



# A Study on the Effects of Mental Health Accessibility on Anxiety Among the Latinx Community

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## Abstract

- 16% of Latinx individuals are living with a mental illness in the past year and face unique barriers to accessing mental health providers.
- Barriers include lack of Spanish-speaking mental health professionals and culturally competent services, lack of health insurance, legal status, and stigmatization.
- The present study aimed to examine how accessibility to mental health services impacts anxiety among the Latinx community.
- Sample consisted of N=2,554 Latinx individuals over the age of 18.
- A series of Mann-Whitney *U* tests were conducted.
- Overall, the findings revealed statistically significant relationships between seeing a mental health provider and anxiety among Latinx individuals.

## Introduction

### Significance of the Study

- The Latinx population consists of 18.3% of the United States population and within the population, 16% of Latinx individuals have lived with a mental illness in the past year.

### Purpose of the Research

- The purpose of the study is to examine how accessibility to mental health services impacts the Latinx community.

### Research Question

- What is the relationship between accessibility to a mental health professional and anxiety among the Latinx community?

### Hypothesis

- Latinx individuals who have accessibility to mental health professionals will exhibit lower rates of anxiety than individuals who do not have access to mental health professionals.

## Literature Review

- In the U.S., the Latinx community is a growing underrepresented, minority group presented with substantial mental health inequalities when compared to Caucasians.
- Lifetime prevalence of developing an anxiety disorder is 23% among Latinx immigrants and 29% among U.S. born Latinx.
- 40% of Latinx residing in the United States struggle communicating in English and only 1% of psychologists are Spanish-speaking.
- Previous research has reported 40% of Latino study participants required treatment for their mental health and were not able to access services due to financial limitations.
- Latinx immigrants may be more at risk for a poor quality of mental health due to the stressors linked with being a minority.

## Methodology

### Research Design

- The present study is a secondary analysis of quantitative data from the National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS); part of the Collaborative Psychiatric Epidemiology Surveys (CPES); a cross-sectional research design.
- The researchers collected data that evaluated the frequency of mental illness and the utilization of mental health services in non-institutionalized adult Latinos and Asian Americans in the United States.

### Data Collection Procedures

- A total of 275 interviewers were trained and assigned to collect data.
- The interviewers collected the data from May 2002 to the end of 2003 by administering the questionnaire using laptop computer-assisted interviewing (CAI).

### Sample & Sampling Method

- The sample included 2,554 Latinos and 2,095 Asian Americans.
- The sampling frame was a complex process consisting of four stages of probability sampling at a national level, and the researchers used stratified sampling to identify eligible individuals.
- The individuals were excluded if they were institutionalized or resided on a military base at the time of the study.
- Participants were over 18 years old and lived in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii.
- The sample comprised of 2,554 Latino participants, who identified as Cuban (*n* =577), Mexican (*n* =868), Puerto Rican (*n* =496), and other adults of Latino origin (*n* =614).

### Measures

#### Independent Variable

**Access to a Mental Health Professional:** defined as receiving services from a variety of mental health providers and measured using the five items. The five items were coded as 0=No and 1=Yes. The higher score meant the participants had greater access to mental health providers.

**Benefits of Treatment:** defined as mental health services that were effective at managing mental health symptoms and measured using one question. The question was coded as 0=No and 1=Yes. The higher score meant the participants found the mental health services they received as effective.

#### Dependent Variable

**Excessive Anxiety and Worry:** defined as experiencing an extreme amount of anxiety or worry compared to the typical person; measured using the sum of three items. The sum index score ranged from 0 to 3. The three items were coded as 0 =No and 1=Yes. The higher score meant the participants experienced more anxiousness or worry than a typical individual.

**Generalized Anxiety:** defined as the severity of anxiety impacting the daily life of a person. Generalized anxiety was measured using the sum of six items and summed to create a scale. A sum index score was created using the six items with range from 5 to 23. The higher score meant the participants experienced more generalized anxiety than a typical individual.

**Demographics:** Gender, Race/Ancestry, Language Preference, Years of Education, Work Status, and Number of Years in the U.S.

## Results

### Inferential Analysis

#### Access to a Mental Health Professional

- Mann-Whitney *U* test: Examine the difference in excessive anxiety and worry among Latinx who had seen a psychiatrist and those who did not. Those who had seen a psychiatrist had a significantly higher level of anxiety and worry (*Mean rank* = 229.50) than those who had not seen a psychiatrist (*Mean rank* = 185.70; *U* = 5208, *p* =.001).
- Mann-Whitney *U* test: Examine the difference in generalized anxiety among Latinx who had seen a psychiatrist and those who did not. Those who had seen a psychiatrist had a significantly higher level of generalized anxiety (*Mean rank* = 55.22) than those who had not seen a psychiatrist (*Mean rank* = 43.15; *U* = 1467.50, *p* =.034).

