in the Fall of 2022. The survey 319 students' demographic data and *Attitudes* and *Practices* regarding Campus Mental Health Services (CMHS). The results were adjusted to exclude students identifying as White/European American as the study focused on minority students. This reduced the sample set to 254 participants. The data obtained from the surveys were then analyzed using Microsoft Excel (ver. 2301). For the qualitative portion of the study, interviews were conducted with staff members familiar with the marketing of CMHS. The interviews took place over Zoom and were recorded and transcribed.

The results of the interviews were then analyzed using content and thematic analysis.

Results: This study found that a majority of the students surveyed for this study viewed CMHS favorably with 92 (36.2%) students responding that they trust information on CMHS received through social media, 127 (50%) students would recommend CMHS to a friend in distress, and 139 (54.7%) students responding that CMHS make them feel that there is no shame in seeking mental health assistance. Additionally, the study revealed that communication strategies played a major role in marketing CMHS: e.g., utilizing technology to reach students, listening and understanding the student population, and collaborating with other departments.

Conclusion: This study set out to gauge the *Attitudes* and *Practices* towards CMHS in a university whose majority student population was composed of minority students. The study also analyzed the techniques and effectiveness of the marketing strategies utilized to inform minority students of CMHS. While the marketing efforts of CMHS have been well received amongst the students surveyed, there still remains opportunities for improvement and growth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as not merely the

absence of disease, but as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-

being" (World Health Organization, 2022). The inclusion of mental well-being in

the WHO's definition of health highlights the potential impact mental health

places upon an individual and, ultimately, the public at large. According to

research conducted in 2016 by the Commonwealth Fund, among high-income

countries, the United States ranks as one of the highest in reported mental health

diagnoses in adults (Tikkanen et al., 2020).

High number of mental health diagnoses within the U.S. is also reflected

on college campuses as well. The American College Health Association (ACHA)

conducted a survey in the Fall of 2019 which included forty-one U.S. colleges

and universities with over 30,000 respondents (ACHA, 2021). They found that

over 70% of college students reported having moderate to severe psychological

distress (ACHA, 2021). In addition, the 2021 National Healthy Minds (NHM)

study showed an increase in depression from 17.4% in 2013 to 40.8% in 2021

and an increase in anxiety from 16.6% to 34.8% in 2021 among college students

(Lipson et al., 2022). These numbers represent an overall increase of 50% of

negative mental health symptoms in college aged students from 2013 to 2021

(Lipson et al., 2022). The increase in reports of mental health issues amongst

college students is often chalked up to the younger generation being weaker than their predecessors (Abrams, 2022; Lipson et al., 2022). However, the increase in the reports of mental health issues can also be attributed to less stigmatization when it comes to seeking mental health services (Abrams, 2022). While this can be seen as a positive effort where promoting overall health is concerned, colleges and universities are faced with new issues in supporting students and their mental health well-being.

According to a 2022 study published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, students from minority groups reported seeking mental health services at a lower rate than White students (Lipson et al., 2022) despite experiencing greater amounts of stress than their White counterparts (DeFreitas et al., 2018; Duffy, et al., 2019). The United Nations defines minority groups as "… any group of persons which constitutes less than half of the population in the entire… State whose members share common characteristics of culture, religion or language, or a combination of any of these" (United Nations, 2023). Within the state of California, where this study took place, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that in 2022, 71.1% of the population identified as "White alone". Those of "Hispanic or Latino" descent were counted at 40.2% and "White alone/not Hispanic or Latino" as 35.2%. Other ethnicities polled were "Asians alone" (15%), "Black or African American" (6.5%), "Individuals identifying as two or more races" (4.2%), "American Indian and Alaska Native" (1.7%), and "Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders" (0.5%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Hence, this study will

focus on minority students identifying as racial backgrounds other than White/European American, specifically: Hispanic/Latinx, Asian, Black, Native American, and Other.

The opportunities that a public university in Southern California offer prospective students combined with its location within the Inland Empire makes the chosen university an enticing choice for minority students. Minority students comprised approximately 76% of the student population in the Fall of 2021. Understanding the demographics of the student body is important in presenting CMHS. Specifically, how does a student's background or identity prevent a university's counseling department from assisting students in addressing barriers and what strategies can be used to overcome said challenges. These barriers can manifest in many ways e.g., generational trauma which perpetuates stigmas around mental health or society's expectation of an individual based strictly on perceived gender (DeFreitas, et al., 2018).

While there is much study into the fields of Public Health and Marketing respectively, there are few studies that investigate the potential overlap that can benefit both fields. There is an abundance of evidence pointing to the fact that Marketing uses behavior-changing techniques and models that were born as a necessity of Public Health (Chichirez & Purcărea, 2018, Cugelman, et al., 2011; Luca & Suggs, 2013). Yet the inverse where Public Health utilizes Marketing techniques to the same extent to achieve its goals is not true. In researching this topic of the intersectionality of Public Health and Marketing for mental health

services on college campuses, the source of reliable information on the topic was woefully lacking. A reason put forward for lack of information is that Marketing is thought of in terms of promoting and distributing services or goods for a monetary sum, or return on investment (Masters, et al., 2017; Purcărea, 2019). Unfortunately, the services that Public Health provides often do not produce immediate tangible or concrete gains. In fact, the return on investment that marketing Public Health services generates may only be seen by observing an absence or drop in a certain rate, and even then, may be observable only after a long period of time (Masters et al., 2017; Purcărea, 2019).

