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Sanando la Mente Académica: The Impact of Mental Health Services on Latinx Women's Educational Attainment Across UC and CSU Campuses

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Publication Date

2025-10-01

Sanando la Mente Académica: The Impact of Mental Health Services on Latinx Women's Educational Attainment Across UC and CSU Campuses

How do UC and CSU campuses support the mental health of their undergraduate

students, such as Latinx women who deal with cultural, racial, and gender expectations while balancing their social and academic lives? All University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) campuses provide mental health services that offer a wide range which are provided by licensed mental health professionals. (Legislative Analyst Office, 2021) This paper will examine whether California's four-year public universities provide effective and accessible mental health support to improve the educational attainment of undergraduate Latinx women. Specifically, what is the impact of the presence of mental health services and cultural centers during the academic years of 2021-22 to 2023-24 on the percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women enrolled in a UC campus, as compared to those enrolled in a CSU campus? To answer this question, I examine a correlation between the UC and CSU system CAPS programs' mental health services, the presence of Latinx Resource Centers, and percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women during the academic years from 2021-22 to 2023-24. I find that there is no statistically significant correlation between the mental health support and percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women, and I discuss what can be done to explore a stronger correlation between mental health support and educational attainment.

Context and Significance

UC and CSU campuses offer excellent academic, professional, and social opportunities for undergraduate students, preparing them for future careers and adulthood. Not only do undergraduate students enjoy the benefits while being enrolled in UC and CSU campuses, but they are also finding their identity. Therefore, students may encounter many stressors that may

lead to mental health illnesses that affect their personal lives and educational attainment.

Individuals in their early adulthood, or those under the age of 25, are more prone to experience serious mental health problems due to this exploration era of their lives. (Wiener, 2019).

Additionally, individuals who come from a minority group or have a low socioeconomic background encounter increased levels of mental health problems (California Budget & Policy Center, 2024). For example, the Latinx student population at UC and CSU campuses is more likely to experience more mental health issues due to their racial and/or socioeconomic background. More specifically, Latinx women face various stressors due to cultural, racial, and gender factors during their undergraduate career.

Why did the topic of mental health in education become important in California? During the California election in 2004, Californians fought for the passage of Proposition 63, or the one percent tax on individuals with incomes above one million, for the expansion of mental health services. Support for Proposition 63 (2004) was high amongst California voters, with 66% voting yes and 26% voting no for Proposition 63 as of August 2004. (Public Policy Institute of California, 2024) California voters supporting Proposition 63 (2004) demonstrate that mental health is an essential policy issue, and increased funding will increase healthy minds in California society.

So, what does Proposition 63 (2004) have to do with higher education? The UC and CSU systems recognized that expanding mental health services was essential due to the high rates of demand for them following the passing of Proposition 63 (2004). In 2011, the UC System expanded mental health services through the funding of \$7.7 million from the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA). (*About-Proposition 63*, n.d.) Similarly, the CSU system received funding from CalMHSA to expand mental health services on its campuses. Through the

passage of Proposition 63 (2004) and funding from CalMHSA, the UC and CSU systems expanded and professionalized mental health services by increasing training among faculty and staff, increasing outreach to promote mental health awareness, and offering different types of mental health assistance. (Woodbridge et al., 2015) I will be considering mental health services as Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), or the mental and behavioral health support provided by university campuses (Sussex Publishers, n.d.). So, CAPS programs at UC and CSU campuses became places where students could get tailored mental health support.

Mental health and education correlate, as a student who suffers from poor mental health has interference in their social and academic life. It is significant to study how such a correlation affects racial and gender minority groups, such as Latinx women, to determine if there has been progress in programs such as CAPS. The structural, cultural, gender, and racial factors may lead Latinx women to face more mental health issues in comparison to their peers. Not only is there a gap in mental health, but in educational attainment as well. There is a growing number of professionals among the Latinx women in California. As of November 2021, the gaps for four-year graduation rates between Latinx women and White women are 14% for the UC system and 23% for the CSU system (“The State of Higher Education”, n.d.). I will also be looking at Latinx Resource Centers, which provide a cultural space to Latinx individuals and may indirectly offer support for mental health. So, it may be important to see if having a cultural space can help lower the stressors for Latinx women. In looking at CAPS and Latinx Resource Centers, the educational attainment of Latinx women should be impacted in a positive way.

