



Predictors and Mitigators of Thwarted Belongingness among Asian American Young Adults



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Key Points

- Suicide is the leading cause of death among Asian American college-aged adults
- Thwarted belongingness has been identified as a key risk factor of suicide ideation among students of Asian descent
- Mixed results of the effect of belongingness on depressive symptoms highlight the role of cultural factors on thwarted belongingness and ultimately suicide desire
- Average thwarted belongingness scores among participants were high
- Asian Americans not only encounter general barriers to help-seeking but specific cultural experiences also influences their likelihood of attending counseling

The Present Study

This cross-sectional, quantitative analysis examines the impact of Asian culture-specific factors on suicide risk factors among adults of Asian descent currently residing in the U.S. guided by the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide. Participants completed an online questionnaire measuring cultural factors, coping orientations, coping strategies, and suicide risk and behavior. Participants mostly identified as East Asian, South Asian, and Southeast Asian.

Study 1

This study examines how coping orientations and strategies relate to suicide risk among a subsample of **427 young adults** aged 18-29.

- Measures:
 - **Coping Orientations** (Brief-COPE): Problem-focus, Emotion-focus, Avoidant-focus
 - **Coping Strategies**
 - Gratitude (GQ-6)
 - Self-Compassion (SCS-SF)
 - Meaning in Life (MLQ)
 - **Suicide Risk** (INQ-15): Perceived Burdensomeness, Thwarted Belongingness

Study 2

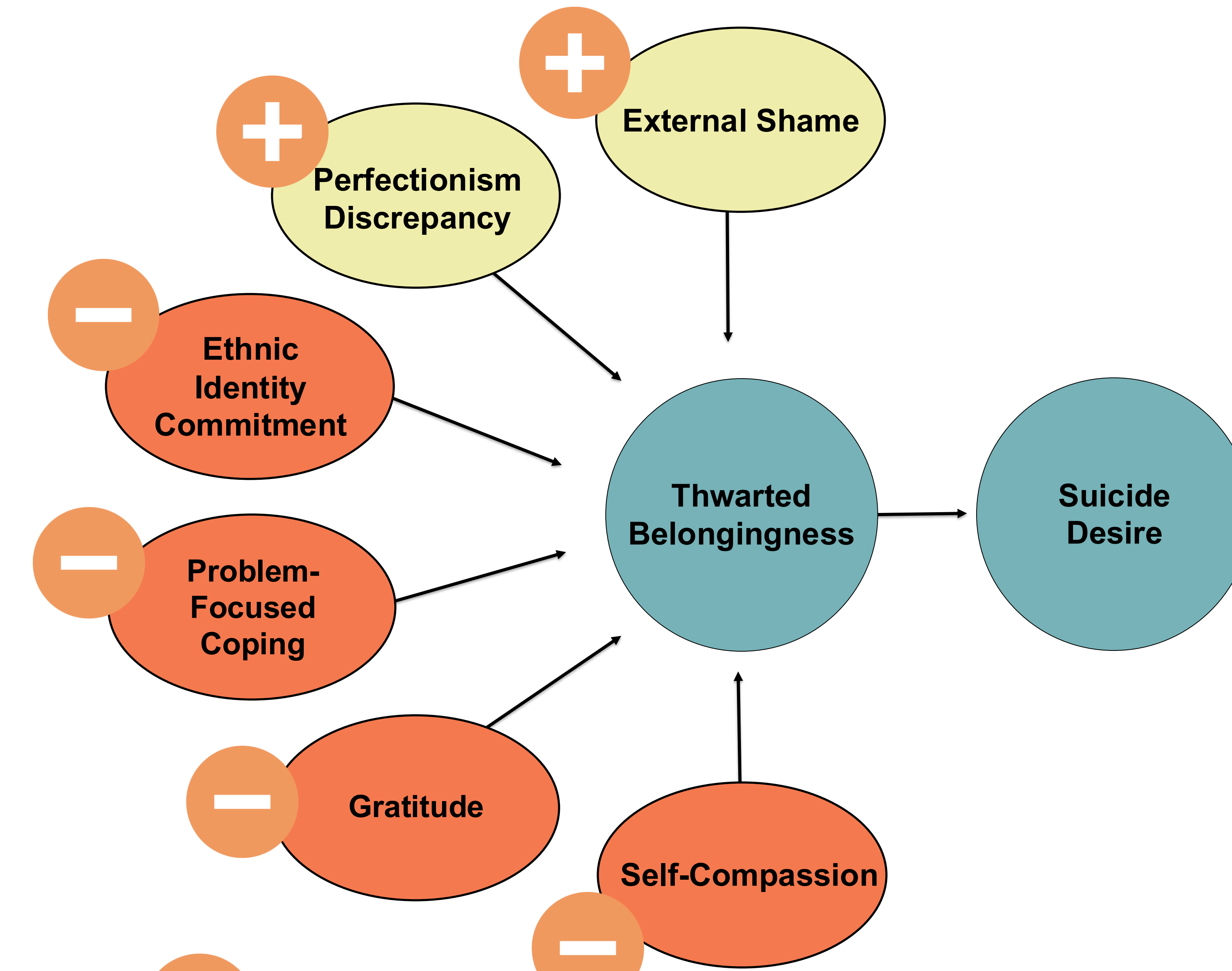
This study explores the relationship between Asian culture-specific factors and thwarted belongingness among a subsample of **218 college students** aged 18-33.

