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**BRIDGING THE GAP: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEED FOR
MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR FULLY ONLINE STUDENTS AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI**

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BRIDGING THE GAP: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEED FOR MENTAL HEALTH
RESOURCES FOR FULLY ONLINE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

by

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A Doctoral Project Submitted to,
the College of Education and Human Sciences
and the School of Education
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

For this action research project, the concern of the researcher is that fully online students at The University of Southern Mississippi are not currently receiving adequate resources and support concerning mental health services. The purpose of this study was to assess the awareness and attitudes of the student population, in addition to their desires for increased mental health services.

A Mental Health Resource Questionnaire was administered to 140 fully online students within the School of Child and Family Sciences at The University of Southern Mississippi. Data was collected on 40 respondents to the questionnaire. The entirety of the population study was female. This qualitative study was structured with open ended questions and an academic needs assessment survey

The results indicated that students are interested in receiving mental health resources and that both outreach and actions as an institution could be expanded for this population. Students appear to have a desire for mental health services to be provided in an online format. The respondents wish for equality of services for students. Students had a positive attitude towards increased anonymity and reduction of stigma when presented an online format option for mental health services.

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A special and sincerest thank you is in order for my dearest wife, Olivia, for her unwavering patience and support given to me throughout this process.

Mom, Dad, and my sister, Ashley – thank you for believing in me and never allowing me to give up on my dreams.

To Dr. Holly Foster, thank you for everything you have done for me from the very beginning. For seeing my potential, even when I did not.

I am thankful for my classmates that became some of my dearest friends. Without you all, I would not have made it through this process.

DEDICATION

This doctoral capstone project is dedicated to my grandfather, Bruce Irvin, Sr., whom I remember and miss daily. I am forever proud to be your grandson, and I hope to continue to live and grow in a way that would make you proud. Although you are not here physically to see this dream realized, I know that you will celebrate with me all the same.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>cCBT</i>	Computer-Delivered Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
<i>CFS</i>	Child and Family Sciences
<i>MH</i>	Mental Health
<i>USM</i>	The University of Southern Mississippi

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

The topic of mental health continues to emerge as one of the most pressing issues discussed and debated in modern society (Kitzrow, 2003). Mental health concerns are not relegated to any particular group, but instead are far-reaching and unbiased. For this action research study, the focus is mental health resources for students enrolled in fully online programs at The University of Southern Mississippi. There is currently no comprehensive plan or protocol in place for addressing a reported mental health concern or crisis for fully online students at the university (D. Crawford, personal communication, September 13, 2018). This interest came from a combination of working with fully online students with the researcher's current position with Southern Miss in the School of Child and Family Sciences, and experiences from the researcher's clinical training in Marriage and Family Therapy. Being a therapist by trade and a student support specialist by title, the researcher is in a position to adequately evaluate the diverse needs of this population.

With a background in therapy and mental health services, the researcher possesses a vast understanding of the nuances of rendering mental health services. Further, the researcher is aware of the time exigencies associated with therapeutic caseloads and client-to-therapist ratios. Having fully online students as advisees has further heightened his awareness of the need to investigate the issue at hand. Viewing this proposal as both an ethical and potentially legal issue, the task is that of ensuring safety and equal resources for fully online students. The researcher hypothesizes that steps such as addressing the lack of mental health resources will help to mend the gap or disconnect that can be created when students are taking classes fully online.

Historically, the responsibility for providing mental health services for fully online students has gone largely unaddressed at this university. In addition, there are issues with extended wait times for face-to-face meetings, and virtually no resources available for fully online students (D. Crawford, personal communication, September 13, 2018). Providing online mental health services is a relatively new venture in its own right (Field, 2016). Because of the newness of this approach, many mental health providers have expressed reluctance in using it in their practices due to lack of research (Kauer, Mangan, & Sancu, 2014). Concerns regarding confidentiality, legality, and the liability and authenticity of online therapy services have all been considered (Clarke, 2015). Therapeutic services must be rendered in such a sensitive and protected manner that the uncertainties of technology have hindered expansion. What has begun to shift this trend is the advancement of both safety measures and the evolution of clientele. As more and more services shift to online formats such as shopping, education, and healthcare, mental health services have begun to adjust accordingly (Clarke, 2015). Although the field is slow to warm, more providers are beginning to try these online methods of providing services.

Some mental health providers are hesitant to try these new methods due to the lack of research on implementation (Kauer, Mangan, & Sancu, 2014). Mental health providers in general already must adhere to state laws, licensure rules and federal guidelines. With the additional element of the clients being students, even more considerations must be taken into account, such as FERPA rules and liability of the institution. The number of students requiring mental health services is often overwhelming to institutions, quickly exhausting resources and leaving clients unseen

within a reasonable amount of time (Field, 2016). It is a university responsibility to provide adequate mental health services to students of all learning formats (Richards, 2009). Online resources can help to alleviate this strain, and some reports have even suggested that students prefer this method (Field, 2016). The primary consideration would have to be the interest of the students and their opinion(s) on whether or not this resource would meet their needs.

Approximately 15-20% of college students have at least one or more common mental disorders that tend to have long-term adverse outcomes in late adulthood (Gagnon, Gelinas, & Friesen, 2017). These mental health concerns are not bound by time or environment, but instead can adapt and progress depending on the situation. One of the demanding periods that can cause mental health statuses to evolve and escalate is during the transition into the higher education environment. Gagnon, Gelinas, and Friesen (2017) further suggest students are unlikely to seek formal help. Many students are reluctant to reach out for assistance due to the negative attitudes and stigmas held towards requesting emotional assistance (Ellis et al., 2013). This can be detrimental, especially considering the vast number of changes and influences that are present during an individual's educational years. When considering online students who are not within close proximity of the campus to utilize available resources, the task of providing quality services becomes even more difficult due to the need for non-traditional services.

Southern Miss students in crisis are often referred to the Counseling Center and must be seen immediately, placing them ahead of students that were voluntarily seeking services. The Counseling Center often becomes inundated with clients due to the increasing number of students requiring services on campus. Compounding this issue is

the fact that these services are currently only offered in-person (D. Crawford, personal communication, September 13, 2018). With the population of fully online students growing for the university, it is becoming increasingly more urgent for this void in services to be addressed. If the population of on campus students are struggling to receive adequate services, and there is no online option for those unable to visit campus there is a large gap in the adequacies for care provided. Currently, a fully online student would have to physically come to campus, either in Hattiesburg or Long Beach, in order to receive mental health services provided by the university. This supports the dire need for a fully online program. It would alleviate some of the stress of overcrowding the in person facilities offered and allow the fully online students to have access to the same level of resources.

