

Case 34 Summary

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Background

Research has examined Racial/Ethnic (RE) disparities in the utilization and delivery of social services such as psychology counselling to minority groups in North America. These RE disparities have been linked to the discrimination of minority groups. Review literatures of RE biases has found that providers appear to have an implicit bias in terms of a positive attitude towards White people and negative attitudes towards people of color.

Objectives

Instead of the provider's attitude towards receivers during the service, this present study of my client aims to investigate on RE bias at the entry point of social services. Specifically, the present study seeks to examine the possibility of RE disparities to a particular South Asian (SA) group of individuals (i.e., Punjabi Sikh individuals) in accessing mental health service in Canada. The main interest of the study lies on the counsellors' possible bias towards different religions, in our case, Sikh versus Christian. The secondary objective involves testing for the impact of other factors such as gender, accent and/or intergroup contact on the how receptive the service provider is to providing social services.

Data Collection

Randomly chosen social service providers will receive a standardized (i.e., pre-recorded) voicemail instructing them to return the call. Each caller represents one of all possible conditions regarding the status of religion, gender and/or accent. In terms of intergroup contact, they plan to perform the experiment on counsellors from cities with low or high percentage of Punjabi Sikh individuals. To reduce the possibility that the phone call will be answered, all calls will be placed after conventional working hours (e.g., 8:30 pm). A pilot test of 20 individuals will assist in a power calculation to determine the sample size and effect size required to obtain a power of 0.8 due to the scarcity of research in this area.

Statistical Advices and Questions

A logistic regression seems appropriate for this case. The response variable should be a dichotomized answer from the service provider (whether the provider returns the call or whether the provider offers appointments). The predictors are those possible factors affecting willingness of reception of the provider: religion, gender, intergroup contact and/or accent. As a generalization of logistic regression, ordinal regression may also be of use if the response is an ordinal variable (e.g. three types of answer like "Sorry I can't accept you", "I can't do it now but please call me back later," and "Yes I will be your counsellor".) Some feedbacks on the following questions would be appreciated:

1. The client also requests a sample size calculation on the study but I'm not familiar with it in a logistic regression case. Any advice on that? Also, how can I make use of the pilot test of 20 individuals?
2. In regard to the intergroup contact, I'm worrying about a potential confounding factor: racial/ethnic characteristics of the counsellor. However, collecting for demographic

information is objected by the client as they want to keep the survey invisible to counsellors.