
College Students' Attitudes towards the Behavior of Help-Seeking: A Psychological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Many universities provide mental health services for students. However, a significant gap has been observed between available resources and service utilization.

This study aimed at examining the relationship between attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help and help-seeking behavior using Azjen's Theory of Planned Behavior.

Close to 500 college students responded to two questionnaires: Attitudes Toward Seeking Psychological Help-Shortened Form (ASPH-SF) and the General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ).

Results overwhelmingly showed that college students have average attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help and would hardly seek professional help, preferring to seek help from family members. However, these variables showed strong significant relationship at .01 level of significance.

On the basis of the results, it is recommended that another study be done with a heterogeneous sample using the same variables or adding other variables to reveal more of the help-seeking process. Further, a psychoeducational intervention on the importance of the psychological help-seeking process and the benefits of utilizing available source of help was also recommended.

Keywords: *help-seeking attitudes, psychological help-seeking behavior, college students*

INTRODUCTION

The transition from high school to college, the demands of schoolwork, maintaining a social life, and other personal issues can be taxing and may induce a significant amount of stress and anxiety that negatively affects a student's mental health (Laxson, 2014). Laxson also found that while many universities provide mental health services for students, there is a significant gap between available resources and service utilization, and it was suggested that there are social constraints that impede students' willingness to partake in resources, such as counseling, when it may potentially be beneficial. In fact, Kerr (2012) wrote that 75% of college students do not seek help for mental health problems.

Hartong (2011) also revealed that despite the difficulties they are experiencing, there are students who keep it to themselves and most college students with a psychological concern forego free mental health services available to them at their school. As another study noted by Walter (2012), Raunic and Xenos (2008) pointed out underutilization is true internationally,

with rates of usage commonly found between 2 and 4 percent in universities throughout the world.

Recognition of problems and of a need for counseling does not necessarily determine that individuals will seek professional help (McClure, 2014). As Vogel, Wade, Wester, Larson and Hackler (2007) wrote that the decision to seek psychological help may be hindered or facilitated by many factors. According to Walter (2012), understanding the underlying mechanisms of underutilization is important not only in helping to promote mental health but also in promoting academic success.

Tuliao (2014) pointed out that it is also important to first discuss if there are sufficient mental health professionals and services available in the Philippines. He mentioned that there are four general professions that are legally recognized to provide mental health services: guidance and counseling practitioners (Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004); psychologists and psychometricians (The Psychology Act of 2009); social workers (Republic Act No. 4373 (1965); and those within the umbrella of the medical profession.

In the Philippines, counseling encompasses a broad spectrum of disciplines (e.g., guidance and counseling, counseling/clinical psychology) (Tuason, Fernandez, Catipon, Dey & Carandang, 2012). The Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP) defined counseling psychology as a psychological specialty that facilitates personal and interpersonal functioning across the life span with a focus on emotional, social, vocational, educational, health-related, developmental, and organizational concerns.

In Samar State University's (SSU) main campus, counseling service is offered by the Career Guidance Center composed of five personnel namely the head of office, who is a Registered Guidance Counselor, three guidance personnel who are still finishing their degrees in psychology and guidance and counseling and a licensed psychometrician. The office facilitates students' concerns from academic, career/placement and personal-social issues as well.

A report from the guidance office revealed that for the past five years the highest number of the students who have sought counseling both for walk-in and referred student-clientele is only 13.31%, supporting the literature in the underutilization of the mental health services such as the counseling service offered in the university. Majority of reported concerns of students fall on career and academic concerns and students referred for counseling by their instructors are facing academic concerns, while career and personal-social are the concerns of walk-in clients.

This study is conducted in Samar State University to get baseline data on the students' attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help and their help-seeking behavior in relation to their utilization of psychological counseling service as a practice professionalized by the law. This will also help develop better awareness on the importance of the protection of the helping professions, secure licenses to practice and deliver better psychological and other related services that would be beneficial to the clientele in the university.