Statement of Problem

This study seeks to uncover the desired needs of the universities' fully online students. The researcher also hopes to discover what services the students are aware of that they consider beneficial to their educational experience. In addition to assessing the student's attitudes and perceptions towards mental health services are also being assessed.

For this action research study, the researcher's concern is that fully online students at The University of Southern Mississippi are not currently receiving adequate resources and support in regard to mental health services. The researcher believes the outreach and actions of the institution could be expanded for this population. There is a need for expansion due to the extended waiting periods and excessive caseloads already present, and the fact that there are no services for fully online students (D. Crawford, personal

interview, September 13, 2018). If a desire for expansion is discovered, it would benefit the population by providing a less stigmatized and highly accessible form of mental health services. Further, those potentially receiving these services would no longer be hindered due to physical distance from the university. For students who reside within a reasonable radius of one of the campuses, either in Hattiesburg or Long Beach, this may be sufficient. However, for those students that cannot reasonably access a physical campus because of distance, transportation, or physical limitation issues, an alternative solution may be needed.

Purpose of Study/Rationale

The purpose of this action research study is to investigate whether or not fully online students at The University of Southern Mississippi are currently receiving adequate resources and support in regard to mental health services. This issue is of importance because the researcher believes that it is the duty of the institution to invest in the success of its students equally and fairly. It can be too easy for fully online students to become disconnected and consequently disengaged. The researcher feels that increasing the institution's levels and forms of support for these students will work to combat this trend.

The objective of this study is to determine if there is a desire for implementation of mental health services for fully online students. In addition to evaluating the student's awareness of what resources are available, their attitude towards mental health services are also being examined. The findings of this study will hopefully help administrators and practitioners strategically address the problem with the discovered information. The results of this study will hopefully not only improve the college experience for fully

online students, but also that of traditional students by providing more accessible forms of mental health services.

Research Questions

1. What resources are fully online students at the University of Southern Mississippi aware of regarding mental health?
2. What are the attitudes towards mental health of fully online students at the University of Southern Mississippi?
3. What mental health resources do fully online students at the University of Southern Mississippi desire?

Conclusion

With the knowledge currently available and considering the research that has been conducted thus far, it is the researcher's belief that the university's outreach and actions as an institution could be expanded for this population. This study will help uncover the student's perception towards online mental health services and explore the encompassing knowledge about the desire for accessible assistance. The researcher realizes that ethically and legally, the university has an obligation to provide equal resources to our online students (Richards, 2009). As this population grows, this issue becomes more pressing.

Mental health is a critical element in not only the success of students academically, but also their quality of life. The University of Southern Mississippi has an excellent opportunity to support their students in a revolutionary way, therefore, continuing its mission and purpose. It is the hope of the researcher that with this information, the

culmination of the study will spotlight the need for additional of resources that will benefit fully online students and the university community as a whole.

CHAPTER II – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A growing population for colleges and universities is that of the online learning community. Just as students who take courses in the traditional on-campus format, online students have needs that must be addressed. Much like on-campus students, mental health is an area of the student experience for online students as well. Currently, there is a gap in the services afforded to fully online students at The University of Southern Mississippi. This deficit was discovered after speaking with the Director of the Counseling Center (D. Crawford, personal communication, September 13, 2018).

At The University of Southern Mississippi, it is common for students to experience an extended waiting period to be seen at the student services clinic. Students can experience waits of weeks to even months (D. Crawford, personal communication, September 13, 2018). Institutions, such as the University of Florida, have implemented teletherapy programs after a similar deficit was experienced (Field, 2016). Therapist Assisted Online, or TAO Program, was created at the University of Florida to help increase the number of students that could be served in a timely and efficient manner (Field, 2016).

It is the purpose of this literature review to explore what answers have already been identified. Hopefully, this information will help guide future efforts in addressing the mental health needs of students at The University of Southern Mississippi.

Mental Health Perceptions

In order to understand whether or not there is a need for enhanced mental health resources, the potential clients and consumers must first be identified and described. Rickwood, Mazzer, and Telford (2015) speak to the social influences that play a role in

an individual seeking online mental health services. Their study provides the first comprehensive empirical evidence of developmental changes in the social influences on seeking mental health care. Their findings suggested that there exists a major developmental shift in the help-seeking influences across both age and gender ranges (Rickwood, Mazzer, & Telford, 2015). Further, their study speaks to the notion that family and friends usually motivate in-person therapy, whereas online therapy often depends upon the individual's self-motivation. This could be especially true of college students given the alignment of college-going ages with normal developmental and life cycle changes. For this population, the influence of family and friends can be low, and is largely based upon the individual's connectivity to their family and support system (Rickwood, Mazzer, & Telford, 2015). Support systems are vitally important to both student success and the student's willingness to access and utilize mental health resources.

Klein and Cook (2010) conducted a study that sought to examine the preferences and satisfaction of mental health clients between online and in-person formats. The study worked with participants between the ages of 18-80 years of age. The findings showed that 77% of participants were satisfied with their in-person therapy experience, and only 9.6% said "no" to the idea of online mental health services. Most pertinent to this study is that Klein and Cook show that those likely to feel stigmatized by traditional therapy formatting would be more receptive to online mental health services opportunities.

Continuing the evaluation of the population that would be utilizing this service, Ellis et al. (2013) specifically researched the attitudes of young males towards mental health and technology. The group surveyed 486 males between the ages of 16-24. The

male participants reported being “big” consumers of technology, especially when it came to fun and friends. The participants also reported being less likely to seek in-person mental health services. On the contrary, the participants reported being more likely to utilize self-help measures. Some of these participants reported having sought help online before and were satisfied with the help that they received (Ellis et al., 2013).

Overall, males have a higher suicide rate and rate of delinquent and destructive behavior (Ellis et al., 2013). An additional factor to consider is that only 13% of males between the ages of 16-24 seek professional mental health services (Ellis et al., 2013). This statistic tends to be related to the stigma of males needing to be strong, masculine individuals and not needing help. An encouraging statistic to come from this study was that individuals are two times more likely to seek mental health services online than they are if the services are offered in-person (Ellis et al., 2013). What this means for this study is that special attention will need to be paid to the promotion of these services to potential male clients and consumers.

Ellis et al (2013) concluded individuals are twice as likely to seek mental health assistance online rather than in person. They also concluded that there is a necessity for gender specific strategies. This study provides original comprehensive empirical supporting evidence of social factors that influence the pursuit of mental health care. Results show a significant developmental change in aid-seeking influence among different ages and genders. They also concluded that in-person therapy is typically motivated by family; however, seeking treatment through online therapy is typically dependent upon the individual (Ellis et al., 2013).

