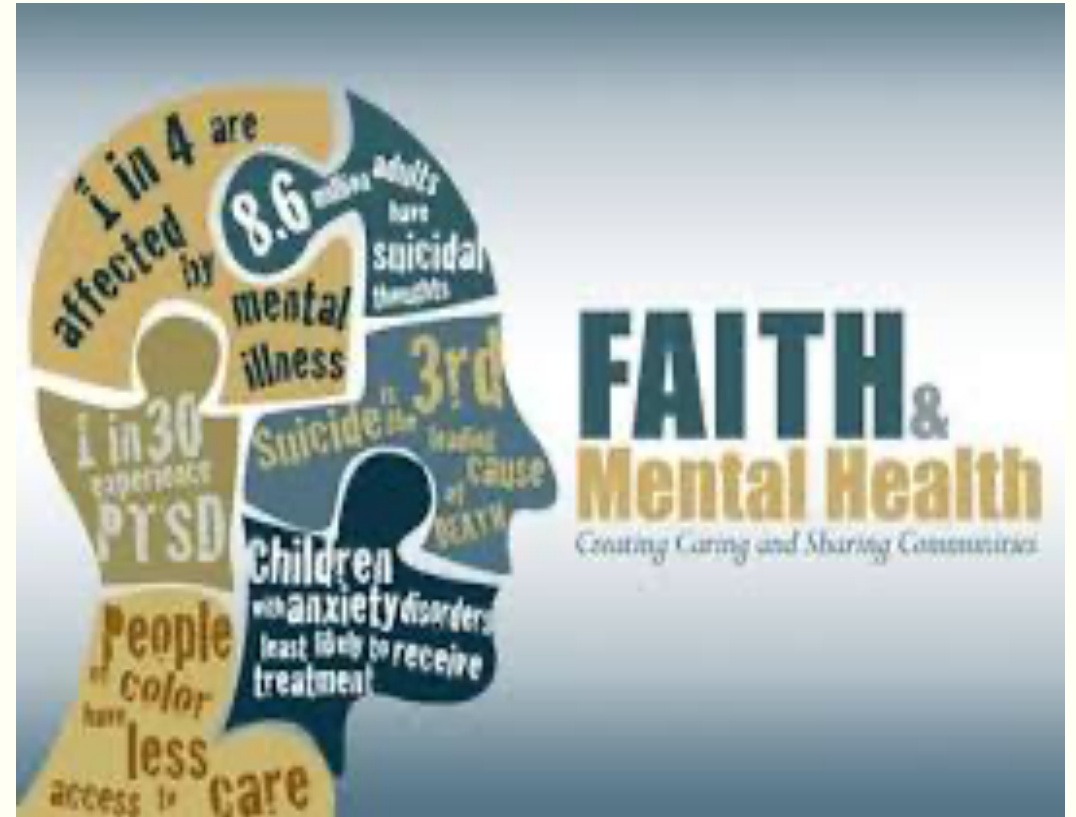


AFRICAN AMERICANS UNDERUTILIZATION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: RELIGION AS A BARRIER

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ABSTRACT

The current study aimed to investigate the underutilization of mental health services amongst African Americans, looking specifically at religion as a barrier. The study used a qualitative design in which 12 African Americans who regularly attend a Black Church were interviewed. The study found that participants felt safer seeking out their church for psychological support rather than mental health services. Moreover, participants also worried about the stigma of being labeled with a mental health diagnosis if they received formal treatment. The results suggest a need to identify ways to bridge the gap between the church and psychological care.

