STIGMA OF MENTAL ILLNESS A BARRIER FOR ASIAN INDIAN WOMEN SEEKING TREATMENT

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Stigma of mental illness a barrier for Asian Indian women seeking treatment

AGENDA

Background information on Asian Indian cultural norms

Asian Indians and the process of acculturation and sustaining “model minority” status.

Stigma: Starting the conversation helps to increase understanding and utilization of mental health services.

Asian Indian adolescent identity development is complicated by a familial obligation to cultural loyalty versus independence
## Characteristics of Traditional Asian Indian Families

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<tr>
<th>Hierarchical in structure</th>
<th>Gender Differences</th>
<th>Collectivism Interdependence</th>
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<td>· Respect for ancestors and elders past and present</td>
<td>· Males highly valued. Female role is to be passive, be subservient to the male, perform domestic chores, and bear children.</td>
<td>· Learn early in life that family is central and actions of an individual member reflects on the entire family</td>
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Characteristics of Traditional Asian Indian Families

**Discipline**
- Shame and Guilt used to control children.
- Emphasis on loyalty and family honor.

**Emotions**
- Discourage open display of emotions and emotional control is a sign of maturity.

**Parenting Style**
- Father is authoritarian and emotionally distant. Primary role is to provide.
- Mother is authoritarian/authoritative providing physical care, controlling and guiding child to adhere to cultural norms.
Video Clip

- Jess stands up for what she wants. Most Asian Indian parents would disapprove based on the threat of something happening that would shame the family name.

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgxQ_U4xul0
Current Issues Asian Indian Families are Facing

- **American vs Asian Indian Norms**: Children assimilate faster than parents. Parents want children to adhere to traditional values. Children feel as if they are straddling the fence of bicultural identity.

- **Dating & Marriage**: Parents want to continue an active role in choosing spouse. Dating is done is secret. Interracial marriages increasing.

- **Academic Views**: Parents want children to have careers such as medical doctors, engineers. Children are exploring non traditional careers.

- **Language**: Native language being lost due to lack of use.
Research: My Sikh Mother and I: The Way We are in America

Objective of research was to identify and examine a number of existing issues experienced by Sikh Mothers and daughters in America.
Research: Sikh Mothers and Daughters: Qualitative Study

| Ethnography   | 10 Sikh daughters born and raised in US  
|              | Researcher identified as a vulnerable observer  
|              | Daughters were able to give a 1:1 interview.  
|              | Age range 21-35  
|              | Education Level: Attending or completed college. |
Sustaining “Model Minority” Status difficult to manage

Bicultural experience: Balancing act assimilating drives internal emotional discord trying to assert independence yet guilt/shamed for being too American by the family.

Values strongly influence and enforced by mother

Experience symptoms of depression, diaspora, and anxiety.
Underutilization of Mental Health Services

- Statistics show that Asian-Americans are among the least likely of all racial groups to seek mental health services.

- No real formal language for even understanding what (mental health) is and how to even speak about it, how to get treatment or help.

- The first national study of Asian-American (May 2002 though December 2003) mental health finds that the second generation is more likely than their immigrant parents to have emotional disorders.

- Data from the National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS), that over 30 percent of Asian-American parents reported minor parent-to-child assault, and 2 percent reported major assault. Both minor and major forms of violence further increase the risk of mental health problems—particularly for children.
What does a young Indian women look like with support?

**Strengthens**
- Independent
- Goal oriented
- Goal driven
- Attending college
- Continuing education

**Challenges**
- Family may perceive outside support as losing their daughter to someone else.
- -Mother, daughter, sister betraying family trust.
- Helping adolescents understand their struggle with independence and identity development separate from the family.
The steps of empowerment

Empower

- Define: Youth empowerment is a process where children and young people are encouraged to take charge of their lives.

Process

- Validate the youth’s need to be socially accepted by the family is normal and that the process is a bicultural struggle.

Resources

- Identify resources on campus & community.
- Develop short and long term plans.
Counseling Youth to Feel Empowered

Adults Role:
1.) Understand the youth’s family from the perspective of the youth.
2.) Understand the youth’s family’s perspective
3.) Understand the collective culture and community the youth and family live in.
4.) Be patient . . . Help the youth make informed decisions and weigh out short and long term outcomes.

Youth:
1.) Help youth articulate what they are feeling and to take time to process their own position and behaviors associated with their bicultural experiences.
2.) Work on understanding their parents’ perspectives and build healthy boundaries.
3.) Build coping skills and identify family and community supports to address their mental health symptoms.
Educating on forms of harassment by the family or community

- Educate the youth on their rights and the laws on harassment.
- Identify safety plans and support systems outside the family to help the youth get through unharmed.
- Process possible scenarios that the youth might experience with their family to help them be prepared on how to respond.
- Provide community resources, books and healthy outlets to appropriately
My recent challenge as a school counselor was when I learned my one of my students faced a sexual harassment situation in her classroom. She went to her counselor who was male and of another cultural background didn’t know how to handle the situation and was redirected to seek my assistance. The student immediately went looking for me, but I was in the middle of another crisis, so she went home to tell her dad. The next day she came crying to my office asking for a schedule a change. I asked her what happened, my immediate reaction was to validate her struggle and help her understand that what the young boy did was inappropriate. I told her we will have to contact her dad, she said she told her dad. Her dad said, "You must’ve done something for this to happen". She felt unsupported and isolated. I went to speak to the Assistant Principal. Who wasn’t using the correct words to show this student support, so I guided the AP. In conclusion, the student was moved from the class and the other young male dealt with the consequences. I suggested counseling services, but her dad was hesitant and as some time passed, another incident happened. Which gave me the opportunity to speak to dad about why it was important for her to receive counseling services. I was able to incorporate being a Indian women and the challenges I faced when I was younger that counseling services helped me and helped me have a stronger relationship with my dad.
Thoughts on the process

- What skills worked?
- Did educating other professionals help?
- How was I able to get the dad to understand his daughter’s needs?
Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to learn how to serve Asian Indian women and families in our communities. You have completed the first step to building a bridge for mental health services to Asian Indian families by being here today and your commitment to learn about the culture, implied norms and increase your skills.

We are hopeful that with time and outreach we will be able to serve a larger number of Asian Indian families, one family at a time!

Shinder & Jagdeep