Investigating the Impact of Mental Health Resource Utilization Among UC Students

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Background

- 41% of college students in the US screened positive for depression, and 36% screened positive for anxiety in the 2022 to 2023 school year.[1]
- Only 59% of these students, who screened positive for either of these conditions, utilized any mental health counseling, therapy, or psychiatric medication in the past year.[2]
- Self-perceived barriers such as stigma and structural barriers such as cost of services, transportation, and time are often significant factors that prevent students from seeking help.[2,3,4]

Study Objectives

1. To assess if utilization of mental health counseling improves perceived mental health outcomes among University of California students.
2. To assess the level of accessibility of resources for UC students

Methods

- Designed a Qualtrics survey for UC students (undergraduate and graduate)
- Distributed survey via physical flyers on the UCSD campus, on Reddit, and word-of-mouth
- Data collected over approx. 7 weeks
- Data analysis: SPSS paired sample t-test & chi-squared test were conducted to assess association between
  - **Outcome:** Perceptions of impact on mental health symptoms
  - **Exposure:** Frequency of mental health resource utilization (i.e. number of appointments attended)

References

Results

Total Number of Participants (N) = 36

Figure 1: Participants rated severity at a scale of 0 to 10 before and after utilizing mental health services

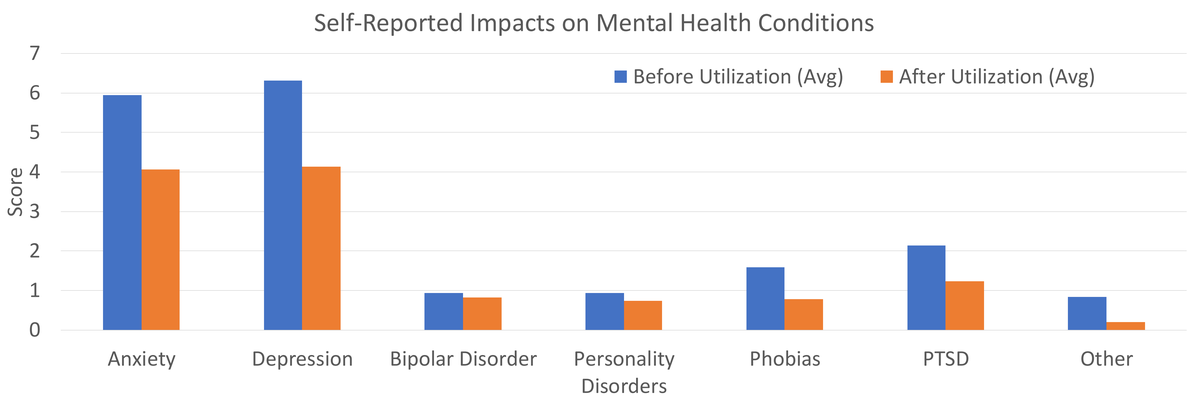

Figure 2: Participants reported what form of barriers they experienced when accessing mental health services