Tuliao and Velasquez (2014) indicated the dearth of studies that tackle help-seeking behaviors among native Filipinos (i.e., born and living in the Philippines) as research on help-seeking behavior of Filipinos focused primarily on Filipino American immigrants. Furthermore, a

considerable number of studies subsume Filipino Americans under the more general label of Asian Americans, together with other ethnicities and subgroups (Tuliao & Velasquez, 2014).

As viewed in the study of Joseph (2010), several authors (Cepeda-Benito & Short, 1998; Cramer, 1999; Deane & Chamberlain, 1994; Deane & Todd, 1996; Kelly & Achter, 1995; Leaf & Bruce, 1987; Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994) wrote that among the many psychological factors that have been associated with the utilization of professional mental health services, findings appear to be central to a person's decision to seek professional help for psychological problems. First and foremost, the psychological help-seeking literature indicates that negative attitudes toward professional psychological services are strongly associated with avoidance of mental health services and less willingness to seek professional psychological help.

Hess and Tracey's (2012) study on psychological help-seeking intentions among college students that the issue of underutilization of mental health services the counseling service in particular is a common and growing concern in the mental health field. The results supported the use of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control when predicting intention to seek psychological help.

According to Brown (2011), previous studies about underutilization of counseling have something to do with attitude towards counseling, thus revealed that it has a significant relationship with help-seeking behavior. Moreover, attitude towards seeking counseling is probably the variable most often examined in relation to psychological help-seeking.

Pfohl (2010) indicated in her study that counseling trainees who had not previously sought psychological help held more negative attitudes toward seeking that help, and had higher levels of stigma concerns (public and private) about seeking psychological help. However, Teh, Acosta, Hechanova, Garabiles and Alianan, Jr. (2014) studied "Attitudes of Psychology Graduate Students Toward Face-to-Face and Online Counseling" and found that their attitude towards online and face-to-face counseling was generally positive and majority of the respondents indicated openness to conducting online counseling although they still considered face-to-face counseling more effective than online counseling.

Brown (2010) instituted that attitudes toward seeking psychological help mediate the relationship between counseling expectations and intentions to seek help. Thus, it appears that what one expects about the counseling process is related to how one evaluates counseling, which, in turn, is related to willingness to seek therapy. It was also revealed that attitudes were related to intentions to seek psychological help.

Likewise, Greenidge's (2007) study on attitudes towards seeking professional counseling indicated that anticipated utility of seeking professional counseling thus, has a significant relationship with the attitudes towards seeking professional counseling. As cited in Brown (2011), Cramer (1999) and Morgan et al. (2003) investigated the relationships among psychological distress, attitudes toward seeking psychological help, and intentions to seek counseling among college students. They found that psychological distress and attitudes toward seeking psychological help were positively related to students' intentions to seek counseling services and that on the other hand psychological distress and psychological help-seeking attitudes were not related.

These studies support the assumptions of the current study that attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help as well as the individual's experience of help-seeking influences one's help-seeking behavior. The present day counseling and help-seeking in the Philippines still involves superstition and reliance on elders and traditional healers when addressing what the West would consider psychological difficulties (Teh, Acosta, Hechanova, Garabiles & Alianan, 2014; Tuason, Fernandez, Catipon & Carandang, 2012). Tuliao and Velasquez (2014) found that those who were open to seeking psychological help from family members and lay social networks were also inclined to seek help from professionals.

Raviv, et.al, (2009) studied factors affecting adolescents' willingness to seek help and found they refer peers more than themselves to a psychologist and to a friend. In addition, adolescents are also more willing to refer themselves and peers to a friend rather than to a psychologist. The findings of the study replicate previous research regarding the existence of a personal service gap among adolescents. The participants' attitudes toward seeking help underscore the fact that, indeed, many adolescents who could benefit from psychological assistance are unlikely to seek out this form of help. This is true for both male and female adolescents despite girls' more positive attitudes toward seeking help and their higher rates of actual help-seeking behavior.

Tinsley, et al. (1984, cited in Kakhnovets, 2010), however indicated that students have different expectations for different campus providers, and they are more likely to seek help from counseling psychologists whom they view as attractive and who will not engage in much self-disclosure or attempt to tell the client what to do.

