Request #: 559 - PSY - Thesis

Using Peer-support Coaching to Improve Adherence to Online Self-help for College Mental Health

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Background

The purpose of this study is to test the feasibility and effectiveness of an innovative peer support coaching model for college students. The primary aim of the coaching model is to increase participants' adherence to ACT Guide, an online mental health program. Online programs like ACT Guide address significant barriers to receiving therapy (e.g., limited access to providers, mental health stigma; Lattie, Lipson, {&} Eisenberg, 2019). Effectiveness outside of clinical trials has been limited though, as many who sign up for online self-help complete few to no sessions (Baumel, Edan, {&} Kane, 2019; Eisenberg, Hunt, {&} Speer, 2012). The current gold standard approach to improving adherence in online self-help is through coaching delivered via phone calls or asynchronous messaging systems by graduate students or staff. However, these coaching methods are often not feasible to implement on a wide-scale basis due to the required professional staff and results regarding efficacy has been mixed (Shim, Mahaffey, Bleidistel, {&} Gonzalez, 2017). Peer-delivered phone coaching, using undergraduate students as coaches, is an innovative alternative to traditional coaching methods which would be feasible for large-scale implementation. To test the effects of peer-support coaching on ACT Guide adherence rates and outcomes, we conducted a RCT with three conditions (peer-support phone coaching, peer-support text message coaching, and a no support control group) using a sample of 230 USU students. Data collection is complete, and I am now analyzing the data for my thesis, as well as in preparation for a grant proposal using the current study as pilot data.

Sample

We have a sample size of 230. Data includes a baseline survey, post survey, ACT Guide usage data, and coaching data (e.g., fidelity scores and number of coaching sessions completed by each participant).

Hypothesis

We aim to test the feasibility of peer-delivered phone coaching and text messaging protocols in a college student sample using ACT Guide. Specifically, we predict the following: 1. Participants will adhere to coaching (80{%} completing 6 coaching calls; 80{%} responding to texts > 6 weeks). 2. Participants receiving either modality of coaching will be equally satisfied with coaching (M = 5 "agree" on 6-point self-reported coaching satisfaction items with no difference in satisfaction between conditions). 3. Coaching fidelity will be maintained (80{%} of audited coaching calls scoring a 9 out of 11 on the fidelity rubric; 80{%} of audited coaching text conversations scoring a 7 out of 9 on the fidelity rubric). We additionally plan to test the efficacy of the ACT based peer-support phone coaching protocol relative to asynchronous text messages or no support on ACT Guide adherence (primary outcome) and mental health symptoms (secondary outcome). In relation to this aim we predict the following: 4. Participants who receive peer-support phone coaching will complete more ACT Guide modules and will report greater improvements in mental health relative to both the text messaging and no support conditions. 5. Participants in the text messaging condition will have better adherence and mental health than the no support condition, but worse outcomes than the phone coaching condition. 6. The number of modules completed will mediate the relationship between coaching condition and mental health outcomes.

I have already conducted analyses on most of these items, but would like help in confirming that I conducted the MLM analysis for prediction 5 correctly, and help with mediation analyses for prediction 6 (I am unsure how to run mediation analyses for a MLM with categorical predictors in R)

Progress

Data cleaning, descriptive analyses, and most of the planned inferential analyses.

Request

I would mostly like help with "double-checking" that that analyses/models I have conducted are conceptually appropriate choices given the data. I would also like help with how to conduct mediation analyses in R with a more complex MLM, as opposed to linear regression.

Timeline

I plan to defend my thesis in the fall, and submit an NIH R15 grant using this pilot data by 9/30/21.