

Factors of Accessibility to Mental Health Services

What major factors currently influence the accessibility of mental health services available for adolescents in the Denton County area?

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Literature Review

According to Dora Black, an honorary consultant and a child and adolescent psychiatrist, “Of every 100,000 young people aged between 15 and 19, 400 attempt suicide each year and three succeed” (Black, 1992). This number is on the rise, and each year more children and adolescents go without the help that could potentially save their lives (Kweskin, 2015). The definition of mental illness, according to the BMC Public Health, is “defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to his or her community” (Guo, Tomson, Keller, & Soderqvist, 2018). This definition is focused on living life with mistakes, but being able to handle those mistakes and to work through them. However, for some adolescents, this can be very difficult, and over time, the small mistakes develop into larger problems that require medical attention. Similarly, many of these mental health issues can also be linked to other physical illnesses such as somatic symptoms and their correlation with anxiety and depression in adolescents (Bohman, Laftman, Cleland, Lundberg, Paaren, & Jonsson, 2018). This could lead to people seeking help in their community, such as public health services, but for many, this could be too time-consuming or costly. It could also be the stigma around mental illness that prevents an adolescent from pursuing treatment that “has continued to be too stigmatized, too jurisdictionally thorny and deemed too expensive ... to be considered enough of a priority to justify the use of federal spending power” (Bartram, 2017). This phenomenon is understandable because the cost of mental health services has increased significantly in the last couple of years from \$57 million to over \$150 million (Scarborough, 2018). Therefore, attempting to find solutions to this problem is necessary, because it takes a lot of planning and resources to put together services that can

accommodate different communities and simultaneously be innovative and modern (Isaksson, Blomqvist, & Winblad, 2016). Additionally, figuring out exactly what the limiting factors of accessibility to mental health services, then a solution will be made more apparent to understand what changes can be made so that these vital services can be accessible for adolescents that are in need.

In this field, it is already known that there are different factors that influence access to public health services. Also, it is known that culture, income, family life, and education can have an effect on the accessibility of health services. According to Dr. Andrew Hunter, an experienced qualitative researcher and training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Interpersonal Psychotherapy, “[e]arly intervention is vital to recovery and empowerment is a key factor in the process” (Hunter, Grealish, & Dowling, 2010). However, it is unknown what major factors currently influence the accessibility of mental health services available for adolescents in the Denton County area? This is important, because if the factors of accessibility are known then finding a solution will be even easier and can cater to adolescents who potentially could benefit from mental health services.

To find the different factors concerning the accessibility of mental health services to adolescents in the Denton County area by surveying a group of adolescents that have access to mental health services and to see if there are trends present between them that could lead to a correlation between various factors and access to mental health services. This is significant because it allows for my survey group to be completely anonymous and to be able to test out different factors that may or may not be important to the accessibility of mental health services.

Methodologies

In order to figure out what the factors of accessibility to mental health services are, we must first know what factors have led adolescents to gain access to mental health services. To do this, I decided to give my survey to 41 adolescents, children between the ages of 6-18, in mental health services at the Denton MHMR Center. This survey will assess the factors of accessibility in the best way possible because it asks about factors that would affect the adolescent, such as their household income, cultural identity, household situations, and previous experiences with mental health. Additionally, the survey will also ask participants about their mental health through the widely used K6 survey. This survey is intended to help give information on psychological distress and helps give quantitative data on an individual's mental health. With that information, it will also be easier to see what factors impact the accessibility of mental health services the most out of the 41 participants that I surveyed. I will be using a cross sectional survey methodology which utilizes surveys to a random sample of a given population once to learn and draw conclusions from the findings. I will be using this research method to explain why only certain people are getting mental health services and what factors prevent certain people from getting access to services. Similarly, this explains my knowledge gap of not knowing what factors affect the accessibility to mental health services to adolescence in Denton County in Texas. I hypothesize that income, race, and family life will be major factors that affect the accessibility to mental health services. Due to the many sources that I have looked as specifically Cheng Guo's research on the different factors that affected adolescents in China the most (Guo, Tomson, Keller, & Soderqvist, 2018).

