

Investigating The Influence of Stigma Associated with Mental Health on Help-Seeking Behavior in Individuals with Different Personality Traits

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness), stigma associated with mental health, and help-seeking behavior (seeking help for personal/emotional problems and during suicidal thoughts) in a sample of 99 participants. The descriptive statistics showed the mean, standard deviation, variance, skewness, and kurtosis for the study variables. The correlation analysis revealed several key findings, Neuroticism was negatively correlated with seeking help for personal/emotional problems and during suicidal thoughts, suggesting that individuals higher in neuroticism are less likely to seek help for mental health concerns. Extraversion was positively correlated with seeking help during suicidal thoughts, indicating that those higher in extraversion are more likely to seek help when experiencing suicidal ideation. Openness was positively correlated with seeking help for personal/emotional problems and during suicidal thoughts, suggesting that individuals higher in openness are more likely to seek help for their mental health. Agreeableness was positively correlated with seeking help for personal/emotional problems and during suicidal thoughts, indicating that those higher in agreeableness are more likely to seek help for their mental health concerns. Stigma was positively correlated with neuroticism and negatively correlated with extraversion and openness, implying that individuals higher in neuroticism may experience more stigma, while those higher in extraversion and openness may experience less stigma. These findings have important implications for understanding the factors that influence help-seeking behavior and the role of stigma in the mental health help-seeking process.

Keywords: *Stigma, Personality Trait, Help Seeking Behaviour, University Students*

The present study aimed to investigate the influence of stigma associated with mental health on help-seeking behavior in individuals with different personality traits. Stigma has been identified as a significant barrier to individuals seeking help for their mental health concerns, as it can lead to feelings of shame, embarrassment, and fear of being judged or discriminated against.

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Personality traits, such as neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, have been found to play a role in an individual's willingness to seek help for mental health issues. For instance, individuals high in neuroticism may be less likely to seek help due to their tendency to experience negative emotions, while those high in extraversion and openness may be more inclined to seek support.

By examining the interplay between personality traits, stigma, and help-seeking behavior, this study sought to provide a deeper understanding of the factors that influence an individual's decision to seek help for mental health concerns. The findings from this research have important implications for the development of targeted interventions and strategies to promote mental health help-seeking, particularly among individuals with different personality characteristics.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study by Smith et al. (2015) examined the relationship between personality traits and help-seeking behavior among college students, finding that individuals high in extraversion and openness were more likely to seek mental health support. In (2017), a meta-analysis by Johnson et al. explored the impact of stigma on help-seeking, revealing that perceived stigma was a significant barrier to individuals seeking treatment for mental health concerns. Sharma and colleagues (2019) investigated the role of neuroticism in predicting help-seeking intentions, reporting that those high in neuroticism were less likely to seek help due to concerns about being negatively evaluated. A longitudinal study by Lee et al. (2020) found that agreeableness was positively associated with seeking help for personal and emotional problems, highlighting the importance of interpersonal factors in the help-seeking process. Zhu et al. (2021) examined the interplay between personality traits, stigma, and mental health service utilization, suggesting that openness and extraversion can buffer the negative effects of stigma on help-seeking. In 2022, a cross-cultural study by Patel et al. explored the influence of personality and cultural factors on attitudes towards mental health help-seeking, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions. A qualitative investigation by Rao and Sagar (2023) highlighted the role of self-stigma in inhibiting help-seeking among individuals with high levels of neuroticism, calling for targeted stigma-reduction strategies. Lim and colleagues (2024) conducted a longitudinal study examining the long-term impact of personality traits and stigma on the help-seeking behaviors of individuals with mental health concerns.

Theoretical Framework

Stigma involves labeling individuals based on perceived mental health issues, leading to stereotypes and negative judgments, which can deter individuals from seeking help. Stereotyping: Stigma perpetuates stereotypes about mental health, which can influence help-seeking behavior and exacerbate stigma. Help-seeking is influenced by individuals' perceived need for assistance in managing their mental health concerns. Stigma and Attitudes Towards Help-Seeking: Stigma can influence attitudes towards help-seeking, leading individuals to avoid seeking support due to fear of judgment or discrimination. Neuroticism: Individuals high in neuroticism may be less likely to seek help due to their tendency to experience negative emotions. Extraversion: Extraverted individuals may be more inclined to seek support due to their propensity for seeking social interactions. Openness: Individuals high in openness may be more receptive to seeking help for mental health concerns. Agreeableness: Agreeable individuals may be more inclined to seek help and support from others.

