

Understanding The Attitudes of Non-Psychology College Students: A Perspective on Seeking Professional Psychological Help

Priyanshu Ojha^{1*}, Ms. Shreya²

ABSTRACT

This research looks at how non-psychology college students feel about getting help for mental health issues. It checks how stigma, fear of judgment, and the idea of relying on oneself affect students' hesitation to ask for help. It also mentions the changing situation, where more awareness and campus efforts are making it easier for students to seeking professional mental health support .The present research investigates the relationship between the mental health knowledge and attitude of non- psychology college students towards seeking professional help for mental health problems. The sampling used for the present study was convenient sampling with the total number of participants (N=100), the scales of Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH-SF) and Mental Health Knowledge Questionnaire (MHKQ) had been used, the results had been analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlations. The findings indicated a significant weak positive correlation (.207) between mental health knowledge and attitude towards seeking professional psychological help for mental health problems, this indicates that not only having good mental health knowledge influence an individual to seek professional mental health services but age, gender, culture, marital status, dependence on family and friends, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion belief about self-treatment, stigma and stereotypes, and other factors could also influence.

Keywords: *Attitude, Professional Help, Mental Health Problems, Mental Health Knowledge, Non-Psychology Students*

The fundamental aspect of our overall wellbeing is our mental health, it basically impacts an individual's emotional, psychological, and social functioning. A sturdy base provides essential support to a structure similarly good mental health enhances our emotional stability, cognitive processing, and healthy social interactions. A good mental health plays a major role in directing life's challenges, nurturing meaningful relationships, and developing a sense of purpose and fulfillment. When we talk about college students their mental health is a complex and crucial topic which is affected by various factors such as academic pressures, social environment, financial burdens, and the transition to adulthood and

¹Bachelors Student, Department of Psychology and Mental Health, Gautam Buddha University Greater Noida, U.P, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Mental Health, Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, U.P, India.

*Corresponding Author

Received: June 28, 2024; Revision Received: September 18, 2024; Accepted: September 21, 2024

Understanding The Attitudes of Non-Psychology College Students: A Perspective on Seeking Professional Psychological Help

many more. College life often triggers broad range of mental health problems including anxiety, depression, stress, and eating disorders, which are caused by academic demands, peer pressure, pubertal issues, substance abuse and change in lifestyle. The pressure to perform exceptionally good in academics, meet deadlines, and to score good marks in exams significantly increases the level of stress and anxiety among students, which impacts their overall well-being and academics achievements. Developing new social bonds in college can be both exciting and challenging, which leads to certain circumstances like loneliness, social anxiety, and relationship problems affecting students' mental health. Financial problems, like paying high tuition fees, living expenses if the student is living far from home, debt, and many more similar circumstances contribute to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. Facilities for mental health care, like providing counseling, peer support groups, and awareness programs are there in colleges but others have limited resources. The COVID-19 had raised mental health challenges in college students, resulting in heightened stress and anxiety due to isolation, uncertainty, disrupted routines, and concerns about the future in non-psychology students whereas psychology had shown higher resilience during pandemic (Raghav, Et.al 2022). Addressing mental health concerns in college students is crucial not only for their well-being during their academic period but also for their long-term mental health and success beyond college. It requires a complete procedure that gives account to various contributing factors and develops and maintains a culture of openness, understanding, and support within educational institutions. Even though the knowledge about mental health and to boost it, has increased in recent years, but the stigma towards mental health illnesses is still present in college students as well as in general public, which creates a barrier for college students to access necessary mental health services. There is still a pessimistic attitude towards the future of people with mental illness and also a belief to restrict social communication with those people (Salve, et.al 2013). Attitudes is defined as a set of an individual's beliefs, emotions and behavior which is directed towards a specific object, person, thing or event. In recent years there has been increased in the number of suicides in Kota among students preparing for competitive exams as well as in IITs and other colleges. Mental health stigma is a kind of societal disapproval towards the people who have some kind of mental illness or seek help for their emotional distress. Overcoming stigma is necessary for ongoing education, destigmatization, and creating a safe space for people to encourage their help-seeking behaviors and develop a mentally healthy campus environment. The public stigma for mental illness can lead to four forms; withholding help, avoidance, coercive treatment, and segregated institutions (Watson and Corrigan 2002). In recent years the Attitudes towards seeking professional mental health services has been increased positively as awareness towards mental health issues and the benefits for seeking professional help has been increased. However, a student attitude is affected by various factors such as knowledge about mental health, personal beliefs, societal norms, concerns about confidentiality, and awareness of available services etc. The mental health knowledge has improved but most people still have negative attitude towards mental disorders (Zhang, et.al 2018). Psychology students are more likely to seek professional mental health services than non-psychology students due to their knowledge and awareness about mental health, while non-psychology students may be less involved due to a lack of awareness and knowledge about mental health. 25 percent cause of mental health illnesses are attributed to evil spirits and 12 percent people prefer to choose tantric/ojha (Salve, et.al 2013). There are still stigmatizing attitudes towards individuals with mental disorders and also a desire for social distance from them, among people who belong from non-mental health professionals (Chen,S., et.al 2020).

