

Understanding Therapy Engagement among Spanish-speaking Outpatients

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Introduction

- Compared to non-Latino Whites, Latinos underutilize mental health services, are less likely to receive guideline congruent care, and rely more often on primary care for services (Cabassa et al. 2008).
- The Lazos Fuertes Needs Assessment aims to understand the demographic makeup, previous experiences, preferences, and perceived barriers to care among individuals seeking mental health services in a Spanish-language outpatient clinic.
- Through this study, we seek to identify key factors influencing access to and utilization of therapy services, including cultural, linguistic, and logistical considerations.

Methods

Recruitment

- Patients were recruited from Lazos Fuertes, a URMH outpatient mental health clinic serving Spanish-speaking adults (18+).

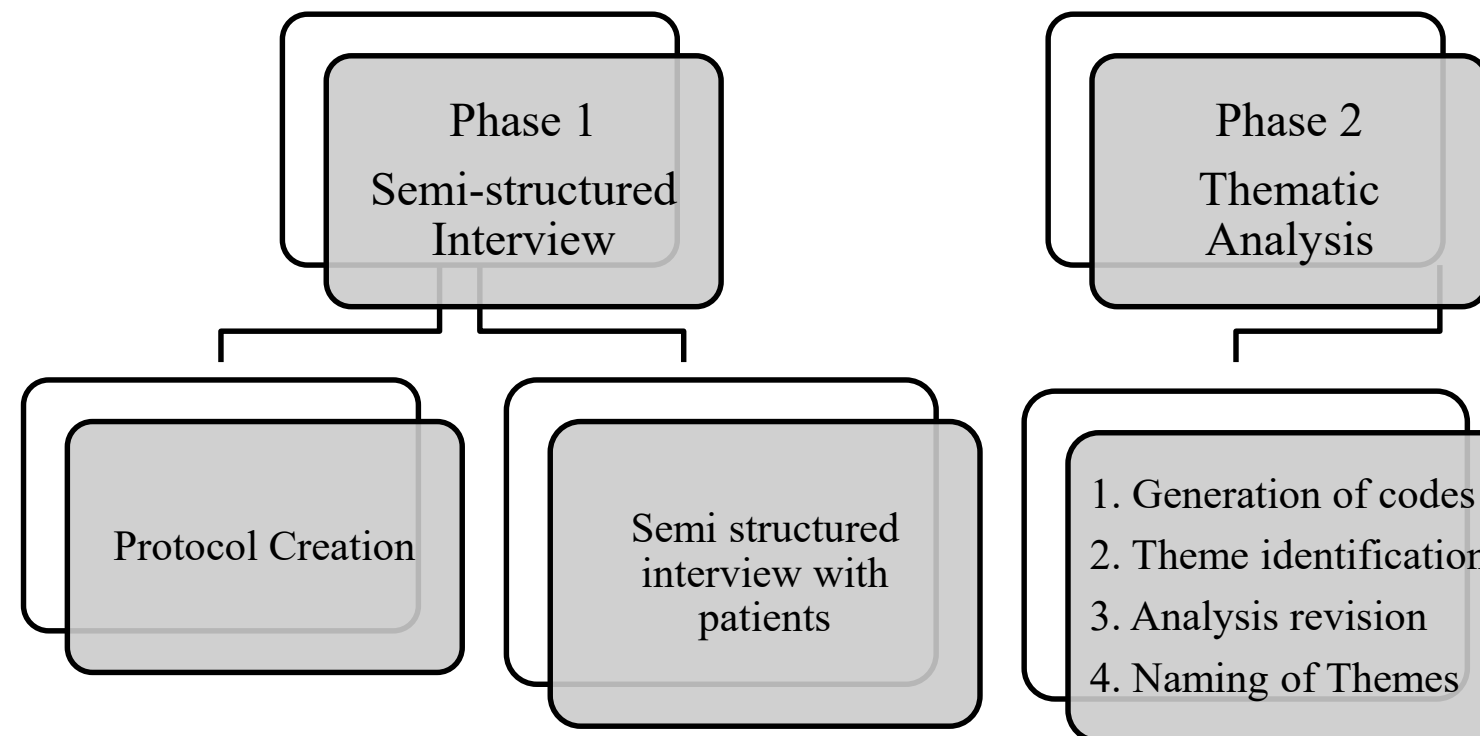


*New pts defined as receiving services for ≤ 6 months.

