

## Family Cohesion, Social Networks, and Cultural Differences in Latino and Asian American Help Seeking Behaviors

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**Abstract :** Background: Help seeking behaviors are highly contingent on socio-cultural factors such as ethnicity. Both Latino and Asian Americans underutilize mental health services compared to their White American counterparts. This difference may be related to the composite of one's social support system, which includes family cohesion and social networks. Previous studies have found that Latino families are characterized by higher levels of family cohesion and social support, and Asian American families with greater family cohesion exhibit lower levels of help seeking behaviors. While both are broadly considered collectivist communities, within-culture variability is also significant. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between help seeking behaviors in the two cultures with levels of family cohesion and strength of social network. We also consider such relationships in light of previous traumatic events and diagnoses, particularly post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), to understand whether clinically diagnosed individuals differ in their strength of network and help seeking behaviors. Method: An adult sample (N = 2,990) from the National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS) provided data on participants' social network, family cohesion, likelihood of seeking professional help, and DSM-IV diagnoses. T-tests compared Latino American (n = 1,576) and Asian American respondents (n = 1,414) in strength of social network, level of family cohesion, and likelihood of seeking professional help. Linear regression models were used to identify the probability of help-seeking behavior based on ethnicity, PTSD diagnosis, and strength of social network. Results: Help-seeking behavior was significantly associated with family cohesion and strength of social network. It was found that higher frequency of expressing one's feelings with family significantly predicted lower levels of help-seeking behaviors ( $\beta = [-.072]$ ,  $p = .017$ ), while higher frequency of spending free time with family significantly predicted higher levels of help-seeking behaviors ( $\beta = [.129]$ ,  $p = .002$ ) in the Asian American sample. Subjective importance of family relations compared to that of one's peers also significantly predict higher levels of help-seeking behaviors ( $\beta = [.095]$ ,  $p = .011$ ) in the Asian American sample. Frequency of sharing one's problems with relatives significantly predicted higher levels of help-seeking behaviors ( $\beta = [.113]$ ,  $p < .01$ ) in the Latino American sample. A PTSD diagnosis did not have any significant moderating effect. Conclusion: Considering the underutilization of mental health services in Latino and Asian American minority groups, it is crucial to understand ways in which help seeking behavior can be encouraged. Our findings suggest that different dimensions within family cohesion and social networks have differential impacts on help-seeking behavior. Given the multifaceted nature of family cohesion and cultural relevance, the implications of our findings for theory and practice will be discussed.

**Keywords :** family cohesion, social networks, Asian American, Latino American, help-seeking behavior

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