Literature Review

This study will examine how the quality and presence of mental health services, such as Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and Latinx Resource Centers, affect the rates of

degrees conferred by Latinx women enrolled in UC and CSU campuses. Previous research studies have shown that mental health and educational attainment do correlate. However, there are gaps in the quality of mental health services provided in California's four-year public universities. For this literature review, I will analyze previous research studies with key findings that indicate that utilizing mental health services has a positive impact on educational attainment. My research contributions will contribute to the gaps in whether having higher-quality and accessible mental health support is beneficial for undergraduate Latinx women.

The Relationship Between Mental Health and Educational Attainment

What correlation exists between mental health and the educational attainment of students enrolled in a university? The research by Eisenberg et al. (2009) examines how mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and eating disorders, affect the grade point average (GPA) and drop-out rates of university students enrolled in competitive, public universities. The findings suggest that there is a correlation between having anxiety, depression, and eating disorders with lower GPAs and higher drop-out rates among college students. Furthermore, the research results demonstrate that female students and students who grew up in lower-income households are more likely to suffer from the common types of mental disorders. The study's policy implications indicate that providing more treatment for poor mental health in university campuses can help students remain enrolled. (Eisenberg et al., 2009) The authors suggest that mental health services can improve students' mental health and lead to better educational attainment. This study focuses on a diverse range of students, both undergraduate and graduate, but I will examine at a deeper level how the support and quality of mental health services impact the educational attainment of undergraduates who identify as Latinx women.

To develop the idea that mental health support is beneficial to undergraduate students, I will look at two studies that examine the impact of the normalization of utilizing mental health support. The authors, Esetu et al. (2025), examine how institutional support, among students, faculty, and administrators, to improve mental health on campus, impacts the graduation rates of college students in five universities across the United States. They find that more institutional support and recognition of improving the mental health of students correlates with the five universities having higher-than-expected graduation rates. (Eshetu et al. 2025) This study shows that having a supportive environment in a university campus may help improve mental health among students and their graduation rates. To connect back to the Eisenberg et al. (2009) research study, women and lower-income students being more prone to poor mental health may benefit from the institutional support as a form of incentivization to utilize mental health support resources.

Similarly, the authors Sontang Padilla et al. (2009) examine California's public universities over two years to determine the impact of prevention and intervention initiatives (PEIs) or support and outreach services within CAPS, on students receiving information about mental health. The authors find that PEIs in California's public universities do reach a high number of students by providing information on mental health topics. It also finds that UC campuses have a significant increase in students receiving information on mental health topics within the past two years. The study explains that students retain more information on mental health in UC campuses because there are more services available, allowing for more interactions between students and faculty. (Sontang-Padilla et al. 2017) If Latinx women receive information about on-campus mental health resources in a supportive environment, then there is a probability that they may have more educational successes. To contribute to both research studies, I will

look at how outreach in UC and CSU campuses normalizes utilization of mental health support and creates a welcoming space for students. I will also examine how this impacts the educational outcomes of Latinx women.

Impact of Utilization of Mental Health Services on Educational Attainment

So, how does the utilization of mental health services impact the educational attainment of university students? Kivlighan et al. (2021) researched how students utilizing university and college counseling services affects their psychological and academic stress. They also examine how the students' GPA is impacted before and after utilizing counseling services. It is found that GPA improved from pre-counseling to after utilizing counseling services due to the reduction of psychological and some academic stress. The results of the students' counseling utilization over time to help with only academic stress were not significant in changes in their educational attainment. (Kivlighan et al., 2021) This study brings in an important consideration of whether mental health services reduce psychological stress, academic stress, or both. Relating to the studies mentioned above, the utilization of mental health may decrease psychological stress, such as depression and anxiety, and lead to better educational outcomes for university students. So, my project contribution will be studying CAPS and Latinx Resource Centers, as services that support the mental health of Latinx women and increase the percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred.

