Exploring Arab Americans’ Preferences Towards Telemedicine as a Mental Health Treatment

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Abstract

Introduction
Arab Americans—a large minority group in the United States—experience higher rates of mental illness and relatively lower rates of treatment compared to the general population. While some factors leading to this disparity have been proposed, data in the literature remains lacking. This study aims to explore Arab-American mental health perspectives with regards to their preferences towards telemental health as a treatment option.

Methods
Responses were collected through an anonymous bilingual Qualtrics survey from both Arab and non-Arab participants (n=294, ages 18+). Participants’ perceptions towards telemental health and mental illness stigma were assessed, performing comparisons between Arabs and non-Arabs, as well as among Arab subgroups. Data analysis was conducted in SPSS using Chi-squared tests, ANCOVA, and t-tests.

Results
Arabs were less likely than non-Arabs to prefer telemental health, although that was not statistically significant (p=0.090), and having a private environment was the most frequently listed cause by Arabs for choosing telemental health. When correlating stigma towards mental illness to telemental health, stigma was positively and significantly correlated with preference towards telemental health in the entire sample (p=0.010). Within the Arab sample, males were significantly more likely than females (p=0.036) and older Muslims were significantly more likely than older Christians (p=0.032) to prefer telemedicine.

Conclusions
Our results provide unique insights into Arab-American mental health perspectives pertaining to telemental health preferences, adding a novel perspective on the mental health preferences of subgroups within the populations especially regarding gender and age differences. Use of telemedicine as a treatment option has been shown to be potentially beneficial in previous studies in Arab countries and with Arab Australians, noting that the virtual setting might be destigmatizing. To our knowledge, this is the first study exploring telemental health preferences of Arab-Americans and might offer important preliminary results. This study highlights the Arab-American population as a nuanced and diverse group, emphasizing the importance of future studies to show a more complete picture of Arab-American mental health.

Keywords: Mental Health, Telemedicine, Arab-American, Stigma
References:


