Mental Illness Perceptions & Misconceptions Within Black Communities

Brielle Vasciannie

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Research Question

What are some of the perceptions and misconceptions that African Americans perpetuate about mental health and mental illness that affects help-seeking attitudes within the black community?

Introduction

The rise of mental illness in the US is increasing at an alarming rate. Approximately one in five adults will suffer from a mental illness in any given year. Along with this shocking statistic, the rates of untreated mental illness, especially within the black community, has escalated.

Mental illness and mental health are topics that tend to be stigmatized within society, specifically in the black community. This results in people believing like they can not even talk about these issues, let alone receive help and treatment for their mental illnesses. Hopefully, in turn, we can begin to dismantle these negative ideas in order to combat the rates of untreated mental illness.

Methodology/Procedure

• Qualitative research utilizing an online survey and (in the future) interviews
• Created a 25 question survey that containing open-ended and yes/no questions
• Sent out the survey through the McNair program Blackboard page
• Participants were given one week to submit responses
• All the data was anonymous and collected through the survey website

Questions

• What are some words that come to mind when you think of mental illness?
• What are your views on mentally ill individuals?
• Do you think the mentally ill are dangerous?
• On a scale from 1-5 how much do you care about mental health?
• Do you feel comfortable talking about mental health?
• Does your family feel comfortable talking about mental health?
• Has anyone in your family been diagnosed with a mental illness?
• Do your beliefs correspond with how your family views mental illness?
• Have you personally received mental health treatment?

Results/Findings

• The overall fear of being "labeled" and "stigmatized"
• Family "disapproval" (lack of support)
• Stigma surrounding medication
• Negative image of mentally ill
• Lack of hope in mental health treatment
• Overall mistrust in the healthcare system
• Affordability

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Contact: Bvasc2@Brockport.edu

References