Utilization of Mental Health Services and Latinx Students

To build off the previous sections, I will be analyzing how support at the UC and CSU campuses and utilization of mental health services correlate with the educational attainment of Latinx students. The study by Ayón et al. (2024) indicates that racial minority students are prone to having poor mental health. So, it examines whether having a welcoming environment in a

university campus impacts the utilization of mental health services among undocumented Latinx students. It is found in this study that having both a welcoming environment on campus and supportive services does increase the utilization of mental health services among undocumented Latinx students. The support services in this study include identity-based centers. The results in this study show that students enrolled in a UC campus were more likely to utilize mental health support, in comparison to those enrolled in CSU campuses (Ayón et al., 2024). My study will expand on how the idea of having a welcoming environment, in addition to the quality of support services for mental health, impacts the educational attainment of Latinx women enrolled in UC and CSU campuses for three academic years. I will analyze how identity-based centers are important to Latinx students in the next section.

Culturally Based Resources and Mental Health

Furthermore, identity-based centers, such as cultural centers, may have an impact on the mental health of Latinx students since they serve as welcoming spaces on campuses. The authors Kim et al. (2016) examine the type of mental health issues among Asian, Latinx, and White students and the effectiveness of university counseling services on improving their mental health. The research found that students who attended at least four counseling sessions had a positive impact on their mental health. Thus, it recommends future research to study how culturally-based outreach reduces the stigma of seeking mental health support for racial minority students. (Kim et al., 2016) There exist gaps in stressors that non-White individuals face. For example, the UC Student Health and Wellbeing data dashboard demonstrates that for undergraduates, 20% of Latinx women feel nervous all of the time, whereas 13% White women do so (UC Student Health and Wellbeing, 2024). This demonstrates that Latinx women face more stressors in comparison to White women. To determine whether identity-based centers at university

campuses are beneficial to university students, I will be examining how the presence of Latinx Resource Centers impacts the rates of degrees conferred by Latinx women enrolled in UC and CSU campuses.

Theory, Hypothesis, Causal Mechanism

Latinx women who are enrolled as undergraduates in UC and CSU campuses encounter academic, cultural, racial, and gender barriers that make it harder to have a healthier mind. They also have lower educational outcomes as compared to their peers who are White women. The previous research indicates that mental health support, such as CAPS and Latinx resource Centers, is beneficial to the educational outcomes of Latinx women. The theoretical framework for this study is that Latinx women build a sense of belonging when they have a supportive social system in welcoming environments at UC and CSU campuses, leading them to utilize mental health services. So, if UC and CSU campuses provide a welcoming environment through Latinx Resource Centers and high-quality mental health services, the rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women will increase.

Therefore, my conceptual hypothesis is that having more accessible high-quality mental health resources, such as CAPS, and the presence of Latinx Resource Centers, will increase the rates of degrees conferred for undergraduate Latinx women in UC and CSU campuses. If California's four-year public universities have high-quality CAPS resources and the presence of Latinx Resource Centers on each campus, then Latinx women will feel more comfortable seeking support services to improve their mental health. But are there any differences in the mental health support resources between the UC system and the CSU system? My operational hypothesis is that UC campuses will have higher quality CAPS programs and more campuses will have a Latinx Resource Center, which will lead to higher percentage rates of bachelor's

degrees conferred for Latinx women, as compared to CSU campuses. The UC and CSU systems vary in differences, which may contribute to the quality of CAPS programs and the presence of Latinx Resource Centers. UC campuses may have more welcoming environments because there are a higher number of resources available and of students enrolled. These are causal mechanisms as to why the rates of bachelor's degrees conferred for Latinx women are higher in UC campuses in contrast to CSU campuses.

Research Design and Methods

My study will examine two independent variables: the first being the range of mental health services offered by CAPS, and the second being the presence of a Latinx Resource Center at each UC and CSU campus. Initially, I was going to have one independent variable that would consist of an index to determine the quality of CAPS services for each UC and CSU campus. My components were going to consist of the count of students served, the wait times for initial appointments, and the counselor-to-student ratio. The data for each of these components was not publicly available. Only system-wide data was available, whereas I was looking for campus-based data. I then transitioned to having two independent variables with accessible data.