Purpose of Study

The Healthy People 2020 (HP2020) goal for mental health and mental disorders is to "improve mental health through prevention and by ensuring access to appropriate, quality mental health services" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). The HP2020 objectives range from improving the status of the nation's mental health to expanding treatment for mental health services. The purpose of this study is twofold: First, to conduct a quantitative study of undergraduate students to gather demographic information as well as assess their *Attitudes* and *Practices* associated with their interaction with CMHS. Secondly, to conduct a qualitative study amongst staff at the chosen public university in Southern California to examine the marketing strategies the university uses to promote CMHS and gauge the effectiveness of these

4

strategies on the student body. The aim of this study is to reduce barriers and increase awareness of mental health services available on university campuses for its attending students.

<u>Research Questions</u>

1.   How effective are the marketing efforts of CMHS on a student body comprised predominantly of minorities?

2.   In what ways can CMHS staff members be continuously proactive, not reactionary, in reaching minority students?

<center>Significance to Public Health</center>

The promotion of health is a paramount goal of Public Health. However, using the tools born of the marketing sector where the promotion of goods and services drives the industry is not often explored. This is evident in the dry campaigns and unremarkable pamphlets and flyers that fail to capture the consumer's attention (Jafari, et al., 2021; Machicao, 2018). Effective marketing strategies include identifying and targeting populations best suited to receive the goods promoted (Lee, 2019), in this case, minority students attending college.

In this study, the university's demographics skewed heavily toward minorities, particularly those of Hispanic origin. Considering this population's demographics, an understanding of the unique stressors experienced by minority students should be evidenced in the university's CMHS. Issues such as funding their education due to a lower socio-economic status background (Pratt et al.,

2019), frustration in navigating the college system because they are a first-generation student (Cataldi, Bennett, & Chen, 2018), and even the unreasonable expectation to strive for academic perfection to live up to parental expectations (Alt, 2015) are just a few burdens that minority students face. These factors make the student population at the selected public university a formidable targeted audience to receive mental health services. The receiving of mental health services can play a crucial role in a student's health outcome and overall academic performance. For example, adequate promotion of mental health services can reduce the prevalence of substance abuse as well as mitigate the rate of attrition in minority students due to mental health issues (Duffy, et. al, 2019). This impacts not only the community as a whole by producing contributing members of society, but also the University itself as there is a far more developed network of alumni that can be examples of what an education at the selected university can offer (Lipson, et al., 2019).

Furthermore, it is well-regarded that young adulthood is a period of time where mental health problems, if left untreated, could have lasting consequences (Sontag-Padilla, et al., 2018). Again, the ramifications stemming from mental health issues is not one that is suffered by the individual alone and as a result, there is a cost that society has to pay in the way of lost talent and even a monetary sum in the form of social support.

MPH Core Competencies

This study is important to public health as it employs the following competencies: (1). Exercises the interpretation of results of data analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, for public health practice; (2). The study will also assess the population needs, in this case college students from the chosen public university and how their community's mental health is impacted, and (3). The study will explain the critical importance of evidence in advancing public health knowledge through the lens of targeted demographic marketing.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public health has long been criticized for its ineffective marketing strategies (Fairchild, et al., 2015; Peinado, et al., 2020). The marketing of mental health resources is an especially sensitive matter considering the stigma that is still associated with issues concerning mental health (Machin, et al., 2022). The criticism is well deserved with examples of campaigns launched by public health in the spirit of helping the community but are instead a miscalculation of perceptions that ends up sending an altogether different message than initially intended. An example of a poor decision in the marketing of mental health is the 2019 "Real Meals" campaign which involved the collaboration between Mental Health America and the fast-food chain Burger King. The ads attempted to call attention to mental health issues using humor, the campaign was received poorly by much of the public who cited pandering and shameless product promotion through a serious societal issue (Lee, 2019).

Unfortunately, not all missteps in marketing public health are as amusing as the "Real Meals" campaign. There are many examples of marketing campaigns launched by public health that miss the mark and resulted in being chastising or off-putting to the public. Missteps like these are detrimental to public health causes as they can result in turning away the intended audience for said public health marketing campaign (Fairchild, et. al., 2015).

Comparatively, there are unique challenges that arise when marketing to college students particularly for mental health services. It is noted that the traditional marketing strategies from the past no longer work on the current college student. At the time of writing this paper, the average age of the current college student is 26.4 years old which firmly places a majority of college students in the GenZ generation (New America, 2017). This means that most college students have grown up inundated with advertisements which may have caused them to become desensitized to prior methods employed in marketing. As such, many universities are increasing their marketing budgets and changing their marketing tactics to reach more of the GenZ population (Marcus, 2021). These tactics include branding of online mental health initiatives for university students (Rith-Najarian, et al., 2019), launching mental health promotion campaigns on university campuses (Champlin & Nisbett, 2018), and the development of novel programs with the GenZ consumer in mind (Duffy, et al., 2019; Marcus, 2021).