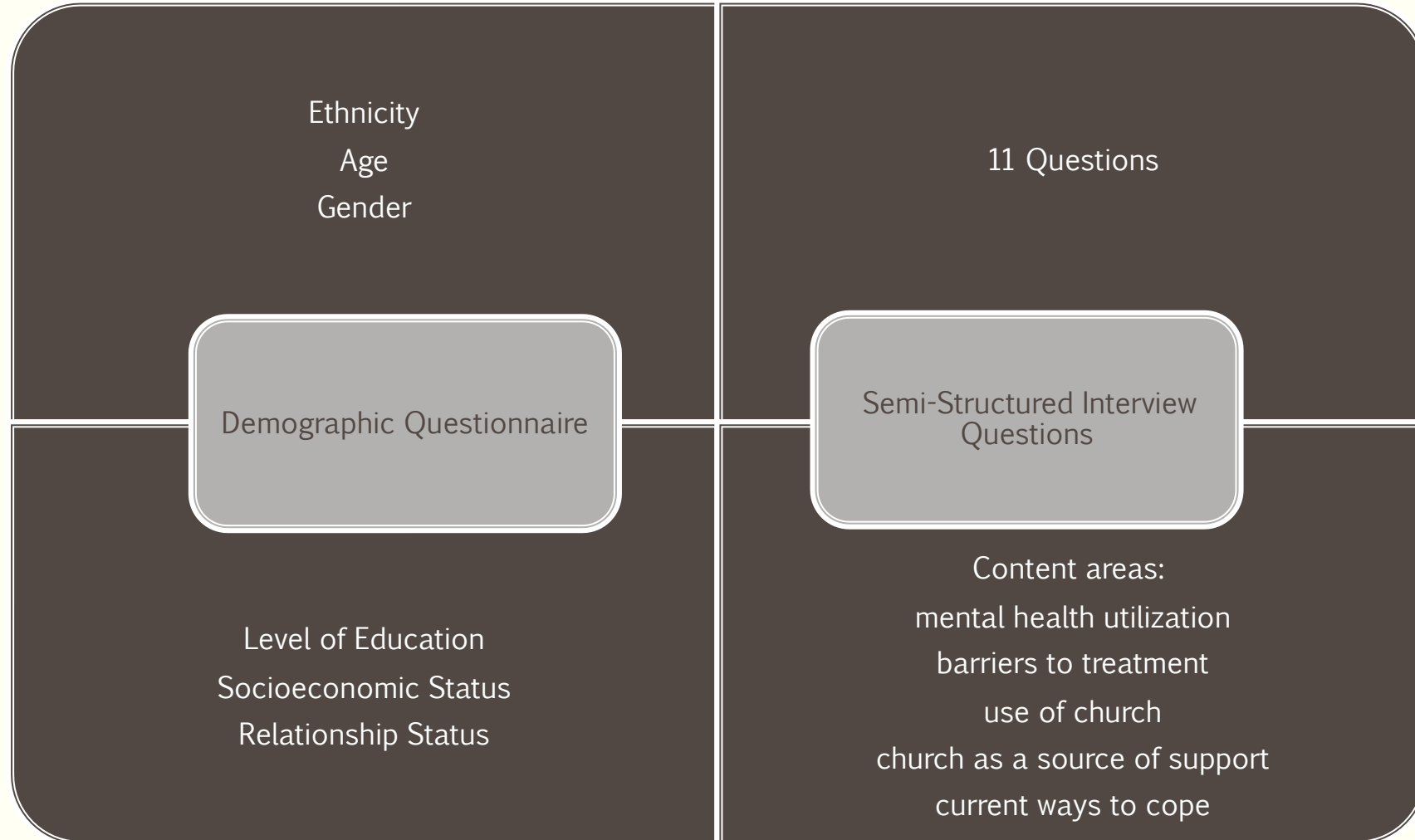
LITERATURE

- Fewer than 9% of African Americans will solicit any form of mental health assistance (Neighbors, 1998, SAMHSA, 2012 , and CDC, 2013)
- Primary barriers
 - Lack of resources/access to quality care
 - Lack of awareness
 - Stigma
 - Distrust towards the healthcare system (cultural distrust)
- Many African Americans prefer informal church support and rely on religious coping
 - 3 dimensions of coping
 - Collaborative religious problem solving
 - Deferring religious problem solving
 - Self-directed religious problem solving
- As a result, traditionally Black churches may continue to be a preferred resource for mental health services among African Americans.
- However, the ability of Black churches to meet their community's mental health needs is unclear