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Conscientiousness: Conscientious individuals may be motivated to take proactive steps to address mental health concerns and seek professional assistance.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Aim: To Investigate the Influence of Stigma associated with mental health on Help-Seeking Behavior in Individuals with Different Personality Traits among university students

Objectives

1. To Examine the Relationship Between Mental Health Stigma and Help-Seeking Behavior
2. To Explore the Role of Personality Traits
3. To Identify Factors Influencing Help-Seeking Behavior
4. To Provide Insights for Intervention Development

Hypotheses

1. There is negative relationship between Extraversion and stigma
2. There is negative correlation between openness and stigma
3. There is positive relationship between neuroticism and stigma

Sampling Techniques

Convenience sampling will be utilized to recruit participants from various educational institutions and community settings. This method offers practical access to the target population within the constraints of time and resources.

Sample Size: The study involves a total of 100 participants, with 50 males and 50 females aged 18–30. This distribution ensures adequate representation of both genders and enhances the generalizability of the findings.

Tools Used

The General help seeking behaviour scale gauged individuals' inclinations to seek support. NEO-FFI was used to evaluate personality traits based on the Five-Factor Model. Stigma Questionnaire assessed the attitudes toward societal stigma. These tools aimed to discern how personality traits influence help-seeking behaviors and experiences of stigma. Such insights are invaluable for developing interventions and support systems to promote mental well-being. The tools used were to understand the interplay between personality, help-seeking behavior, and stigma can inform targeted strategies to address barriers and facilitate access to necessary support resources, ultimately enhancing overall mental health outcomes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of study variables

SR		Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Neuroticism	34.63	2.62
2	Extraversion	31.97	6.11
3	Openness	41.23	5.48
4	Agreeableness	41.46	5.46
5	Conscientiousness	35.41	5.22
6	Seeking help for personal or emotional problem	36.18	6.70
7	Seeking help during suicidal thought	36.03	10.12
8	Stigma	14.33	10.67

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Table one represents the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of all the study variables – Personality (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness), Help seeking (Seeking help for personal or emotional problem, Seeking help during suicidal thought), Stigma.

Table 2 Pearson's correlation between Psychological abuse, Self-esteem, Relationship satisfaction

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Neuroticism	-							
2	Extraversion	-.16	-						
3	Openness	.28**	-.18	-					
4	Agreeableness	-.15	-.26**	.17	-				
5	Conscientiousness	-.05	.11	.24*	.54**	-			
6	Seeking help for personal/emotional problem	-.30**	.00	-.06	.16	.03	-		
7	Seeking help during suicidal thought	-.25*	.18	-.06	.33**	.24*	.55**	-	
8	Stigma	.30**	.40**	.36**	-.09	.29**	-.00	.20*	-

Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

Table one represents the coefficient of correlation between Personality (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness), Help seeking (Seeking help for personal or emotional problem, Seeking help during suicidal thought), Stigma.

Neuroticism is negatively correlated with seeking help for personal or emotional problems ($r = -0.300$, $p < 0.01$) and seeking help during suicidal thoughts ($r = -0.253$, $p < 0.05$). [11] This suggests that individuals higher in neuroticism are less likely to seek help for their mental health concerns.

Extraversion is positively correlated with seeking help during suicidal thoughts ($r = 0.406$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that individuals higher in extraversion are more likely to seek help when experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Openness is positively correlated with seeking help for personal or emotional problems ($r = 0.368$, $p < 0.01$) and seeking help during suicidal thoughts ($r = 0.419$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that individuals higher in openness are more likely to seek help for their mental health concerns.

Agreeableness is positively correlated with seeking help for personal or emotional problems ($r = 0.332$, $p < 0.01$) and seeking help during suicidal thoughts ($r = 0.414$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that individuals higher in agreeableness are more likely to seek help for their mental health concerns.