Understanding The Attitudes of Non-Psychology College Students: A Perspective on Seeking Professional Psychological Help

Aim

The current study explores that how mental health knowledge influences the attitude of non-psychology college students for seeking professional mental health support, whether its essential factor which alone influences the attitude or not.

Hypotheses

- **Null:** There will be no significant relationship between mental health knowledge and attitudes of non-psychology college students towards seeking professional help for mental health problems.
- **Alternative:** There will be a significant relationship between mental health knowledge and attitudes of non- psychology college students towards seeking professional help for mental health problems.

Variables

- **Independent Variable-** Mental health knowledge
- **Dependent variable-** Attitudes of non-psychology college students for seeking professional help for mental health problems.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study included participants by using convenient sampling method. The data was collected in Delhi NCR region from 1 October 2023 to 2 November 2023. The data was collected through google form, in which included participants, age ranges between 18- 25 years who are basically college students having basic education and across socioeconomic-status, religion culture and geographies etc. There are total 100 participants, out of which 50 are males and 50 are females and each participant belongs from non-psychology background.

Instruments

Two measures were used in this study,

1. **Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH-SF):** The ATSPPH-SF (Fischer and Farina, 1995) is a 10-item scale which is used to measure the attitude of an individual towards seeking professional psychological help for mental health issues. It uses 4-point Likert-type scale for rating the items (3= Agree to 0= Disagree) in which items 2, 4, 8, 9, 10 are scored reversely. In last, the scores are added and interpreted, high scores reflect a good positive attitude towards seeking professional psychological help for mental health issues and low stigma towards mental illness. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale is 0.84 and it reported construct validity of 0.87.
2. **Mental Health Knowledge Questionnaire (MHKQ):** The mental health knowledge questionnaire (MHKQ) is used to understand the general public knowledge and awareness about mental health. It was developed by Chinese ministry of health (MOH) in 2009. It is a self-administering scale which of consists of 20 items, in the first 16 items the subject has to answer in true, false and unknown, in which each item is related to mental health knowledge. Its scoring is done as (True= 1) (False, Unknown= 0). Here items 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15 and 16 are reversely scored. The last 4 items are about the previous knowledge related to four mental health awareness days. Its scoring is done as (Yes= 1) (No, Unknown= 0). The final score ranges from 0 to 20, where

Understanding The Attitudes of Non-Psychology College Students: A Perspective on Seeking Professional Psychological Help

higher score represents more knowledge and awareness about mental health. The Cronbach's Alpha of mental health knowledge questionnaire is 0.61.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis were done to find the results from the collected data. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was done to examine the relationship between mental health knowledge and attitude towards seeking professional psychological help for mental health problems. The statistical analyses was done to find out the answer of our research question and to improve the strength of our findings.

RESULTS

The objective of our study is to find the relationship between the mental health knowledge and attitude towards seeking professional psychological help for mental health problems in non-psychology college students. For this, the investigators used IBM SPSS Statistics.

