Stigma Towards Seeking Mental Health
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INTRODUCTION

- Stigma: defined as the perception of being flawed because of a personal or physical characteristic that is regarded as socially unacceptable, is the single most common reason for not seeking help.
- 2 types: Public and Self
  - Public Stigma can be experienced through rejection or discrimination; can have social, economic, political, or psychological consequences
  - Self Stigma is internalization of negative feelings; this can eat away at an individual and he/she will silently suffer rather than asking for help
  - Seeking professional help could pose too much stress for individuals and they are even less likely to seek needed help
  - Self Stigma is positively correlated with self-stigma.
  - Public stigma will be positively correlated with self-stigma.
  - 19% Bi/Multiracial
  - Attitudes towards seeking professional help will be positively correlated to willingness to seek professional help.
  - Completed surveys returned to the researcher for analysis
  - Different cultures can view stigma and seeking professional help in unique ways.
  - 8% African
  - 23% Euro
  - 5% Asian

Hypotheses
1. Public stigma will be positively correlated with self-stigma.
2. Self-stigma will be negatively correlated with attitudes towards seeking professional help (psychological and interpersonal concerns, academic concerns, and drug use concerns).
3. Attitudes towards seeking professional help will be positively correlated to willingness to seek professional help.
4. Men are less willing to seek professional help about psychological, academic, and drug use concerns than women.

METHOD

- Self-Stigma of Seeking Help Scale (Vogel et al., 2006). Ten statements on a 5-point, Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). High scores represented greater perceived self-stigma.
- Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (Fischer & Farina, 1995). Ten statements on a 4-point, Likert-type scale (1=agree to 4=disagree). High scores represented more positive attitudes.
- Intentions to Seek Counseling Inventory (Cash, Begley, McCown, & Weise, 1975). Three subscales: psychological and interpersonal concerns, academic concerns, and drug use concerns, using a 7-point scale (1=very unlikely to 7=very likely). High scores indicated greater willingness to seek professional help.

Procedure
- Group-administered during regularly scheduled classes
- Informed participants that participation was voluntary and responses would remain confidential
- Consent forms were signed and detached from survey
- Completed surveys returned to the researcher for analysis
- No compensation given

RESULTS
- Pearson r correlation showed a positive, strong correlation, \( r(100) = .51 \), \( p < .01 \), between public stigma and self-stigma. Indicates the more negative public stigma an individual perceives the more negative self-stigma they perceive.
- Pearson r correlation showed a negative, strong correlation, \( r(100) = -.68 \), \( p < .01 \), between self-stigma and attitudes towards seeking professional help. Indicates the more negative self-stigma an individual perceives the less positive their attitude towards seeking professional help will be.
- Pearson r correlation showed a positive, strong correlation, \( r(100) = .53 \), \( p < .01 \), between attitudes towards seeking professional help and intentions to seek help about psychological and interpersonal concerns. Indicates the more positive attitudes one feels towards seeking professional help the more intentions they have to seek professional help concerning psychological and interpersonal concerns.
- Pearson r correlation showed a positive correlation, \( r(100) = .24 \), \( p < .01 \), between attitudes towards seeking professional help and intentions to seek help about academic concerns. Indicates the more positive attitudes one feels towards seeking professional help the more intentions they have to seek professional help concerning academic concerns.
- Pearson r correlation showed a positive correlation, \( r(100) = .20 \), \( p < .05 \), between attitudes towards seeking professional help and intentions to seek help about drug use concerns. Indicates the more positive attitudes one feels towards seeking professional help the more intentions they have to seek professional help concerning drug use.
- T-test for independent samples was performed to examine the differences in intentions to seek professional help between men and women. Women report significantly higher levels of intentions to seek professional help for psychological and interpersonal concerns when compared to men, \( t(98) = 2.85 \), \( p < .01 \).

METHOD CONTINUED

- Correlations Between Variables
- Intensions to Seek Professional Help about Psychological and Interpersonal Concerns
- Intentions to Seek Professional Help about Academic Concerns
- Intensions to Seek Professional Help about Drug Use Concerns
- Note. \( N = 100; * p < .05; ** p < .01 \)

Means and Standard Deviations on Intentions to Seek Professional Help for Men and Women

<table>
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<th>Gender</th>
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<th>Female</th>
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<td>SD</td>
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<td>4.28</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

- The more public stigma an individual perceives, the more self-stigma they will perceive. The more self-stigma an individual perceives the more negative their attitudes towards seeking professional help will be. The more negative attitudes an individual has towards seeking professional help the less likely they are to have intentions to seek professional help.
- Men are less likely to seek out professional help concerning psychological and interpersonal concerns. Men did not show lesser intentions to seek professional help concerning drug use and academic concerns.
- Importance: Stigma can be hard to change. Self-stigma is probably easier to change, but it does not involve changing society’s views.
- Findings in this study give professionals a place to start in trying to alleviate the concerns with stigma patients may have when considering seeking professional help.
- Limitations
  - Participants were college-aged psychology majors at a local university, predominantly female.
  - Population from which sample was drawn was mainly Euro-Americans/White and Latino/Hispanics.
  - Different cultures can view stigma and seeking professional help in different ways. Stigma may not hold the same influence in another culture as it does in a Western culture.