For the range of mental health services, I created an index to determine the quality of CAPS programs at each UC and CSU campus. The components consist of whether a campus had independent counseling, Latinx group counseling, psychiatric services, crisis services, virtual resources, outreach programs (workshops/presentations), and at least one Latinx counselor. I created a score from 0 to 7 to determine the quality of mental health services. I categorized the average number of services offered for each campus of the academic years I examined and created system-based categories for low or high-quality CAPS programs. The categorization of CAPS programs for UC and CSU systems will be further discussed in the results section. Since

there are no data dashboards readily available containing this information, I went into every individual CAPS website from each UC and CSU campus. For this, I used the two websites that contained all the CAPS website links for the UC and CSU campuses. Additionally, I used the *Wayback Machine* website to go back to the CAPs website for each campus in the fall quarters of the academic years 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24. I chose this operationalization because campuses should provide these services based on the requirements from the funding they receive from CalMHSA (Woodbridge et al., 2015). Also, I chose to focus on only Latinx counseling groups and Latinx counseling to determine whether CAPS programs bring a welcoming space for Latinx students.

For my second independent variable, I examine whether UC and CSU campuses have Latinx Resource Centers. In my study, Latinx Resource Centers include spaces, offices, and programs that work independently to provide resources to Latinx students. I used a binary score to determine whether each campus has a Latinx resource center, 0 being that a campus doesn't have a center and 1 being that a campus has a center. To gather this data, I googled whether each campus has a Latinx resource center by using keywords such as "Latinx Resource Center", "Chicanx Resource Center", and "Chicanx/Latinx Resource Center". I then collected a list of the Latinx Resource Center websites of all UC and CSU campuses. If a campus had a center, I looked at the "History" or "About" sections on the website to determine how long the center has been providing services to students. If the history of the center was not available, I used the "About" website and input it into the *Wayback Machine* website to determine if the link was archived for the academic years I examined. To make sure that UC and CSU campuses had no centers, I looked into the multicultural centers' websites to find if there was a source that linked

to the Latinx Resource Center. I used this operationalization because having identity-based centers brings a stronger sense of belonging to Latinx students.

The dependent variable that I am analyzing in this study is the percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women in UC and CSU campuses. For UC campuses, I used the "UC Degrees Awarded Data Tables" to gather the data on the count of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women and transwomen. For CSU campuses, I used the "Degrees Issued" data dashboard to get the count of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women. I then created percentages for each based on the counts of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women and the total count of bachelor's conferred by all undergraduates. I chose this operationalization because looking at the percentage of degrees conferred will allow me to determine the success in educational outcomes of Latinx women enrolled in UC and CSU campuses.

My control variables are income and enrollment at each UC and CSU campus. I chose to have income as my confounding variable because individuals may have more or less access to services based on their income. If income is higher, then they are more likely to seek mental health support, and vice versa for lower income. For income as my control variable, I will be obtaining data on the percentage of Pell Grant recipients who identify as Latinx women. For UC campuses, I used the "Fall Enrollment At a Glance" data dashboard to obtain the count of Pell grant recipients who are Latinx women. For CSU campuses, I used the "Pell Recipients" dashboard to obtain the count of Latinx people who are Pell grant recipients. Also, for CSU campuses, I am using Latinx people as a proxy since there is no option to gather the data for only Latinx women. I am creating this percentage by using the counts mentioned above and obtaining

the count of total undergraduates who are Pell grant recipients. I chose this operationalization because household income is a factor in who may receive a Pell grant.

For my second confounding variable, I examine enrollment as a determinant of the student population size of each campus. I chose to have enrollment as a confounding variable because campuses with a higher number of enrolled students have more resources available to offer. To build off from the study by Sontang-Padilla et al. (2017), there may be more interactions between students and faculty in campuses that offer more resources to their students (Sontang-Padilla et al., 2017). If this is the case, students are more likely to reach out for mental health support. For enrollment as my control variable, I examined the percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by the total number of all undergraduate students. I used the same data sources as my dependent variable for both UC and CSU campuses. I chose this operationalization because enrollment shows the population size of each campus and may be a determining factor in the number of mental health support resources accessible to students.