Online Mental Health Overview

The objective of a study conducted by Hoerman, McCabe, Milne, and Calvo (2017) was to examine the current feasibility and effectiveness of online one-on-one mental health interventions which use text-based synchronous interventions. A methodical exploration was conducted using databases relevant to this area with no specific selection criteria placed on the participant group (Hoermann et al. 2017). In this study, reported interventions with individual synchronous conversations were studied, and psychological results were determined. Results encompassed reviews from 24 articles. Reviews included a wide range of mental health issues (i.e. anxiety, depression, distress, eating disorders, and addiction). Compared with waitlists, conditions revealed significant advancement, but not superior to face-to-face and telephone counseling. An assessment of treatment methods indicated significant, sustained improvements. While results indicate a positive post-intervention improvement, further research is required to determine feasibility of remote psychotherapy in clinical practice.

A study conducted by Dowling and Rickwood (2016) examined the expectations and hopes of individuals age 16-25 receiving online mental health treatment through chat counseling services. A questionnaire was distributed to a group of subjects. Results of the questionnaire showed that, in general, individuals experienced low levels of hope and high expectations, psychological distress, and low life satisfaction. Results also showed that hope and expectation were not directly correlated. A conclusion was drawn that Online Chat may not be the most effective method of providing online mental health services (Dowling & Rickwood, 2016).

Participants in a research study conducted by Dodd et al. (2017) agreed to an online/telephone-based trial in an attempt to understand one's motivation and barriers in engaging in ERP online and online intervention for bipolar disorder. Findings showed that those who participated did so due to the convenience, flexibility, and rewarding design of the trial. Those who exhibited barriers did so due to the extensive assessments, practical difficulties, and mood about participation. Several participants reported positive changes; however, it was noted that routine care should not be replaced (Dodd et al., 2017). The results show that a number of barriers exist as well as a number of objectives to consider when evaluating and implementing digital interventions. An example of such barriers could be the severity of the patients' diagnosis (Dodd et al., 2017). Key factors to consider for both trials are individual preference and human contact.

Specific Online-Based Mental Health Techniques

Ray, Kemp, Hubbard and Cucciare (2017) deduced that computer-delivered cognitive behavioral therapy (cCBT) is an efficient method of treating anxiety and depression; however, high attrition poses a threat to its continuity. Social support would likely be an effective mechanism in improving cCBT engagement. The study was conducted to assess its effectiveness among veterans suffering from anxiety and depression. The goal of this study was to gain insight from veterans on their preferences of methods by Veterans Administration Peer Support Specialists (VA PSS) to treat anxiety and depression using "Moving Forward," a cCBT-based program (Ray et al., 2017). The study was conducted by obtaining feedback from four focus groups with five to seven military veterans per group. The feedback was used in creating a peer-supported engagement intervention to aid veterans in using "Moving Forward." Results of the study

showed that veterans preferred PSS activities that focused on program orientation, technical support, observing and assessing progress, and other practical aspects of using Moving Forward. Results also showed a preference for more personal roles of the PSS such as providing emotional support and applying Moving Forward to “real-life” issues (Ray et al., 2017). The author concluded that including emotional support and “real-life” skills application as components of Moving Forward would enhance engagement in cCBT for depression and anxiety.

Next, the effectiveness of online collaborative care for treating mood and anxiety disorders in primary care was also examined (Rollman et al., 2018). In a clinical trial of 704 patients randomized to computerized cognitive behavioral therapy (cCBT) combined with an internet support group (ISG) served as subjects of this study. cCBT treatment alone as well as their primary physicians’ ordinary care was observed. Results showed that patients in the cCBT group combined with ISG and cCBT alone reported similar improvements in mental health. Improvements were also noted related quality of life, mood and anxiety symptoms. Furthermore, patients in the cCBT-alone cohort reported greater improvements in mood and anxiety than in usual care. Overall, research showed that providing moderate access to ISG gave no measurable advantage to depression and anxiety over care manager-supported cCBT; however, results did reveal that care manager-supported cCBT was more effective than the usual care of primary physicians (Rollman et al., 2018).

A similar study by Kauer, Mangan, and Sanci (2014) also focused on cCBT by examining online mental health in college module-based treatment for high school and college students online. This study presents a systematic review of online youth mental

health promotions and prevention interventions. The increased use of technology among students will allow the opportunity to increase online mental health services. The review evaluated the efficacy of a number of online mental health formats. It was found that skills-based interventions presented in module format had the most significant impact. Furthermore, computerized cognitive behavioral therapy (cCBT) showed a positive impact on depression. Implementation results provided evidence that participant face-to-face and/or web-based support were important features in program completion and outcomes. Results also indicated the need for further research in this area due to the lack of prior studies on online mental health, as well as the majority of the research participants reporting as being female.

A study was conducted by Lattie, Duffecy, Mohr and Kashima (2017) to review the development and evaluation of an online mental health program for medical students. Medical school is notoriously stressful, and students are less likely to seek treatment. Implementing an online mental health system may be extremely beneficial to medical students. An example of an effective previously implemented internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy program is the “ThinkFeelIDo” program (Lattie, et. al., 2017). The conclusion of this study was that medical students were more likely to reach out for mental health services if offered online.

Given the far-reaching attention to mindfulness and the potential value of online Medicare Beneficiary Identifiers (MBIs) for clinical practice, a study conducted by Spijerkman, Pots and Bohlmeijer (2016) examines the benefits and effectiveness of MBIs. In order to form an adequate comparison, fifteen control trials were conducted. The research examined pre- and post-treatment data. Results indicated that the greatest

impact occurred in stress reduction. Smaller impacts occurred on depression, anxiety, well-being, and mindfulness (Spijkerkman et al., 2016). It was concluded that MBIs can help reduce stress among students.

A study by Nguyen-Feng, Greer and Frazier (2017) provides evidence that interpersonal trauma (IPT) is associated with increased distress and poor academic performance. Assessment methods included self-measurement of anxiety, stress occurrence, perceived stress, and depression. Results indicated that internet-based interventions are effective in decreasing distress among college students (Nguyen-Feng et al., 2017). Research also suggested that providing students with stress management resources without providing training in one specific skill area may also be beneficial.

The Element of Technology

Another interesting perspective is provided by Clarke, Chambers, and Barry (2017) regarding the digital disconnect that currently exists between mental health and young people. The group suggests that little is known about the professional's view of online mental health services. The majority of research conducted on online mental health is related to the number of participants being treated, often negating satisfaction and attitudes of professionals (practitioners) towards these services (Clarke, Chambers, & Barry, 2017).

The study by Clarke, Chambers, and Barry (2017), consisted of 900 professionals comprised of education, health, and mental health professionals who were surveyed about their perceptions and attitudes towards online mental health services. Of those, 98% said that they were ready to support the use of online mental health resources. Also reported by some participants on the state level was the fear that online mental health services may

one day eventually replace in-person services altogether. Ultimately, what is gathered from these studies is that the majority of those involved seem to perceive online mental health services as beneficial.

