Introduction

With the drastic increase of confirmed cases of the Covid-19 in the United States (CDC, 2020), the pandemic has unleashed hate and discrimination against Asian Americans nationwide. The STOP AAPI HATE has received 1,497 cases of COVID-19 related discrimination from Asian Americans since March (Jeung & Nham, 2020). There exists a research gap in understanding how Chinese American adolescents cope with crisis and challenges brought by the pandemic, such as distance learning, family stress, and family communication. Therefore, the present study aims to identify predictors of Chinese American adolescents’ mental well-being perceived by adolescents’ parents. The present study hypothesized that affirming communication and distance learning engagement negatively predict adolescents’ mental problems, whereas parental discrimination experience and incendiary communication positively associate with adolescent’s mental problems.

Methods

Participants included 193 parents of Chinese American adolescents in the Bay Area of California and other areas in the United States. Parents’ discrimination, family communication, and child’s mental problems were measured by the Everyday Discrimination Scale (William et al., 1997), Family Problem Solving Communication Instrument (McCubbin et al., 1996), and Youth Internalizing Problems Screener (YIPS; Renshaw & Cooks, 2018), and Youth Externalizing Problems Screener (YEPS; Renshaw & Cooks, 2018) respectively respectively. The distance learning engagement was measured by modified version of Delaware School Engagement Scale (Bear et al., 2019a). Reliability analyses showed that all scales used in this study achieved adequate reliability. Correlation and multiple regression analysis were run using SPSS to examine predictors of adolescents’ mental well-being.

Results

Correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between adolescent mental well-being and various potential predictors based on parents’ report. Table 1 summarizes the correlation and descriptive statistics. As shown in Table 1, both adolescents’ externalizing and internalizing problems were significantly correlated with all potential predictors. The multiple regression model with all four predictors on externalizing problems produced $R^2=.24, F(4,187) = 14.33, p < .001$. The parental discrimination had significant positive regression weights ($b=.26, p<.001$), indicating that higher distance learning engagement can serve as a protector for adolescent well-being. Affirmative communication was also a significant predictor for externalizing problems ($b=.25, p<.01$). Regarding internalizing problems, however, affirming communication did not significantly predict adolescents’ internalizing problems. Incendiary communication had significantly positive regression weights ($b=0.17, p<.05$), and both parent discrimination experience and distance learning engagement were negative predictors of internalizing problems.

Conclusions

Results of the study highlighted the significant influences of parent’s experience of discrimination and adolescent’s distance learning experience in predicting Chinese American adolescent’s mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, different types of family communication influences adolescents’ mental well-being distinctly, with affirmative communication reduced the risk of externalizing problems and incendiary communication increased the risk of internalizing problems. It highlights the importance of differentiating internalizing and externalizing problems when assessing adolescents’ mental well-being.

References


