The Exploration of Peer-Based Mental Health Service Model

Mental health issues in modern society are always concerning topics to mention (Kessler et al., 2005). Among all the age groups, the mental health conditions of college students are inevitable to be one of the few most urgent fields needed to be researched. Hunt and Eisenberg (2010) demonstrated in their review paper about mental health problems in college students that while the prevalence of all kinds of mental disorders remains high in this population, the treatment rates are indeed very low and are not ideal. At the same time, college students exhibited some different patterns in the mental health problems they have, compared to their non-college counterparts. For example, it was found that college students were more likely to get alcohol use disorders than their noncollege peers while they were less likely to have drug use disorders. Furthermore, a meta-analysis study done by Ibrahim et al. (2013) found that college students had a much higher chance of getting depression than people in the general population. In addition, special life events were found to be a candidate that severed the mental health conditions of college students. It was found that almost 25% of the college students surveyed at a university in China during the recent pandemic experienced anxiety, mildly or severely (Cao et al., 2020).

Hunt and Eisenberg (2010) argued that one of the reasons that led to low treatment rates of mental health problems among college students was the existence of some barriers that prevented them from seeking help. With this background, the current study is trying to explore a solution to the outcome of the existing barriers that impede college students from seeking mental health support. Lack of time, lack of perceived need for the help of mental health, and being untrusted to the mental health services were some of the common and prevalent barriers that were found by prior research as well as the research done by Hunt, Eisenberg, and their

colleagues. A new strategy in the field of mental health has been recently proposed to assist counseling by eliminating cognitive barriers to mental health problems, providing social support, and creating communication venues for the students with the mental health professionals (Oades et al., 2012). This strategy is based on peer support and is aimed to provide mental health services to the people who need them. While it is created with good intentions, its working model is still under development in terms of its efficacy, efficiency, and executing formats. The present study is aimed to understand peer-based mental health services and explore a potential framework for the individuals and organizations who want to adopt it in their services.

<div align="center">Methods and Final Products</div>

The current focus of the present study is to explore the existing models of peer-based mental health service models as much as possible and potentially modify some of them so that the models can be used to serve the college student population better. The work that is aimed to be finished in the semester of fall 2021 will be considered as preliminary work of the overall study. There will be a total of two stages for this phase. In stage I, all the related information (e.g., peer-based mental health service models, college student counseling) will be gathered from websites, literature, and other open resources. The goal I of stage I is to evaluate the existing peer-based models, understand their goals and aims, and understand their operation mechanisms. At the same time, goal II is to research the literature that discussed the efficacy of peer-based mental health services and to review them for purpose of finding theoretical supports for the new strategy. In stage II, all the information obtained from stage I will be integrated and discussed. The discussion will include if it is necessary to develop a new model or modify an existing to meet the need of college student population and the direction where the new model should go. A review paper is expected to be created by the end of stage II, discussing if the peer-based mental

health service is plausible, ethical, and what are some potential research gaps as well as directions that are needed for this strategy. Meta-analysis is expected to be used if the literature in the field is of adequate amount. After completing this phase of the study, the goal and aims of the next phase should be discussed at the end of Fall 2021. There is no need for IRB documents for this phase of the study.

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