Ethnicity and Help-seeking

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Introduction

- Ethnic minorities have traditionally underutilized mental health services (Matsuoka, Breaux, & Ryujin, 1997).

- It has been proposed that both willingness to see a counselor and attitudes towards seeking psychological help may impact utilization of psychological services among ethnic minority populations (Kim & Omizo, 2003).

- The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between willingness to see a counselor and attitudes toward seeking psychological help among college students.
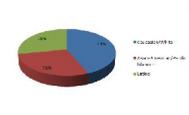
Method

- This study was conducted in two stages; Stage 2 began after Stage 1 data collection had been completed and utilized a different, but similar, online delivery method than Stage 1.

Participants

Stage 1

- Fifty one Asian Pacific Islander (API), 51 Latino, and 79 Caucasian college students participated by completing online measures.

Stage 2

- Sixty four API, 106 Latino, and 90 Caucasian college students participated by competing online measures.

Method (cont'd)

Measures

Stage 1

- Willingness To See A Counselor questionnaire (WSC; Gim, Atkinson, & Whiteley, 1990).

- Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form (ATPSF; Fischer & Farina, 1995).

Stage 2

- Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Long Form (ATPLF; Fischer & Turner, 1970).

- WSC

Results

Stage 1

- Results indicated that recognizing the need for psychological help related to general willingness to see a counselor for students in all three groups (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Intercorrelations Between Willingness To See A Counselor Questionnaire (WSC) Total Scores and the Recognition Subscale Scores of the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form (ATPSF).*

Group	r	p <
Caucasian	0.59	0.01
Latino	0.62	0.01
API	0.34	0.05

- For Latinos and Caucasians only, confidence in mental health practitioners related to general willingness to seek counseling (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Intercorrelations Between Willingness To See A Counselor Questionnaire (WSC) Total Scores and the Confidence Subscale Scores of the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form (ATPSF).*

Group	r	p <
Caucasian	0.42	0.01
Latino	0.74	0.01
API	0.24	n.s.

Results (cont'd)

Stage 2

- Results indicated that recognizing the need for psychological help related to general willingness to see a counselor for students in all three groups (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Intercorrelations Between Willingness To See A Counselor Questionnaire (WSC) Total Scores and the Recognition Subscale Scores of the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Long Form (ATPLF).*

Group	r	p <
Caucasian	0.23	0.05
Latino	0.42	0.01
API	0.50	0.01

- Results indicated that confidence in mental health practitioners related to general willingness to seek counseling for students in all three groups (see Table 4).

Table 4. *Intercorrelations Between Willingness To See A Counselor Questionnaire (WSC) Total Scores and the Confidence Subscale Scores of the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Long Form (ATPLF).*

Group	r	p <
Caucasian	0.36	0.01
Latino	0.32	0.01
API	0.38	0.01

Discussion

- An examination of WSC and ATP (both forms) scores found a relationship between recognizing need for services and willingness to see a counselor at both stages of the study.

- The strengths of the intercorrelations varied somewhat between Stages 1 and 2; intercorrelations for recognizing the need for help weakened somewhat for Caucasians and Latinos and strengthened for APIs.

- However, with respect to confidence in mental health practitioners, the intercorrelations of the groups were more similar than they had been during Stage 1, with the API group now more closely resembling the other ethnic groups.

Discussion (cont'd)

- Both recognition of the need for help and confidence in the mental health practitioner appear to be related to willingness to seek help, which implies that help-seeking would be influenced by the ways in which "need" and "help" are defined and the way confidence is instilled or enhanced.

- Cultural values may play a role in determining whether "psychological" help is even needed, in addition to identifying factors related to the development of "confidence in mental health practitioners".

- Traditional counseling and psychotherapy have often been rooted in assumptions primarily based on theories of treatment rather than being embedded in cultural values or perceptions.

- Involving community may be one way to incorporate cultural values in psychotherapy.

- A suggestion for future research is to use the community based participatory research (CBPR) approach of collaborating with community members, agencies, and organizations in examining how different ethnic groups define "need for psychological help" and "confidence in mental health practitioners" with an eye to improving both utilization and effectiveness of mental health services.

References

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