

Emotion, Religious Coping, Stigma, and Help-Seeking Attitudes Among Asian Americans: Examination of Moderated Mediation

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Abstract

Using a moderated mediation model, we investigated how emotion regulation, emotion socialization, and religious coping affect the relationship between close others' stigma, self-stigma, and help-seeking among 106 Asian American students. We predicted that (a) self-stigma would positively mediate the close others' stigma and help-seeking attitudes association, and (b) emotion regulation, emotion socialization, and religious coping would moderate this relationship. Mediation and moderated mediation analyses indicated that close others' stigma predicted self-stigma, which in turn predicted help-seeking attitudes. This mediation model was moderated by religious coping but not emotional socialization or regulation; emotion regulation and help-seeking attitudes, however, were positively correlated.

Introduction

Help Seeking and Mental Health Stigma

- Asian Americans underutilize (e.g., Kearney et al., 2005) and express less favorable attitudes towards (Masuda & Boone, 2011) professional counseling.
- The current study examined two types of stigmas:
 - Close others' stigma: perceptions of stigma from one's close relationships (Vogel et al., 2009).
 - Self-stigma: tendency to internalize negative views from others about seeking professional help (Vogel et al., 2006).
- Close others' stigma and self-stigma have been associated with less favorable help seeking attitudes among Asian Americans (e.g., Masuda & Boone, 2011; Yee et al., 2020).
- We examined the mediating relations involving close others' stigma as a predictor, self-stigma as a mediator, and help-seeking attitudes as an outcome.

Emotion Regulation and Socialization

- Emotion socialization hasn't been examined in relation to help seeking or stigma, but Asian cultural-specific emotion socialization practices (i.e., emphasis on socially engaging emotions (Kitayama et al., 2000), emotion self-control (B. S. K. Kim et al., 2005)) are expected to influence both variables.
- Emotion regulation (i.e., ability to control one's emotional state; Thompson, 1994) has been associated with negative help seeking attitudes (Ciarrochi et al., 2003).
- Effective regulation and socialization experiences may promote effective emotion coping skills to overcome stigma and recognize the effectiveness of professional help seeking.

Religious Coping

- We explored positive religious coping (i.e., utilization of sacred or spiritual resources for coping with stressful life situations; Pargament et al., 2000) as a potential moderator in the proposed mediation model.
- We did not specify the nature of moderation (suppression or amplification) as it could go either way (i.e., view help seeking more positively or negatively).

Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1:** Self-stigma will mediate the association between close others' stigma and help-seeking attitudes. Close others' stigma would be positively related to self-stigma, which in turn would be inversely related to favorable attitudes toward seeking psychological help.
- Hypothesis 2:** Emotion regulation, emotion socialization, and religious coping will moderate the mediation model in Hypothesis 1. These three variables will protect against the deleterious influence of self-stigma on help-seeking attitudes.

Method

Participants

- 106 self-identified Asian American undergraduate students ($M_{age} = 20.24$, $SD = 2.91$; 75 females, 25 males, 5 non-binary/other).
- Reported Ethnicities: Filipina/o ($n = 36$), Chinese from mainland China ($n = 19$), Japanese ($n = 16$), Korean ($n = 13$), Vietnamese ($n = 11$), Hong Kongese/Hong Konger/Chinese from Hong Kong ($n = 8$), Indian ($n = 7$), Cambodian ($n = 5$), Taiwanese/Chinese from Taiwan ($n = 5$), Indonesian ($n = 1$), Laotian ($n = 1$), Malaysian ($n = 1$), and Other ($n = 11$).
- Reported Religions: Protestant Christian ($n = 42$), Catholic Christian ($n = 29$), no religion ($n = 14$), Buddhist ($n = 5$), Muslim ($n = 3$), Hindu ($n = 1$), and Other ($n = 11$).

