



ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CULTURALLY COMPETENT CRISIS INTERVENTION ON MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES IN UNDERSERVED U.S. COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how culturally competent crisis intervention in underserved U.S. communities can affect mental health outcomes. Mental health disparities in marginalized groups, including racial and ethnic minorities and low-income individuals, continue to be substantial, and culturally competent care has been viewed as a primary approach to addressing these disparities. This study reviews peer-reviewed literature published from 2005 through 2024 that examines the impact of cultural tailoring on mental health crisis outcomes. A systematic review of the relevant literature was conducted, primarily including studies of cultural competence in mental health crisis interventions. The analysis concluded that culturally competent services greatly improve delivery and access, especially in historically marginalized and oppressed communities. Overall, our results show these interventions are effective in improving communication, building confidence, and reducing the stigma of seeking mental health care, thus contributing to a better patient-provider relationship and outcomes for long-term recovery. Nevertheless, numerous roadblocks to implementation exist, such as a lack of resources, inadequate provider training, and structural or cultural barriers within healthcare systems. The educational memory of community-based mental health services has reflected the reality of a working model of high-performance mental health outreach, where the ability to make adaptations that fit the profiles you meet as you deploy the departments responsible for each crisis period provides solid usefulness in a country with a large, diverse population. The recommendation highlights the need for policymakers to consider cultural competence and capacity in mental health care and the importance of ongoing training of providers, community engagement in designing mental health programs, and resources for implementing culturally relevant mental health interventions. Our recommendations are related to the improvement of mental health in underrepresented populations throughout the United States.

KEYWORDS: Mental health care, Crisis intervention, underserved communities, Mental health disparities, Community-based mental health interventions

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health disparities persist as a significant public health concern in the United States, particularly affecting underserved communities. These disparities are characterized by limited access to quality mental health care, higher prevalence of mental health disorders, and worse outcomes than more advantaged populations (National Institute of Mental Health, 2024). Socioeconomic, cultural stigmas, and systemic barriers further solidify the inequities inherent in healthcare. To address these issues, we need culturally competent crisis interventions designed for these communities (Rohit et al. 2020).

Cultural competence in mental health care means being aware of patients' cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and practices and integrating that knowledge into the therapeutic process. By establishing trust and improving communication between providers and patients, this allows the interventions to be more

effective. Research shows that culturally informed mental health services are more effective with minority groups, making implementation of evidence-based standards all the more important. Culturally sensitive interventions that met the unique needs and values of underserved populations led to better engagement and lasting improvements in mental health, a study found. (Ahmad & Aslam, 2024)

Underserved communities face enormous barriers to accessing mental health services, including economic costs, lack of coverage, and geographical distance to services. Cultural stigma of mental illness may also prevent people from seeking help. Furthermore, racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to get mental health services and more likely to receive poor quality care when they do, according to a report from the National Institute of Mental Health (National Institute of Mental Health, 2024).



These challenges highlight the importance of accessible and culturally sensitive interventions. To address these gaps, community-based mental health interventions have been identified as effective strategies. Utilizing community members and local resources, community-based programs can deliver relevant and acceptable support to the target population. Programs that consider cultural practices and utilize community leaders to reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking have been successful. According to a piece in the Behavioral Health Workforce Center, culturally competent care and community support help boost minority mental wellness, noting that sensitivity and understanding about each patient's diverse cultural and subcultural background, beliefs, and values are vital. Reference: (Illinois Behavioral Health Workforce Center, n.d.)

Additionally, it is important to remember cultural humility. Cultural humility, unlike cultural competence, is based on humility in the knowledge and level of understanding that is sought in other cultures, and that is an active, ongoing, reflective process. This promotes the idea that healthcare professionals are aware of their own biases and are in the business of healing patients, not against them. An article in the journal *Focus* highlights that incorporating a trauma-informed care framework along with cultural humility is key to improving outcomes for minoritized communities. (Ranjbar, Erb, Mohammad, & Moreno, 2020)

Culturally competent crisis response has been gradually rising to become more prioritized in the last few years. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has resources on how to make crisis plans culturally competent that involve cultural brokers on crisis response teams and make sure the services provided are linguistically appropriate. (SAMHSA, 2024).