Further impeding effective marketing of CMHS is the demographic shift present in students seeking higher education. Universities are no longer for the privileged and elite (Duffy, et al., 2019). College campuses across the United States are beginning to reflect the varied demographics of the country itself. As such, CMHS are challenged to become more innovative in their reach to the student population. The shift in student demographics is important to note as minority students demonstrate additional stressors in the college setting.

Additionally, many of the students comprising the diverse community of university students come from backgrounds that are known to have a history of hesitancy when it comes to seeking mental health services. Given these characteristics, mental health services would benefit a good portion of the college student population (Cokley, et al., 2012; DeFreitas et al., 2018; Lipson, et al. 2019; Zvolensky, 2016).

In this study, modern practices in the marketing of mental health resources will be discussed. Additionally, the unique situations associated with minority students and their need for mental health resources will be examined. The result of the information gathering will consist of how marketing and innovative practices in campus mental health resources within a college demographic composed predominantly of minorities can be used effectively.

Marketing Mental Health

In a society inundated with advertisements and information on various products and services, marketing can play a key role in the field of public health in promoting mental health services. In the past, marketing was seen as a field that was primarily concerned with generating income for a company (Purcărea, 2019). However, shifts in the scholarship of marketing have raised the question of marketing's responsibility to society (Ruyter et al., 2021). Indeed, while not explicitly mentioning public health or the aspect of marketing mental health services, Harvard Business School professor Alvin J. Silk states in his 2006

book, "*What is Marketing?*" that marketing is "...What an organization must do to create and exchange value with customers" (Silk, 2006). Silk goes on to further state that marketing plays a role in the direction of an organization demanding a knowledge of its consumer base and competitors to best serve its customers (Silk, 2006).

When looking at marketing through the lens of possible impact, its importance in spreading the messages of public health is clear and has given rise to the field of behavior change marketing (Cugelman, 2011). In behavior change marketing the principles of behavior change theories such as the transtheoretical model, health belief theory, and social cognitive theory are used to persuade the targeted population to partake in behaviors that promote better health (Cugelman, 2011; Luca & Suggs, 2013).

However, despite its apparent practicality in public health and the influence it can generate in increasing mental health service awareness, there remain issues that impede the effectiveness of marketing in the public health setting. Issues such as public misconceptions about health topics, a lack of research into the unique intersection of marketing and public health, and ethical matters serve as roadblocks in effectively implementing marketing strategies where public health is concerned (Ruyter et al, 2021).

Interestingly, while the impact of effective marketing on mental health resources can be difficult to gauge (Mirabito et al., 2022), there is scholarship that makes the argument for looking at marketing strategies in public health

through the lens of the economic model of return on investment (ROI).

Unfortunately, as it is difficult to see results from public health initiatives,

budgetary cuts to public health are all too common. However, studies have

shown that investments in public health interventions at both the local and

national levels are, in fact, cost-saving measures that can benefit society not only

socially, but economically as well (Masters, et al., 2016). In the same vein,

universities are encouraged to examine their budget and mindfully allot funds to

market CMHS to serve the student body and the institution economically (Lipson

et al., 2019). The Healthy Minds Network even has a calculator available on its

website where colleges and universities can calculate the ROI from their

investment in mental health for their student population (Healthy Minds Network,

2019).

Minority College Students and Mental Health Issues

In numerous studies, it is found that university students comprise a high-

risk population for mental health issues that if not addressed appropriately and

promptly can lead to additional stress upon the student, disenrollment, and other

detrimental effects on mental health that can carry on long into adulthood

(Abrams, 2022; Auerbach et al., 2016; DeFreitas, et al., 2018; Fernandez et al.,

2016; Mirabito et al., 2022; Sontag-Padilla et al., 2018). An additional layer of

tension on a college student's mental health can come from simply being a

minority (DeFreitas et al., 2018; Zvolensky, 2016).

In a 2018 study examining Latino and African American College students, DeFreitas et al. found that there are high rates of mental health stigmas amongst both minority groups. This creates a bleak picture when compared to a study conducted from 2014 to 2015 looking at 1,095 minority college students which found that acculturative stress and experiential avoidance were significantly correlated to depression and anxiety (Zvolensky et al., 2016). Another study focusing on stress and feelings of imposter syndrome showed that African American, Latinx, and Asian students experienced stress stemming from being a minority in college differently (Cokley, et al., 2013). Further, in the study on acculturative stress, college students from minority demographics cited an issue of not being represented in a positive light when mental health issues are in question (Zvolensky et al., 2016).

Considering that the student body at the public university located in Southern California is predominantly comprised of minorities, providing mental health services on campus without specific, targeted marketing strategies to appeal to and address the varied issues of minority populations can create a disservice to a vast majority of the student body (Fernandez et al., 2016).

Earlier it was stated that marketing is tasked with understanding the consumer base to best serve the customer. Armed with this knowledge as well as acknowledgment of the research information regarding the demographics which make up the student body and their unique mental health experiences at the collegiate level, the public university in Southern California now has a

responsibility to the student body to invest more effort in targeted approaches that appeal to and welcome minority students to seek mental health services.

