Role of Perfectionism, Self-Compassion, and Cultural Values on Help-Seeking Attitudes of Asian American College Students


Abstract

We examined the impact of self-compassion in positive help-seeking attitudes and the effects of perfectionistic self-presentation related to help-seeking attitudes in a sample of Asian American college students at two Pacific Northwest 4-year institutions (N = 101). We first predicted that perfectionistic self-presentation would be related to more unfavorable help-seeking attitudes (Hypothesis 1). Second, we predicted that self-compassion and perfectionistic self-presentation would be related to more favorable help-seeking attitudes (Hypothesis 2). We also explored the impact of cultural elements (emotional self-control, family recognition through achievement) as correlates of help-seeking attitudes. Our results indicated that non-disclosure of imperfection and emotional self-control were significantly correlated with unfavorable help-seeking attitudes. Unwillingness to talk in act restraint might act as barriers to seeking psychological services for Asian American college students.

Introduction

We predicted that high levels of perfectionistic self-presentation would be correlated to more unfavorable help-seeking attitudes. In addition, we explored the impact of cultural elements (emotional self-control, family recognition through achievement) as correlates of help-seeking attitudes. Our results indicated that non-disclosure of imperfection and emotional self-control were significantly correlated with unfavorable help-seeking attitudes. Unwillingness to talk in act restraint might act as barriers to seeking psychological services for Asian American college students.

Method

Participants completed an online questionnaire that included measures assessing the study variables. Attitudes toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale-Short Form (Fischer & Farha, 1995) had 10 items (α = .84). Perfectionistic Self-Presentation Scale (Hewitt, Szkarpka, Habke, & Parkin, 2003) had 3 scales (perfectionistic self-promotion [α = .86], nondisplay of imperfection [α = .83], and non-disclosure of imperfection [α = .80]) and one item total. Self-Compassion Scale (Raes et al., 2011) had 12 items (α = .94). Emotional Self-Control (B. S. K. Kim et al., 2005) had 8 items (α = .74). Family Recognition Through Achievement (B. S. K. Kim et al., 2005) had 14 items (α = .90).

Results

- Hypothesis 1: Perfectionistic self-presentation would be related to more unfavorable help-seeking attitudes.
- Hypothesis 2: Self-compassion would be related to more positive help-seeking attitudes.

Discussion

- Our results indicated a significant relationship between non-disclosure of imperfection and unfavorable help-seeking attitudes. This finding may suggest that psychological help-seeking environments may not align with how a person wants to present themselves in terms for acknowledging shortcomings or would be conducive for preventing the disclosure of imperfections.
- Additionally, consistent with prior studies (e.g., P. Y. Kim & Kendall, 2015; P. Y. Kim & Lee, 2014), emotional self-control was also related to unfavorable help-seeking attitudes, indicating that individuals who express high emotional regulation are less likely to seek professional psychological help as beneficial and are therefore less likely to engage in help-seeking behaviors. Further research is needed to see if this relationship is explained by aversive attitudes towards settings that involve emotional vulnerability or rather an expression of self-sufficiency in regulation of emotions.
- Our study did not show a significant relationship self-compassion was not related to positive help-seeking attitudes, however there were several self-compassion scales showed moderate correlation with perfectionistic self-presentation. Overall, trends showed that individuals with lower self-compassion scores were more likely to express perfectionistic self-presentation, variants of non-presentation of imperfection, and emotional self-control. The role of self-compassion in helping individuals to deal with the need to acknowledge the role of perfectionistic self-presentation in therapeutic settings, as well as investigating how familial and cultural influences may inform perfectionistic tendencies. Models of therapy oriented around developing self-compassion can be particularly helpful to individuals who express perfectionism, as Mehr and Adams (2016) study depicts self-compassion as a mediator between maladaptive perfectionism and depressive symptoms.