Tuliao (2014) studied mental help-seeking among Filipinos and revealed other correlates of mental help-seeking behavior. For example, considering an economic and contextual perspective, Filipinos may not be accessing mental health services because it is inaccessible and prohibitive and, the ratio of professionals to population is below the minimum standards of the World Health Organization (WHO). He added that professionalization of counselors and psychologists is also in its early stages increasing the Filipinos' reliance on traditional and folk healers, who are more accessible and cheaper than mental health professionals.

Gong, Gage and Tacata (2003) explored the existing research on Asian Americans and help seeking behavior, using data from the Filipino American Epidemiological Study (FACES) survey and revealed that the lay system is the most frequently used source of care compared with the other systems of professional and folk systems for Filipino Americans. Results of the help-seeking behaviors mentioned in the cited literature revealed the preferences of Filipinos to seek help for psychological concerns from informal mental health providers and underutilization of professional psychological help is due to limited access to it thus, a service gap is observed.

The present study is anchored on Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (TPB). This framework would reveal a clear understanding of consistent indications of a gap between service need and service utilization rates in general population studies, as well as student population studies (Marsh, 2011). The TPB assumes that the best predictor of a certain behavior is an individual's intention to perform that specific behavior. This model includes three determinants of the intent to perform a certain behavior: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective normative beliefs about performing the behavior, and perceived behavioral control of performing the behavior (Figure 1). Ajzen (1985) suggests that behavior is most

effectively predicted given knowledge of attitudes, subjective norms and subjective beliefs about control over potential obstacles to achieving particular behavioral goals”.

The TPB has a strong empirical history and is appropriate for help-seeking research and the validity of TPB makes it a strong theoretical framework (Hess & Tracey, 2012). A study by Cepeda-Benito and Short, (1999, cited in Hess & Tracey, 2012) revealed that positive attitude was significantly related to likelihood to seek help with strongest psychological and interpersonal concerns. Cited in the study of Hartong (2011), the TPB posits that intention to perform a behavior is predicted by one’s attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms associated with the behavior, and perceived behavioral control over performing it (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Based on context, one predictor (e.g., attitudes) may influence intentions more than the other two predictors (subjective norms, perceived behavioral control), and the most influential component varies based on context as well.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study aimed to find out the attitude towards professional psychological help and help-seeking behavior of Samar State University students. Specifically, the study sought to know the attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help of Samar State University students, their help-seeking behavior and if there is a significant relationship between attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help and help-seeking behavior of Samar State University students. It was hypothesized that there would be no significant relationship between attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help and help-seeking behavior of Samar State University students.

This study will be significant to present and future psychology students and researchers of Samar State University. The findings will add to the understanding of the attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help of college students and their help-seeking behavior. The result of the study will lead other researchers in the field of counseling psychology to identify some related variables to undertake. Future research is needed to replicate and validate the results adding other significant variables such willingness to seek counseling, attitudes toward counselors, stigma related to help-seeking and self-concealment having a larger sample.

The results can also be applied to the practice of psychological counseling in school setting such as counseling program’s review and evaluation, assessment of the availability of sources of help, and if available, qualification and training of these practitioners to cater to the psychological needs of college students. Likewise, with appropriate advocacy, communication, awareness campaign, information drive and collaboration with allied professionals and the general public, the notion about seeking psychological counseling services will become less-stigmatized.

It also in a way or another will help the field of counseling psychology in the school setting with an understanding of the students’ attitude towards seeking professional psychological help and help-seeking behavior and facilitate their own actualization of the importance of seeking needed help in dealing with some adjustments and concerns in their college life.

Psychologists and other mental health professionals could work together to conduct more outreach services working with different indigenous support systems from religious and community groups, lay networks and the family which serves as coping resources could

potentially alleviate some of the stigma that is attached to the psychological help-seeking process.

Another significance of this study would encourage competencies of the different fields and practice of Psychology, particularly and mandated to those who provide psychological counseling and assessment in school settings to secure licenses for the protection and preservation of the growing counseling psychology profession in the Philippines.

This study could also be beneficial, especially if these findings are replicated to emphasize to counselors in every university the help-seeking processes that our student-clients experience and the other factors such as stigma, self-concealment and problem severity related to their help-seeking. Such knowledge is hoped to help the office towards the development and implementation of more effective counseling programs and promotion of mental health awareness and campaigns.