The support of students with mental health resources not only benefits the student but can also benefit the institution as well in terms of mitigation of student attrition and promotion of an overall positive learning environment (Lipson et al., 2019). Interestingly, while there is scholarship that makes the argument for looking at marketing strategies in public health through the lens of the economic model of return on investment, not for just the university but also the community (Lipson et al., 2019; Masters et al., 2016), there is exceptionally little in the way of research that examines the process and impact that marketing mental health resources has on public universities students from minority demographics (DeFreitas et al., 2018).

This study will assess student perception and engagement of CMHS at a public university in Southern California. Further, marketing techniques and novel approaches employed by CMHS designed to reach the diverse student population will be examined. The former goal will be met by analyzing data gathered from a survey disseminated to a student body of both undergraduate and graduate students at a public university in Southern California. The latter goal will be achieved by analyzing data gathered from interviews conducted with staff connected to the campus mental health resources. This study aims to address a gap in the knowledge concerning the intersection of targeted

marketing and innovations in mental health resources for college students

coming from minority backgrounds.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODS

Study Design

The study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative portion of the research focused on obtaining demographic information. Furthermore, the research collected data on *Attitudes* and *Practices* of the student population at a public university in Southern California regarding CMHS. The qualitative portion of the research was gathered through interviews with staff employed at the same university. Data were then analyzed using Microsoft Excel (ver. 2301) to respond to the research questions.

Data Source and Collection

Upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, a mass email request was distributed to both undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at the public university during the Fall 2022 semester. The request was distributed between the dates of November 2 through December 31, 2022, where a total of 320 responses were collected for quantitative data through a Google survey emailed to participating students. Whereas qualitative data was collected through interviews conducted over Zoom with staff familiar with the CMHS at the public university in Southern California in the Fall of 2022 term.

Measures

The quantitative survey consisted of 4 questions that gathered demographic information from the respondents. Additionally, the survey included 12 questions gauging the *Attitudes* and *Practices* of the respondents regarding CMHS which utilized the Likert scale. The qualitative portion of data gathering consisted of 5 open-ended questions exploring the marketing strategies employed by CMHS. The interviews for qualitative data were conducted through individual interview sessions via Zoom.

Ethics

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was secured from the university committee IRB-FY2023-63 (see Appendix A).

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESULTS

Quantitative Data Analysis Results

Quantitative data was obtained through survey results and input into
Microsoft Excel (ver. 2301). The data contained demographic information as well
as respondents' *Attitudes* and *Practices* towards CMHS. While the respondents
were comprised of students from all backgrounds, the focus of this study is on
minority students, therefore responses of students identifying as being from a
White/European American background will be excluded in answering the two
research questions on this study. As such, while the initial survey had N=320, the
study will use an adjusted sample size of N=254 minority students.

Table 1 illustrates the collected demographic data of the 254 respondents.
A majority of the sample set were in their third year (23.6%) or fourth year
(29.9%) of college with the 18–21-year age range being the mode (37.8%). In
terms of race/ethnicity, minority students (79.6%) made up the bulk of the survey
takers even prior to the exclusion of White/European American (20.4%) students
from the initial data set. In the adjusted data, Hispanic/Latino students were the
highest in numbers (75.2%), with Asian/Pacific Islander students being the next
highest minority demographic (10.23%) followed by Black/African American
students (7.1%). The gender of the participants in the selected data skewed
heavily towards Female (76.8%) with Males (20.1%) and Other (3.1%)
comprising less than a quarter of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

Overall (N^1=319) Adjusted (N^2=254)

Variable	N^1	$\%^1$	N^2	$\%^2$
Academic Standing Level				
First Year	28	8.8	26	10.3
Second Year	31	9.7	24	9.4
Third Year	79	24.8	60	23.6
Fourth Year	89	27.9	76	29.9
Fifth Year or more	38	11.9	31	12.2
Graduate Student	54	16.9	37	14.6
Age Range				
18-21	114	35.7	96	37.8
22-25	86	27.0	71	28.0
26-29	29	9.1	24	9.4
30+	90	28.2	63	24.8
Race/Ethnicity				
Hispanic/Latino	191	59.8	191	75.2
White/European American	65	20.4	n/a	n/a
Asian/Pacific Islander	26	8.2	26	10.2
Black/African American	18	5.6	18	7.1
Other	13	4.1	13	5.1
Native American	6	1.9	6	2.4
Gender				

Female	251	78.7	195	76.8
Male	59	18.5	51	20.1
Other	**9**	**2.8**	**8**	**3.1**

Research Question 1

How effective are the marketing efforts of CMHS on a student body comprised predominantly of minority populations?