Mental Health in College

According to Kitzrow (2003), the need for mental health services among college students has recently increased. Growing needs have expanded beyond college students and includes faculty and staff members. This study explores strategies for responding to the increasing demand for mental health services on college campuses. This study also explores some of the challenges presented when implementing mental health services on college campuses as well as some recommendations to improve the state of mental health on college campuses.

A study by Reifler (1971) examined the epidemiological aspects of mental health on college campuses. The primary purpose of this study was to provide an overview of available information in this area. An additional component of research was the prevalence of conditions among specific populations within a given time period. An additional key issue was identifying etiologically relevant information. Over a period of ten years, it was determined that pathology was similar among clients; however, during the same time period, the use of medication significantly increased (by 5 times) (Reifler, 1971). A thorough assessment of clients' mental health is crucial to effective treatment and for future preparation of counseling professionals.

An additional study by Schwartz (2010) explored faculty members' role in responding to actively depressed college students. A hopeful outcome is that identifying mental health issues of college students will allow institutions to effectively empower

faculty members to participate in campus-wide mental health campaigns and strategies for suicide prevention. Studies also show that an increased number of students attending post-secondary institutions suffer from mental health issues (Schwartz, 2010). As provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), these students are entitled to reasonable accommodations. Further, students with disabilities contribute to the diversity of college populations.

Strained Mental Health Resources

Another study was conducted from January 2013 to June 2015, targeting Australian adults suffering from anxiety and depression. The objectives of this research study were to improve access to mental health services, to increase public awareness of how to access services, and to provide evidence-based treatments (Titov et al., 2017). Analyses were based on internet/website utilization, and subjects were selected based on demographics, previous internet/website utilization, and reason for using the online mental health service. The majority of subjects indicated that they had no prior contact with mental health services. Based on data collection and analysis, this model proved to be comparative to existing services. It also proved to be beneficial to those who previously lacked access to mental health services (Titov et al., 2017).

Ellis et al. (2013) describe the examination of the relationship between the Developmental and Well-Being Assessment and its designated diagnoses. Child and Adolescent Mental Services clinics gathered and analyzed data from online sources as well as clinical diagnostics. The diagnoses of 286 patients were compared. Further studies of age, gender, and the number of respondents greatly contributed to the explanation of agreement and disagreement. Agreement on mental health, whether online

or day-to-day, may be better served with an online clinical assignment, thereby saving time and resources (Ellis et al., 2013).

Further reiterating the importance of this resource, Kauer, Mangan, and Sancı (2014) evaluated the accessibility of online mental health resources. The group states their reasoning for conducting this research as needing to evaluate the effectiveness of online mental health services since there is “little information” about the intervention other than how many people utilize this service. By examining PubMed, PsychINFO, and the Cochrane Library, the group found that out of 608 publications, only 18 studies fulfilled the inclusion referencing and evaluating the effectiveness of the method. The research concluded by pointing out that the majority of studies conducted utilized a small sample size involving mostly female participants. Further, the findings of this research suggest that future research needs to be conducted in order to produce more data and answers.

Furthermore, the study by Kauer, Mangan, and Sancı (2014) was intended to examine a patient population in the Netherlands with an extended waiting period (minimum of six weeks) for an initial treatment session after registration. By receiving guided online treatment, patients may find effective solutions to mental health issues with a reduced waiting time and relatively low cost. The resulting data also provides detail on uptake, dropout, and effects of online problem-solving treatment provided in a mental health facility.

In the study by Kenter et al. (2013), 104 patients ranging from 18 to 65 years of age participated. Participants also presented a variety of symptoms and were examined after the first 6 months of implementation of the treatment. The study measured

depression (BD II), anxiety (HADS-A) and burnout symptoms at baseline, at five weeks, and at twelve weeks. A total of 55 patients agreed to participate in online treatment. Young females with less education were more likely to agree to online treatment. Baseline differences were insignificant in clinical symptoms. At five weeks, there were significant differences between groups for depression ($d = 0.94$) and anxiety ($d = 1.07$) but not groups for burnout ($d = 0.07$). At twelve weeks, when both groups began face-to-face, there were significant differences with the exception of anxiety ($d = 0.69$) (Kenter et al. 2013). The results of the study showed patients were receptive to online treatment. The study further indicated that online PST increased the recovery time and can therefore be considered an initial step to treatment in mental healthcare.

Online Mental Health and Students

A study conducted by Kessler, Foster, Saunders and Stang (1995) identifies the mental health factors which affect the performance and efficiency of fully online counseling for online students. This study of social consequences of psychiatric disorders is the first in a series based on the National Comorbidity Survey. The Comorbidity Survey is nationally representative of psychiatric disorders. There were 8,098 respondents, ranging from 15 to 54 years of age served as subjects. Structured psychiatric interviews were conducted with a subsample of 5,877 participants (Kessler, Foster, Saunders & Stang, 1995). Diagnoses of various disorders were concluded, and survival analyses were used to project data that would be useful in school examinations in the US. The results of this study showed that early-onset psychiatric disorders varied among high-school graduates (4.3 million) and non-high school graduates (3.5 million) based on the age range of the National Comorbidity Survey (Kessler et al., 1995). The most prominent

disorders are conduct disorders among men and anxiety among women. Psychiatric disorders account for 14.2% of high school dropouts and 14.7% of college dropouts (Kessler et al.,1995). A conclusion was drawn that early-onset psychiatric disorders have a number of adverse consequences. In consideration of the presented data, the application of universal insurance coverage and its affordability should be up for debate.

Tying it Together

Richards (2009) wrote an article discussing the features and benefits of online mental health counseling in a college setting. He states, “universities have a responsibility to develop appropriate interventions to respond to the mental health needs of their students” (Richards, 2009).

Today’s students use technology more than any previous generation of students, thus, how universities reach them changes with the times. Richards also states that technology is how today’s students communicate with the world. By accommodating the technological advancements that are now a component of college life today, universities can increase access, enhance flexibility, and better on-demand availability of mental health services (Richards, 2009).

Ruppel and McKinley (2015) speak to the social support and social anxiety associated with the use and perceptions of online mental health resources. The pair specifically researched college students in relation to social anxiety and support and their use of mental health resources. They found that consistent with the social compensation hypothesis, perceived usefulness of web-based services was positively associated with social support. These findings suggest that college students’ use and perceptions of online mental health resources vary as a function of social support and social anxiety. In

essence, students' perceptions of the online mental health program will largely determine how success the resource will be for them (Ruppel & McKinley, 2015).

