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MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS:

Help-Seeking Behaviors of Symptomatic Adolescents from an Urban School District in Texas

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Study Purpose

- 1 in 4 adolescents (11-18 years old) in the U.S. meet lifetime diagnostic criteria for any mental disorder (Polanczyk 2015; Merikangas 2010)
- < 50% receive treatment (Merikangas 2011)
 - Specialty care services: 47%
 - School-based services: 35%
 - Primary/general care services: 21%
- Mental health stigma is a significant barrier to treatment (Clement 2015)

To examine how ***mental health stigma*** shapes help-seeking behaviors of adolescents with high mental health symptoms

Texas Stigma Study, 2011-2015

A school-based study that evaluated the short- and long-term effectiveness of three anti-stigma interventions on reducing mental illness stigma and improving help-seeking behaviors among 6th graders from an urban/suburban school district in Texas

14 Schools

High-Symptom Subsample: N = 270

PIs: Painter K, Link B, Phelan J; NIMH R01MH095254-01

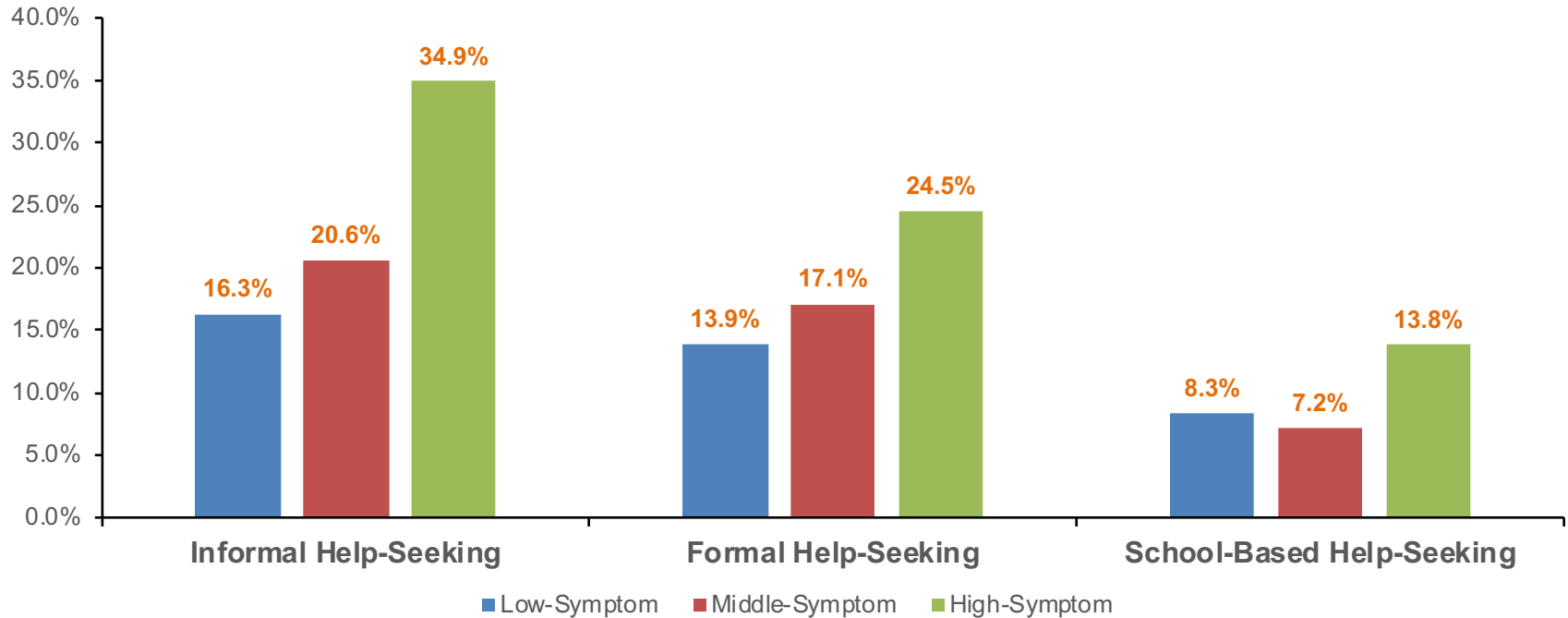
Painter K, et al. *Psychiatric Services*; 2016