To test my hypothesis, I created a survey which included many factors of accessibility and other information that will be relevant about the participant. This survey was completely anonymous and given out on paper, and I was not present when these surveys were filled out. After creating the surveys, I reached out to Phyllis Finley at the Denton County MHMR Center. She is the Community Outreach Director and works with many other students who are researching topics that involve mental health services. She had her supervisor approve the survey to be given out to adolescents at their facility and also any adolescent in the crisis department at Denton County MHMR Center. For the adolescents in the crisis department, those participants also had a case manager with them while filling out the survey. This might have some effect on the outcome, but I do not know which surveys came from the crisis department, so it would be very difficult to figure out if the data was affected.

Factors of Accessibility

Race and Gender

The factor of race and gender can be important to collect data for because it can then be compared to the demographics of North Texas and it can be seen if these relate to other things. For example, comparing the percentages of race and gender to the actual percentages of Denton County adolescents will allow me to see if my sample group is a good representation of the Denton county population. With this information, I could also see if there is another city with similar demographics and show that my findings could also be applied to that city.

1. What race do you identify as?
2. What gender do you identify with?

Household Income

The factor of household income will be important to collect because it will lead to more knowledge about what kind of economic class they come from. Also, this factor is deemed important by other researchers in my field as seen in a study done in China by Cheng Guo, a Human-Centered Computing Ph.D. student at Candidate of School of Computing at Clemson University. The researchers saw that “family indicators were household composition, family relationships, parenting style, family physical and mental health status, substance use among family members, and family income”, and that these are important factors to take into consideration while doing research on adolescents (Guo, Tomson, Keller, & Soderqvist, 2018). In addition, this is significant because of how impressionable children are not only in their household, but also in their communities such as when they are in school or are in religious groups that could ridicule them for being of a different socioeconomic class. This is also a factor that is uncontrollable by most children and is mainly based on what kind of family or household they are born into.

1. What do you think the average income of your household is?
 - a. Under \$15,000
 - b. Between \$15,000 and \$29,999
 - c. Between \$30,000 and \$49,999
 - d. Between \$50,000 and \$74,999
 - e. Between \$75,000 and \$99,999
 - f. Between \$100,000 and \$150,000
 - g. Over \$150,000

Parents in the Household

The factors of whether parents are divorced or how many parents they live with are included in my survey because many people have lost a parent or suffer from trauma, which leads to mental health problems. Not having their parents during adolescent years leads to an increase of stress and strain to their lives, and make them more likely to develop a mental health problem. This is important when trying to find the solution to adolescents not having access to services because if there is a correlation between having divorced parents and mental health problems, then places that work with children of divorced parents can have new opportunities for outreach and advertising of mental health services.

1. Are your parents divorced or in the process to get divorced?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

2. How many parents live in your main household?

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3

Language

The factor of language and if English is their first language can affect a person's ability to gain access to service. According to Malcolm V. Williams, researcher at the RAND Corporation who has experience in health services research, those who do not know English or do not have

English as their first language can make it harder for them to get health care services, or even find health care services(William, M. V., et al., 2016). This is significant because making signs or flyers in another language or finding therapists or psychiatrists that are bilingual can help increase the number of people getting access to mental health services. Additionally, according to Hári Sewell, a Founding Director of Health HS Consultancy, UK, who focuses in mental health and social care, social justice, and equalities, language and culture have a deep correlation and that “culture is associated with other forms of difference, e.g. physical presentation (dress), language and religion” (Sewell, 2009).

1. Is English your first language?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. If not what language/s did you learn before?

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Immigration

The factor of whether an adolescent’s parents are immigrants is to try to get a scope on how cultural ideas can shape an adolescent and their ability to gain access to mental health services. One limitation could be not knowing what culture their parents come from, which would make it harder in identifying what culture or what ideas their parents could think. However, to help decrease this limitation, I added the race question which I felt could at least help narrow down the region of ideas that they could hold. Additionally, this will be helpful in seeing how different cultural ideas and

views can affect a person's mental health. Similarly, this factor will help show what cultures have the most awareness of mental health and which ones try to get adolescents mental health services.

1. Were your parents immigrant to America?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Community

The factor of whom the adolescent would feel comfortable going to if they needed help was also important in seeing where adolescents are most likely to go to get help. This would make sure that the people most likely to get asked for help know what they should say and have the resources to help them react appropriately. In addition, having people in your community while going through treatment and dealing with mental health is vital for participants in recovering and getting through their mental illnesses. According to Dr. Patrick R. Mullen, the faculty director for Project Empower in the William & Mary School of Education, the stigma and perspectives of people in a community can have a positive or a negative effect on a person's mental health and their chances of getting help (Mullen & Crowe, 2017).