After review of this research, it is believed that further investigation of the mental health resources available to students at The University of Southern Mississippi is necessary. Integrating the aforementioned resources together along with data collected first-hand will offer both direction and insight to the action research study. The perceived benefits are not only worth the investment, they are the responsibility of the institution.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study employed a primarily qualitative method, with some quantitative data points being collected for demographic purposes. The setting for this action research study is The University of Southern Mississippi, a 4-year, public university located in the Southeastern United States. After collection, the data was analyzed to gain an understanding of the attitudes towards providing online mental health services. Additionally, data from questions geared towards the specific attitudes of online mental health services being available or accessible for students to take classes in a fully online format was analyzed. It is intended that the data will help contribute to the assessment of any needed changes to the mental health resources provided at The University of Southern Mississippi. The following sections examine the research questions, research design, instrumentation, timeline, participants, and data collection procedures and analysis.

Research Questions

The questionnaire (Appendix C) was created by the researcher. The questionnaire consisted of 22 multiple choice and open-ended response items which included an “Academic Obstacles Assessment” and additional open-ended response availability for the “Academic Obstacles Assessment.” The Academic Obstacles Assessment was used to evaluate potential factors that may exacerbate the desire for further provided services. The questionnaire was aimed at collecting responses to address the following research questions.

1. What resources are fully online students at the University of Southern Mississippi aware of regarding mental health?
2. What are the attitudes towards mental health of fully online students at the University of Southern Mississippi?
3. What mental health resources do fully online students at the University of Southern Mississippi desire?

Research Design

As an advisor in the School of Child and Family Sciences, the researcher's advisees are all fully online students. All of the fully online students within the school (approximately 140 students) are divided between the researcher and one other faculty advisor. To collect data, it was requested that the approximately 140 students within the school's fully online program complete a questionnaire. This measure was to help ensure anonymity and to encourage more authentic responses. The intent of the questionnaire was to serve as a needs assessment to gauge what the students report as important and needed through their own collective perspectives. For this action research study, a qualitative design was utilized. Some quantitative questions were included in the questionnaire, but primarily for demographic purposes. A qualitative method was used with the hope of allowing for questionnaire participants to provide actively engaged responses.

Instrumentation

The researcher formulated the questionnaire (Appendix C) in order to obtain insight into the attitudes, awareness, and need of online mental health services for fully online students at The University of Southern Mississippi.

The questionnaire was an original one, with the first section being comprised of demographic information. The questions then transition to open-ended to allow for qualitative responses. The final section of the questionnaire was comprised of a multiple-choice selection assessment to identify protentional stressors to be used by the researcher to evaluate for correlation of desire for services. These questions function to garner a better understanding of the potential barriers to success that this population faces by virtue of being fully online students.

Timeline

The questionnaire was distributed during the fall 2018 semester after obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board.

Participants

For the purpose of data collection, the study was administered to the 140 students enrolled in the School of Child and Family Sciences' fully online degree program at the time of data collection. The study was completed by 40 of the 140 students that received the survey. Ten additional students started but did not complete the entirety of the survey, and their data was not included in the results. The average age of the 40 participants was 31 years old (ranging 19-50 years) and 100% of the respondents were female.

Data Collection Procedures and Analysis

An email was sent to the 140 students selected for this study based on the criteria of being a fully online student in the Child and Family Studies program at The University of Southern Mississippi. This email (Appendix A) contained a link to the study that was created using the online survey software, Qualtrics. The students were first directed to read the studies' purpose and were made aware of the benefits and risks of the study.

Afterwards informed consent (Appendix B) was gained from the participants. Of the 140 students sent the email, 50 began the survey (Appendix C), and 40 of those students completed the survey.

Data analysis was completed with qualitative-coding analysis and frequency analysis with the goal of identifying trends and gaining the ability to summarize the results and frequency of participants' responses.

Assessing Outcomes

The desired outcome of this study is a more complex understanding of the needs of fully online students at The University of Southern Mississippi. In addition to understanding the attitudes and awareness these students have towards said services.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

1. The researcher assumes that the participants will have little or no knowledge of any mental health services offered online since there are none currently offered.
2. It is assumed that online students will desire mental health resources offered in a format that matches their educational modality.
3. Students may be reluctant to divulge answers in complete honesty due to the sensitive nature of the topic.

Limitations

1. All respondents to the questionnaire reported themselves as female in gender.
2. The respondents to the questionnaire were all enrolled in the same academic program, being the online campus of Child and Family Sciences.

3. There exists limited previous research about effectiveness of the proposed study and implementation.
4. Participates were unable to select multiple answers on the “Academic Obstacles Assessment.”

CHAPTER IV – FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study was completed to assess the gaps in the online mental health services that are offered at The University of Southern Mississippi. The data compiled has been reviewed to assess the attitudes, awareness, and desire of the students. The following chapter proves a summary of the data collected. In addition, the following data addresses the three research questions that were used to drive this study. There were several themes identified within the answers including: accessibility of use, anonymity, and need for more information.

Presentation of Data

The survey was administered to 140 students from the fully online Child and Family Studies Program. The study received a return rate of 28.57%. The entire sample population was female. Of the population's participants, 77.5% of the population reported as Caucasian and 22.5% reported as African American. The average age of the participant was 30.95 years (range of 19-50 years). Of the respondents, 57.5% of the participants were first generation students. In addition, 87.5% of the participants identified as being a transfer student. In addition to the figures provided, each item on the Mental Health Resource Questionnaire has been paired with one of the three research questions.

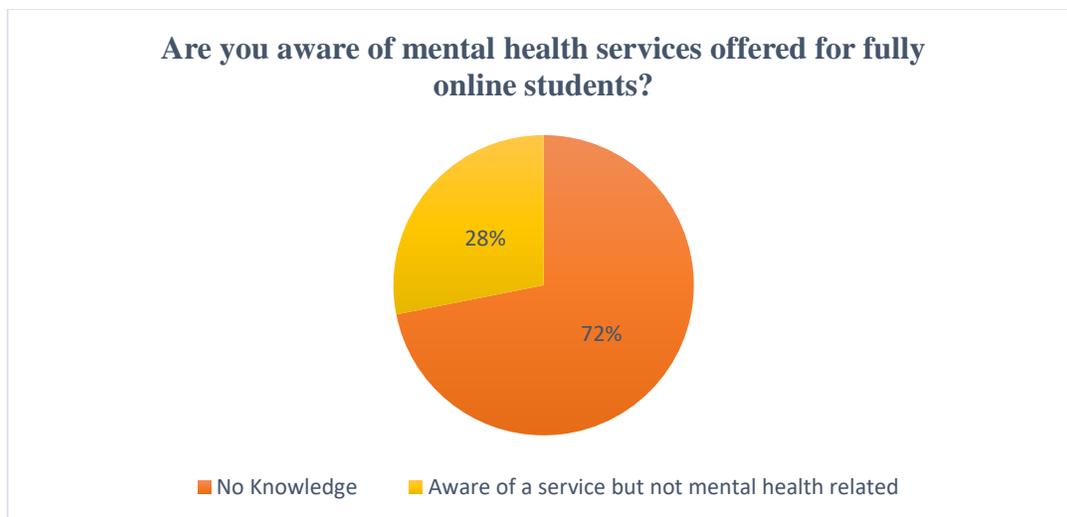


Figure 1 Awareness of Available Resources; Question #13 on survey (Appendix C)

Of the students surveyed, 72% reported having no knowledge of any services available for fully online students. Twenty-eight percent of respondents reported that they were aware of some service (library assistance and writing centers), but none of the provided examples were related to mental health services. While 72% reported not knowing of any services available to them, 100% supported (question 14, appendix C) the implementation of a program to assist with providing equal services comparable to what is offered the on-campus student. While there is a severe lack of awareness, it could be due to the lack of services available.