The unit of analysis for this study is UC and CSU campuses, which are located in the state of California. Each campus's CAPS programs provide mental health services to its undergraduate students. I do not examine UC San Francisco because it doesn't have an undergraduate program. I also don't examine CAL Maritime, CSU Northridge, Cal Poly Pomona, and San Jose State because most of the data for my first independent variable was not available for these campuses. The research design will be a large n-study that examines multiple cases over the full academic years from 2021-22 to 2023-24. I decided to work with the years after the COVID-19 pandemic because campuses began to go back to in-person instruction. I also decided to examine multiple cases over time because it will allow me to see changes on the

CAPS website and how the services evolve. Also, I will be able to see if Latinx resource centers have been established for longer periods of time or if they are newly established centers.

I ran a regression analysis in R Studio to find a correlation between my independent variables and dependent variables. In the model for my regression analysis, I also account for my control variables. For each variable, I obtained the averages of all variables for the three academic years I examined. For the next sections, I will not be analyzing enrollment because the regression results were shown as not available, since this control variable is similar to the dependent variable.

Results

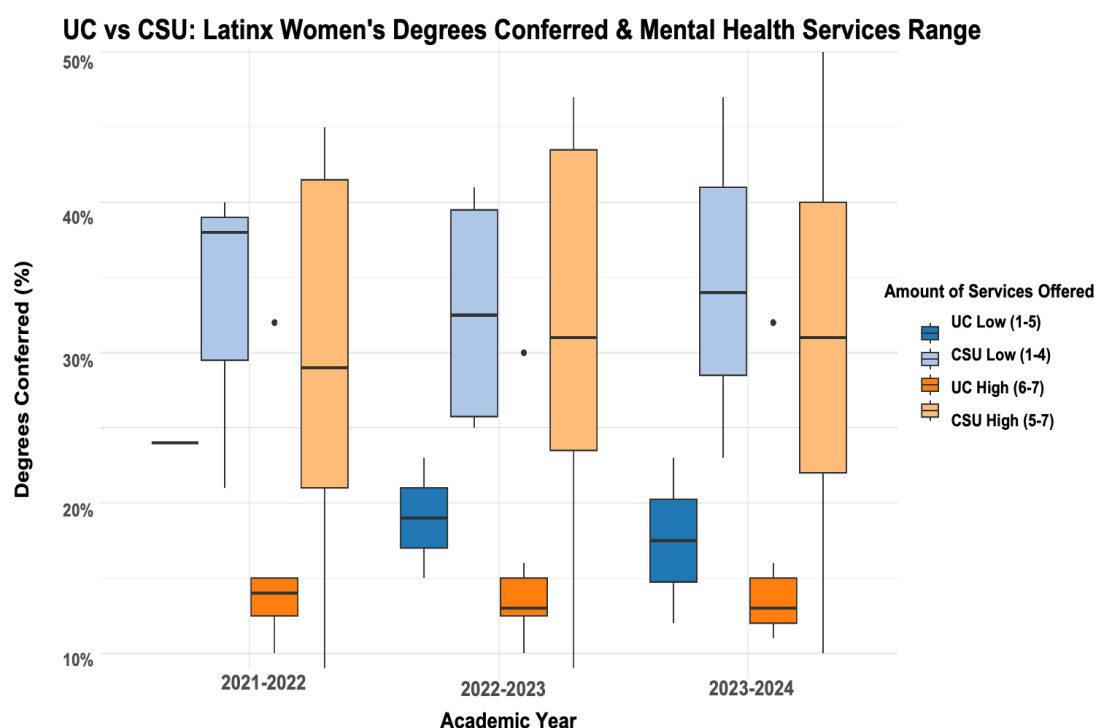


Figure 1. Data Sources: CAPS Websites, UC Degrees Awarded Data Tables, CSU: Degrees Issued

