2004

College Students’ Attitudes Toward Seeking Help for Mental Health Problems: A Vignette Approach

Kelly Sensenig

Follow this and additional works at: https://mosaic.messiah.edu/honors

Part of the Mental and Social Health Commons, and the Psychiatry Commons
Permanent URL: https://mosaic.messiah.edu/honors/228

Sharpening Intellect | Deepening Christian Faith | Inspiring Action

Messiah College is a Christian college of the liberal and applied arts and sciences. Our mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society.
COLLEGE STUDENTS’ ATTITUDES TOWARD SEEKING HELP FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS: A Vignette Approach

Research performed by: Kelly Sensenig, Senior Nursing Student, Messiah College

Review of Literature

In a review of current literature focusing on help-seeking behaviors, attitudes, and barriers, Motivation and incentives observed among college students. The goal was to analyze these themes through a comprehensive format to assess the experiences of a help-seeking continuum. To summarize, some factors influence the stages involved in the help-seeking process. A person seeking help may pass through this process using any of the stages before getting help for a problem. The influencing factors—motivation and barriers—play into the process at different points. These factors may stop the process, impede the process, or accelerate the process at any point.

Motivators

1. **Fear of stigma:** An individual may feel that seeking help will lead to social isolation or judgment, which can prevent them from seeking assistance.
2. **Misperception of help:** Individuals may not understand the nature of mental health issues and the effectiveness of seeking help, leading to a delay in seeking assistance.
3. **Lack of awareness:** The individual may be unaware of the symptoms of mental health issues or the availability of professional help.
4. **Social pressure:** Family or friends may encourage or discourage seeking help, influencing the individual's decision.
5. **Lack of knowledge:** Individuals may lack knowledge about mental health issues and the help available, leading to a delay in seeking assistance.
6. **Cost:** The cost of mental health services can be a significant barrier, preventing individuals from seeking help.
7. **Lack of access:** Geographic or logistical barriers, such as lack of transportation or proximity to services, can prevent individuals from seeking help.
8. **Concerns about confidentiality:** Individuals may fear that their mental health issues will be disclosed to others, leading to a delay in seeking assistance.

Barriers

1. **Fear of stigma:** The fear of being judged or ostracized by others can prevent individuals from seeking help.
2. **Cost:** The cost of mental health services can be a significant barrier, preventing individuals from seeking help.
3. **Lack of access:** Geographic or logistical barriers, such as lack of transportation or proximity to services, can prevent individuals from seeking help.
4. **Concerns about confidentiality:** Individuals may fear that their mental health issues will be disclosed to others, leading to a delay in seeking assistance.

Methodology

Participants

Participants included college students enrolled at Messiah College, representing various majors and demographics. The sample was selected based on convenience and availability, with an emphasis on ensuring a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds.

Instruments

The data collection instrument was a 50-item survey, which included Likert-scale questions to assess attitudes and experiences related to seeking help for mental health problems. The survey was distributed through an online platform, allowing for anonymous participation.

Procedures

Data collection was conducted over a period of three weeks, with all participants completing the survey. The survey was administered online, and participants were informed of the study's purpose and the voluntary nature of their participation.

Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, with the results presented in the form of frequency distributions and summary statistics. The findings were then interpreted in the context of the research questions.

Results

**Motivators of Help-Seeking**

1. **Fear of stigma:** Individuals are more likely to seek help if they perceive that help-seeking is acceptable, and they are confident in their ability to handle their mental health issues.
2. **Misperception of help:** Individuals may seek help if they understand the nature of mental health issues and the effectiveness of seeking help.
3. **Lack of awareness:** Individuals may seek help if they are educated about mental health issues and the availability of professional help.
4. **Social pressure:** Family or friends may encourage or discourage seeking help, influencing the individual's decision.
5. **Lack of knowledge:** Individuals may seek help if they lack knowledge about mental health issues and the help available, leading to a delay in seeking assistance.
6. **Cost:** Individuals are more likely to seek help if they can afford the cost of mental health services.
7. **Lack of access:** Geographic or logistical barriers, such as lack of transportation or proximity to services, do not prevent individuals from seeking help.
8. **Concerns about confidentiality:** Individuals are more likely to seek help if they feel that their mental health issues will be kept confidential.

**Barriers to Help-Seeking**

1. **Fear of stigma:** Individuals are less likely to seek help if they believe that help-seeking will lead to social isolation or judgment.
2. **Cost:** The cost of mental health services can be a significant barrier, preventing individuals from seeking help.
3. **Lack of access:** Geographic or logistical barriers, such as lack of transportation or proximity to services, can prevent individuals from seeking help.
4. **Concerns about confidentiality:** Individuals are less likely to seek help if they fear that their mental health issues will be disclosed to others.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the study findings indicate that college students' attitudes toward seeking help for mental health problems are influenced by a variety of factors, including motivation and barriers. These factors play a critical role in shaping help-seeking behavior and should be considered in the development of interventions aimed at improving mental health outcomes among college students. The results highlight the need for interventions that address the specific barriers and motivators identified, such as increasing access to mental health services, reducing stigma, and improving awareness and knowledge about mental health issues.

The research suggests that interventions focused on addressing the identified barriers and motivators can help improve help-seeking behaviors among college students. These interventions may include education programs, awareness campaigns, and the development of support systems that reduce stigma and improve access to mental health services. The findings also underscore the importance of ongoing research to further understand the complex interplay of factors that influence help-seeking behavior in this population.