**Evaluating the Quality of Research**

One of your colleagues in the division, Dakota, is interested in developing a program to reduce mental health stigma among the students he works with (Dakota works primarily with male-identified students in fraternities). Dakota defines mental health stigma as “prejudicial attitudes and discriminating behavior directed towards individuals with mental health issues”. Notably, he has a limited budget with which to implement the program.

In researching mental health stigma, Dakota comes across the following article in a reputable student affairs journal, which he believes describes a promising intervention:

Chiu, I., & Graham, J. A. (2017). The effect of a peer-based personal stories intervention on focus of anxiety and social distance towards people with mental illness. *Journal of College Student Development*, *58*(1), 101-107.

Before implementing the intervention, however, Dakota comes to you. He knows you have been trained in how to evaluate research and wants to be sure the study is high quality and supports use of the intervention before he proceeds.

**Your Task:** Use the article provided to answer the questions on the next page. Then, craft an email response to Dakota (no more than one single-spaced page). In your email, be sure to address the following:

1. Overall, do you believe the article is “high-quality”? Why or why not?
2. Do you believe the article supports the effectiveness of the intervention (internal validity)? Why or why not?
3. Do you believe the results are generalizable to Dakota’s context (external validity)? Why or why not?
4. What questions (if any) do you have for either Dakota or the researchers? Do you believe any important information needed to answer Questions 1-3 is missing?

Keep in mind that Dakota has *not* been trained in how to evaluate research, so make sure that your email response does not include terms and phrases that would be unintelligible to someone without a research methods background.

**Purpose/Research Questions/Program**

* Describe the study intervention.
* Describe the intended outcomes.
* Are the researchers trying to make causal inferences?

**Sampling**

* Describe the study sample.
* To whom do the researchers attempt to generalize their results?
  + Is the sample representative of the population to which researchers want to generalize?
* To what extent does the sample in the study align with Dakota’s target population?
* Do you have any concerns about sampling? If so, what are your concerns?

**Research Design**

* What is the research design of the study?
  + Multiple timepoints (pre/post)?
  + Comparison group?
  + Random assignment?
* Given the study’s research design, are the following threats controlled/not applicable, possible, plausible, or fatal flaws? For each threat, please explain the designation you selected.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Potential Threats** | **Controlled or N/A** | **Possible** | **Plausible** | **Fatal Flaw** | **Explanation** |
| History |  |  |  |  |  |
| Maturation |  |  |  |  |  |
| Selection Bias |  |  |  |  |  |
| Testing |  |  |  |  |  |
| Instrumentation |  |  |  |  |  |
| Attrition |  |  |  |  |  |

* Overall, do you have any major concerns about the research design? If so, what are your concerns?

**Instrumentation**

* How are the outcomes operationalized (i.e., how are the outcomes defined)?
  + Do the outcomes of the study align with Dakota’s intended program outcomes? Explain.
* Do the authors provide information about the quality of the instruments (i.e., reliability/validity information)? If so, what information do they provide?
* Do you have any concerns about instrumentation? If so, what are your concerns?

**Analyses/Results**

* In your own words, provide a brief summary of the results (one paragraph or less). In your summary, please address the following:
  + Are the results statistically significant?
  + In your opinion, are the results practically significant? Why or why not?
* Do you have any concerns about the results? If so, what are your concerns?

**Conclusions & Limitations**

* What conclusions do the researchers draw about program effectiveness? Do they note any limitations?