

Exploring the Influence of South Asian Cultural Beliefs on the Mental Health Treatment-Seeking Behaviors of First-Generation American South Asian Young Adults

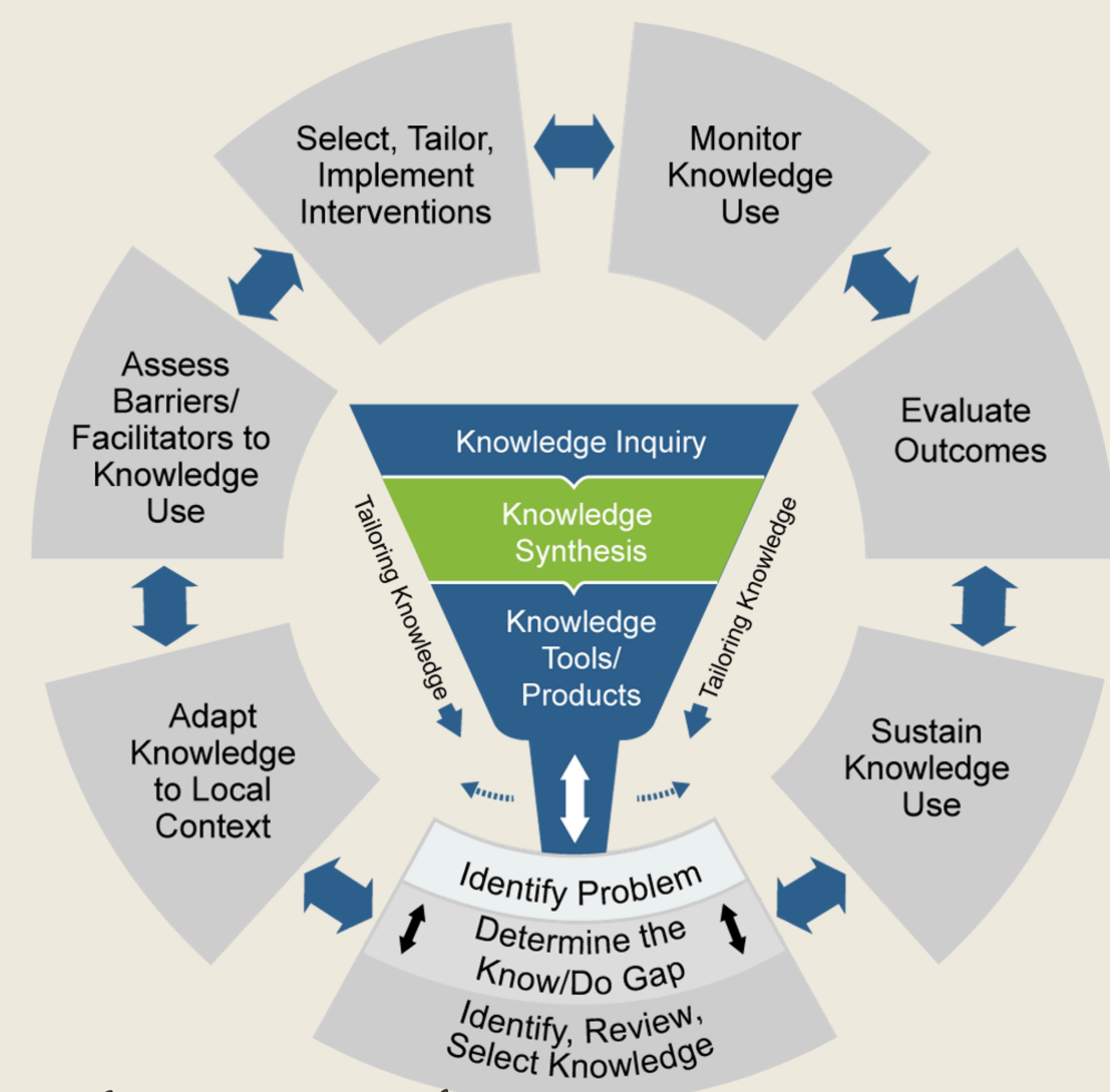
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South Asians have become a significant part of the diverse tapestry formed by the United States' proverbial melting pot. Join us in learning how this population's cultural beliefs impact their mental health treatment-seeking behaviors.