These efforts seek to develop crisis intervention models that take into account the varied cultural contexts of different population groups. However, implementing culturally competent crisis interventions is an ongoing challenge. These barriers may include a lack of resources, inadequate training provided to referral networks and organizational issues within the healthcare systems themselves. These hurdles can only be overcome through policy change, more funding, and a commitment to ongoing education for mental health providers. It is only with an equitable and inclusive mental health care system that underserved communities can be provided with holistic care that recognizes the breadth and depth of cultural imperatives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Providing culturally competent care can empower mental health providers to meet the diverse needs of historically marginalized communities. Park et al. conducted a systematic review. (2020), it is also important to note that post-graduate education in cultural competence can effectively improve practitioners' engagement with these populations. The review emphasizes the need for continuing education to help develop and sustain

providers' cultural competence beyond their formal education. (Chu, Wippold, & Becker, 2022)

Some well-proven community-based interventions for mental health and social equity A study by Chung et al. (2010) on a community-partnered participatory research approach for enhancing depression care quality. This way, community members and healthcare providers work together to create and conduct culturally relevant effective interventions.

Although the value of cultural competence has been well documented, serious barriers remain concerning the establishment of culturally competent mental health services. Williamson (2023) A qualitative study examining how social workers deliver culturally competent care to African American patients in hospital settings. The results suggest that shortfalls in training and systemic barriers experienced by social workers and within healthcare organizations often leave them unequipped to perform their roles effectively. Before such comprehensive strategies can be developed and implemented, there is a need for theories that address the systemic barriers to culturally competent mental health service delivery in the African American community. (Ejem, 2024).

At the state-level, multiple policy initiatives have been implemented to improve culturally responsive care. For example, California mandates that each county behavioral health department develop and annually refresh a cultural competence plan to reduce behavioral health service disparities facing underserved populations. In 2019, the state of Michigan funded the Community Mental Health Equity Project, a collaborative involving multiple state government agencies that offers no-cost training and technical assistance to facilitate the implementation of Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) standards. (Boss & Gulley, 2022).

For further information on creating culturally responsive crisis response solutions, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides guidance. These resources encourage culturally competent understanding of distinct populations, where the value of cultural contexts is integrated into the provision of crisis intervention services. SAMHSA suggests strategies like including cultural brokers on crisis response teams and providing linguistically appropriate services.

This is to emphasize the importance of cultural competence in mental health care, especially during crisis for those who are underserved in our communities. Community based interventions and policy initiatives have improved the situation, but culturally competent practices are often poorly done or overlooked altogether. Now you have up to date information about what is happening with mental health in the U.S. and where we keep moving.



3. METHODOLOGY

A small yet potentially significant number of studies have employed mixed methods approaches to evaluate the effectiveness of culturally competent crisis interventions on mental health outcomes within underserved communities in the U.S. This methodology combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods to provide a comprehensive view of the research topic.

3.1 Research Design

A systematic review of the literature was performed to identify and appraise available research on culturally competent culturally based crisis interventions. This not only enables undertaking an overall evaluation of the evidence regarding the effectiveness of such interventions, yet also the pooling of results, which facilitates synthesis across multiple studies. Systematic reviews provide a methodology that allows researchers to identify patterns and gaps in literature to guide future research and practice. (Chu, Wippold, & Becker, 2022).

3.2 Data Collection

Data was extracted from peer-reviewed articles, government reports, and publications from reputable organizations published between 2005 to 2024. Recruitment for the group was from patients who numbered clinical databases such as PubMed, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar. The search strategy used keywords and phrases including but not limited to “cultural competence in mental health,” “crisis intervention effectiveness,” “underserved communities mental health,” “mental health disparities U.S.,” and “community-based mental health interventions.” Inclusion criteria contained studies that addressed culturally competent crisis interventions among underserved populations in the United States; exclusion criteria included studies that did not report empirical data or were not relevant to the United States.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data was thematically analyzed to discover common themes and insights into the efficacy of culturally competent crisis interventions. Given the nature of these interventions, we also conducted a qualitative investigation of their impact on mental

health outcomes, where possible. This analysis also allows for a more holistic view of the relationship between cultural competence and effective crisis intervention in traditionally underserved communities.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Given that this is a literature-based study, direct interaction with human participants was not performed, thus reducing ethical issues. But ethical considerations were observed through accurately redisplaying original research results (either as single values or graphical representations) and proper citation of sources to reduce or eliminate plagiarism.