Table 1: Correlation between ATSPPH & MHKQ

		ATSPPH	MHKQ
ATSPPH	Pearson Correlation	1	.207*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.039
	N	100	100
MHKQ	Pearson Correlation	.207*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039	
	N	100	100

This table presents the results of a Pearson correlation analysis between two variables, ATSPPH and MHKQ, based on the sample size of (N = 100). The Pearson correlation coefficient measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. It reports a weak positive correlation (0.207) between ATSPPH and MHKQ. This correlation is statistically significant at the (0.05) level, with a p-value of (0.039).

DISCUSSION

The study basically examines the attitudes of non-psychology college students for seeking professional help for mental health problems. As, college life is very important for every student because it's a period where they decide about their career and professional life, handle academic pressures, maintain their interpersonal relationships etc. Having a good mental health is very essential for them to manage these challenges effectively. But sometimes, while facing these challenges many students face lot of issues like can't decide about their career paths, puberty related issues, problems in studying, unable to handle academic pressure, substance abuse and many more. These challenges can also lead to major mental health conditions in students like anxiety, depression, suicides etc. The newspaper Times of India (TOI) on 22nd March 2013 reported the suicide of nine students who resorted to the extreme step when they tried to cope with new challenges and academic pressure in the last 12 months in Hyderabad. It has been said that when facing such challenges, psychology students who have a good understanding of mental health are more likely to seek professional psychological help whereas non psychology students due to their lack of this awareness affect their attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help. But is it true that only a student's knowledge about mental health can influence his/her attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help.

Understanding The Attitudes of Non-Psychology College Students: A Perspective on Seeking Professional Psychological Help

Our study on (100) non-psychology college students, had found a statistically significant weak positive relationship between mental health knowledge and attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help. As the strength of that relationship is weak positive this means mental health knowledge can influence an individual's attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help but it is not only the one that can influence the attitudes, while there are other factors too that can influence it. When it comes to the gender of a person, the women's showed significantly more positive attitude towards seeking professional psychological help than the men's (Soorkia. R, Snelgar. R, Viren. S, 2010). Researches had suggested that the ethnic identification of a person can influence his/her attitude towards seeking professional psychological help in the way that, greater ethnic identification is more associated with negative attitude towards seeking professional psychological help (Soorkia. R, Snelgar. R, Viren.S, 2010). For example, the people of Malays and Indians both are less open to seek professional psychological help. When it comes to the stigma attached with the mental health studies had found that greater the mental health stigma the more negative attitude is there towards seeking professional psychological (Shetty. V & Jain.T, 2016). Religion of a person can also influence his/her attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help. For example, in a comparative study between Malaysian and Chinese people on the impact of culture on illness perception and help seeking behaviors indicated cultural differences, Malays were more likely to attribute illness to religion and help seeking behaviors through prayer and traditional healers than Chinese (Edman & Koon, 2000). It was also found that Indians and Malays often attribute mental illness as to be caused by supernatural powers (Razali et al, 1996). Studies also suggests that people with high socioeconomic background have more positive attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help than with people with low socioeconomic status (Picco. L, Abdin.E, et.al, 2016). Many people believe in self-treatment, they think they are good enough to effectively deal with their personal issues, they know more about themselves so they can alone meet their life challenges professional (Shetty. V & Jain.T, 2016). For them seeking help from someone can be a predictor of weakness, inability to cope from one's problems which is a threat to their self-concept (Vogel, Wester & Larson, 2007). However, majority of people also believe that they can have sought of help from their family members and friends but will not go to a mental health professional (Shetty. V & Jain. T, 2016). Another factor is individuals' unwillingness to disclose oneself, their personal issues to an outsider similarly, feeling of shame in sharing one's own issues to unknown is also emphasized in this factor. Vogel & wester, (2003) had suggested that that comfort with self-disclosure is an important factor that could influence ones help seeking behaviors. Marital status of a person can also influence an individual's attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help, where the people who are never married are open to seek professional psychological help than married people this happens when people face difficulties in relationships and there is lack of social support from partners in challenging situations (Picco. L, Abdin. E, et.al, 2016). Previous findings had also suggested that younger age people are more open to seek professional psychological help whereas older adults had shown negative attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help (Picco.L, Abdin. E, et.al, 2016). The easy accessibility of professional psychological services and the trust on mental professional can also be the factors that can influence an individual's attitude to seek professional psychological help.