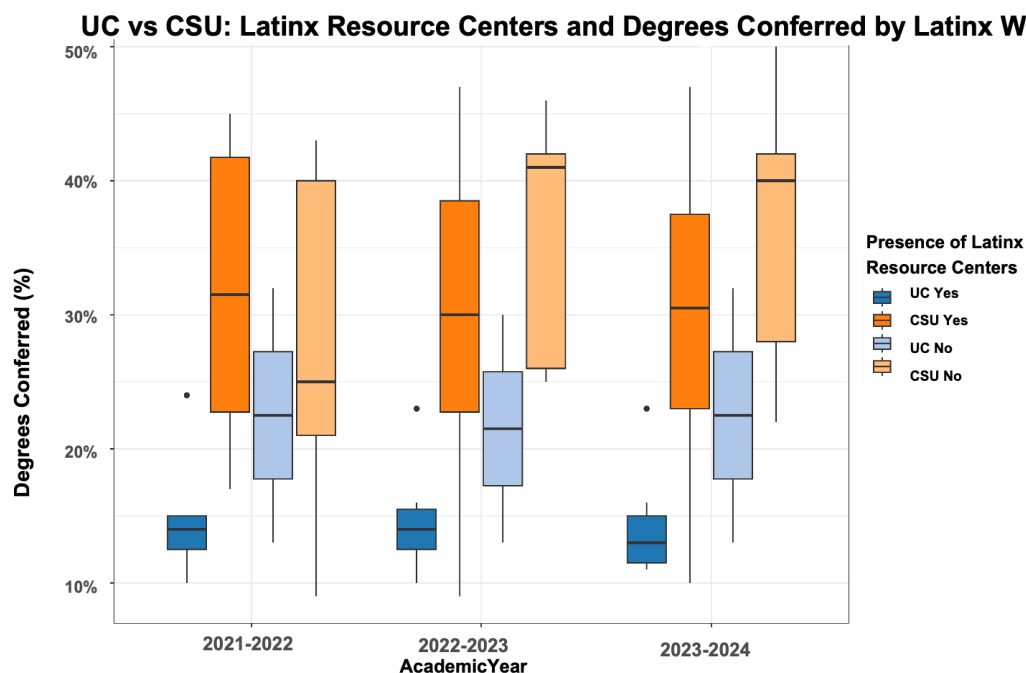


Figure 2. Data Sources: Latinx Resource Center Websites, UC Degrees Awarded Data Tables, CSU: Degrees Issued

Figure 1 is a box-and-whiskers plot that demonstrates the percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women during the academic years from 2021-22 to 2023-24 based on the quality of services offered by the UC system and the CSU system. I categorized UC and CSU systems in four categories: UC low, CSU low, UC high, and CSU high. UC campuses that offered 1 to 5 mental health services and CSU campuses that offered 1 to 4 mental health services were categorized in a low services offered system-wide category. UC campuses that offered 6 to 7 mental health services and CSU campuses that offered 5 to 7 mental health services were categorized in a high services offered system-wide category. After I gathered my data, I found that, on average, most CAPS programs for UC campuses offered a high number of mental health services. Most of the CAPS programs for CSU campuses, on average, had about 2

to 4 mental health services that they did not offer, resulting in lower numbers of services offered than UC campuses.

The results from Figure 1 present the different median percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women between the UC and CSU systems. The CSU system has higher percentage rates of degrees conferred in comparison to the UC System. The interquartile ranges and whiskers for the UC system range from 10% to 24% of degrees conferred by Latinx women. For CSU, the interquartile ranges and whiskers range from 9% to 50%. The differences between the two systems are varied due to the population size of each campus and the enrollment of Latinx women. While gathering my data for this independent variable, I found that CSU campuses had higher enrollment of Latinx women than UC campuses.

Figure 2 is a box-and-whiskers plot that demonstrates the percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women during the academic years from 2021-22 to 2023-24 on the presence of a Latinx Resource Center at a UC or CSU campus. Here, I categorized the campuses into system-wide categories of whether they do or don't have a Latinx Resource Center. Similar to Figure 1, CSU campuses have higher median percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women than those enrolled in UC campuses. The interquartile ranges and whiskers for the UC system ranged from 10% to 32%. The interquartile range and whiskers for the CSU system ranged from 9% to 50%.