- Measures:
 - Ethnic Identity (MEIM)
 - Shame (ISI)
 - Perfectionism (SAPS)
 - Discrimination (EDS)
 - Suicide Risk
 - Thwarted Belongingness (INQ-15)
 - Suicide Behavior (SBQR)

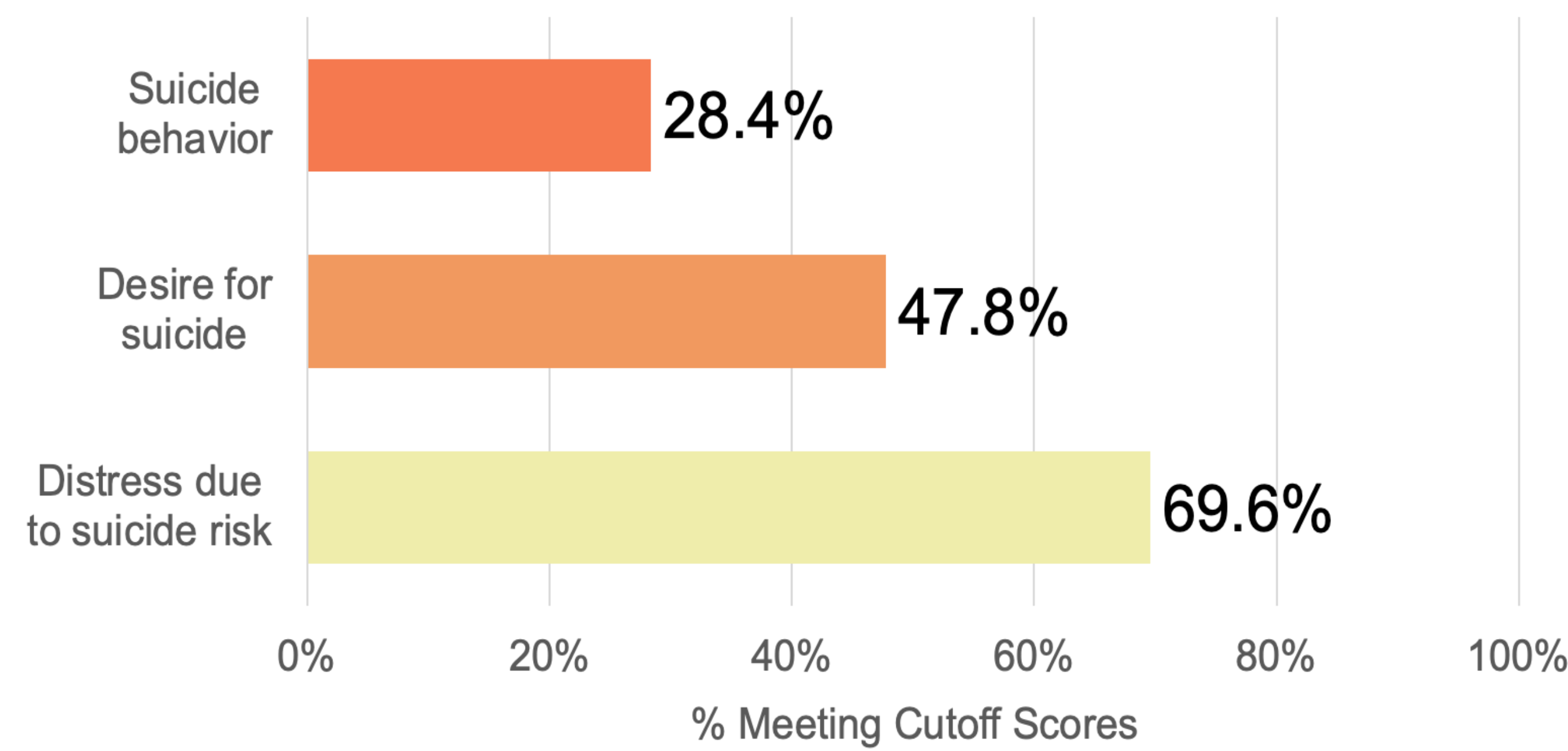
Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