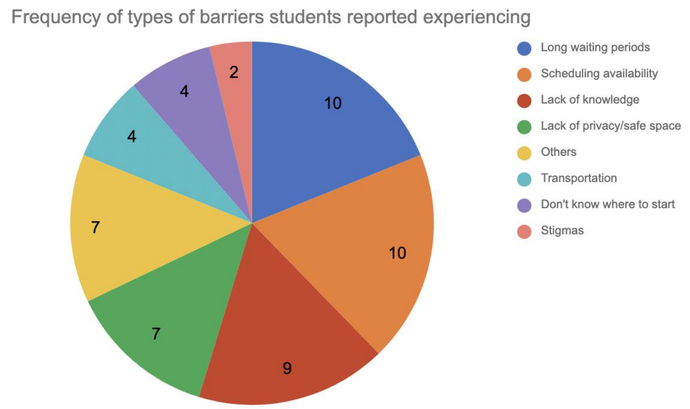

Figure 3: Gender Identity

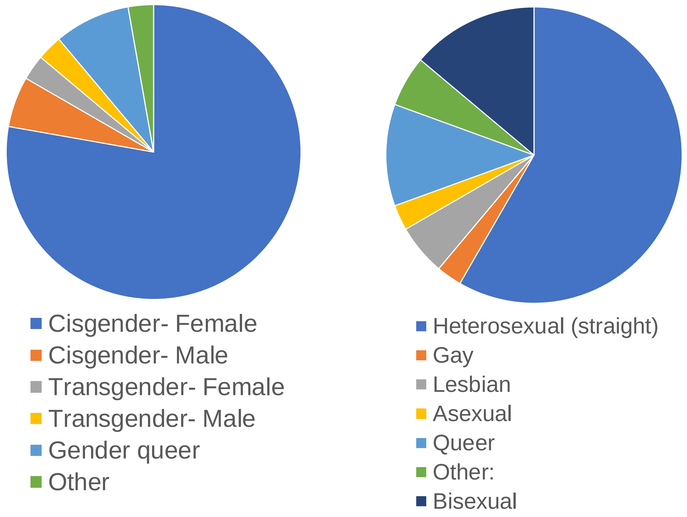

Figure 4: Sexual Orientation

Figure 5: Participants reported the ease of accessing mental health resources

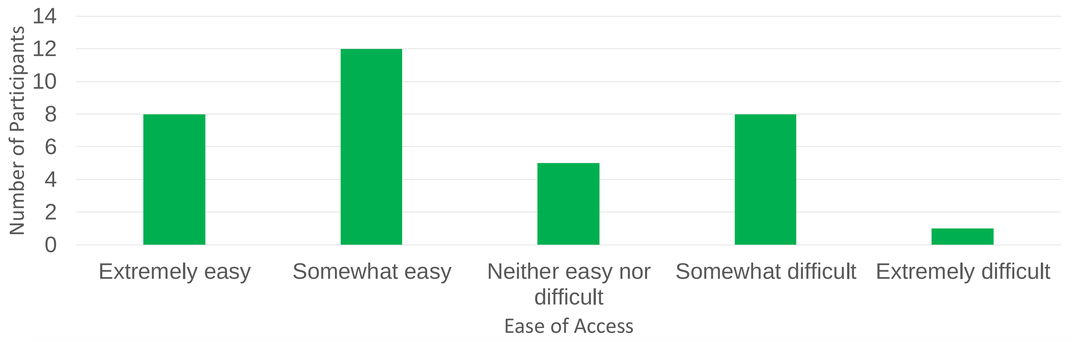

Table 1: Impact on Mental Health Conditions After Utilizing Services/Treatment

Conditions	Average Change	P-value	95% CI	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Anxiety	2.483	p<0.001	[1.685,3.281]	d=1.183
Depression	2.393	p<0.001	[1.341,3.445]	d=0.882
Bipolar Disorder	0.103	p=0.184	[0.76,-0.52]	d=0.253
Personality Disorders	0.222	p=0.282	[0.202,-0.193]	d=0.212
Phobias	0.679	p=0.017	[0.268,0.130]	d=0.479
PTSD	0.885	p=0.012	[0.325,0.215]	d=0.534
Other	0.625	p=0.185	[0.458,-0.322]	d=0.279

Conclusions

- We found statistically significant improvements of self-reported symptoms of anxiety, depression, phobias, and PTSD after utilizing mental health services.
- With the limited sample size, results also suggested there is no association between frequency of mental resource utilization and participants' satisfactions.
- Secondary findings shows half of the population reported having barriers to mental health resources, with the most common type of barriers being long waiting periods and scheduling availability.

Policy Implications

We recommend UCSD and other UC campuses to:

- Increase investment in campus counseling and hire more staff to meet students' needs.
- Implement programs to reduce symptoms related to anxiety, depression, phobias, and PTSD among students.
- Increase dissemination of information about available services for students.