Help-Seeking Behaviors and Coping in Homeless Latino Youth

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## Introduction

Around 1.5 to two million homeless people in United States live in streets, and they are mostly the Latino Americans.  Homeless Latino adolescent are distressing to social problems. In United States, homelessness in young people is more common as compared to older people. Young people in United States often leave their families because of the violence between family members, emotional abuse, and parental conflict, physical and sexual abuse from the family members. They left their homes of risk to have risky living situations on the streets. Leaving home has highly negative health consequences. These consequences are related to the risky sexual behavior, unhygienic life and substance abuse.

## Literature Review

A research by Colby explained that homeless young adults are staggering in United States. Rates of homeless people vary with economic and social situations of the country. (Colby, 2011). Another research done by Rew, Taylor-Seehafer, & Fitzgerald, stated that over 60% of the homeless adolescents are reported from sexual abuse, around 57% had injected drugs, and 12% have attempted suicide (Rew, Taylor-Seehafer, & Fitzgerald, 2001). The research by Prescott, Sekendur, Bailey and Hoshino explained that the homeless youth is a serious societal problem in United States. The efforts done for the treatment have approached the problem, which focuses on the pathology and deficits. Instead, it strengthens the resiliency and coping skills (Prescott, Sekendur, Bailey, and Hoshino, 2008)

**Individual Factors Associated With Help Seeking**

There are numerous individual factors involved with the adolescents define as the need for help. The factors include perception of need, perception of social support, personal motivation and internalized gender norms.  Studies have provided the evidence that adolescents are more likely to report the family issues for, which they need, help (Barker, 2007). Adolescents approach the decision and social support about help seeking with the negative, positive and neutral consequences, which in turn to the subsequent decision in the help seeking.

**Personal beliefs**

During the consultation programs, a common set of personal problems is sought by the adolescent for help, including, intimate relationship, normative role transition, sexual abuse, family violence, employment, substance abuse and homelessness.  The most common reaction taken by the adolescent against the family issues is to leave their homes. The adolescents believe that keeping themselves away from home and family will improve their lives. After leaving their homes adolescents realized the difficulties of life, they seek help for various things (Barker, 2007). They faced difficulties in adjusting themselves to the new situations. The one of the most hazardous thing they faced was the street life. Adolescent started believing personally that street activities give them pleasure. They seek for the help in order to get themselves out of the street activities and start living a better life.

**Internalized Gender Norms**

Gender is considered to be the socially constructed exogenous variable. The way adolescents internalize the gender norms and act on them showed the combination of individual

factors. There are many cultural and regional variations are there, which needed to be considered. It is been believed that girls seek more help in comparison to boys. Boys are more likely to spend their life on streets and to get involved in the dangerous activities. On the other hand girls are more likely to seek help, get a better job and reconstruct their lives positively. Boys are at higher risk of using the substance abuse in times of stress. Girls are more likely to use social support to seek help. They will discuss their issues with the close friends and relatives. On the other hand, boys would try to manage things on their own (Lippman, 2012). They would not seek for help and do not consult to any professional counselor. Boys also do not pay attention to their health issues, whereas, the girls are more concerned with their health issues. Boy's manage dot work under stress and depression. For girls, it is difficult to manage working with depression and stress. Homelessness leads to the mental health concerns and could cause the serious affects on the life of adolescent's boy's delay seeking help than the girls, and they only seek help when the need has led to significant personal consequences.

**Perceptions of Others**

Young people do not view or trust others. It is imperative in the help-seeking behavior that whether they view available source as helpful. Adolescents usually ignore the health related and help related information because it is difficult for them to trust the social support. They believed that those sources are not reliable. The researchers provides the evidence that even after adolescents and parents report the conflict, parents continued to be a major social support for the adolescents, and they value their connections with their parents (Prescott, Sekendur, Bailey, and Hoshino, 2008). Adolescents rely on their parents for the certain kind of issues while they do not

rely on them for other needs. Trust on professional help provider is difficult for the adolescents who have left their homes, and their behaviors are seen as deviant.

## Coping Skills

The ability of adolescents to resolve their problems is an important factor in relevance to help-seeking. The ability of Latino adolescents to cope up with their problems varies tremendously by individual. A variety of personal and family traits leads to greater resilience.  In many cases, it is believed that Latino adolescents have an exaggerated sense of their ability in order to cope with the risks and problems. Latino youth is more likely to resolve their issues by themselves. They do not want to share their problems with others. This has caused them with to greater consequences because they do not take their heath issues seriously in relevance to homelessness (Lippman, 2012). The other homeless Latino helps each other in developing the coping skills. Latino girls have less coping skills than boys. Latino boys come out of depression and stress easily and move forward in their lives. On the other hand, Latino girls are not good in coping up with stress and depression. Coping skills are associated with the learning behaviors. The Latino youth observed and internalized the way their adults or parents cope up with the stress and in, which condition they seek help.

## Literature Gap

Many of the researches have been conducted in relevance to the homeless Latino. The researchers have focused more on the help-seeking behaviors and its relation to the mental health to only one narrative data. Further researches must be conducted to in generalized young homeless adults. The studies must be conducted in comparison to different cities and regions. By

providing the economic situation it is important to explore health seeking challenges among

young homeless adults across United Nations.

## Research Questions

Following are the research questions developed in relevance to the homeless young adults. The

questions are structured through the lens of social psychology. The questionnaire in its

demographics section obtained the information about gender, ethnicity, age and time spent

homeless.

1. Why you become homeless?

2. According to you, homelessness has gained what kind of strengths in you, which you
   think would not have otherwise?

3. For the next four to five years what are some goals and plans for yourself?

4. What are some actions you have done, which makes you proud?

5. Do you spend your time in thinking about your life experiences?

6. How the social world response to you, when you become homeless?

## Conclusion

It is very challenging for a young adult to become homeless. The rate of Latino youths is

relatively high in spending their life on the street. It is a crucial time for a mental health

intervention because many emotional and behavioral difficulties are present in adolescents.

Latino youths are not good with their coping skills. They usually avoid seeking help from others

and try to resolve their issues by themselves. It is believed that seeking help is one type of coping

strategy, which is associated with the better adjustment. There are several social barriers to seek

help for the unmet needs of hygiene, which includes homeless young adults. The homeless

Latino adults feel that they are unwanted in the society and perceive that efforts are made to

make them invisible. The homeless Latino adults suffered from the negative consequences of

living in the street.

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