METHODS

This study investigated attitudes towards seeking professional counseling and help-seeking behavior of Samar State University's college students. More specifically, this study examined the relationship of students' attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help and help-seeking behavior.

A detailed description of variables, participants, instruments, as well as data analyses which were used to investigate each research question are offered. This chapter summarizes the process of conducting the present study, which includes an overview of the variables, description of the research participants, data gathering procedure, enumeration of the sampling techniques, a review of the instruments used, and an outline of the statistical analyses.

In this study, attitude toward seeking psychological help was defined as learned predispositions to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to psychological help-seeking (Brown, 2011). Moreover, help-seeking was used to describe the behavior of the college students in seeking needed help for academic, personal/emotional and career related concerns. Rickwood et al. (2005) classified help-seeking as informal help-seeking (family, friends, etc.) and formal help-seeking (mental health professionals, youth workers, etc.). As used in this current study, professional psychological help is one of the responses of formal help seeking (Cebi, 2009).

The participants/respondents of this study were the students enrolled in Samar State University for the summer term of the school year 2015-2016. These student respondents' data were gathered from the official list of enrollees for the summer term of the school year 2015-2016. The number of actual respondents was selected using the Slovin's formula. A total of 490 student-respondents represented each college of Samar State University main campus from the 874 total numbers of enrollees. To ensure that the resulting sample is distributed the same way as the population, a stratified random sampling was utilized and based on the needed samples representation from each college or strata, 86 respondents came from the College of Engineering, 23 from the College of Education, 206 from the College of Arts and Sciences, 105 from the College of Industrial Technology and 32 out of 58 from the

College of Nursing and Health Sciences respectively. A simple random sampling was used to select respondents from each college.

The instruments used in this study were selected following a systematic and careful review of the counseling literature. Instruments were selected based on the applicability to the content of this study as well as based on the psychometric properties of each instrument. *Attitudes toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form* (ATSPPH-SF) is based on Fischer and Turner's (1970) original 29-item measure, Fischer, E., and Farina (1995) developed a 10-item scale to measure attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help.

This is a shortened form and considerations for research developed are adapted from Whittlesey's (2001) book entitled *Diversity Activities for Psychology*. Using factor analysis, 10 items representing essentially the same constructs as the original instrument were retained. The authors reported evidence of criterion-related validity (correlations with previous help-seeking experience and respondent gender) and convergent validity (correlation of .87 with the original measure). In terms of reliability, the ATSPPH-SF has a coefficient alpha equal to .84 and a 1-month test-retest reliability coefficient of .80; the current data yielded a coefficient alpha of .85. The items in the ATSPPH-SF are rated using scores between 1 (disagree) and 4 (agree). The Short Form of the ATSPPHS has been used more frequently in recent studies than the long form (Pfohl, 2010).

The ATSPPH-SF is a self-report measure which can be completed in about 5-10 minutes. In terms of scoring, the responses are arranged in a 4-point Likert-type format and scores range from 0-30. A high score indicates a more positive attitude towards seeking professional psychological help. The total score is obtained by adding up all items. Scoring this measure is simple and quick (Greenidge, 2007). Sample items include the following: "A person with an emotional problem is not likely to solve it alone; he or she is likely to solve it with professional help", "There is something admirable in the attitude of a person who is willing to cope with his or her conflicts and fears without resorting to professional help", and "I might want to have psychological counseling in the future."

General Help Seeking Questionnaire is a vital instrument in the assessment and improvement of mental health in the Philippines, given its adaptability and flexibility of use in this particular culture (Tuliao & Velasquez, 2014). This is a modified version of Wilson and colleagues' (2005) General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ). Permission was sought to use this instrument.

Tuliao and Velasquez (2014) revisions to the GHSQ included replacing "mental health" professionals with "professional counselor, psychologist, psychiatrist, or social worker". Seeking help when experiencing suicidal thoughts was an uncomfortable topic for the participants thus, was subsequently dropped from the adapted GHSQ. In their modification, Likert scale was also reduced from seven to five for quicker response time; with fewer points in the scale preventing distortion effects of reference points, avoiding triviality of categories, and reducing bias for cognitive ability of respondents.

