



Cultural Acceptance and Mental Health Among High School Students in Georgia

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Background:

Mental Health condition in adolescence is critical to analyze. One of the major factors affecting adolescence mental condition could be perception of cultural acceptance. Georgia is a state with increasing population from different race and ethnicity.

Research Question:

Cultural acceptance is associated with posing mental health condition among adolescents.

$$H_0 \rightarrow \mu_{CA/MH_{\theta_i}} = \mu_{CA/MH_{\theta_j}} = \dots i \neq j$$

$$H_A \rightarrow \mu_{CA/MH_{\theta_i}} \neq \mu_{CA/MH_{\theta_j}} \neq \dots i \neq j$$

Data and analysis strategy:

Georgia Students Health survey GSHS 2.0 2019 and 2020 data for high school students were used for the analysis. Among various aspects of the survey, demographics, cultural acceptance and mental health related question answers were used. ANOVA was used to understand the difference among different grade, gender and ethnicity and regression analysis were used to find the strength and significance of the relation.

Regression Models

$$Y_i = \beta_{0_i} + \sum_{k \in K} \sum_{j \in J} \sum_{i \in I} \beta_{j_{k_i}} X_{j_{k_i}}$$

i refers to each mental health condition referred in the survey, j refers to each of the independent variables and k refers to their factors.

Measures of cultural acceptance were based on the following questions with 5-point Likert response that were combined to generate a composite score and were also analyzed individually

- Students at my school treat each other with respect,
- Students treat one another fairly,
- Students show respect to other students regardless of their academic ability
- Students at this school are treated fairly by other students regardless of race, ethnicity, or culture,
- All students in my school are treated regardless of their appearance

Measures of mental were based on the following questions that asked about mental health in the past 30 days, how many days.....with 5-point Likert response that were combined to generate a composite score and were also analyzed individually

- felt sad or withdrawn?
- felt suddenly overwhelmed with fear for no reason, sometimes including a racing heart or fast breathing?
- experienced severely out-of-control behavior that could hurt yourself or others?
- avoided food, thrown up, or used laxatives to make yourself lose weight?
- experienced intense worries or fears that get in the way of your daily activities?
- experienced extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still, which has put you in physical danger and/or caused school failure?
- experienced severe mood swings that have caused problems in relationships?
- experienced drastic changes in your behavior and/or personality?

Results:

- Asian Americans have the highest perception of feeling culturally accepted and lowest days with poor mental health, but Native Americans have the opposite
- Males have higher perception of CA and lower days with poor mental health, compared to females
- Even though perceptions of CA is improving with higher grades, the number of days with poor mental health is also increasing with grade
- All measures of CA and the number of days with poor mental health status are negatively associated

Conclusion:

This study found that perceptions of not being culturally accepted is with poor mental health among high school student.

The trend of cultural acceptance showed that over the years, the overall cultural acceptance had been positive.

The results of this study can inform the importance of efforts in the school systems across the state to encourage inclusion and belongingness.