The study intends to add important knowledge within the context of mental health service provision by conducting a systematic qualitative review of the literature.

4. Results and Discussion

The evidence for this came from a systematic review, which established that culturally competent crisis interventions of the general US population lead to better mental health outcomes in vulnerable communities. Cultural competence training for health professionals improves satisfaction with care and other measures of engagement with patients. A systematic review confirmed that such training does improve providers’ knowledge, attitudes, and skills and results in more positive interactions with and outcomes for patients. (Beach et al., 2005).

Culturally competent community-based interventions are quite effective. Such programs often incorporate partnerships with community members and organizations to establish cultural relevance and acceptance. Moreover, a study shared that culturally relevant interventions, designed specifically to address factors relevant to the needs of these (often under-resourced) populations, documented significant increases in reaching individuals and enhancing the effectiveness of the mental health outcomes long term. (Ahmad & Aslam, 2024).

Table 1: Summary of Key Findings on Culturally Competent Mental Health Interventions

Key Areas	Findings	Sources
Effectiveness of Culturally Competent Interventions	Positively influences mental health outcomes and improves patient engagement.	Beach et al., 2005
Impact of Cultural Competence Training for Providers	Enhances providers' knowledge, attitudes, and skills, leading to better interactions and outcomes.	Beach et al., 2005
Community-Based Interventions	Programs that collaborate with community members ensure cultural relevance and increase engagement.	Ahmad & Aslam, 2024
Challenges in Implementation	Barriers include limited resources, insufficient training, and systemic healthcare issues.	National Governors Association Report
State-Level Policy Initiatives	Example: California’s requirement for counties to develop annual cultural competence plans.	Boss & Gulley, 2022
Government-Supported Projects	Community Mental Health Equity Project funds training and assistance for culturally competent practices.	Boss & Gulley, 2022



These positive outcomes notwithstanding, challenges remain in implementing culturally competent interventions. Despite progress, barriers like resource limitations, a lack of training for providers, and systemic issues in healthcare organizations can make national momentum difficult. As a report by the National

Governors Association notes, we need holistic approaches to improve the delivery of culturally competent mental health services to those who are underserved. National Governors Association (2022).