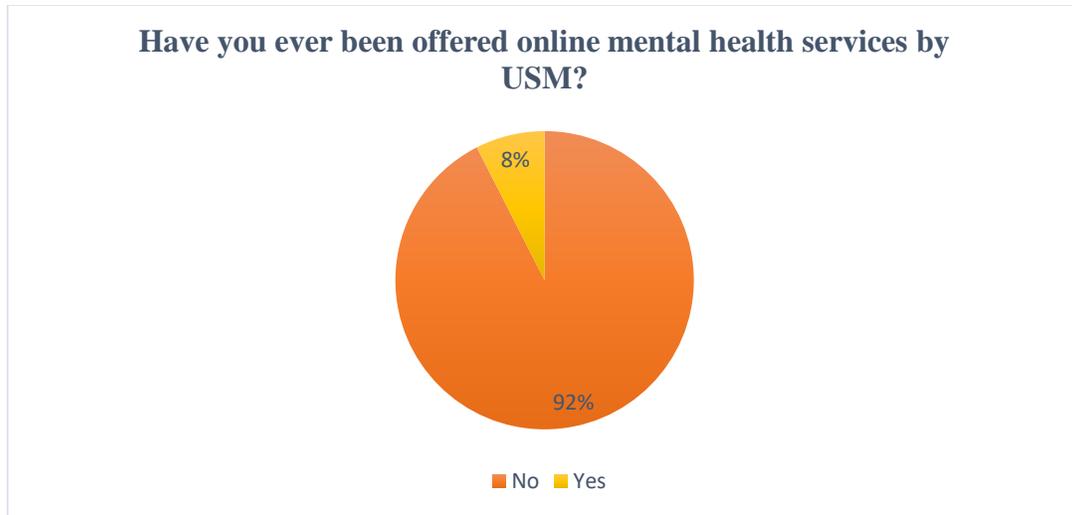


Figure 2 Percentage of student awareness to outreach; Question #11 on survey (Appendix C)

When asked about the awareness to mental health services (Figure 4.1) 72% of those polled were unaware of any available help. They also stated that there is a strong need for equal mental health services to be provided to fully online students just as the on-campus student can access. The participants’ responses stated (question 14, appendix C) in 100% of the responses that increased services would be beneficial. One participant stated, *“I strongly do believe that fully online students should have access to the same quality of mental health services as those who are in campus. This is because online students are just as important...”* another participant stated, *“I definitely think online students should have equal access to the same quality of mental health due to online students having the same stresses with classes, could have depression, or need support with their mental well-being.”* Due to 100% of the participants reporting similar responses, it can be deduced that there is a desire for more mental health services for the fully online students of The University of Southern Mississippi. There is also a need for these services to be provided. The survey (Appendix C) provided of an Academic Obstacles Assessment that was completed by 39 of the respondents. It can be concluded

from this assessment that 53.84% of the respondents reported that “pressure, stress, and anxiety” were their biggest obstacles to success in regard to school performance. It can be deduced that these stressors will not only affect a student’s academic performance, but also their mental health as well. Much of the time, these same stressors that students reported as contributing to academic hardships also serve as catalysts for individuals to seek mental health services.

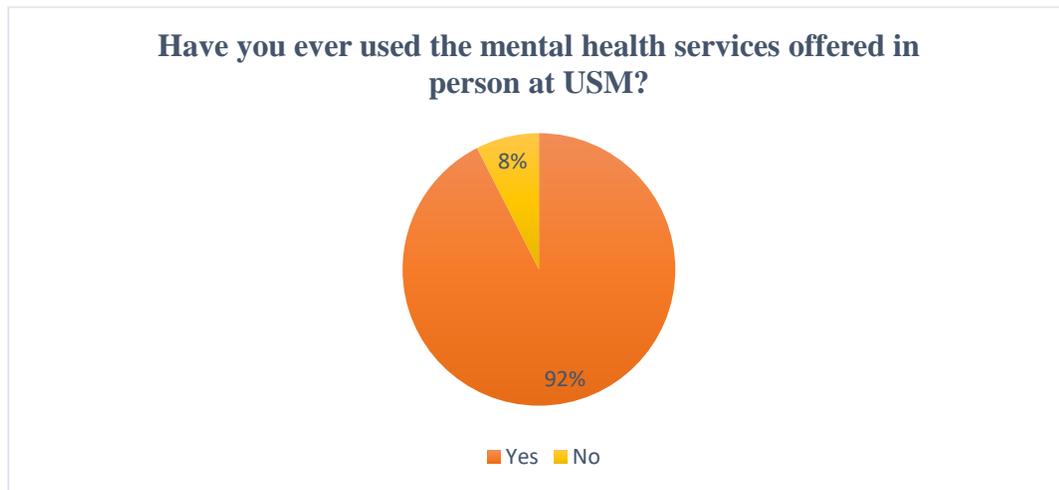


Figure 3 Students use of current services; Question #12 on survey (Appendix C)

Of the 40 students polled only 8% reported using any mental health services provided in person at The University of Southern Mississippi. This percentage could be attributed to the barrier that many students face with being located too far away to access the offered in person services. Question #16 of the survey (Appendix C) asked if they would be more likely to utilize mental health services if they were offered online.

Due to me living over an hour away from USM, it would be more convenient for

me to access mental health services online

If they offered online support or extended hours.

If I felt like they were accessible, and I needed them.

I know that I have some issues with mental health. So, knowing that the services are readily available to me makes me utilize them as much as i can.

Question 22 of the survey asked the following: How would offering counseling services online help improve student's experience? (Services would include mental evaluation by a mental/medical health professional). A common theme in the respondent's answers was the desire for online students to feel as involved as on campus students. Fully online students wish to feel like they are getting equal care to those on campus. Another common report was that often times fully online students work full time/have additional stressors compared to those who live on campus. The Academic Obstacles Assessment showed that 55% of the respondents said that their biggest family/social obstacle to overcome was working too much. These respondents reported the following:

I strongly do believe that fully online students should have access to the same quality of mental health services as those who are in campus. This is because online students are just as important. For example, the only reason I'm taking my classes online is because I have a full time job and kids to support. I am important though and am a student just like the campus students.