Sample items such as "I would not seek help from anyone," as well as an item asking for other possible sources of psychological help other than the ones already included were also added by Tuliao & Velasquez, for the GHSQ to be responsive to the Filipino population, other possible sources of psychological help were added by the Filipino authors.

The current study used a quantitative strategy wherein the researcher utilized a survey design to determine the relationship of the variables in order to explain it. In the collection of reliable and relevant information, a letter of permission was given to the university president regarding the nature of the current study and the selection of summer class students of Samar State University as the respondents. The approved letter was sent to the deans of the different colleges of Samar State University to ask for permission to administer the research tool to the random sample of student-respondents from their respective classes.

An introductory letter with informed consent form was given to the student-respondents about the research; its purpose and confidentiality were also presented to them for ethical considerations. The researcher secured an informed consent from the respondents after the respondents have been informed and oriented about the study in a formal letter given to them. Additional parent's consent was given to the respondents below 18 years old. The respondents were asked to answer all items in the questionnaire and not leave any item unanswered as much as possible. They were informed that including their name in their demographic data is optional, but other biographical information had to be obtained. Respondents were assured that all information gathered will be held with strict confidentiality and they can have access to the results of the study. The researcher made all the possible ways that the data collection did not disrupt their class schedule and work.

The data collected was tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, Standard Deviation, frequency and percentage). These statistical tools measured the characteristics and number of times a particular value for a variable (data item) has been observed to occur. Attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help were determined by the total score for the 10-item statements-the higher the score the more positive the attitude is. The mean scores for the general help-seeking were computed to determine the general help-seeking behavior of the respondents. Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the degree of relationship between student's attitudes towards professional psychological help and help-seeking behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected consists of student-respondents' attitudes towards professional psychological help and help-seeking behavior as supported by the psychological help-seeking framework of Theory of Planned Behavior.

Respondents' demographic information revealed that about half of the participants in the sample were female (n= 260, 53.1%) while males represented 47% of the sample (n= 230). About one third of the respondents were 19 years old (n= 145, 29.6%), with a range from 16 to 29 years old. Over a third of the respondents are taking Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (36.5%). Respondents were mostly of second year level (n=242).

The highest number of the student-respondents was those respondents enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences which includes Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, Bachelor of Science in Information System, Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Bachelor of Science in Applied Statistics of which is about half of the respondents (n=236).

Students' attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help were measured using the Attitude towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form questionnaire. The

student-respondents were asked to rate their attitude towards seeking professional psychological help within a range of 0 (strongly disagree), 1 (disagree), 2 (agree) and 3 (strongly agree) (Table 1). Majority (n= 428 or 87.3%) of the respondents scored average on their attitude towards seeking professional psychological help. Similar low percentages scored low and high. Participant's total scores reported a mean score of 15.66 ($SD = 3.344$) on the ATSPPHS-SF reflecting neither a positive nor a negative attitude toward seeking professional help.

In this study, the possible range on the ATSPPHS-SF was 0-3 and a total score of 0-30, where higher scores indicated a more positive orientation toward seeking psychological help. The General Help Seeking Behavior questionnaire measures general help-seeking behavior in terms of normativeness, actual help-seeking behavior and intent to seek help. The responses on General Help-Seeking Behavior of the participants reported a mean score of 2.28 ($SD = .64$) on the GHSQ indicating that student's which means that the respondent's hardly address their concerns to other possible sources of help.

The possible range on the GHSQ was 1-5, where higher scores indicated the frequency in seeking for psychological help. The participants were asked to rate their general help-seeking behavior in three categories in terms of normativeness, actual help-seeking and intent to seek help within a range of 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (sometimes), 4 (most of the times) and 5 (always). Results (Table 2) indicate that majority of the majority of the respondents (n=316, 64%).

Similar results were found no matter what help-seeking behavior was considered- whether normativeness (2.28), actual help-seeking (2.22) or intent to seek for help (2.37). These categories of help-seeking behavior reported consistent ratings of the participants of infrequently seeking for help.

