

Iranian American Beliefs About Mental Illness and Psychological Help-Seeking

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A large concentration of Iranian Americans reside in the NJ/NYC metropolitan area, and the population is growing in the US. The scant existing studies suggest that Iranian Americans underutilize services due to cultural factors such as stigma regarding mental illness, language or financial barriers, and lack of knowledge about services. Evidence suggests Iranians experience mental illness at similar rates as Americans, however first- and second-generation Iranian Americans sit at the intersection of multiple identities that may exacerbate existing mental illness or result in new challenges that warrant treatment. These include acculturation and acculturative stress, post-9/11 perceptions of discrimination, contentious relations between the governments of Iran and the US, and anti-immigration policies. This qualitative, exploratory study will use grounded theory to identify Iranian American beliefs about mental illness and treatment-seeking. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 10 – 15 self-identified Iranian American adults. The research questions are: 1) how do Iranian Americans view mental health and treatment-seeking, 2) what do participants perceive to be common mental health concerns among their group, 3) and how do participants' beliefs about mental illness and treatment-seeking differ from their caregivers' beliefs? Answers to these questions will provide a framework to reduce stigma, increase treatment-seeking, and provide culturally-sensitive outreach and treatment to Iranian Americans. This dissertation is expected to be completed by June 2021, and \$2,000 is requested for transcription services (\$1.25/min per 60-minute interview), participant compensation (\$25/interview), and conference fees (\$500).