Table 2 represents data collected examining the *Attitudes* and *Practices* of the students. This data was gauged using the Likert scale with responses spanning from "*Strongly Agree*" to "*Strongly Disagree*". Amongst those surveyed in the sample set, technology plays the largest role in the receipt of information from campus mental health resources with 92 (36.2%) participants responding, "*Strongly Agree*" and 101 (39.8%) participants responding with "*Agree*". Of the students from diverse backgrounds, 92 (34.5%) respondents stated that they "*Strongly Agree*" and 136 (53.9%) responded with "*Agree*" to a statement exploring their trust in information regarding CMHS received through technology outlets. Participants in the study also responded positively when asked if they would recommend CMHS to other students struggling with mental health issues. Of those who participated in the survey, 127 (50.0%) replied as "*Strongly Agree*" and 111 (43.7%) replied as "*Agree*".

A question was then asked to gauge *Attitudes* towards mental health services prior to entering the institution. From the pool of minority students surveyed, 93 (36.6%) responded with "*Strongly Agree*" and 111 (43.7%) responded with "*Agree*" to having positive views of mental health services prior to attending the institution whereas 41 (16.1%) responded with "*Disagree*" and "*Strongly Disagree*" had 9 (3.6%) respondents. In comparison, a question was asked regarding the absence of shame in seeking mental health resources from CMHS. The responses revealed a mostly favorable view with 139 (54.7%) participants in the chosen set replying as "*Strongly Agree*" while 95 (37.4%) participants replied as "*Agree*" with only 14 (5.5%) and 6 (2.4%) students answering "*Disagree*" and "*Strongly Disagree*" respectively.

Table 2: Attitudes and Practices of Respondents Concerning Campus Mental Health Services

Overall (N^1=319) Adjusted (N^2=254) (see table note above)

Question 1: I receive information on resources through technology outlets (i.e., Instagram; Facebook; Twitter; Email)

	N^1	$\%^1$	N^2	$\%^2$
Strongly Agree	119	37.3	92	36.2
Agree	124	38.9	101	39.8
Disagree	51	16.0	46	18.1
Strongly Disagree	25	7.8	15	5.9

Question 2: I would trust information on campus mental health resources that I would receive through the university's social media outlets (i.e., Instagram; Facebook; Twitter; Email)

Strongly Agree	122	38.2	92	36.2
Agree	164	51.4	136	53.5
Disagree	19	6.0	17	6.7
Strongly Disagree	14	4.4	9	3.6

Question 3: I would recommend on CMHS to a friend in need

Strongly Agree	191	59.9	127	50.0
Agree	111	34.8	111	43.7
Disagree	13	4.0	11	4.3
Strongly Disagree	4	1.3	5	2.0

Question 4: My view of receiving help with mental health services was positive prior to becoming a student at (the institution)

Strongly Agree	120	37.6	93	36.6
Agree	134	42.0	111	43.7
Disagree	48	15.0	41	16.1
Strongly Disagree	17	5.3	9	3.6

Question 5: Information I receive on CMHS makes me feel that there is no shame in seeking resources connected to mental health

Strongly Agree	167	52.4	139	54.7
Agree	122	38.2	95	37.4
Disagree	23	7.2	14	5.5

Strongly Disagree	7	2.2	6	2.4

Qualitative Data Analysis Results

In the qualitative analysis of the interviews, participants were asked a series of questions pertaining to their outreach and marketing efforts for campus mental health resources.

When asked how CMHS marketed their services, interviewees all responded with some form of technology heading off the list of promotional strategies used to reach the student population.

"…We send out mass emails to students with flyers of our upcoming events and our workshops…"

"…We use emails with flyers and send them to [students]… and post the flyers to [the university] website and [university app]…"

"…We also have social media where we interact with [students]… We have Instagram more than anything else…"

"…We also collaborate with numerous departments on campus and affinity centers… and guest speakers who will advertise for us as well…"

Another common answer was gaining student feedback to help create "objectives and goals" for CMHS.

"…Surveys to understand [the students'] needs…"

"We'll send out a survey…We'll target certain areas… students would like more programming related to…and then we'll develop programming from that information…"

Other responses revolved around giveaways.

"…Some workshops have $25 Amazon gift cards… they raffle off to students who attend [the workshop] …"

"…There's swag like cute little notebooks, stress balls… stuff like that…"

It should be noted that two of the respondents mentioned a move away from "physical paper flyers" to flyers distributed electronically via email or through QR Codes. The shift was due to student interest in the environment and expressed concern over the litter that was caused by discarded flyers promoting events.

When respondents were asked, what criterion is used to gauge the effectiveness of a marketing strategy for CMHS, only one responded with:

"… Attendance and evaluations [surveys] of the workshop…"

filled out by the student after a workshop. The rest of the respondents stated that it is not measured and expressed that they did not know why it was not evaluated with one respondent stating:

"…Assessment isn't built into our current program…"

but one respondent clarified the absence of evaluation with:

"We don't survey our clients on how they hear about us… because of confidentiality…"

However, this only pertained to individual counseling sessions.

In a question exploring innovative strategies CMHS have employed to promote their services for a student population of minority students, the use of technology was again the common theme. In this case, other uses of technology were mentioned in addition to the use of emails and social media. In addition, the theme of collaboration and understanding the student population emerged once again as an important factor for promoting CMHS.