1. If you were having mental health problems who in the community would you go to for help?
 - a. A friend
 - b. A parent
 - c. A school counselor
 - d. A teacher
 - e. A religious leader

- f. Wouldn't ask for help
- g. Other _____

Geological Distance

The factor of geological distance from a treatment center will also help in seeing how easy or how hard it is for a patient to receive treatment. Also, this is important because it can lead to more treatment centers going up in places that need them to help people be closer and more conveniently located which will make them more likely to get help and to go and use the health care services.

1. How far away do live from the Denton County MHMR Center? (minutes or hours)

K6 Survey

I found the K6 survey in another research study in my field by Ronald C. Kessler, a professor of health care policy at Harvard Medical School and an American sociologist, the purpose of this survey is to be a "screening scale of serious mental illness and mild-moderate mental illness and questions about suicidal ideation, plans and attempts" (Kessler, Galea, Jones, & Parker, 2006). Knowing their score on the K6 survey will allow me to see if there would be similarities in the other factors and also to see how the factors differentiate between people who might need mental health services more than others who already have access to mental health services. The K6 score will also help me organize my data and separate the surveys by their K6 score. Additionally, the K6 survey gives quantitative data that I can analyze along with the rest of my data which is all qualitative data.

Limitations

There are some limitations to my survey and my research, but I feel that I have done enough to help counteract the limitations so that my results will still be valid. An example of this is when asking about the participants' household income. I am trying to see who has the most access to deduce who has the least amount of access. However, a limitation to identifying this factor is that the class that gets the least amount of mental health services could also just not need the help. Another limitation of my research is that fact that I only distributed my survey at one location. However, if I had distributed my survey at other centres I would be able to get more data across Denton County. In doing this I will be able to see what demographics mental health services should be reaching out to more.

Data Analysis

I was able to collect 41 surveys from the Denton County MHMR Center and with those surveys. I collected these surveys from Phyllis Finley who was gracious enough to hold my surveys at the Denton MHMR center until they were all collected. Furthermore, I went through and separated them by the K6 scores. I categorized them into 3 groups according to how high or low they scored on the K6 section of the survey. The high K6 surveys were any participants that scored 13 or higher. The medium K6 surveys were any participants that scored between 8 - 12. Lastly, the low K6 surveys were any participants that scored lower than an 8 on the K6 survey. Out of the 41 surveys 10 had high K6 scores, 11 had medium K6 scores, and 20 had low K6 scores.

Factors	High K6	Medium K6	Low K6	All surveys
16 and older	50.00%	22.22%	27.78%	33.30%
15 and younger	50.00%	77.78%	72.22%	66.70%

Black	10.00%	0.00%	15.00%	9.80%
White	40.00%	54.55%	60.00%	53.70%
Black and White	0.00%	9.09%	0.00%	2.40%
Hispanic	50.00%	36.36%	25.00%	34.10%
Female	80.00%	27.27%	45.00%	48.80%
Male	20.00%	73.73%	55.00%	51.20%
Under \$15,000	20.00%	36.36%	15.00%	22.00%
Between \$15,000 and \$29,999	40.00%	36.36%	45.00%	41.50%
Between \$30,000 and \$49,999	20.00%	18.18%	35.00%	24.40%
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	0.00%	9.09%	5.00%	7.30%
Over \$150,000	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.40%
Don't Know	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.40%
Yes (Parents are divorced)	40.00%	81.82%	55.00%	58.60%
No	60.00%	18.18%	45.00%	41.40%
3 Parents in household	0.00%	18.18%	0.00%	4.90%
2 parents in household	40.00%	27.27%	30.00%	31.70%
1 parents in household	60.00%	54.55%	55.00%	56.10%
0 parents in household	0.00%	0.00%	15.00%	7.30%
Yes (English is my first language)	60.00%	81.82%	78.95%	75.00%
No	40.00%	18.18%	21.05%	25.00%
Yes(Parents are immigrants)	40.00%	9.09%	21.05%	22.50%
No	60.00%	91.91%	78.91%	77.50%
Yes(Dealt with Mental Illness before)	77.78%	54.55%	26.32%	46.20%
No	22.22%	45.45%	73.68%	53.80%
A friend	20.00%	30.77%	14.29%	22.00%
A parent	50.00%	23.08%	57.14%	48.80%
A school counselor	10.00%	7.69%	4.76%	7.30%
A religious leader	0.00%	7.69%	0.00%	2.40%
A teacher	0.00%	0.00%	4.76%	2.40%