Implications & Limitations

In this study, the data collection was from online sources is one limitation of the study. But, the data in the study was collected from many parts of India so the generalizability was not lost. Moreover, the study used self-reported questionnaire which can be arbitrary. In future,

Understanding The Attitudes of Non-Psychology College Students: A Perspective on Seeking Professional Psychological Help

the same sample can be used for a follow-up-study to identify more factors that influences an individual's attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help.

CONCLUSION

College students have lot challenges in there day to day life, but these challenges become a major issue for some students leading to mental health issues. Keeping in mind that psychology students due to their adequate amount of mental health awareness seek professional psychological help, the study examines the attitudes of non-psychology college student towards seeking professional psychological help. It founds a weak positive correlation between mental health knowledge and attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help, this suggests that mental health knowledge is not only one factor that can influences that individuals' attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help in fact other factors like gender, age, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status and many more factors can influence the attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help.

REFERENCES

- Corrigan, P. W., & Watson, A. C. (2002). Understanding the impact of stigma on people with mental illness. *World psychiatry. official journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)*, 1(1), 16–20, 16946807.
- Edman, J. L., and Koon, T. Y. (2000). Mental illness beliefs in Malaysia: ethnic and intergenerational comparisons. *Int. J. Soc. Psychiatry*, 46, 101–109. doi: 10.1177/002076400004600203
- Li, J., Zhang, M. M., Zhao, L., Li, W. Q., Mu, J. L., & Zhang, Z. H. (2018). Evaluation of attitudes and knowledge toward mental disorders in a sample of the Chinese population using a web-based approach. *BMC psychiatry*, 18(1), 367. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-018-1949-7>
- Picco, L., Abdin, E., Chong, S. A., Pang, S., Shafie, S., Chua, B. Y., Vaingankar, J. A., Ong, L. P., Tay, J., & Subramaniam, M. (2016). Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help: Factor Structure and Socio-Demographic Predictors. *Frontiers in psychology*, 7, 547. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00547>
- Raghav, D., Verma, G., Varshney, A., (2022). Mental Health and Resilience during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Comparative account of Psychology and Non-psychology Students. *Indian Journal of Behavioral Research & Therapy*, 3(1 & 2), 29-32
- Razali, S. M., Khan, U. A., and Hasanah, C. I. (1996). Belief in supernatural causes of mental illness among Malay patients: impact on treatment. *Acta Psychiatr. Scand.* 94, 229–233. doi: 10.1111/j.1600-0447.1996.tb09854.x
- Salve, H., Goswami, K., Sagar, R., Nongkynrih, B., & Sreenivas, V. (2013). Perception and Attitude towards Mental Illness in an Urban Community in South Delhi - A Community Based Study. *Indian journal of psychological medicine*, 35(2), 154–158. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0253-7176.116244>
- Shetty, V., & Jain, T., (2016). Attitudes and stigma towards seeking professional psychological help among college going students. *Indian Journal of Mental Health*, 3(2), 202-207,10.30877/IJMH.3.2.2016.202-207
- Soorkia, R., Snelgar, R., & Swami, V. (2011). Factors influencing attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help among South Asian students in Britain. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 14(6), 613–623. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2010.494176>

Understanding The Attitudes of Non-Psychology College Students: A Perspective on Seeking Professional Psychological Help

- Vogel, D. L., & Wester, S. R. (2003). To seek help or not to seek help: The risks of self-disclosure. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 50, 351–361. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.50.3.351>
- Vogel, D. L., Wester, S. R., & Larson, L. M. (2007). Avoidance of counseling: Psychological factors that inhibit seeking help. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 85, 410–422. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2007.tb00609.x>
- Wu, Q., Luo, X., Chen, S., Qi, C., Yang, W. F. Z., Liao, Y., Wang, X., Tang, J., Tang, Y., & Liu, T. (2020). Stigmatizing Attitudes Towards Mental Disorders Among Non-Mental Health Professionals in Six General Hospitals in Hunan Province. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 10, 946. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2019.00946>

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Ojha, P. & Shreya (2024). Understanding The Attitudes of Non-Psychology College Students: A Perspective on Seeking Professional Psychological Help. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(3), 2435-2441. DIP:18.01.237.20241203, DOI:10.25215/1203.237