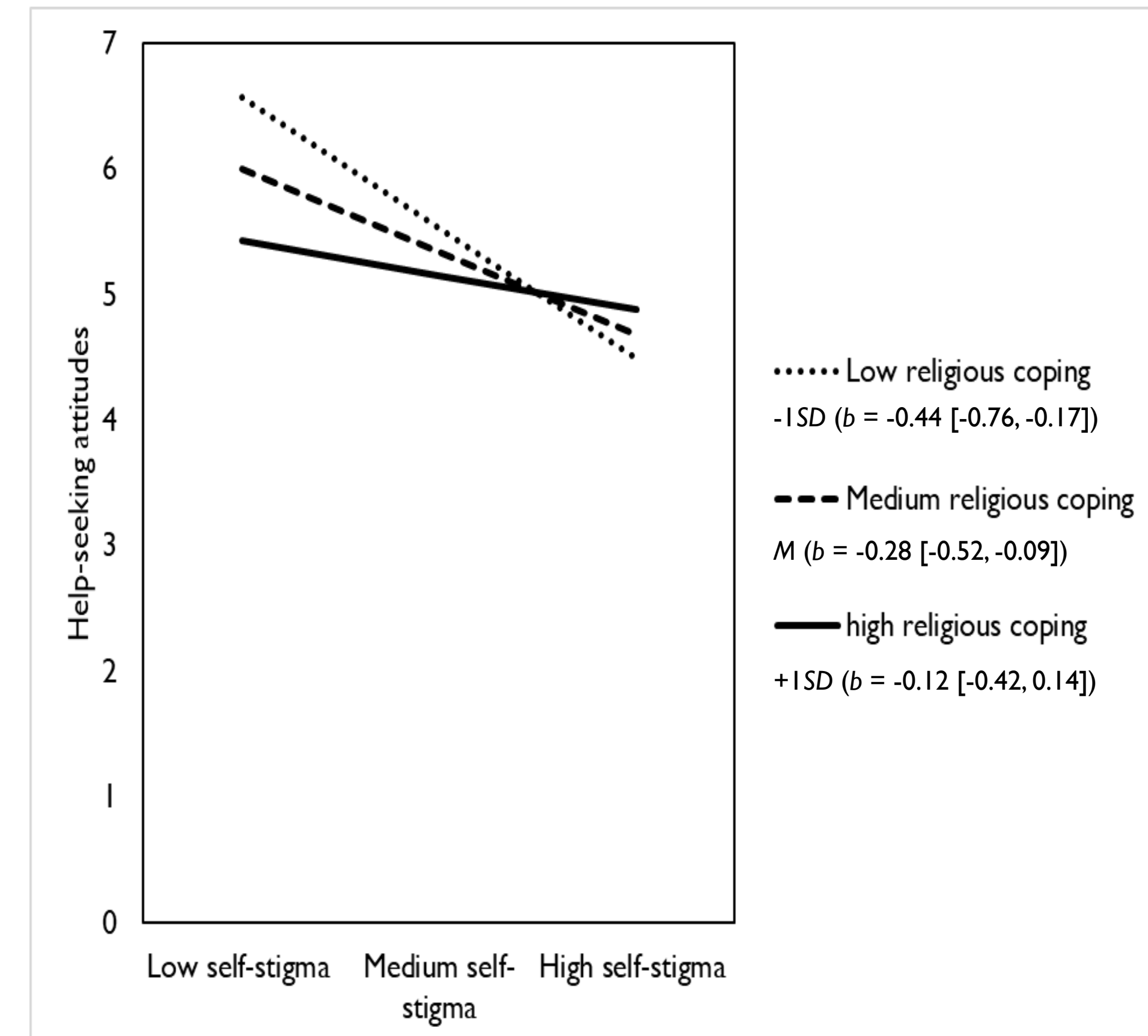
Procedures

- Participants were recruited via email with a list of all Asian American students enrolled at the current institution.
- Participants took an online Qualtrics survey consisting of demographic questions and study measures.

Measures

- The Perception of Stigmatization by Others for Seeking Help (Vogel et al., 2009)
- The Self-Stigma of Seeking Help (Vogel et al., 2006)
- Mental Help Seeking Attitudes Scale (Hammer et al., 2018)
- Emotions as a Child – Youth Report (Magai & O'Neal, 1997)
- Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (Gratz & Romer, 2004)
- Brief RCOPE (administered to Christian participants; Pargament et al., 2011)

Results



- The mediation model of close others' stigma predicting help-seeking attitudes through self-stigma was found significant in the present study (i.e., close others' stigma was a positive and significant predictor of self-stigma, and self-stigma was a significant and inverse predictor of positive help seeking attitudes).
- Emotion regulation and socialization did not significantly mediate the moderated mediation model. However, the direct relationship between emotion regulation and help seeking attitudes were positively correlated ($b = 0.32$, $t = 2.44$, $p = .017$).
- Religious coping significantly moderated the mediation model weakening the inverse relation between self-stigma and help-seeking attitudes in the mediation model.

Discussion

- For Asian American college students who might be impacted by Asian American cultural values emphasizing collectivism and conforming to norms (B. S. K. Kim et al., 2005), the opinions about help-seeking held by close relationships might influence help-seeking decisions (P.Y. Kim & Park, 2009).
- Religious coping findings suggest a complex facilitative role of religious coping on help-seeking attitudes; at lower levels of self-stigma, religious coping does not seem to be as impactful on help-seeking attitudes, compared to higher levels of self-stigma where religious coping seems most protective.
- The direct relationship between emotion regulation and help seeking is consistent with the literature demonstrating that adolescents with low levels of emotional awareness (Ciarrochi et al., 2002) and emotional competence (Ciarrochi et al., 2003) displayed the lowest intentions to seek help.
- This study suggests the importance of being attuned to the religious coping tendencies of Asian Americans to counter stigma and facilitate positive mental help seeking attitudes.

References

