
ABSTRACT

Personal service gap in help seeking from a student counseling service: Using a hypothetical depression vignette

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Personal service gap, which was defined as the gap between university students' intention to seek help for depression, and their intention to refer friends to seek help from a student counseling service was the focus of this research. Undergraduate students ($N=267$) completed a self-report questionnaire. Participants were asked to imagine themselves and their friends suffering from depressive symptoms and to provide ratings of help-seeking intentions, helpfulness of formal (student counseling service) and informal (friend/family) help, coping alone, causal attribution, problem severity and prognosis. The results indicated (1) participants would refer their friends more than themselves to both formal and informal help sources, (2) participants perceived that the helpfulness of formal and informal help was positively related to the intention to seek help and also for referring friends to seek help from student counseling services and friend/family, (3) the personal service gap regarding help seeking from a student counseling service was predicted by cognitive bias regarding the helpfulness of student counseling services and by internal causal attribution. The implications of these findings are discussed.

Key Words: personal service gap, help-seeking, student counseling service, depression, undergraduate students