"…When the campus closed [from COVID] we offered our services virtually through Zoom… We found that it worked… We continued to offer online sessions even after the campus opened and expanded to include webinars online…The department [campus mental health] even received the… grant which is money spent on [technology] to support student success…"

"…An Instagram account… run by a graduate student working with the department… [The student] posts our flyers to Instagram…"

"We're always wanting to consider all aspects of the demographic… We have a diverse group of counselors. So, let's say we have someone who prefers to speak Spanish… we do have counselors available who are bilingual…"

The response of collaborating with other entities segued well into the following question of the interview that asked which other departments or entities are consulted when creating a marketing campaign for CMHS.

"…We reach out to the health center… health science, and psychology department…"

"…Almost all affinity centers [student resources and campus organizations] on campus… A wide range of our counselors here, so different counselors have different connections or relationships with those departments…"

"…Every time a student goes to a professor, and they say 'Hey, I need an extension if that's OK?'… a lot of the times the professor says… 'We can work together to collaborate, but you know… the counseling center's there for you.' They [faculty] would refer the student to us… knowing the student's under distress…"

<u>Research Question 2</u>

In what ways can CMHS be continuously proactive, not reactionary, in their reach of students?

Through the interviews, three themes were found to be present in most of all responses: technology, collaboration with other departments, and understanding the student population. When examined closely, all three of these elements are utilizing communication.
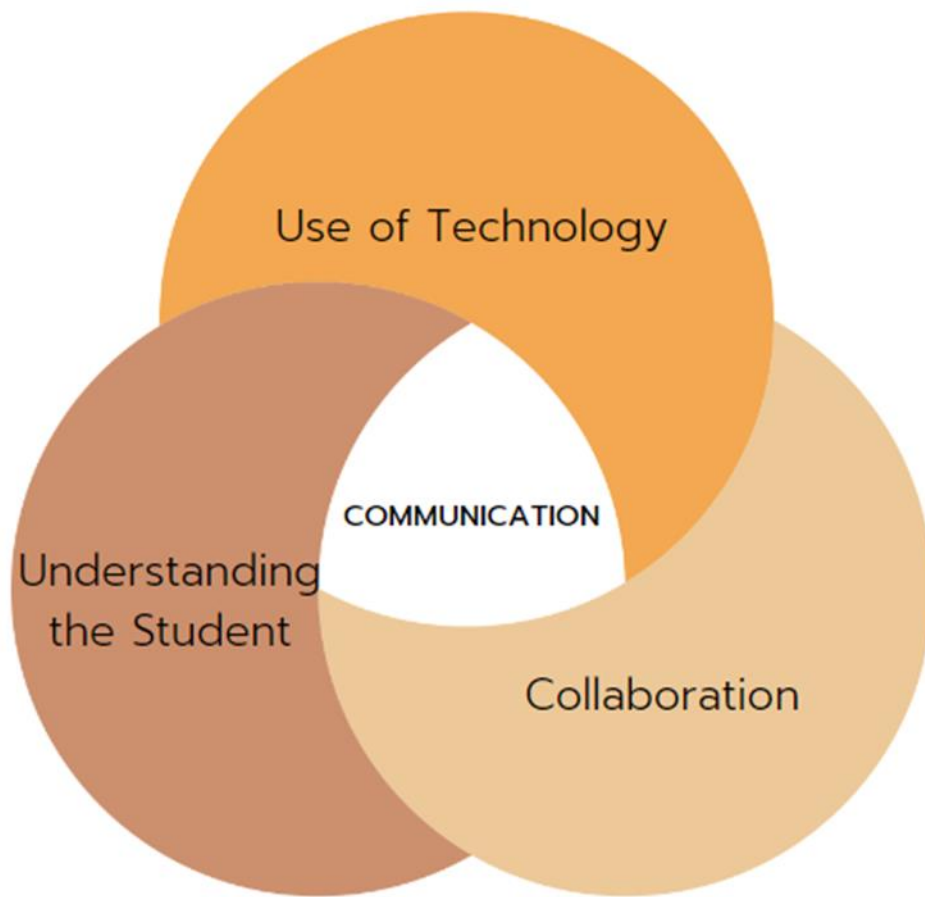
Figure 1: Emerging Themes Featuring Communication as a Common Factor

CHAPTER FIVE:

DISCUSSION

This study used quantitative research methods to capture a sample of 320 undergraduate and graduate students' *Attitudes* and *Practices* regarding CMHS. Since the focus of the study was minority students, an adjusted sample of 254 was used to reflect the omission of students identifying as White/European American. Additionally, this study used qualitative research methods whereby five staff members familiar with the CMHS marketing practices at the university were individually interviewed via Zoom meetings.

Research Question 1

How effective are the marketing efforts of the CMHS on a student body comprised predominantly of minority populations?

Results from the survey in this study indicated that the student population received a considerable amount of information and interacted with CMHS through technology. These results are unsurprising as many studies point to the current generation receiving a vast majority of their information through technology (Abrams, 2022; Yadav & Rai, 2017). Equally as important is the high degree of trust that the students expressed in the information received regarding CMHS. Studies show that the current college-aged students, or those from Gen Z, prefer to communicate through social media sites (Yadav & Rai, 2017).