A family member	0.00%	0.00%	4.76%	2.40%
Wouldn't ask for help	20.00%	30.77%	14.29%	22.00%
15-30 Minutes away	70.00%	70.00%	78.95%	69.30%
35-60 Minutes away	30.00%	30.00%	21.05%	30.70%
CPS	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.41%
Family Members	20.00%	72.73%	40.00%	48.65%
Other Care Hospitals	20.00%	9.09%	25.00%	21.62%
Referrals	40.00%	18.18%	15.00%	13.50%
Online	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	5.41%
Don't know	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	5.41%

Conclusions

Within these groups, I was able to recognize that the major factors were the ones that had the biggest difference between the minority and majority. Within the high K6 scores major factors of accessibility were gender, parents, previous experiences with mental health, and their geological distance from the MHMR center. As for the medium K6 scores that the major factors of accessibility were age, income, parents being divorced, and distance from the MHMR center. For the low K6 scores the major factors of accessibility were age, race, first language, previous experiences with mental health, who they would go to for help, and how close they were to the MHMR center. Overall, my data showed that major factors of accessibility were the geological distance from the Denton County MHMR Center, family life, and if their parents are immigrants. These factors were the ones that had the most difference in the answer choices and proved to be most significant. Overall, my hypothesis was somewhat correct because I did suspect that family life would be a major factors, but did not predict that immigration and the distance from the MHMR Center would have such a big impact.

15-30 Minutes away	70.00%	70.00%	78.95%	69.30%
35-60 Minutes away	30.00%	30.00%	21.05%	30.70%

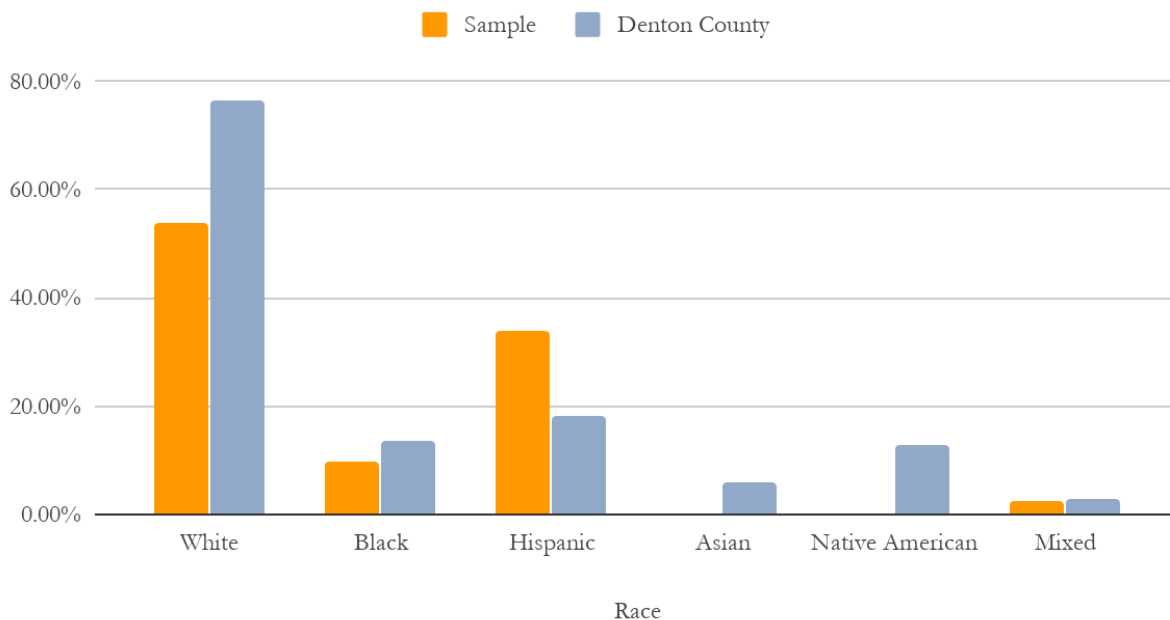
Yes(Parents are immigrants)	40.00%	9.09%	21.05%	22.50%
No	60.00%	91.91%	78.91%	77.50%