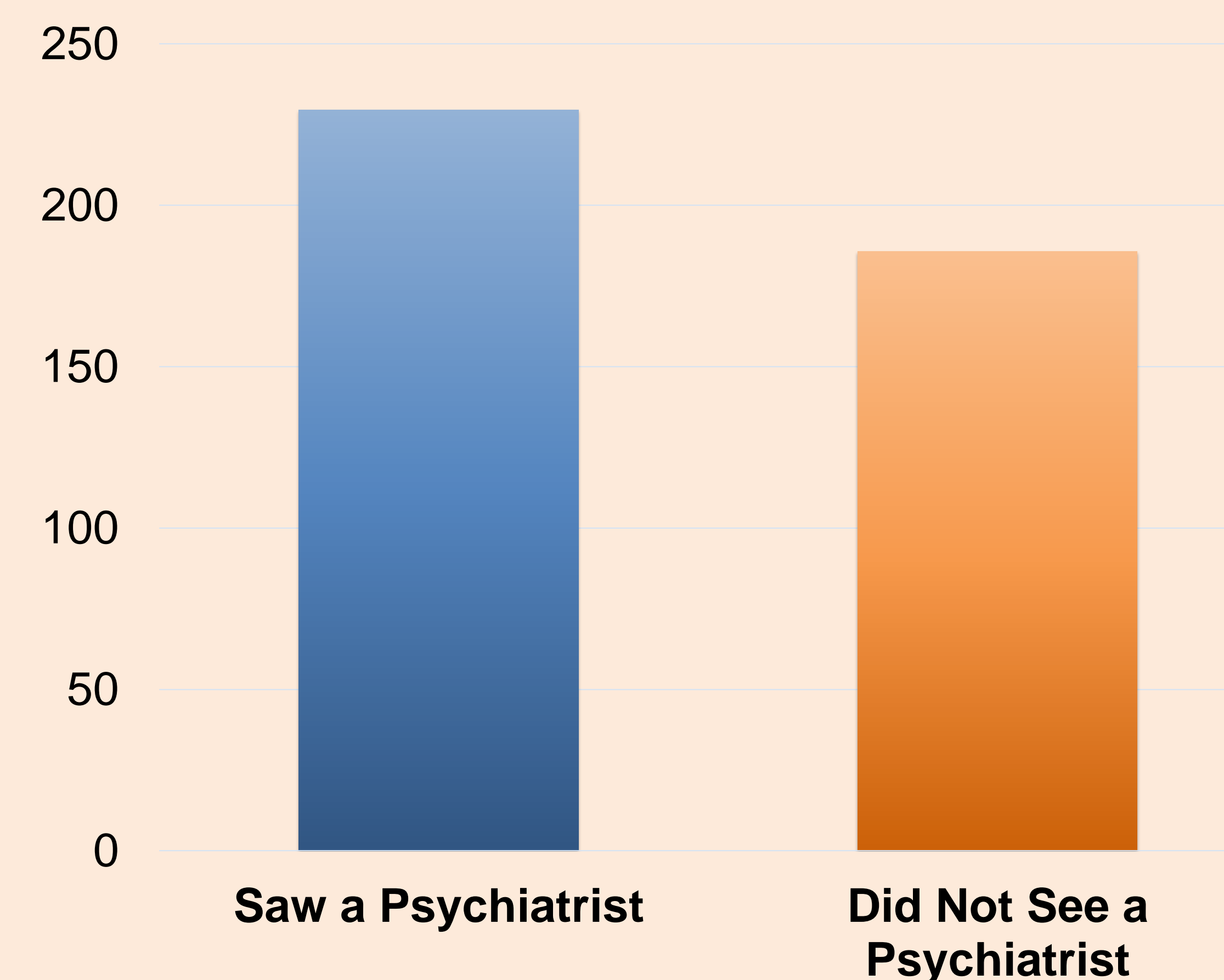
#### Benefits of Treatment

- Mann-Whitney *U* test: Examine the difference in excessive anxiety and worry among those who received benefits of mental health treatment and those who did not. Resulted in a nonsignificant relationship.
- Mann-Whitney *U* test: Examine the difference in generalized anxiety among those who received benefits of mental health treatment and those who did not. Resulted in a nonsignificant relationship.

Excessive Anxiety and Worry Difference Between Participants Who Saw a Psychiatrist and Those Who Did Not

Variables	Mean rank	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
Seen a Psychiatrist		5208.00	=.001
Yes	229.50		
No	185.70		

Bar Graph of Mean Rank Differences in Excessive Anxiety and Worry Between Those Who Saw a Psychiatrist and Those Who Did Not.



## Discussion

### Summary of Findings

- Latinx participants who saw a mental health provider (e.g., psychiatrist, psychologist, or counselor) presented with a higher level of excessive anxiety and worry, and generalized anxiety than those who did not see a mental health provider.
- Findings suggests a higher level of generalized anxiety among Latinx participants who saw a social worker than those who did not see a social worker.

### Interpretation of Findings

- Present study's findings do not align with previous studies due to the limited number of studies focused on mental health services on the effects of anxiety among the Latinx population.
- Present study results did not support the hypothesis that Latinx individuals who saw a mental health provider would exhibit lower rates of anxiety than Latinx individuals who did not see a mental health provider.
- Latinx experiencing anxiety are possibly seeing a mental health professional to manage their symptoms and may not face the barriers that the literature suggests.

### Implications & Future Research

- Latinx will seek mental health services if they experience mental health symptoms, but the services need to be easily accessible to everyone in the community.
- Advocate for expanding mental health funding in Spanish-speaking low-income communities that address the lack of Spanish-speaking mental health providers, provide low-cost services, and psychoeducation to address the stigma in the community.
- Future studies need to analyze the benefits of culturally competent mental health treatment and the effects on mental health symptoms.

### Study Limitations

- Cross-sectional research design and secondary data analysis
- Study participants do not represent the general Latinx population residing in the U.S.
- Limited number of Latinx subgroups represented in the study