Another important aspect of marketing to Gen Z is the use of word of mouth (Martin, 2016; Yadav & Rai, 2017). In a study focusing on the mental health of university students, the authors point out that a student in need will first turn to another student for help. This action highlights the problem of "People who had the least capacity to provide a professional level of help were the ones most likely to provide it" (Abrams, 2022, p. 68). The results from the survey show that an overwhelming number of respondents would recommend CMHS to a friend in need. The degree of trust compounded with the willingness of students to recommend CMHS to a friend in distress is a worthy distinction. Furthermore, it is shown that the use of word of mouth regarding mental health services reduces stigma attached to seeking assistance (Abrams, 2022; Martin, 2016).

The research also points to a shift towards a more positive view regarding mental health services. Prior to attending the university, a total of 19.7% of the sample of the students polled viewed the receipt of mental health services in an unfavorable light. In comparison, only a total of 7.9% of those polled responded with "*Disagree*" or "*Strongly Disagree*" to a statement of feeling no shame in seeking mental health resources based on information received from campus mental health resources. The shift in view towards more positive feelings about mental health services after attending the university suggests that there are factors within the institution successfully mitigating stigmas for mental health in minority students.

Research Question 2

In what ways can CMHS be continuously proactive, not reactionary, in their reach of students?

Generally speaking, the recurring themes of technology, understanding the student population, and collaboration have the common thread of communication. Technology is used by campus mental health to communicate with the student body through email and social media. Understanding the student population is also utilizing communication where the students express their needs and campus mental health staff practices active listening on their part to form trust. Lastly, in collaborating with other stakeholders at the university, communication is vitally important to successfully create long-term student support.

Connecting with students through social media has the benefit of creating a space for dialogue. It is shown that students are inclined to share their views and opinions with brands and services (Yadav & Rai, 2017). Use of feedback garnered from interaction with students through social media as a means of guiding the offerings of CMHS is an invaluable trove of knowledge. Indeed, many businesses use this very same tactic to market their brands to the 18–26-year-old demographic (Lee, 2019; Yadav & Rai, 2017).

Likewise, the use of surveys shows a continuous learning of the population being served with special attention to changes in the student population's interest. Listening to student concerns can be a meaningful action

that builds confidence in CMHS and assures that they are being heard (Lee, 2019). A Pew research study from 2021 showed that individuals making up Gen Z are more vocal on social media when it comes to the environment than any other generation (Tyson, et al., 2021). With campus mental health paying attention to the students' environmental concerns, they exemplified that they heard the students and were willing to act to better align themselves on issues important to them.

Furthering the theme of communication, using collaboration among university organizations, and departments forges denser networks of support. The positive outcomes of denser networks are twofold. First, when more people are knowledgeable of the programs offered by CMHS, there will be more opportunities for a student in need to become exposed to the resources that they may need. Second, when there are many people talking about a topic, it becomes less stigmatized. Currently there is a trend of reduced stigmatization surrounding mental health, however there are still pockets where cultural beliefs and societal expectations can still create discomfort where mental health is concerned (Abrams, 2022; DeFreitas et al., 2018; Duffy, et al., 2019; Zvolensky, 2016).

Strengths and Limitations

No study is without its limitations. The sample size of the quantitative portion of those interviewed could have been expanded to include more respondents had the survey been made available to the students for a longer

period of time as opposed to a limited six-week time period. Also, some students

may have been reluctant to complete the survey due to not understanding the

nature of the survey or even absence of an incentive to complete the survey.

Additionally, the pool of respondents for the qualitative portion of this study was

exceedingly small due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts.

As for strengths, the study was conducted at a university with a high

population of minority students making the study timely and relevant. The

diversity of the university was additionally fortunate as even after the exclusion of

White students from the sample set, the study was left with a hefty sample size to

analyze. Additionally, the sample set of respondents for the survey accurately

represented the demographic make-up of the university.

Recommendations for Research and Practice

While researching this topic, there was woefully little scholarship

examining effective marketing practices of a university's mental health services

particularly to minority students. What little was found urged that more research

be done as minority students have been identified as having more stressors

leading to mental health issues than their White counterparts (DeFreitas et al.,

2018; Duffy, et al., 2019; Zvolensky, 2016). The CMHS at this university has the

distinction of having a high population of minority students and is viewed as a

favorable presence on campus. As such, studies of this nature should be

conducted to continue the effectiveness of CMHS promotion to a predominantly

minority student body which could possibly translate to other institutions learning from this university's CMHS.

When interviewing those working closely with marketing CMHS, collaboration was a recurrent theme. However, collaboration only went as far as promotion of CMHS. Despite academic fields keeping their research in silos, campus mental health can approach the marketing department for their expertise to strengthen their student support. Internships could be created for marketing students utilizing their skills in promotion of CMHS. A program like this could result in many ancillary positive outcomes such as: improved relations, novel exposure, and experience for students, and encouraging the exchange of information between fields.

In an institution which serves a high population of minority students, special attention should be paid to identifying and addressing barriers to accessing information pertaining to mental health services. While the institution's CMHS is active on their social media platforms and posts information on the university website, the information provided is only available in English. This is despite the high population of minority students whose second language is English. Providing information in their primary language may make CMHS more inviting and accessible.