The resulting correlation coefficient ($r=.166$) indicated that the relationship of attitude towards seeking professional psychological help and help-seeking behavior is significant at .01 level of significant, thus rejecting the null hypothesis of the study stating that *there is no significant relationship between attitude towards seeking professional psychological help and help-seeking behavior of SSU students*, and accepting the alternative hypothesis of the study stating that *there is a significant relationship between attitude towards seeking professional psychological help and help-seeking behavior of SSU students*.

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help and general help-seeking behavior of college students. Seeking help for mental and psychological healthcare is a complex issue, particularly due to stigma against people with psychological problems or concerns. Indeed, Tuliao and Velasquez (2014) have asserted that psychological problems are also known by other names such as mental health concerns, emotional problems, mental troubles, and personal difficulties.

The study reveals that majority of the students have an average score in the Attitude towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form and 6% have a positive attitude towards professional psychological help-seeking while the other 7% indicated a negative attitude towards professional psychological help. The reported result on the ATSPPH-SF revealed that students' attitude towards seeking professional psychological help are neither positive nor negative or reflected an average stance towards seeking psychological help from professionals. This result supported the contention of Greenidge (2007) that anticipated utility

of professional psychological help had a direct relationship with attitudes towards seeking professional help such as counseling. Thus, participants who anticipated greater utility of counseling services also reported more positive attitudes (Vogel et. al, 2005) towards seeking professional counseling.

However, respondents who reported negative attitudes towards professional psychological help-seeking negatively affected their belief about counseling thus, results in hindering service utilization. This result attested Greenidge (2007) findings which purported that the anticipated risks of seeking professional psychological help such as counseling are often perceived as worse than the problem itself and result to service underutilization.

The data also indicates that participants rarely seek for psychological help and whenever they do, the students sought help from family members-e.g., parents and grandparents. The participants' general help-seeking behavior in three categories in terms of normativeness, actual help-seeking and intent to seek help revealed that they seldom seek for psychological help for the given help sources and very few are either always seeking or never seek psychological help. Results appear consistent with the literature indicating that young individuals tend to believe that personal and emotional problems are better dealt with by family members than with professional sources of help (Rickwood, Deane, Wilson, & Ciarrochi, 2005).

Indeed there is underutilization of available sources of psychological help, may it be formal or informal. Despite the difficulties they are experiencing, there are students who keep it to themselves and most college students with psychological concerns forego free mental health services available to them at their school.

An important component of the findings in this study is the strong relationship consistently found between attitude towards seeking professional psychological help and help-seeking behavior in terms of normativeness of help-seeking, actual help-seeking behavior and intentions to seek for help. This resulted to rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative.

The findings were backed up by Azjen's (1991) claim that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control will vary in their contributions to the prediction of behavioral intentions depending on context. This claim was further supported by the study of Tuliao (2014) when he found that help-seeking behavior from family and nonfamily members were associated with higher problem severity and better attitudes towards help-seeking while intent to seek psychological help from family and nonfamily members were associated with lower stigma and better attitudes towards help seeking.

Results of this study were also supported by Tuliao's (2014) adaptation of GHSQ when he associated the tool with another measure of help-seeking behavior, as well as other variables purported to be correlated with help-seeking behavior, such as higher problem severity, lower stigma, and positive attitudes towards seeking professional help. In the findings, although average attitude towards professional psychological help-seeking has a strong relationship towards help-seeking, participants' seldom help-seeking would probably have something to do with problem severity, lower stigma towards professional psychological help-seeking or the subjective norms that lead to perceived behavioral control to seek help from parents/grandparents as the reported source of help-seeking .

Indeed, there have been mixed results in the literature as to what type of significant factor/s have played a more prominent role in predicting behaviors related to mental help-seeking. But attitudes towards seeking help is one of the often used variables that influences behavior in the mental help-seeking literature. The current study extends the literature by more directly measuring help-seeking through examining the constructs of attitude and behavior in college students and using the construct of attitude as a variables related towards help-seeking behavior.