These two figures showed unexpected findings between the mental health support resources and the percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women. UC and CSU campuses with a low amount of services offered and those that did not have a Latinx Resource Center had higher percentage rates than campuses with a high number of services offered and the presence of a Latinx Resource Center. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that the UC

system, in the categories of a low number of services offered and no presence of a Latinx Resource Center, had a range of 10% to 24% bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx Women. The CSU system, in the category of low number of services offered and no presence of a Latinx Resource Center, had a range of 9% to 50% of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women.

Regression Table

Bachelor's Degrees Conferred	
Mental Health Services Range	-0.001 (0.01)
Latinx Resource Centers	-0.03 (0.02)
Pell Grant Recipients	0.6*** (0.05)

Figure 3. Regression Analysis for Mental Health Support, Income, and Degrees Conferred

Figure 5 shows the regression analysis I ran for my independent variables, confounding variables, and dependent variables. As explained in the research design section, my regression table only has income as a confounding variable because enrollment as a control variable was too similar to my dependent variable. The results of the regression show that a 1 unit increase in the mental health services range results in a 0.001 unit decrease in the percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women. The results also show that for a 1 unit increase in Latinx Resource Centers, there is a 0.03 unit decrease in the percentage rates bachelor's degrees conferred. There is no statistically significant correlation between my independent variables and dependent variable. The p-values (not shown in Figure 3) are greater than 0.05, which is the p-value that indicates if a variable is statistically significant. The results demonstrate that for a 1

unit increase in Pell Grant recipients, there is a 0.6 unit increase in the percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women. The correlation between income and the percentage rates of degrees conferred is statistically significant. The p-value for income is less than 0.05, which shows a strong positive correlation between income and my dependent variable.

Discussion and Research Implications

My study looks to answer what the impact of mental health support resources (CAPS and Latinx Resource Centers) is on the percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women enrolled in UC and CSU campuses. I hypothesized that UC and CSU campuses with high-quality CAPS programs and the presence of a Latinx Resource Center will have higher percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women. I also hypothesized that there will be higher percentage rates of degrees conferred by Latinx women in UC campuses that have higher quality CAPS programs and the presence of Latinx Resource Centers than in CSU campuses. Neither of the independent variables has a statistically significant correlation with my independent variable, thus my hypotheses are not supported. Instead, my control variable that examines Pell Grant recipients does have a statistically significant correlation with my dependent variable. A reason why these are the results may be that students don't have to face financial stress if they receive financial aid through the Pell Grant. Receiving financial aid allows students to have education as their main priority.

As mentioned before, Latinx students may come from lower socioeconomic families. Many Latinx students encounter the question of how they will finance their education. Maybe students are not able to access CAPS services because of the lack of health insurance or inability to pay for the mental health services. Latinx women are more likely to come from lower-income backgrounds and may be working to pay their tuition and personal expenses. So, they may not

have time to utilize mental health support resources. So, maybe CAPS programs should focus on making their services more accessible and lower cost to incentivize students to utilize them. Increasing the outreach of CAPS programs and Latinx Resource Centers may also make it easier for students to access the resources.

All Latinx and non-Latinx students have free access to Latinx Resource Centers, so there may be a lack of utilization from the students. Maybe the presence of Latinx Resource Centers is not enough, and other factors play a role in the question of whether they do help improve the educational success of the students. As previously stated, students do not have time to utilize services with their busy schedules. Latinx women also face both cultural and gender issues. So, how do Latinx Resource Centers respond to these factors to help improve the mental health of Latinx women? Latinx Resource Centers may consider offering tailored resources for identifying Latinx women to incentivize them to use the resources.

A surprising finding is that CSU campuses had higher percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women, although UC campuses had higher quality CAPS programs and had the presence of Latinx Resource Centers. Looking at campus-based data during the three academic years was key to understanding what each campus was able to offer. The reason why CSU campuses had higher percentage rates is that they enrolled more Latinx women than UC campuses. A reason why the UC system has higher quality CAPS programs and more Latinx Resource Centers may receive more funding than CSU campuses. Both systems vary in campus size, student enrollment, funding, and many other aspects. The mental health range may not be representative of the quality of services. Maybe the presence of CAPS and Latinx Resource centers alone does not create welcoming environments. Societal and institutional factors, such as campus culture, may play a role in why students may feel a sense of belonging on campus.