Online courses can be very stressful for people, especially students with full time jobs or children. Having a mental health provider help them through stressful times could take the weight off the shoulder

It would make them feel like they are a part of the campus by having the same access to campus programs

Of the 35 participants who responded to the question of what would make them more likely to use the mental health services if they were offered online, (question #15, Appendix C), 48.57% responded with the common theme of wanting more accessible mental health services. This was a common desire among all of the open-ended questions from the survey. One participant stated they wished services were offered online due to geographical restrictions. This helps support the idea that an online mental health program would be beneficial to those who are not within reasonable travel distance of the on-campus services. One participant stated the following:

“It would be easier [if the services were provided online to] access as I do not live in the state of MS.”

“By making it more available to students more would be able to use it. Many don’t have time to go to campus but could access online quickly when able.”

Another common theme that emerged from the data was the desire for anonymity. A participant stated they would be more likely to use services offered online, because of increased anonymity. In addition, when asked what would prevent them from reaching out to seek mental health assistance, in question #16 of the survey (Appendix C), a participant stated that they thought it would help reduce the stigma. Respondents reported throughout the survey that they were worried about the stigma that is associated with receiving in person mental health assistance, but they responded positively to the idea of the anonymity online services provides. They responded with an attitude of reluctance to reach out for help when needed due to the feared negative repercussions caused by the stigma. This shows a negative attitude towards in person services, but a positive attitude for online mental health services.

“being able to talk to someone who was not personal to me would be beneficial.”

“I think that having it online would eliminate the cultural and stigma that comes with therapy.”

“I think that having it online would eliminate the cultural and stigma that comes with therapy”

“Seems more anonymous. No one would see you walking into the counselor's office, More students may feel comfortable...”

An additional common theme was the desire for more information about available mental health services offered. Since 72% stated they were not aware of any services it is known this is a great need. When asked what would make them more likely to use the provided resources they responded with the following:

“Just to learn more information about it”

“If I knew about them and they were offered near me (gulf coast)”

“I need to know about them”

Overall, it seems that fully online students have relevant thoughts about what they need from their institution in terms of mental health services. When asked what personally would make the student more likely to use mental health services if they offered online, participants reported ease of access as being the most relevant factor that would increase their likelihood to utilize online mental health services. Respondents also reported that their stress level would serve as a major factor in determining whether or not they would be more likely to use the offered online services.

Additionally, the perceived anonymity of proposed online mental health services was reported as being an appealing aspect of increased usage if offered. When the

question was posed how offering mental health services online would increase the overall use of online support services, students reported the reduction of stigma and barriers, intuitional responsibility, and meeting the unique needs of online students as the major themes. Respondents identified the stigma of receiving mental health support as a potential barrier to reaching out for assistance. Fully online students appear to believe that since they are “students too,” the university has the same intuitional responsibility to meet their mental health needs.

In conclusion, students appear to have a desire for mental health services to be provided in an online format. The respondents wish for equality of services for students. It is believed that enhancement of these services would not only benefit students’ mental health, but also their academic performance, therefore improving their overall collegiate experience.

CHAPTER V – RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In order to provide recommendations for how to best use the information collected, the research questions should be revisited. The research questions were created out of an interest to assess what students believed about mental health and what they needed in terms of resources. The following research questions were used to drive this study and identify what answers were needed for this assessment.

Research Question One

The first research question of the study was “What resources are fully online students at the University of Southern Mississippi aware of regarding mental health?” Of the 40 participants, only 28% were able to list a resource of any kind. There were no online mental health services listed by any of the participants. Three participants listed mental health services that are available for the on-campus student, but two of the three stated they would not be able to access them due to proximity to where they lived. The participants frequently listed that they were aware that there are currently no mental health services available for the fully online student.

Research Question Two

The second question was “What are the attitudes towards mental health of fully online students at the University of Southern Mississippi?” A common theme expressed toward the attitude of mental health as whole was there is still a negative stigma associated with reaching out for mental health assistance. Due to this, many students are unwilling to ask for help when it is needed. Another common topic discussed throughout the entirety of the data collected was that access to mental health services can significantly reduce the stress of being at a higher education institution. Participants

reported a positive attitude towards implementation of greater services due to the need for stress relief and the increased ease of getting help when feeling overwhelmed. Students reported a positive attitude to the possibility of having mental health services available to help them with things such as skill building and coping mechanisms.

Research Question Three

The third question examined was “What mental health resources do fully online students at the University of Southern Mississippi desire?” It was reported by the participants that an implementation of a module-based therapy program would be beneficial to students due to the ability to access individual/anonymous therapeutic assistance. The participants desire a program that will allow for stress relief, skill building, and coping mechanisms. The participants reported that an online chat format was the most desired with 74.63% interested in this type. Text messaging therapy was also requested, but at a much lower rate with only 23.07% reporting the possibility of benefitting from this type of service. The majority of participants mentioned the desire to have access to mental health services that were equal to those available to the on-campus student.

After review of the data, it is recommended that The University of Southern Mississippi continue this assessment of the needs of fully online students at the institution. Based upon the collected responses, it is apparent that there are needs that are not currently being met and further resources that could be provided.

To conclude this action research study, it was enlightening to hear from the students themselves on what they desire in terms of institutional support of their mental health. It is the hope of the researcher that the results of this study be used to make a

difference in the lives of fully online students at Southern Miss. Further, it is hoped that this information may be used to improve the educational experience for all members of the institutional community at The University of Southern Mississippi.

APPENDIX A – Questionnaire Cover Letter

Cover Letter for Student Questionnaire

Dear Students,

My name is Ryan Luethje and I am a doctoral student studying Higher Education Administration at The University of Southern Mississippi. The area of interest for my capstone project is evaluating mental health resources for fully online students at The University of Southern Mississippi. I am collecting responses from undergraduate students at Southern Miss from a questionnaire and inventories to further investigate this topic. The purpose of this project is to hopefully gain better understanding of areas of weakness within the Southern Miss mental health services offered. Further, it is hoped that through this study, information will be gained that helps to create new, effective strategies for addressing mental health concerns of Southern Miss students.

Since you are an undergraduate student enrolled in a fully online degree program at The University of Southern Mississippi you are being asked to partake in this study. Since you are a student in the School of Child and Family Sciences completing this questionnaire, you will receive extra credit in your FAM 200 or other applicable Child and Family Sciences course upon the approval of those corresponding professors.