Another recommendation is to implement process evaluation to gauge the effectiveness of outreach, marketing, and promotion. The most successful strategies used by campus mental health to promote their services were

intentional: use of technology, understanding students, and collaboration. However, there is no process in place to measure the effectiveness of these efforts nor other marketing techniques like giveaways. Implementation of process evaluation would not only help in identifying and strengthening successful practices, but it also could possibly save the department money.

Lastly, CMHS could push for the creation and integration of a class for new and incoming students to identify mental health risks. This would not only serve to help the students identify mental health risk factors in a timely manner, but also promote CMHS in a more interactive environment (Abrams, 2022; Duffy, et al., 2019).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gauge the *Attitudes* and *Practices* that minority students had with CMHS as well as the effectiveness of the CMHS's marketing techniques at a public university in Southern California. Since the prevalence of mental health issues can weigh heavier for minority students than White students in college, CMHS ought to give special attention in garnering the attention of minority students. This study has found that the efforts of the CMHS at the university have been effective in promoting their services through engaging the students. Further, this study found that communication played a key role in CMHS's outreach and marketing. However, the use of communication on the part of CMHS when it came to other departments on campus was almost strictly relegated to promotional efforts, despite respondents citing collaboration as an

important tool in marketing CMHS. True collaboration includes the exchange of ideas between stakeholders. Further research and implementation of innovative practices gathered from other departments at the university could create even more of an impact for minority students at the university.

APPENDIX A:

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM

October 24, 2022

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Expedited Review
IRB-FY2023-63
Status: Approved

Prof. Salome Mshigeni
CNS - Health Science
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Prof. Salome Mshigeni:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Mental Health Services on a College Campus" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. The CSUSB IRB has weighed the risk and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants. The study is approved as of October 24, 2022. The study will require an annual administrative check-in (annual report) on the current status of the study on October 23, 2023. Please use the renewal form to complete the annual report.

This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses. Investigators should consider the changing COVID-19 circumstances based on current CDC, California Department of Public Health, and campus guidance and submit appropriate protocol modifications to the IRB as needed. CSUSB campus and affiliate health screenings should be completed for all campus human research related activities. Human research activities conducted at off-campus sites should follow CDC, California Department of Public Health, and local guidance. See CSUSB's COVID-19 Prevention Plan for more information regarding campus requirements.

If your study is closed to enrollment, the data has been de-identified, and you're only analyzing the data - you may close the study by submitting the Closure Application Form through the Cayuse Human Ethics (IRB) system. The Cayuse system automatically reminders you at 90, 60, and 30 days before the study

is due for renewal or submission of your annual report (administrative check-in). The modification, renewal, study closure, and unanticipated/adverse event forms are located in the Cayuse system with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission Webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action. Please note a lapse in your approval may result in your not being able to use the data collected during the lapse in the application's approval period.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy.

- **Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.**
- **Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implemented in your study.**
- **Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.**
- **Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.**

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risks and benefits to the human participants in your IRB application. If you have any questions about the IRBs decision please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2023-63 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive regarding your research from participants or others should be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

King-To Yeung

King-To Yeung, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

KY/MG

APPENDIX B:

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Quantitative Survey Questions for Students

Demographic questions:

1. What is your current standing level?

   First Year

   Second Year

   Third Year

   Fourth Year

   Fifth or More

   Graduate Student

2. What is your age range?

   18-21

   22-25

   26-29

   30+

3. What best describes your race/ethnicity?

   Whites/European American

   Black or African American

   Hispanic or Latino

   Asian or Pacific Islander

   Other

4. What is your gender?

   Female

   Male

   Other

Questions on attitude and practice

5. I receive information I receive information on resources through technology outlets (i.e., Instagram; Facebook; Twitter; Email)

   Strongly Agree

   Agree

   Disagree

   Strongly Disagree

6. I would trust information on campus mental health resources that I would receive through the university's social media outlets (i.e., Instagram; Facebook; Twitter; Email)

   Strongly Agree

   Agree

   Disagree

   Strongly Disagree

7. I would recommend on CMHS to a friend in need

   Strongly Agree

   Agree

   Disagree

   Strongly Disagree

8. My view of receiving help with mental health services was positive prior to becoming a student at (the institution)

   Strongly Agree

   Agree

   Disagree

   Strongly Disagree

9. Information I receive on CMHS makes me feel that there is no shame in seeking resources connected to mental health

   Strongly Agree

   Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX C:

QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

Qualitative Survey Questions for Campus Staff

1. What is the process for creating a marketing strategy for CMHS?

2. What criterion is set forth to measure the level of effectiveness a marketing strategy has for CMHS?

3. What innovative strategies has [the institution] employed to promote CMHS to minority students?

4. Which departments or entities are consulted when creating a marketing campaign for CMHS?

APPENDIX D:

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE

Completion Date 30-Aug-2022
Expiration Date 29-Aug-2027
Record ID 50211095

This is to certify that:

Rochelle Bernarte

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Human Research
(Curriculum Group)
Social Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

California State University, San Bernardino

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w060cada9-2eb4-4594-aac4-4f58fd2a8e26-50211095

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    nd%20faces%20backlash%20on%20Twitter,-

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