This research may guide future policies on how to tailor CAPS programs and identity-based centers to support minority students, such as Latinx women. Partnerships between CAPS and identity-based centers may allow increased accessibility to the mental health support resource for students. I believe that identity-based centers are important, but their presence alone is not significant in increasing the educational success of minority students. Also, UC and CSU campuses may focus on approaching or providing similar mental health services in their CAPS programs. For example, they can expand their outreach resources to help reduce the stigma of obtaining mental health support. Relating to cultural background, Latinx individuals are judged for utilizing resources to improve their mental health. So, campuses normalizing the ability to reach out can reduce the barrier for students who fear being judged for utilizing mental health support.

Research Limitations and Research Extensions

Although this study presents important results for analyzing the correlation between mental health support resources and the educational attainment of undergraduate Latinx women, there were several limitations. One limitation I encountered was not having campus-level data available for my initial index. Initially, I was going to examine campus-based wait times, counselor-to-student ratios, and the count of students served. CAPS programs don't provide this information to the public. Instead, I found a system-wide source that provided the average wait times, counselor-to-student ratios, and the count of students served. But that source did not cover the academic years of 2021-22 to 2023-24. If possible, future research should examine these components as a way to determine the quality of CAPS programs. As shown in the discussion of my results, looking at just the range of mental health services offered by CAPS programs is not enough.

Another limitation I encountered while gathering my data was the different formats for UC and CSU data dashboards. While gathering data for both my dependent variable and confounding variable, I found it difficult to find the information needed since the formats were different for UC and CSU campuses. For example, I accounted for all individuals who identified as a Latinx woman when gathering data for my dependent variable. Only UC campuses offered data based on gender identity. Also, when gathering the data for Pell Grant recipients, only UC campuses offered the option to examine only Latinx women. CSU campuses did not have the option to examine Pell Grant Recipients based on ethnicity and gender. A policy recommendation is that UC and CSU systems should establish similar data dashboards, because they are both California four-year public universities.

Future studies should continue to explore the impact of the quality of mental health support resources and the utilization of Latinx women in UC and CSU campuses. A longer temporal scope should be examined to look at the evolution of the CAPS programs. Preferably, pre-COVID-19 pandemic years should be examined to look at the change in demand for mental health support. A question that can be studied is: “Does the quality of mental health support resources incentivize utilization and impact the educational attainment of Latinx women?” For research methodology, I suggest looking at other control variables, such as health insurance and the amount of extracurricular activities that a student partakes in. In looking at health insurance, research may be able to answer whether students are more likely to utilize mental health support. While examining the amount of a student’s extracurricular activities, it can be determined whether time is a contributing factor to the utilization of mental health support. Future research may contribute to improving Latinx students’ mental health and their educational success, which sets them up for their lives after graduation.

Conclusion

This research project explores the correlation between mental health support resources and the educational attainment of Latinx women enrolled in UC and CSU campuses. The findings demonstrate that income has a statistically significant correlation when it comes to the increased percentage rates of bachelor's degrees conferred by Latinx women for the academic years of 2021-22 to 2023-24. Students' reduction of economic stress after receiving financial aid, such as the Pell Grant, increases their educational success. It is still important to study the impact of mental health support, although the findings show CAPS programs and Latinx Resource Centers do not have a statistically significant correlation with educational success. There exist disparities in the presence of Latinx Resource Centers and in the mental health services offered by CAPS programs at UC and CSU campuses. So, the presence of CAPS programs and Latinx Resource Centers may not be enough to find a strong positive correlation with the educational attainment of Latinx women.

Although my hypotheses were not supported, this avenue of research is still important to the exploration of improving mental health support for undergraduate students. The program evaluation and examination of the presence of CAPS programs and Latinx Resource Centers may contribute to the question of whether the campuses are moving forward to help Latinx women. UC and CSU campuses should continue making their campuses welcoming for not only Latinx students, but for all minority students. The UC and CSU systems should also continue improving their CAPS programs to offer a higher range of mental health services. CAPS programs and Latinx Resource Centers should also create partnerships to make accessing mental health support easier for students. There are still gaps to be explored in the research on how mental health support impacts the educational success of Latinx women.

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