

We gon' be alright: The Relationship between Untreated Childhood Trauma, Psychosocial Development, and Attitude towards Mental Health Help-seeking among Black College Students

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between untreated childhood trauma, psychosocial development, and attitude towards mental health help-seeking among Black college students. The main objective of this study was to examine how untreated childhood trauma affects the ability to build and maintain social relationships and reasons for seeking or not seeking mental health services. Questionnaires will be administered to 50 Black male college students and 50 Black female college students at Florida A&M University.

Aims of the Research

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between untreated childhood trauma, psychosocial development, and attitude towards mental health help-seeking in Black college students at Florida A&M University.

Research Questions

- (1) How is untreated childhood trauma related to the psychosocial development of Black college students?
- (2) How are psychosocial characteristics in Black college students related to their attitudes toward seeking mental health services at Florida A&M University?

Theoretical Framework

To understand how exposure to trauma can impact psychosocial development, this study used Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory along with the Information Motivation Behavioral Skills (IMB) Model. Information, motivation, and behavioral skills (IMB) provide the foundation for the IMB model with the idea that if individuals have the information, are willing to engage in the health behavior, and have the necessary behavioral skills, they are more likely to engage in the desired behavior (DeBate et al., 2018).

Research Design

Before conducting this correlational study, all components of the proposed study were submitted for approval by the University Institutional Review Board. The participants will be given a copy assessment electronically via email by their professors teaching psychology courses. All responses will be returned to the researchers after completion. The study will utilize surveys and assessments such as the *Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ)*, *Life-Skills Development Inventory-College Form (LSDICF)*, and the *Information-Motivation-Behavioral (IMB) Survey*. The data will be collected and entered into Qualtrics and analyzed using SPSS.

Participants

The participants will include 100 Black (e.g., African American, African-Caribbean, African) college students attending Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida. They will consist of (n= 50) male and (n= 50) female young adults between the ages of 18-25 years old. The participants will fit the criteria of being enrolled in classes for the Fall 2022 semester majoring in psychology.

Instruments

Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (70 items):

- Measure of child abuse and neglect
- Rated on a 5-point, Likert-type scale with response options ranging from "Never True to Very Often True".
- Five clinical scales: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect

Life-Skills Development Inventory-College Form (88 items):

- Measure of students' psychosocial development
- Four areas of skill achievement: interpersonal communication and relationships, problem-solving & decision making, physical fitness and health, and identity development & purpose in life.

Implications and Limitations

This study may have several implications for diverse audiences including clinicians and higher education administrators who serve Black students. For instance, this study may be significant to the field of clinical psychology. It may provide knowledge on adverse childhood experiences and their impact on psychosocial development regarding mental health help-seeking behaviors in Black college students attending Historically Black Colleges or Universities. Additionally, the possible outcomes of this study may have important clinical implications for identifying and understanding the correlates of mental health service use for Black/African Americans.

This correlational study collected responses from a moderate sample of Black college students at Florida A&M University, but it was a convenience sample which is representative of the student population. Some of the items measure sensitive attitudes, beliefs, and experiences, so it is possible some participants may not be open to discussing their childhood traumatic experiences and/or their attitudes toward mental health help-seeking. This may lead to bias in participants' responses.

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