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Age	Sex	SES	Degree Level	Profession	Denomination	Marital Status	Church Attendance	Actively Involved	Distress	Prev Serv
29	M	M	BA	Business	Non-Denom	M	4x/month	yes	yes	no
26	F	M	BA	OT student	Non-Denom	S	4x/month	yes	yes	no
40	M	M	AA	Deacon	Baptist	M	4x/month	yes	yes	no
29	F	M	MA	Teacher	Baptist	S	4x/month	yes	yes	no
27	F	M	BA	Mental Health Aid	Baptist	S	4x/month	yes	yes	no
45	M	M	Ph.D	Pastor	Baptist	M	4x/month	yes	yes	no
31	M	M	MA	Psy.D student	Non-Denom	M	4x/month	yes	yes	no
27	M	M	BS	Youth Spiritual Counselor	Non-Denom	S	4x/month	yes	yes	no
39	M	M	AA	Deacon	Baptist	M	4x/month	yes	yes	no
28	F	M	BA	Social Worker	Baptist	M	4x/month	yes	yes	no
27	M	M	BA	Education Student	Pentecostal	S	4x/month	yes	yes	no
30	F	M	BA	Teacher	Non-Denom	S	4x/month	yes	yes	no

METHODOLOGY



METHODOLOGY

PROCEDURES

- The researcher traveled to multiple churches within Southern California and recruited (via flyers) any individuals who were willing to participate in the study.
- Permission to place flyers on church billboards was received from each of the Pastors from each church
- The flyer included the researcher's contact information and interested participants were able to send an email to the researcher expressing their interest.
- The evaluator then contacted the volunteers via stated preferred contact, either email or telephone and were informed of the inclusion criteria and subsequently administered an initial screening
- Upon meeting the minimum criteria for participation in the study, the researcher proceeded to discuss the nature of the project, verbally review their rights as a participant, and provided them with an informed consent form.
- In circumstances in which the volunteer agreed to participate in the study, the researcher then allowed the participant to set a meeting time and set up the interviews at a designated church office, which was private and soundproof.
- Upon the completion of the semi-structured interview, a verbal and written debriefing statement was provided with the contact information of the researcher and any necessary referrals.
- Participants were offered compensation in the form of \$5 paid by the researcher to one of the church ministries of their choice.

RESULTS

Goals:

- (1) identify if there truly is reluctance in the African-American community to seek out traditional mental health services
- (2) if their reluctance is due to their faith
- (3) what are the stigmas regarding mental health and therapy from the perspectives of African American participants
- (4) what would help break the barriers to professional help seeking.