Sample Characteristics

- Patients were 10 Hispanic/Latino adults (100% Puerto Rican; 100% gender-identified females). A majority (70%) identified their race as White/Caucasian, with 30% identifying as Other.
- $M_{age} = 46.9$ years ($SD_{age} = 14.06$ years; range 26-64 years)
- Most (90%) indicated Spanish as their preferred language, with one pt indicating equal preference for Spanish/English
- Most (90%) were born in Puerto Rico; 70% had been living in the continental United States for >5 years, with 30% living in the continental US for 3 to 5 years
- A majority reported highest level of education as less than high school (40%) or high school graduate/GED equivalent (30%)
- A majority were on disability (60%), with 20% unemployed; 10% home maker; 10% employed full-time (paid)
- Most (90%) reported prior experience receiving therapy.

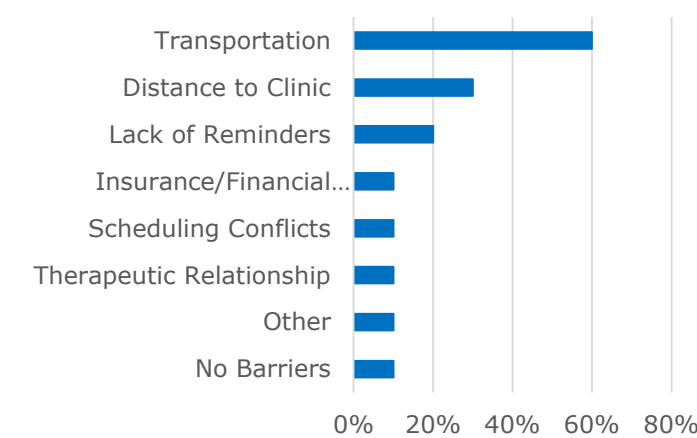
Procedure



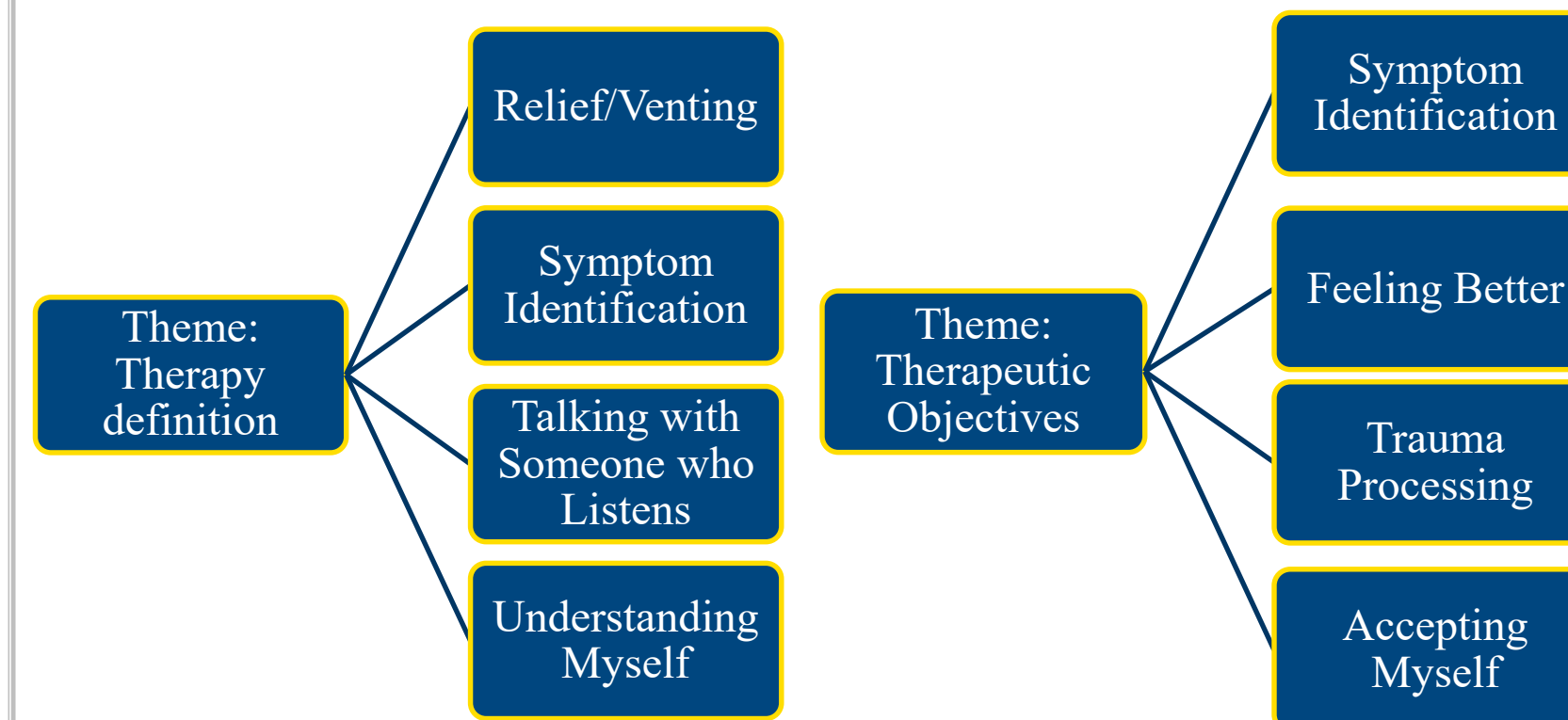
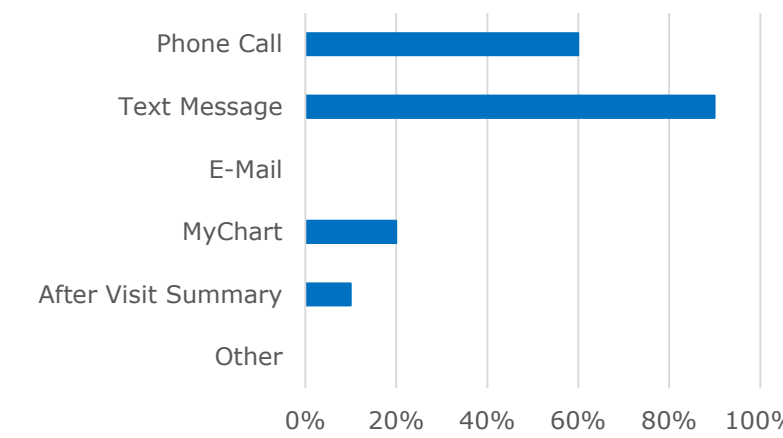
Results