Brown (2011) has indicated underutilization of psychological help such as counseling. As earlier mentioned, among the many psychological factors that have been associated with the utilization of professional mental health services are the attitudes toward professional psychological services and willingness to seek professional psychological help.

Perhaps a limitation of this study has to do with the variables themselves and how these were measured. The respondents came from municipal backgrounds and might have limited exposure to professional psychological help. Therefore, the idea of seeking professional help is new to them, thus, the neutrality in their responses.

Indeed, help-seeking has been identified as a complex process; the simplistic model of identifying needs, deciding to seek help, and carrying out that decision is fraught with a host of factors that might hinder acting upon help-seeking intentions,” Tuliao and Velasquez (2014, p. 12-13). Tuliao and Velasquez (2014) had observed that Filipinos sought help from faith healers, herbalists, and so on, but the current study did not factor this phenomenon in as an important consideration.

While both attitudes towards help-seeking behavior and help-seeking behavior are important variables of study, it is also recommended that future researches might also consider looking into the following: willingness or openness to seeking help, rural-urban sample comparison, personality characteristics such as self-esteem, resilience, and locus of control, and even a multicultural comparison (e.g., locals versus international students). It is further recommended that schools undertake information drives so that students and their families as well as faculty and staff may be enlightened on the work of mental health professionals and what the protocols are when they or anyone they know experiences problems of a psychological nature such as personal difficulties, social adjustments and crisis.

The office of Counseling Services can take a very active role in the school counseling program’s review and evaluation, assessment of the availability of sources of help, and if available, qualification and training of these practitioners to cater to the psychological needs of college students. Likewise, with appropriate advocacy, communication, awareness campaign, information drive and collaboration with allied professionals and the general public, the notion about seeking psychological counseling services will become less-stigmatized (Tuason, Fernandez, Catipon, Dey & Carandang, 2012).

Finally, teachers/instructors will be encouraged to make referrals of students who have manifested symptoms of distress, poor academic performance, relationships and family issues, poor coping mechanisms and other concerns to the office of the guidance services for immediate action and intervention and prevent additional burdens to the student-clienteles not knowing who to seek for certain concerns.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Student's transition from high school to college may induce a significant amount of stress and anxiety that negatively affects a student's mental health (Laxson, 2014). Studies found a significant gap between available resources and service utilization. In fact, Kerr (2012) wrote that 75% of college students do not seek help for mental health problems.

Literature indicated that negative attitudes toward professional psychological services are strongly associated with avoidance and less willingness to seek professional psychological help thus underutilizations of psychological counseling have something to do with attitude towards psychological help-seeking.

Attitude towards help-seeking and help-seeking behavior variables were selected by the researcher since the interest of the researcher is to know and examine the help-seeking behavior of college students and as what the literature have indicated, attitude has the strongest influence to a person's behavior as supported by the theory of Planned Behavior, a theory utilized by most researchers who studied help-seeking behavior.

A randomly selected sample of 490 college students responded to two questionnaires: Attitudes towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help- Short Form (ATSPPH-SF) and the General Help-seeking Behavior (GHSQ). Majority (over 80%) rated average on the Attitudes towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help- Short Form (ATSPPH-SF) scale, signifying that they were neither favorable towards nor against seeking professional psychological help. In other words, they were mostly neutral. The respondents also tended not to seek help from informal sources- that is, family members (e.g., parents and grandparents).

When these two variables, however, were statistically correlated, the result was significant. Even as the resulting r was very low, this means that one's attitude towards professional psychological help is related to one's help-seeking behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

Although there are several studies on the attitudes towards seeking psychological counseling, limited studies focused on Filipino sample. This study sought to examine psychological help-seeking attitude and behavior aimed in bridging this gap and underutilization of this available service in schools and add the research findings in the literature. Based on the data collected, results and analysis of tests, this study has concluded that SSU student-respondents have a average attitude towards seeking professional psychological help and that would rarely seek for psychological help in formal or informal sources in general help-seeking behavior but would prefer parents/grandparents as a source of psychological help signifying that they were neither favorable towards nor against seeking professional psychological help. In other words, they were mostly neutral. The respondents also tended not to seek help from informal sources- that is, family members (e.g., parents and grandparents).

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