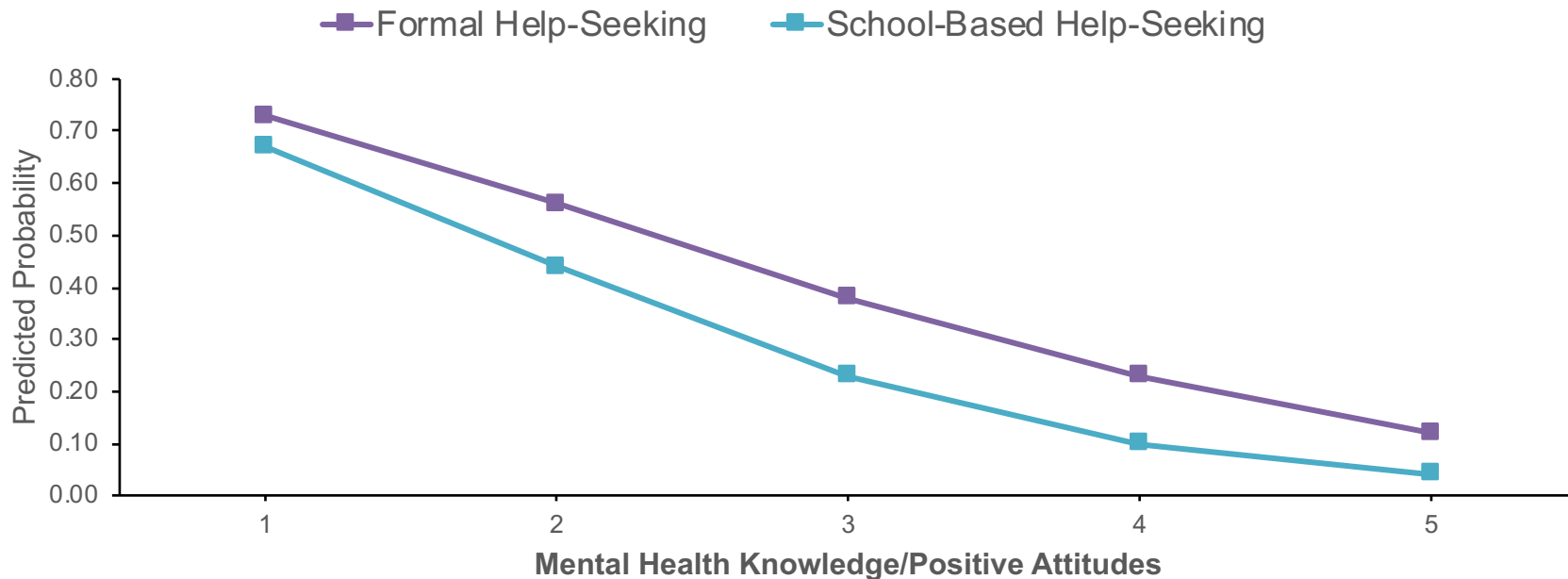
Variables of Interest

- **Stigma Components**
 - **Stereotypes:** MH knowledge/positive attitudes; Awareness and action
 - **Discrimination:** Social distance
- **Help-Seeking (HS) Behaviors**
 - **Formal HS:** Therapist, doctor, medication
 - **School-Based HS:** School counselor
 - **Informal HS:** Friend, parent, clergy/priest

