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Aaron Madow

Clark University, amadow@clarku.edu

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“Why Try?”: The Impact of Self-Stigma on Self-Efficacy Among College Students

Aaron Madow '20

In collaboration with Prof. Nicole Overstreet, Ph.D.

Introduction

- Mental illness disproportionately burdens college students (Auerbach et al., 2018; National Institute of Mental Health 2019).
- Mental illness stereotypes can become internalized; a phenomenon known as self-stigmatization (Livingston & Boyd, 2010).
- Self-stigma can influence self-efficacy and can be examined by assessing the “why try” effect; an undermining in confidence to achieve life goals (Corrigan, Larson, & Kuwabara, 2010).
- Research Questions: How do stereotypes around mental illness contribute to self-stigma and perpetuate adverse outcomes among college students? What are the instances where students indicate “Why Try”? And what aspects of self-stigma (or other forms of stigma) may come up in these narratives?

Methods

- 20 semi-structured interviews
- Eligibility criteria: a. enrollment as a student at Clark University b. diagnosis of a mental illness c. 18 and above.
- Codebook Thematic Analysis; codes generated from literature on “Why Try” Effect and present interviews with use of NVivo12 to organize the coding process and identify data corpus

Theoretical Framework

The “Why Try” Model of Self-Stigma

- Corrigan et al., (2010) proposed the “Why Try” model of self-stigma to understand how self-stigma influences self-efficacy
- Pathway: Cue, Cognition, Behavior. Represented as awareness and agreement with stereotypes (cue), application to the self (cognition), and an experience of a “why try effect” (behavior)
- “Why Try” Effect: an undermining in confidence to achieve goals such as receiving employment, living on one’s own, and maintaining interpersonal relationships.

Discussion

- 75 quotes reflected “Why Try”: 25 reflected self-stigma, 50 reflected other stigmas (See Results)
- Self-Stigma expressed as decrements in self-efficacy to behavior, interpersonal relationships, academics
- “Why Try” expressed as structural and multiple stigmas (See Results)
- 19/20 students disrupted aspects of stigma
- Future research: address how models of stigma work together, incorporate how students disrupt stigma.
- Solutions for students: addressing new sets of stressors, challenging stereotypes, incorporating suggestions from students

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Results

