

Assessing Students' Perceptions of the University Counseling Center

THROUGH VIDEO PRESENTATION

Lindsey Drachenberg and Cassidy Mattson | Jarrod Hines | Psychology Department

University of Wisconsin
Eau Claire



ABSTRACT

The present study investigated if student perceptions of university counseling services became more positive after viewing a video where fellow students shared their experiences with counseling services and if the associated perception change is stronger when the video is viewed in-person instead of online.

INTRODUCTION

It has been recognized that over 75% of the people in the United States who live with a mental illness do not seek help from a professional (Kaplan et al., 2012). This is especially concerning when we recognize that 75% percent of mental illnesses are diagnosed by the age of twenty-four, which is when many college students are graduating (D'Amico et al., 2016). It has also been shown that the students who experience the most stress are also the least likely to utilize counseling services (Holland, 2016).

We expect that a video that showcases fellow students' positive experiences with counseling services will aid in breaking down some of the barriers related to stigma and under-utilization of resources. It has been demonstrated that a video could help change attitudes surrounding counseling services, especially if the video is viewed repeatedly (Kaplan, 2012).

However, past research has not examined if there was a difference between participants who watched the video online or in-person. We expect that there will be, and those who view the video in-person will experience a stronger change in positive perceptions of counseling services.

METHOD

ONLINE

Using a convenience sample, 164 participated.

- 21 Men & 142 Women
- The sample was largely White (84%), with the rest of the sample identifying as Asian (4.3%), Latino (6%), Mixed Race (1.2%), African American (1.2%), and Other (1.2%).
- 71 first-year students // 39 second-years // 25 third-years // 24 fourth-years // three fifth-years // two transfer students.
- Seen a mental health counselor in the past
 - 84 answered "Yes" // 80 responded "No."

IN-PERSON

Using a convenience sample, 158 participated.

- 58 Men & 99 Women & 1 "Other"
- The sample was again largely White (84.3%), with the rest of the sample identifying as Asian (10.7%), Pacific Islander (.6%), Mixed Race (.6%), African American (.6%), and Arab or Middle Eastern (.6%).
- Two first-year students // 60 second-years // 54 third-years // 32 fourth-years // nine fifth-years // one transfer students.
- Seen a mental health counselor in the past
 - 52 answered "Yes" // 106 responded "No."

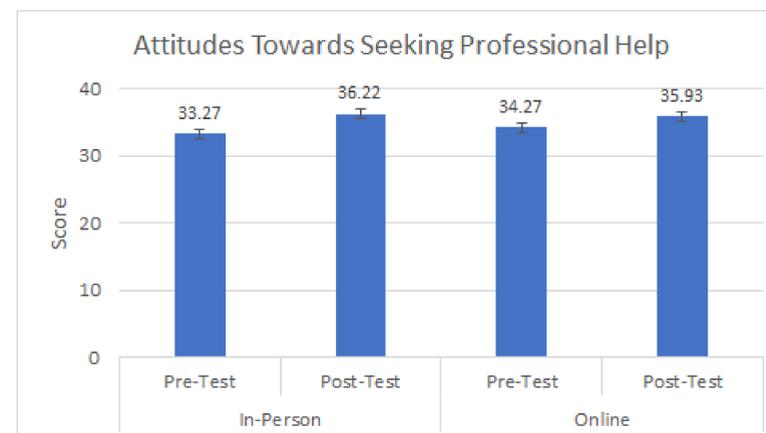
MEASURES

For our survey, we used questions from the Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Help Scale (Fischer & Farina, 1995), which is a ten-question scale, where each item is scored from one to five (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The ten scores are then summed, and a higher score indicates a more positive attitude towards receiving professional help.

We also used the Self-Stigma of Seeking Professional Help Scale (Vogel et al., 2006), which was also a ten-question scale, where each item is scored from one to five (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). The ten scores are then summed, and a lower score indicates less self-stigmatizing behaviors regarding seeking therapy. These measures were used to examine if participants exhibit more positive perceptions towards seeking professional help after viewing the video, in addition to also demonstrating lower self-stigmatization behaviors post-video.

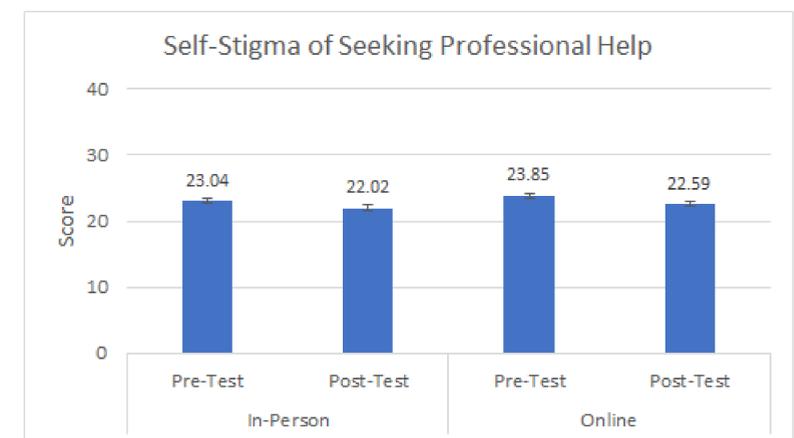
RESULTS

To test if participants' attitudes toward seeking professional help improved between our pre-test and post-test as a function of participant viewing condition, we ran a 2(Test Type: Pre-test, Post-test; Within-Subjects) x 2 (Viewing Condition: In-person, Online; Between-Subjects) mixed ANOVA on attitudes towards seeking professional help. There was a main effect of test type, $F(1, 301) = 111.07, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .27$. There was no main effect of viewing condition, $F(1,301) = .24, p = .626, \eta_p^2 = .001$.



Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes toward seeking professional help

To test if participants' self-stigmatizing behavior improved between our pre-test and post-test as a function of participant viewing condition, we ran a 2(Test Type: Pre-test, Post-test; Within-Subjects) x 2 (Viewing Condition: In-person, Online; Between-Subjects) mixed ANOVA on self-stigmatizing behavior. The ANOVA revealed a main effect of test type, $F(1, 301) = 12.77, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$. There was not a main effect of viewing condition, $F(1,301) = 1.18, p = .278, \eta_p^2 = .004$.



Lower scores indicate less self-stigmatization toward seeking professional help

DISCUSSION

Our results corroborated previous research in that participants demonstrated (1) more positive feelings towards seeking professional help and (2) less self-stigmatizing behaviors after viewing our pro-counseling video. This finding showcases the importance of providing students with a plethora of information regarding University counseling services, especially if this information includes testimonials from fellow students who have had positive experiences.

Our current study did not find that there was a statistically significant difference between students viewing our video in-person or online, but this is a positive finding. This means that our video could be viewed online at a students' convenience while still having a positive impact on their perceptions of university counseling services. We therefore recommend that our video, or a similar video which highlights student testimonials, becomes mandated for all incoming first-year students. This will ensure that the most vulnerable students receive necessary information about counseling services, which they can then use for their own mental health needs or share with a friend who may be in need.

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