Mental Health Help-Seeking Patterns

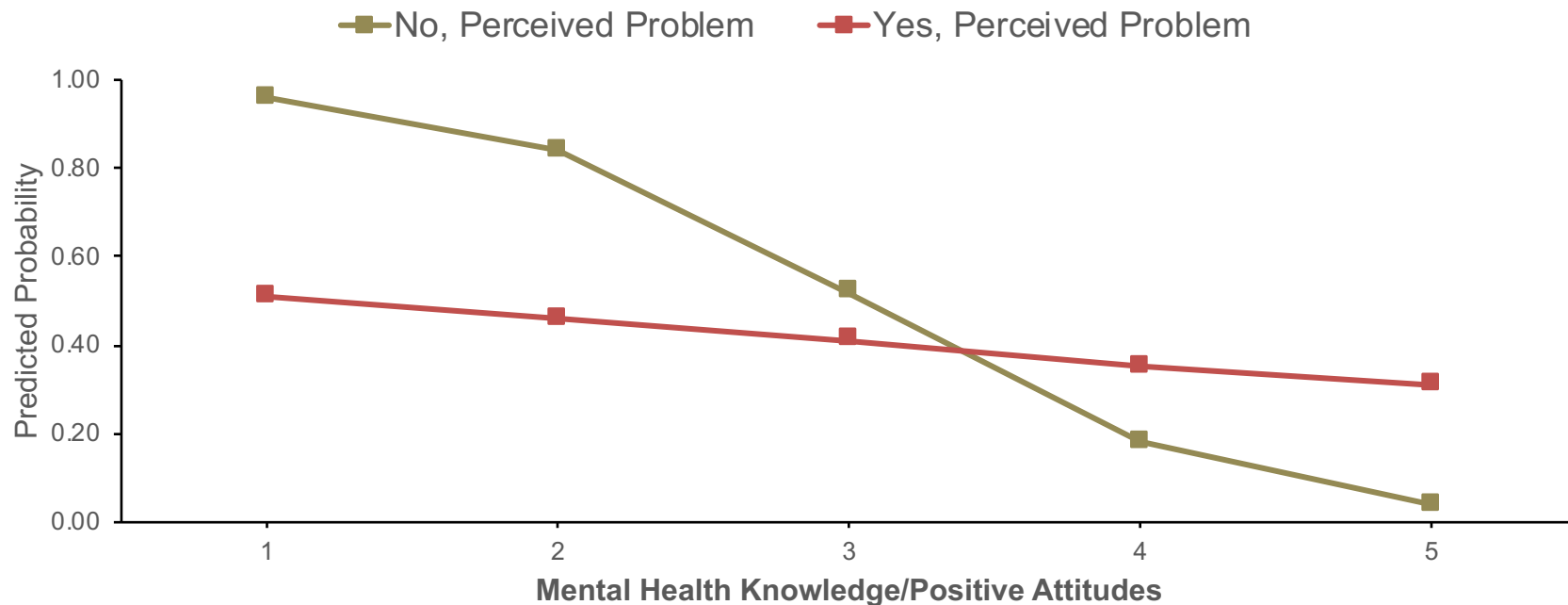


Stigma Component: MH Knowledge/Positive Attitudes



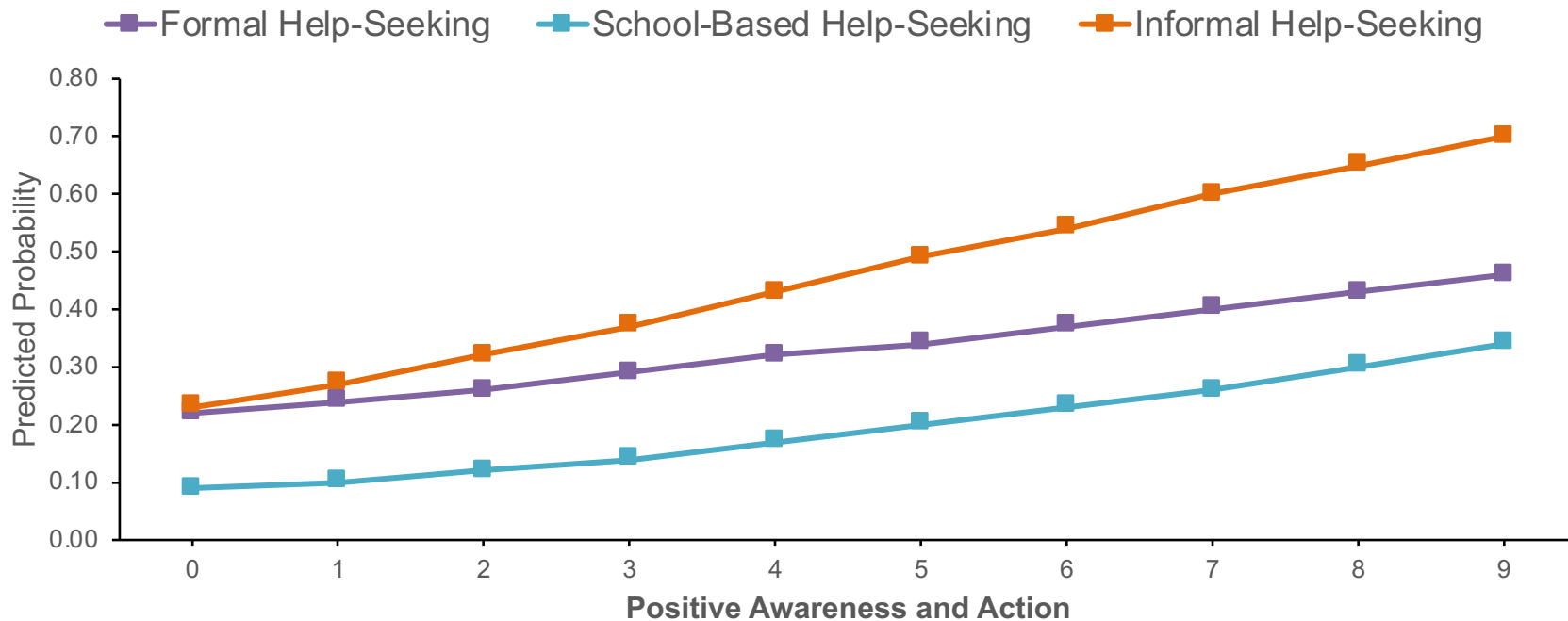
Analyses control for number of mental health symptoms, familiarity with MI, perceived mental health problem, race/ethnicity, gender, intervention assignment, and time.

Informal Help-Seeking



Analyses control for number of mental health symptoms, familiarity with MI, race/ethnicity, gender, intervention assignment, and time.

Stigma Component: Awareness and Action



Analyses control for number of mental health symptoms, familiarity with MI, perceived mental health problem, race/ethnicity, gender, intervention assignment, and time.

Conclusions

- Stigma influences where adolescents seek help for mental health concerns
- General mental health literacy is associated with less help-seeking, particularly informal help-seeking among symptomatic adolescents who do not perceive a mental health problem
- Overall, higher awareness and action of mental illness improves help-seeking
- Anti-stigma interventions may facilitate treatment entry for adolescents with significant mental health needs

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