- All patients reported wanting appointment reminders, with most preferring to receive reminders 1 day (70%) and/or at least 3 days prior (40%). Most pts (77.8%) who reported received reminders in the past (n=9), reported finding them effective to extremely effective.

Barriers to Care:



Reminder Preferences:



Results

Theme: Therapy Definition	Theme: Therapeutic Objectives
“Being able to improve, being able to understand my own stories and grow. Talk to someone who listens and appreciates”.	“Feeling better. Have emotional peace. Not being alone with my burden. And that professional person gives me tools to help me solve my things”.
“It is a time to express my situations with someone trustworthy and professional who does not necessarily live with me and feels more open to expressing things”.	“Have better relationships and inspire me to move forward and improve emotionally and motivate myself every day”.

*Quotes translated from Spanish to English

- The most frequent category identified under **Therapy Definition** was ‘Talking with Someone who Listens’ (80%)
- For the **Therapeutic Objectives** theme the most frequent category identified was ‘Feeling Better’ (50%)
- Most patients reported positive **experiences with prior therapy** (80%; 20% neutral) and **therapy at Lazos Fuertes** (90%; 10% neutral)
- Most patients reported receiving **therapy in their preferred language** (Spanish) as very (30%) or extremely (60%) important
- All patients reported having a **culturally-respectful provider** as very (40%) or extremely (60%) important

Discussion

- Ultimately, this assessment strives to inform strategies for optimizing mental health support and fostering a culturally sensitive and inclusive therapeutic environment within Lazos Fuertes
 - Barriers to care were mostly logistical and informed need for reminder preferences (e.g., transportation)
 - Most respondents defined therapy as “talking with someone who listens,” with their main objective for therapy as “feeling better”
 - Most patients reported positive experiences with therapy (including at Lazos) and indicated that receiving therapy from a culturally-respectful provider in their language of preference to be very/extremely important
- Given the significant emphasis on personal interaction and emotional improvement, culturally sensitive practices that respect and understand diverse backgrounds are essential for effective therapy
- Lazos Fuertes can focus on developing targeted interventions that aim to improve emotional well-being can align therapy services with patient goals.

References

Cabassa LJ, Zayas LH, Hansen MC. Latino adults' access to mental health care: a review of epidemiological studies. *Adm Policy Ment Health.* 2006 May;33(3):316-30. doi: 10.1007/s10488-006-0040-8. PMID: 16598658; PMCID: PMC2551758.