	M	SD	Min	Max
Suicide Risk Factors				
Thwarted belongingness	28.86	10.45	9.00	55.00
Perceived burdensomeness	14.54	9.63	6.00	42.00
Coping Orientations				
Problem-focused	19.86	5.49	8.00	32.00
Emotion-focused	27.66	7.11	12.00	48.00
Avoidant	15.73	4.99	8.00	32.00
Coping Strategies				
Gratitude	5.26	1.13	1.50	7.00
Self-compassion	4.07	0.53	2.50	6.00
Search for meaning in life	24.93	6.28	5.00	35.00
Cultural Factors				
Ethnic identity commitment	22.03	3.93	10.00	28.00
Perfectionism standards	22.13	4.56	8.00	28.00
Perfectionism discrepancy	1.75	5.96	4.00	28.00
External shame	12.39	6.53	5.00	30.00
Discrimination	17.89	5.95	9.00	35.00

Factors Associated with Thwarted Belongingness



Participant Reported Suicide Risk



Predictors of TB

- Experiences of external shame ($p < .001$)
- Discrepancy in perfectionism ($p = .008$)



Mitigators of TB

- Commitment to ethnic identity ($p < .001$)
- Problem-focused coping ($p < .05$)
- Practicing gratitude ($p < .001$)
- Practicing self-compassion ($p < .001$)



Interpersonal Theory of Suicide

- The Interpersonal Theory of Suicide posits that suicide is a multifactorial process, and identified three risk factors of suicide: **thwarted belongingness**, **perceived burdensomeness**, and the **acquired capability of suicide**.
 - Specifically, thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness are associated with increased suicide desire
- **Thwarted belongingness** is encompassed by feelings of **loneliness** and the **absence of reciprocal care**
- Perceived burdensomeness refers to self-hatred and feeling like a liability to others.
- Acquired capability of suicide may be central to an individual completing suicide. Specifically, individuals may engage in behaviors that increase physical pain tolerance and reduced fear of death.

22.5%

of participants reported ever attending a single psychological counseling or therapy session that lasted 30 minutes or longer



- Higher levels of self-compassion were associated with lower odds of having attended counseling.
- Self-compassion may serve as a protective factor, potentially reducing the perceived need for formal mental health services.
- Conversely, individuals with lower self-compassion may be more vulnerable to distress and therefore more likely to seek out counseling.

Implications for Counselors

- Increase the accessibility of mental health resources for students of Asian descent (i.e., outreach, peer-led programming).
- Target stigma associated with family of origin and concerns over reputation
- Address shame and perfectionism to reduce suicide risk.
- Support ethnic identity development to protect against suicide risk.
- Adjust treatment approaches with clients of Asian descent to include increased problem-solving approaches to address stressors and increase self-efficacy.
- Foster a sense of belongingness and connection on campus by encouraging gratitude and self-compassion exercises.

Selected References:

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