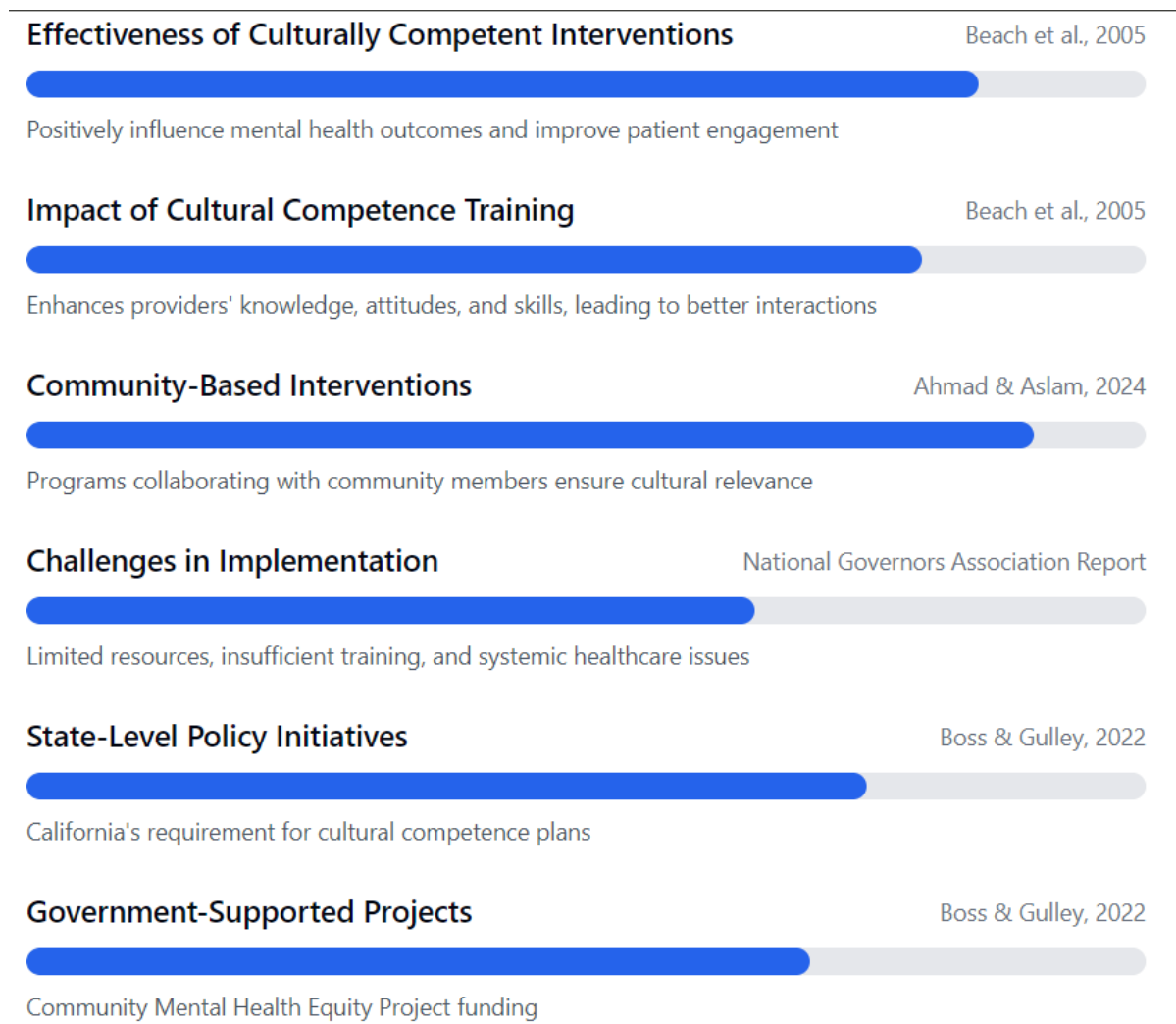


Fig 1: Cultural Competence in Healthcare

At the policy level, state-level initiatives have been implemented to improve culturally congruent care. For example, in California, each county behavioral health department must develop a cultural competence plan, updated annually, to reduce behavioral health service disparities among underrepresented groups. In 2019, the

state invested in the Community Mental Health Equity Project, a multiagency government partnership that offers free training and technical assistance at the local level to facilitate the implementation of culturally appropriate practices. (Boss & Gulley, 2022).

