

The Mental Health of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students in Rural Schools

Doctoral Dissertation Project Summary¹

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Purpose

The mental health needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in rural schools is understudied and has not receive the attention necessary to help schools make informed decisions regarding mental health systems and practice. The need to understand these issues and how to best CLD students is ever present as minoritized individuals "...were responsible for three-quarters of the population growth in rural areas between 2000 and 2010" (Crockett & Carlo, 2016).

Background

Mental health rates vary across racial/ethnic groups and locales. Specifically, youth who are Latinx are at a greater risk of school refusal, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts and experience several barriers to receiving mental health treatment (Alegria et al., 2010; Brown et al., 2016). Likewise, individuals in rural areas report greater concerns with mental health and have several barriers to obtain mental health services. What has not been previously examined has been the intersection of these two identities and how schools might be able to support rural CLD families receive the mental health care that they might need.

Methodology

Focus groups were conducted with educators in three rural school districts. Participating educators were asked several questions about their CLD student mental health needs, barriers that CLD students might experience in accessing and receiving mental health services in their community, and how schools might be able to support increased access to those mental health services.

Results

Key themes identified in this research included:

District A	District B	District C
Mental health concerns of rural CLD students might be related to being undocumented or being an immigrant	Mental health concerns of rural CLD students are related to trauma and poverty	Peer relationships are a consideration for mental health concerns
Rural context as a barrier to receiving mental health services	Rural CLD students struggle with coping with mental health symptoms	Acculturation creates stressors
Need more bicultural/bilingual services, school staff, and educational leaders	Lack of school and community mental health services for rural and/or CLD families	Lack of accessible mental health supports for rural and/or CLD families
Lack of administrator support for mental health programming	Desire for school-based mental health providers, services, and trainings	Resistance to school mental health programming from families

Recommendations

The following recommended based on the present findings:

1. Further examine the mental health needs of rural CLD youth through the use of surveys and rating forms;

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2. Garner parents'/caregivers' perspectives to ensure that any mental health system decisions are culturally responsive;
3. Recruit CLD individuals as educators and mental health care providers in rural areas;
4. Provide mental health training for rural educators to increase awareness of mental health issues, services, and ways of supporting students within schools and communities.

References

- Crockett, L. J., & Carlo, G. (2016). *Rural ethnic minority youth and families in the United States*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-20976-0
- Alegria, M., Vallas, M., & Pumariega, A. J. (2010). Racial and ethnic disparities in pediatric mental health. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics*, 19, 759–774
- Brown, A., Rice, S. M., Rickwood, D. J., & Parker, A. G. (2016). Systematic review of barriers and facilitators to accessing and engaging with mental health care among at-risk young people. *Asia-Pacific Psychiatry*, 8(1), 3–22. doi:10.1111/appy.12199

Footnote

¹ This document summarizes results from the following dissertation document:

Young, K. (2020). *The mental health of culturally and linguistically diverse students in rural schools* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Wisconsin – Madison.