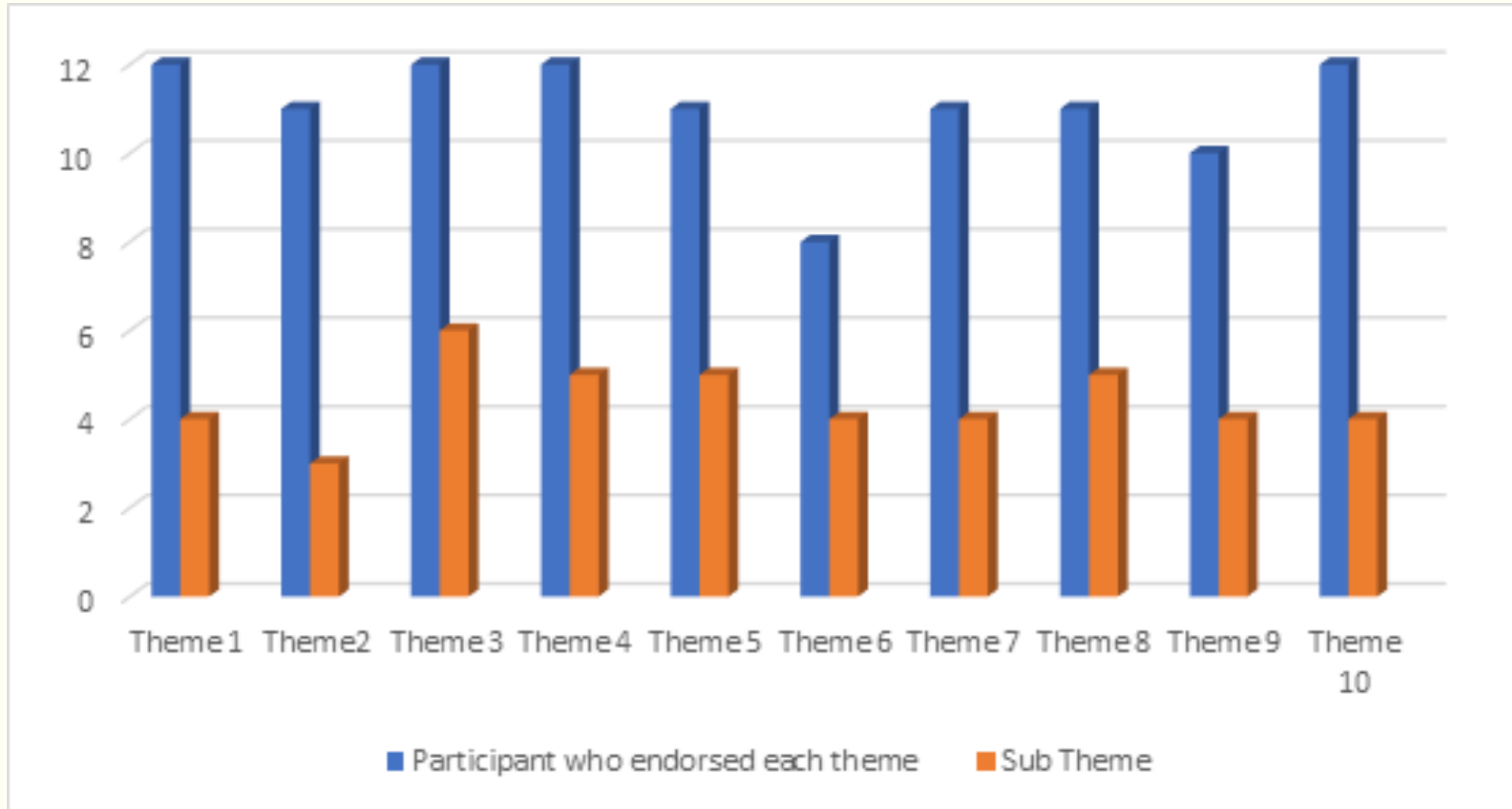
The interviews for this study were reviewed utilizing interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

All transcripts used pseudonyms (P02, P02, etc.) instead of the participants name to help ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

The transcripts of the interviews were examined to find interpretative comments and themes.

Inter-rater reliability for this study was .98

THEMES



THEMES

Theme
1

Church & Identity

Theme
2

Balance Spiritual
& Worldly
Demands

Theme
3

MH Problems
Reflects Your
Faith

Theme
4

African
Americans
Experience Mood,
Trauma &
Anxiety Disorders

Theme
5

Underutilization is
associated with
Stigma and Faith

Theme
6

Definitive Need

Theme
7

Mental Health
Lacks Value

Theme
8

African
American
Christian
Therapist

Theme
9

Role of God is
to Help His
Children

Theme
10

Responsibilities
of Clergy is to
Assist Helping
God's Children

RESULTS

Findings:

(1) African Americans are reluctant to enter therapy and seek professional treatment because of their faith (religion) and stigmas

(2) Their desire to seek out mental health services only when it is an absolute last resort.

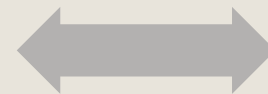
(3) They believe that the clergy should be trained to provide counseling and refer out when they are not competent to provide mental health interventions

DISCUSSION

Clinical
Implication



Future
Research



Limitations

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