

Mental Health and Resilience in College Students Who Have Experienced Sexual Assault

Mikayla-Jaelle Olmedo
Department of Education and Psychology
Advisor: Tron Wilder
mikaylaolmedo@southern.edu



Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine individuals' resiliency through the mental health processes they had used to in order to cope with after encountering a sexual assault. The participants in this study were interviewed on their coping process, that specifically asked questions based on resiliency. Questions were asked about healthy and unhealthy ways the participant was able to cope with their past incidents, how they were able to perceive and ways in which they would advise others to cope. Results showed that those who had not seen a counselor or sought for help in some way, were just as resilient as those who had sought out counseling. Research also showed that there was a significant correlation in individuals who did seek counseling and the way they were able to process their incident.

Introduction

- 97% of women and 6% of men have been sexually assaulted in their lifetime (Keller 2018)
- women and children are more likely to have poor mental health due to preexisting victimization (McCrae 2006)
- Over the years a stigma has been created by individuals who are not educated on the circumstances of sexual assault. (Del Campo et al. 2020)
- Only 34% of females have self-reported incidents of rape and sexual assault. (Keller et al. 2018).

Hypothesis

H1: Individuals who have been sexually assaulted, who have some sort of counseling/therapy are more resilient than those who do not receive counseling/therapy.
H2: Individuals who have been sexually assaulted, who do not receive some sort of counseling/therapy are just as resilient as those who go to counseling/therapy.

Methods

- Participants were 13 female and 2 male undergraduate students from Southern Adventist University
- Participants answered 6 questions:
 1. If they had received counseling or therapy at some point in their lives
 2. How they deal with setbacks
 3. How they were able to cope after the incident
 4. What made them choose to either attend or not attend counseling
 5. What are coping skills that should be avoided
 6. What are a few words of advice they would give to someone in a similar situation
- Participants' answers were recorded, transcribed, and coded.

Results

- 15 Southern Students Participated in this qualitative research study
- Both individuals who had received some form of counseling and therapy, as well as the individuals who didn't seem to be resilient after experiences of sexual assault
- Results support hypothesis 2 showing that individuals who have been sexually assaulted, who have not received some form of counseling/therapy are just as resilient as those who go to counseling.

Discussion

- Not all individuals cope the same ways
- Students who want to suppress their emotions tend to fill their minds and schedules to fill up their day so that they don't have to come to terms with their reality
- Other students chose to talk to friends, write letters, burn journals, and see a counselor to feel heard, understood, and safe.
- Results showed that although coping mechanisms are different, resiliency can be seen in all individuals
- Overall, individuals who have been sexually assaulted want their lives to go back to normal and do what they need to ignore to achieve that.

References

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