Throughout the entirety of this study, your responses will be completely confidential and there are no foreseeable risks involved with your participation. The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board has approved the research study. The questionnaire should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. The results from this study will be presented in a completely anonymous and unidentifiable

format. The success of this study depends on your answering all questions as honestly as possible. This survey is only of voluntary participation, and if at any time you wish to leave the study, you are permitted to do so. By submitting your completed survey, you are consenting to having your responses used in this study.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research project. If during any part of the study you have questions about the administration of the survey, please contact me at Ryan.Luethje@usm.edu. The survey can be found at the following web address listed below:

https://usmep.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bsEr9p6ob3f9Fxb

Sincerely,

Ryan Luethje

Ryan.Luethje@usm.edu

Doctoral Student, Higher Education Administration, University of Southern Mississippi

APPENDIX B – QUESTIONNAIRE CONSENT FORM

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
STANDARD (ONLINE) INFORMED CONSENT

STANDARD (ONLINE) INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURES

The Project Information and Research Description sections of this form should be completed by the Principal Investigator before submitting this form for IRB approval. Use what is given in the research description and consent sections below when constructing research instrument online.

Last Edited July 20th,

2017

Today's date: 11/9/2018		
PROJECT INFORMATION		
Project Title: Attitudes Towards Online Mental Health Resources		
Principal Investigator: Ryan Luethje	Phone: 601/266-6909	Email: Ryan.Luethje@usm.edu
College: Education & Human Sciences	Department: Child & Family Sciences	
RESEARCH DESCRIPTION		
<p>1. Purpose:</p> <p>For this action research study, the focus is mental health resources for students enrolled in fully online programs at the University of Southern Mississippi. There is currently no comprehensive plan or protocol in place for how to address a reported mental health concern or crisis for fully online students at the university. Increasing the institution's forms of support for mental health concerns for those students without on campus access will work to combat this trend.</p> <p>2. Description of Study:</p> <p>The objective of this study will be to determine the specific ways that services for fully online students can be improved if a need to do so is found. The findings of this study will hopefully help administrators and practitioners strategically address the problem. The knowledge attained through this study will hopefully not only improve the college experience for fully online students, but also that of traditional students. The questionnaire should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. The success of this study depends on your answering all questions as honestly as possible. By submitting your completed survey, you are consenting to having your responses used in this study.</p> <p>3. Benefits:</p> <p>While no direct benefits for participants will occur, participation in the study will inform students of the measures being enacted to help support their academic and personal endeavors.</p> <p>4. Risks:</p> <p>Throughout the entirety of this study, your responses will be completely confidential and there are no foreseeable risks involved with your participation. Participants could potentially experience discomforts associated with mental health questioning.</p> <p>5. Confidentiality:</p>		

APPENDIX C – MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Mental Health Resources Questionnaire – The University of Southern Mississippi

1. What gender do you identify as?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other: _____
 - d. Rather not disclose
2. What is your age in years? _____
3. What is your ethnicity and race? _____
4. What is your current classification at Southern Miss?
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Other: _____
5. Are you a transfer student? (i.e. – previously attended a community college or other institution) Yes or No? (Circle one)
6. Would you classify yourself as a traditional student (coming to university directly from high school) or non-traditional student (a returning student)? _____
7. Are you a first-generation student (meaning that neither parent completed postsecondary education)?

8. How many online classes do you normally take during the course of a semester?

- a. 1 class (1-3 credit hours)
- b. 1-2 classes (3-6 credit hours)
- c. 2-4 classes (6-12 credit hours)
- d. 4-5 classes (12-15 credit hours)
- e. 5 or more classes (More than 15 credit hours)

9. How familiar are you with the mental health services provided by USM? (Circle one)

- a. Very familiar --- Familiar --- Somewhat familiar --- Not at all familiar

10. Have you ever been offered online mental health services by USM?

11. Have you ever used the mental health services offered in person at USM?

12. If yes, would you recommend them to a friend?

13. What university services provided for fully online students are you aware of?

- a. _____

14. Explain if you think that fully online students should have access to the same quality of mental health services as those who are on campus?

- a. _____

15. What would make you more likely to use the mental health services if they were offered online?

a.

16. What would prevent you from reaching out to seek mental health assistance?

- a. Negative stigma
- b. Cultural factors
- c. Associated cost
- d. Accessibility
- e. Other

factors: _____

17. Have you discussed about using mental health facilities provided by USM with anyone?

- a. If so, how do those conversations arise?

18. In what ways do you think that offering mental health services online would increase the overall use by students?

- a. _____

19. How would having mental health services available online help students not able to visit campus to receive in-person assistance?

- a. _____

20. Under what circumstances would you seek services? (i.e., stress, crisis, exams, etc.)

a. _____

21. Would you use a module based online therapy? This would be electronic forms of therapy (i.e – text messages, online chat, modules, etc.)

a. If yes, what would be your preferred method?

22. How would offering counseling services online help improve student’s experience? (Services would include mental evaluation by a mental/medical health professional)

a. _____

Academic Obstacles Assessment

In reviewing your academic performance, what obstacles have affected your grades? Please **check all** that apply.

Some of the factors listed below are rather personal. The intent of the questions is to encourage true self-reflection that will identify the relationships between your academic performance and support services that you are receiving.

Academic		Personal/Other	
Ineffective study skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>
Undeveloped time management skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health problems	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unprepared for exams	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you struggle with motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>

Difficult classes/not prepared for course level	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use or abuse of alcohol or other substance(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unable to understand course content/relevance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Possible learning disability	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conflict with professor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulty sleeping at night	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hard to concentrate/daydreaming	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pressure, stress, anxiety or tension	<input type="checkbox"/>
Registered for too many classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Over-involved with extra-curricular activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did not attend/skipped class	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of Motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Major/Career		Family/Social Adjustment	
Uncertain about major	<input type="checkbox"/>	Working too much	<input type="checkbox"/>
Changed major one or more times	<input type="checkbox"/>	Relationship issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
No clear career goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal/family situation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not sure why I'm in school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Changes in living situation	<input type="checkbox"/>
USM may not be the place for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulty adjusting to college life	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Loneliness	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other factors not listed above: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Please explain in detail the three most significant obstacles that affected your academic performance.

Obstacle	Explain each obstacle's impact on your success
1. Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
2. Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
3. Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

APPENDIX D– IRB Approval Letter



118 COLLEGE DRIVE #5116 • HATTIESBURG, MS | 601.266.6756 | WWW.USM.EDU/ORI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-18-28

PROJECT TITLE: Attitudes Towards Online Mental Health Resources

SCHOOL/PROGRAM: School of Education, Educational Research and Admin

RESEARCHER(S): Ryan Luethje
Lilian Hill

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved

CATEGORY: Exempt

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: November 16, 2018 - November 16, 2019

Edward L. Goshorn, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

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