

How do Undergraduate Students of Color Experience, Describe, and Cope with Mental Health Challenges in College?

Faculty Director: Dr. Garbarski, Department of Sociology

Student Researcher: Sarah Lehmann

(Research is still in progress)

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the unique experiences of students of color and how they experience, describe, and cope with mental health challenges in college. To better understand their specific mental health experiences, surveys were sent out to undergraduate students of color at Loyola University Chicago. The preliminary results of this study are the following: during the 2020-2021 academic year, most students of color reported their mental health as “fair” or “poor”, did not have professors that emphasize the importance of mental health, did not believe that Loyola adequately addressed the mental health needs of students of color, and did not seek mental health treatment/services. The information obtained from this research will help inform university-level efforts to develop and implement programs that address the unique mental health needs of students of color.

mental
health
matters.

Introduction

More than ever before, college students are being diagnosed with mental health illnesses whether that be depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, or others (National College Health Assessment, 2019). College students who are people of color are particularly susceptible to mental health struggles as they face both normative stressors of adjusting to college life, as well as unique stressors such as discrimination, racial profiling, and xenophobia which are all linked to race/ethnicity (Primm, 2018). While an emerging body of research focuses on the prevalence of mental health illness's faced by people of color on predominantly white college campuses, very little research focuses on how they experience, describe, and cope with these challenges. Mental health affects student's of colors' ability to succeed in all areas of life, and if we can become more culturally aware and sensitive to their specific needs, we can intentionally and more effectively support them, thus empowering them to achieve their potential in college and beyond.

Methods

In this research study, I created a 25 question survey using Qualtrics. So far, I have gathered data from a sample of 79 Loyola undergraduate students of color. The participants in this study were recruited by sending out emails to different organizations/departments on campus that in turn sent them out to their students. This survey data was quantitatively analyzed using the software SPSS statistics.



Preliminary Results

Table 1. Overall mental health state of undergraduate students of color at Loyola

Poor	17.6%
Fair	47.3%
Good	28.4%
Excellent	6.8%

Table 2. Level of agreement among undergraduate students of color that Loyola professors emphasize the importance of mental health

Yes	27.4%
No	72.6%

Table 3. Level of agreement that Loyola adequately addresses the mental health needs of undergraduate students of color

Yes	28.8%
No	71.2%

Table 4. Prevalence of seeking mental health treatment among undergraduate students of color at Loyola

University	5.5%
Elsewhere	31.5%
Nowhere	63%

Preliminary Discussion

During the Fall 2020-Spring 2021 school year:

- Nearly 2/3 of respondents reported their mental health as only “poor” or “fair”
- Nearly 3/4 of respondents did not have professors that emphasize the importance of mental health
- Nearly 3/4 of respondents did not believe that Loyola adequately addressed the mental health needs of students of color
- Nearly 2/3 of respondents did not seek mental health treatment/services

Hopefully this research will bring awareness to the unique mental health needs of a vulnerable minority group who do not normally have a fair distribution of opportunities and privileges.

References

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