Theoretical Framework

- My study, guided by the Knowledge-to-Action (KTA) Framework, aims to synthesize research on cultural beliefs and mental health stigma among South Asian populations.
- By incorporating the stress process model, it explores the origins and impacts of stress on individuals, emphasizing the interplay between internal and external stressors.
- This integrated approach informs culturally sensitive methodologies, enhancing mental health support for South Asian American youth and shedding light on their help-seeking behaviors.

Methodology

- My research utilizes a qualitative approach to delve into mental health treatment-seeking behaviors within the South Asian community, prioritizing understanding over theory testing.
- This method allows for deep insights, especially given the scarcity of research in the United States on this topic.
- Using focus groups, audio recording, note-taking, and observation, the study aims to uncover how cultural beliefs impact mental health treatment.
- Through purposeful sampling of first-generation South Asian Americans aged 18-25, diverse perspectives will be captured.
- The interview guide, approved by the Faculty Advisor, will steer discussions on cultural nuances and societal perceptions.
- Ultimately, this qualitative approach provides a thorough examination of the interplay between cultural beliefs and mental health treatment-seeking behaviors, informing future interventions and policies.

Abstract

- South Asian immigrants contribute significantly to the diverse fabric of the United States, originating from nations like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and others, bringing a rich array of cultural traditions and religious practices.
- Despite their diversity, they share common cultural values that influence the worldview of first-generation young adults, including attitudes towards mental health.
- Recognizing this is crucial not only for individuals and families but also for mental health professionals and policymakers, particularly given the lack of research in the U.S. context.
- This study aims to explore the interplay of cultural beliefs, mental health stigma, and treatment-seeking behaviors among first-generation South Asian American young adults through qualitative methods, including focus groups.
- These sessions, guided by an approved interview guide, will be audio-recorded to capture nuances, ensuring relevance to the cultural and demographic context under investigation.



Discussion

- Mental health treatment-seeking behaviors amongst South Asian American youth who identify as first-generation is a significantly understudied issue.
- The limited pool of available research suggests that South Asian American youth suffer from disproportionate rates of mental illness due to not seeking treatment because of the collectivist nature of South Asian families, along with cultural stigma, acculturation, and macro/micro-aggressions (Karasz et. al, 2019, p. 23).
- To provide this thriving ethnic community with the mental health care it needs, providers must gain awareness of South Asian cultural beliefs, common cultural issues, and culturally compatible interventions that can inform their practice, while also remaining open to cultural variation and individualized differences (Shariff, 2009, p. 29).
- Future studies should focus on potential solutions to the lack of culturally sensitive approaches to the mental health concerns of South Asian American youth.
- A comprehensive understanding of the epidemiology and conceptualization of mental illness amongst South Asians in the U.S.A. will allow researchers and mental health providers to explore appropriate interventions that promote mental well-being in the South Asian community.
- Engaging culturally responsive providers is imperative in implementing interventions, since cultural barriers to care have reduced mental health care utilization among South Asians (Karasz et. al, 2019, p. 25).

Plans for Dissemination

- The study, focusing on the impact of South Asian cultural beliefs on mental health treatment-seeking among first-generation South Asian American young adults (18-25), aims for broad dissemination.
- It will be presented at conferences like the American Psychological Association's annual meeting and published in relevant peer-reviewed journals.
- Community engagement will involve workshops with South Asian community centers, mental health organizations, and university student groups.
- Digital strategies, including infographics, podcasts, and webinars, along with active presence on social media platforms like KT Lab Instagram and partnerships with advocacy groups, will ensure widespread reach and encourage dialogue on culturally sensitive mental health care among South Asian American youth.

Contributors

- Susan Rabinowicz PT, DPT, MS, PhD
- Allan Weissmann

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