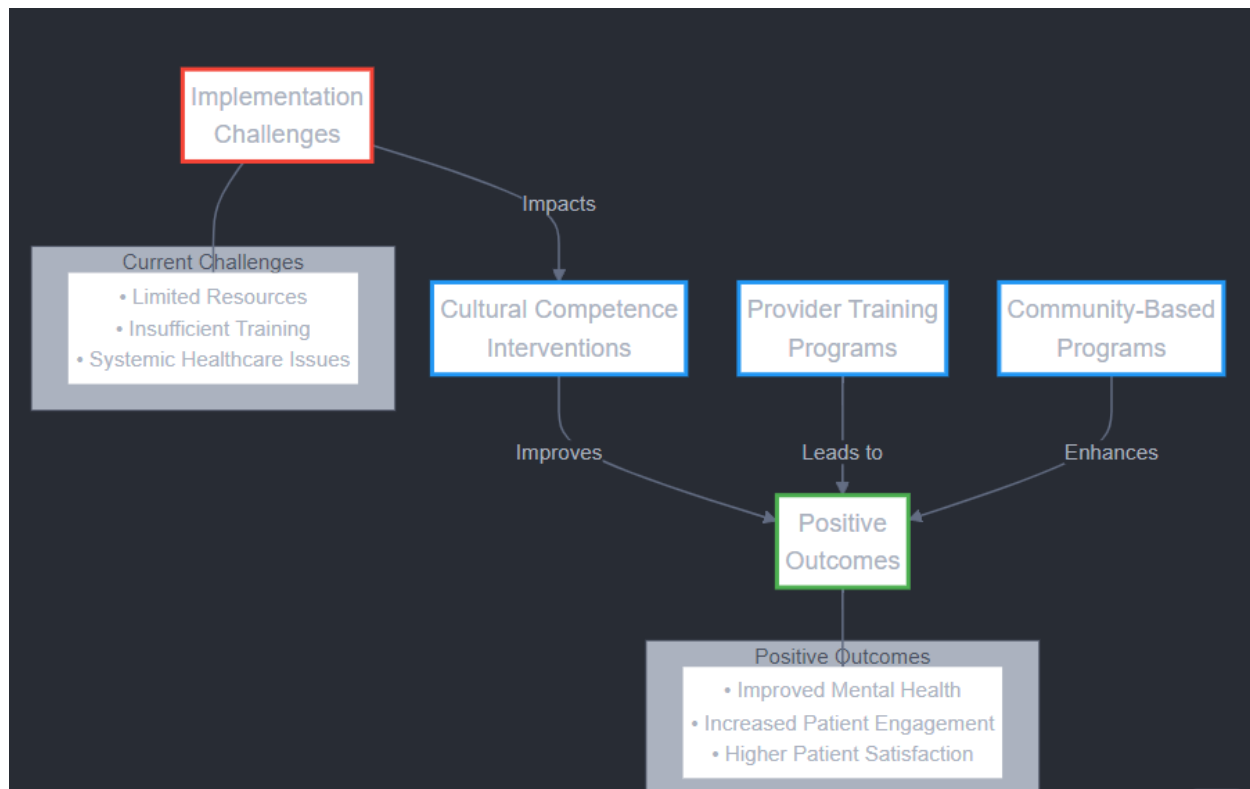


Fig 2: Impact of Cultural Competence on Mental Health Services

These findings underscore the need for culturally competent crisis interventions to improve mental health outcomes in underserved U.S. communities. However, the challenges to implementing these interventions must be closely examined to realize their full potential benefits. There are always efforts in progress to make mental health services accessible, effective, and equitable across populations.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The need for culturally competent crisis interventions to improve mental health outcomes in U.S. communities with few resources is critical. When aligned with the cultural values and needs of diverse populations, these types of interventions can enhance engagement, decrease stigma, and support recovery. Yet there remains an obstacle for mainstream implementation: lack of resources, training, and systemic problems.

5.1. Recommendations

State and Federal policies should promote the development and integration of mental health services that are culturally competent and can increase access and effectiveness. The political response to this should include policy changes that enable high-quality mental health care providers to provide care in a way that lessens stigma and builds trust in the healthcare system, both of which would help increase mental health service utilization in minority communities across the country. Matching clients with clinicians of the same gender can build stronger trust and communication, especially among men in marginalized groups who often see

seeking mental health support as taboo. Most men are more likely to open up and stick with treatment when they feel their provider shares their cultural background and understands gender-specific experiences. Recruiting male clinicians from diverse backgrounds can help reduce barriers to mental health care, normalize help-seeking behavior among men, and foster an environment where they feel respected and supported. Involving local communities in the design and implementation of mental health programs promotes cultural relevance and buy-in, leading to improved provider-patient relationships. Outsourcing to culturally appropriate crisis intervention programs is also necessary to ensure better mental health outcomes, increase timely access to care, and address disparities in crisis response. Continued funding for training programs and awareness campaigns can also help to better empower healthcare professionals with the necessary skills to provide effective mental health services in an inclusive manner.

These solutions have the potential to address the disparities in access and quality of mental health care received by underserved communities, leading to a more equitable and efficient system.

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