Yes (Parents are divorced)	40.00%	81.82%	55.00%	58.60%
No	60.00%	18.18%	45.00%	41.40%

3 Parents in household	0.00%	18.18%	0.00%	4.90%
2 parents in household	40.00%	27.27%	30.00%	31.70%
1 parents in household	60.00%	54.55%	55.00%	56.10%
0 parents in household	0.00%	0.00%	15.00%	7.30%

Within these factors, it can be seen that if people’s parents were not immigrants, they had more access to mental health services because out of all of the surveys 77.5% of their parents were not immigrants. Also, it can be seen that people who lived closer to the MHMR Center had more access to these services because 69.3% of the participants lived between 15 to 30 minutes away from the MHMR Center. Similarly when looking at the census from the U.S. Census Bureau the population percentages are close, but still different (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). This could cause the conclusions to not be as applicable across all of Denton County, but it also shows what races have more access than others.

Sample Population and Denton County Race Distribution



People who only have one parent that live in their main household also have a higher percentage of being in mental health services and accessibility to these services due to 56.1% of them only having one parent in their main household. Also, I have seen that the majority, 80% of participants that also had high K6 surveys were female. This was interesting because overall the majority of participants were male, but as the K6 surveys go down in score the percentage that was male go up from 20% to 73.73%.

Within the data about the participants parents being immigrants and if English is their first language. It was worth noting that the majority of the participants that spoke Spanish as their first language had parents that were immigrants. This makes sense due to how close Texas is to Mexico and the increasing amount of immigrants coming to America across the Texas border.

Also, I noticed that in the high K6 scores the majority were Hispanic followed by White participants. Similar to before, as the K6 scores got lower the percentage of White participants increased from 40% to 54.55%, and the percentage of Hispanic participants decreased from 50% to 36.36%. Also throughout all of the K6 scores, a high majority, 69.3%, of them live between 15-30 minutes from the MHMR Center. Overall, there have been some differences and similarities between the different K6 score ranges. Together, these show people that have the most access to mental health services so the minorities in these factors are those that need more outreach. It also shows that these are the groups that have less access to mental health services. Overall, my data shows the minorities that need more access to mental health services and need to focus on outreach to those groups.

Implications

My data can lead to the improvement of mental health services and making sure that adolescents in the Denton County area to get the services that they need. One way that my data can help certain aspects of these services is by identifying who already have service and then seeing what aspects are missing from that pool of people who need services. For example, 58.6% of participants have parents that are divorced, therefore, having brochures should be given out at places that are meant for divorce or helping children through divorce. Another example is that 69.30% of the participants live between 10 to 30 minutes away. This shows that there is a good amount of mental services available for those that live near the center. However, this means that those who live further away are not getting the services that they need due to the fact that they do not have the services near them. Also, I found through my survey that most of the adolescents would ask their parents for

help if they were having mental health problems. Through these classes and educational pamphlets could be given to parents about how to help their children if they start to show signs of mental health problems and help prevent mental illnesses from getting too severe. Also the next biggest majority of who the participants would go to for help would be their friends. Therefore, having educational classes at schools or community centers would help increase the knowledge of peers, so they would be prepared and knowledgeable if their friends came to them for help. Also it can be seen in the data that the majority of participants found the MHMR center through family members so having these pamphlets available at family center and community hotspots would help increase the exposure of the services that are available to the adolescents in the Denton County. With the data on how the participants found the MHMR Center only 5.4% found the center online. Therefore, having a bigger online presence would help increase how many people could come across an advertisement for the Denton County MHMR Center. For example, having bigger presence on Instagram and Facebook could help people have quicker access to information that could be life saving. Overall, my new understandings would help improve the outreach in the Denton County area of mental health services to adolescents. My data and new conclusions would help add to the knowledge pool in the scientific community and inform people that mental health services need to be accessible to more diverse and open groups of adolescents than service currently are accessible. Overall, my paper would also help in lowering suicide rates and fostering positive change in the Denton County community.

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