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Self-Esteem Among Immigrants Using Mental Health Services

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Self-Esteem Among Immigrants Using Mental Health Services

Kevin Schaefer, USM, Sadie Russell, USM, Juma Poggio, USM, Jennifer First, USM

Abstract

Many immigrants face mental health issues following exposure to war, persecution, and political upheavals from their countries of origin. Post immigration challenges such as shattered social and cultural networks, living conditions, impoverishment, and job procurement contribute to mental health risk factors. This study examines adult immigrants who utilize mental health services at Gateway Community Services. This exploratory research project utilized a cross sectional study and employed quantitative methods. Three participants who self-identified as adult immigrants were recruited using convenience sampling methods. Case managers administered questionnaires to clients to assess their perceived self-esteem. Bi-variable analysis was used to calculate data using Rosenberg's Perceived Self-Esteem Scale to measure self-esteem. Initial findings show no significant reports of high perceived self-esteem among immigrants who use mental health services.

Introduction

This research project explores immigrant's access, utilization of mental health services and its effect on their self-esteem. Literature explains how U.S. born immigrants and non-Hispanic White Americans are more likely than first-generation immigrants to use formal mental health services (Jackson et al., 2007). A gap exists in literature in connecting mental health services to self-esteem. Our study aims to establish such a relationship if it exists. Prevalence of mental health problems among immigrants is highest compared to the general population (Straiton, Reneflot & Diaz, 2017). Consequently, this poses as a concern for social workers because of their role in supporting immigrant's diagnosis, treatment planning, and bridging connections with social services.

Question

What is the impact of mental health service utilization on self-esteem among adult immigrants?

Methods

- Pilot study
- Exploratory quantitative method
- Cross-sectional study data
- Clients recruited using snowball sampling
- Questionnaire was used to collect data (demographic, Rosenberg's self-esteem scale)

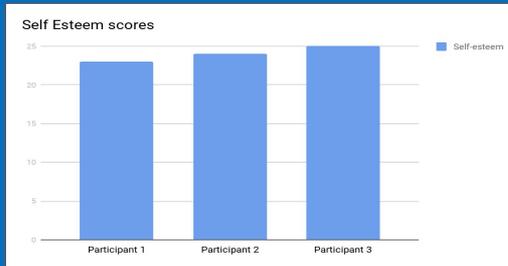


Figure 2. Self Esteem Distribution

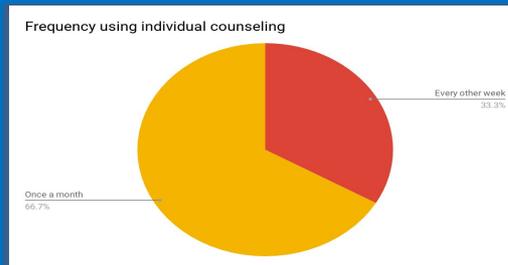


Figure 3. Counseling Distribution

Results

- All participants were female
- All participants accessed mental health services
- All participants were employed
- All participants had high self-esteem per Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale with score of 23, 24, and 25 respectively (see figure 2).

Discussion/Conclusions/Next Steps

Results show immigrants with mental health complications do seek treatment. This is reflected by all three participants receiving at least weekly counselling and attending psychiatry at least once a month by the time of the study. The usefulness of this exploratory study allowed researchers a look into how three immigrants utilize individual therapy with a psychiatrist or therapist. Due to the limited number of participants, this pilot study did not establish the influence of mental health service access on self-esteem. Of the three participants, two indicated low income (<\$20,000/year). The other reported an income between \$20,000 and \$45,000 per year. Although these results are not statistically significant, it is interesting that the one participant who reported a higher income indicated the highest self-esteem. Future studies could look further into this to see if there is a correlation between income and self-esteem among immigrants. All participants in the study identified as women. This partially suggests immigrant women with mental health illness are more likely than their men counterparts to access mental health services. As this is not conclusive, however there it calls for further research study to explore this possibility.

Acknowledgements

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