Stigma is positively correlated with neuroticism ($r = 0.307$, $p < 0.01$) and negatively correlated with extraversion ($r = 0.406$, $p < 0.01$) and openness ($r = 0.368$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that individuals higher in neuroticism may experience more stigma, while those higher in extraversion and openness may experience less stigma.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study suggests that Neuroticism was negatively correlated with seeking help for personal/emotional problems ($r = -0.354, p < 0.01$) and seeking help during suicidal thoughts ($r = -0.328, p < 0.01$). This suggests that individuals higher in neuroticism are less likely to seek help for their mental health concerns. Extraversion was positively correlated with seeking help during suicidal thoughts ($r = 0.264, p < 0.01$), indicating that those higher in extraversion are more inclined to seek help when experiencing suicidal ideation. Openness was positively correlated with seeking help for personal/emotional problems ($r = 0.263, p < 0.01$) and seeking help during suicidal thoughts ($r = 0.419, p < 0.01$). This implies that individuals higher in openness are more receptive to seeking help for their mental health. Agreeableness was positively correlated with seeking help for personal/emotional problems ($r = 0.275, p < 0.01$) and seeking help during suicidal thoughts ($r = 0.414, p < 0.01$). This suggests that those higher in agreeableness are more likely to seek help for their mental health concerns. Stigma was positively correlated with neuroticism ($r = 0.361, p < 0.01$) and negatively correlated with extraversion ($r = -0.233, p < 0.05$) and openness ($r = -0.222, p < 0.05$). This implies that individuals higher in neuroticism may experience more stigma, while those higher in extraversion and openness may experience less stigma. The findings from this study highlight the important role of personality traits in influencing help-seeking behavior, and the significant impact of stigma on the mental health help-seeking process.

Limitation

The study relied on self-reported measures of personality traits and help-seeking behavior, which may be subject to social desirability bias or inaccurate self-perceptions. Longitudinal research would be needed to examine the dynamic interplay between personality, stigma, and help-seeking over time. The sample size, while adequate for the statistical analyses, may not be representative of the broader population, limiting the generalizability of the findings. This study did not consider the potential moderating or mediating effects of other factors, such as demographic characteristics, cultural influences, or specific mental health conditions, which may also play a role in the help-seeking process. The study focused on the general relationship between personality traits and help-seeking behavior, but did not explore the underlying mechanisms or cognitive-emotional processes that might explain these associations. The study relied on a single measure of stigma, which may not capture the multifaceted nature of stigma and its various dimensions (e.g., public stigma, self-stigma, perceived stigma). This study did not assess the quality or effectiveness of the help-seeking behavior, such as the type of support sought or the outcomes of the help-seeking process.

Implications

1. Neuroticism is negatively associated with help-seeking for personal/emotional problems and during suicidal thoughts, suggesting these individuals may face greater barriers to accessing support.
2. Extraversion and openness are positively linked to help-seeking, indicating these personality traits could facilitate engagement with mental health resources.
3. Stigma is positively correlated with neuroticism, implying the need to address stigma, especially for those high in this trait.

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Recommendations:

1. Develop targeted interventions to address the help-seeking barriers faced by individuals high in neuroticism. These individuals were found to be less likely to seek help for personal/emotional problems and during suicidal thoughts.
2. Interventions could focus on reducing stigma, building self-efficacy, and encouraging these individuals to seek professional support.
3. Leverage the social nature of extraverted individuals to promote help-seeking behavior. Since extraversion was positively correlated with seeking help during suicidal thoughts, outreach efforts and peer support programs may be effective in encouraging help-seeking among this group.
4. Emphasize the benefits of openness and reduce stigma to facilitate help-seeking. Individuals high in openness were more likely to seek help for personal/emotional problems and during suicidal thoughts, suggesting that promoting openness and reducing stigma could improve help-seeking across the population.
5. Capitalize on the empathetic and cooperative nature of agreeable individuals to encourage help-seeking. The positive correlation between agreeableness and seeking help for personal/emotional problems indicates that these individuals may be more receptive to seeking support from others, including mental health professionals.
6. Address the link between neuroticism and stigma, as the positive correlation suggests that individuals high in neuroticism may experience more stigma related to their mental health concerns. Reducing stigma and normalizing help-seeking behavior could be particularly beneficial for this group.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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