



A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON MENTAL HEALTH HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR, PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT, AND MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY AMONG YOUNG ADULTS FROM DIVERSE LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS

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Abstract

The present conceptual paper explores the interrelationships between mental health help-seeking behaviour, perceived social support, and mental health literacy among young adults from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Young adulthood represents a developmental period marked by heightened vulnerability to psychological distress due to academic, social, and occupational transitions. Despite increasing awareness, help-seeking for mental health concerns remains limited, often constrained by stigma, inadequate literacy, and cultural or linguistic barriers. Drawing upon the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Health Belief Model, this paper proposes that higher mental health literacy enhances awareness and positive attitudes toward professional help, while perceived social support functions as a protective factor that reduces stigma and encourages openness to assistance. Cultural and linguistic contexts are conceptualized as moderating factors influencing these relationships. The framework presented emphasizes prevention, empowerment, and culturally responsive approaches as central to promoting mental well-being among young adults. The study offers a theoretical basis for designing inclusive interventions and university-based programs that integrate awareness, peer support, and culturally sensitive communication strategies.

Keywords: Mental Health Literacy, Help-Seeking Behaviour, Perceived Social Support, Young Adults, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

1. Introduction

Humans are inherently social beings who seek connection, acceptance, and understanding throughout life. These needs shape emotional development and influence how individuals cope with life's challenges. Young adulthood, marked by transitions such as higher education, career beginnings, and identity formation, often presents both opportunities and psychological strain. During this period, mental health becomes particularly vulnerable to stress, social isolation, and cultural pressures. Help-seeking behaviour—the ability and willingness to recognize distress and pursue support—is essential for mental well-being. However, stigma, cultural beliefs, and low awareness often hinder young adults from seeking help. Perceived social support and mental health literacy act as protective factors that encourage adaptive coping and openness to professional help. This conceptual paper explores the interrelationship among mental health help-seeking behaviour, perceived social support, and mental health literacy among young adults from diverse linguistic backgrounds. It aims to present an integrated understanding of how these variables interact conceptually to influence psychological well-being.

1.1 Background of the Study

Young adulthood is a developmental stage characterized by emotional exploration, increased responsibilities, and social transitions. Mental health challenges are common during this period due to academic pressures, shifting relationships, and career uncertainties. Perceived social support—belief in the availability of emotional or practical help—has been shown to buffer stress and reduce psychological distress. Similarly, mental health literacy, which refers to awareness, understanding, and attitudes toward mental disorders and treatment options, enhances early recognition and intervention. However, in multilingual and multicultural societies, help-seeking tendencies are deeply influenced by language, culture, and community norms. For instance, stigma surrounding mental illness, differing health beliefs, and linguistic barriers may discourage help-seeking among certain groups. This review addresses these culturally nuanced factors that shape young adults' psychological help-seeking patterns.

1.2 Need for the Concept

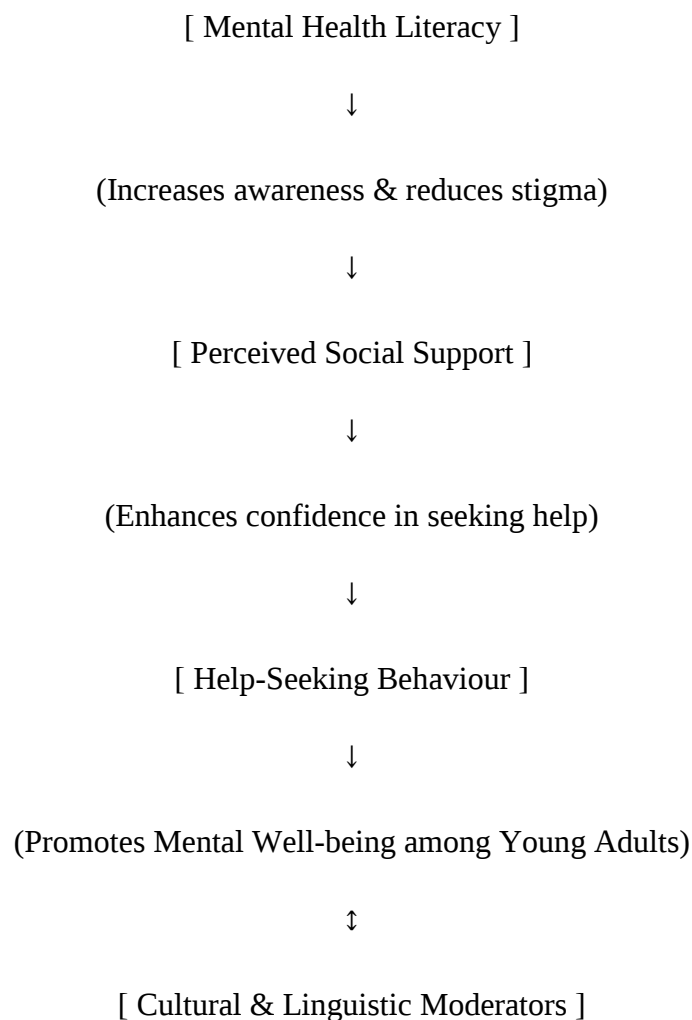
Understanding how help-seeking, perceived social support, and mental health awareness interact is crucial in building inclusive mental health strategies. By analyzing these constructs collectively, this paper provides a holistic conceptual framework for promoting psychological resilience, awareness, and help-seeking confidence among young adults. This approach emphasizes **mental health empowerment** rather than pathology, aligning with preventive and community-based mental health perspectives.

2. Conceptual Framework

This conceptual paper draws upon the **Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)** and the **Health Belief Model** to explain how attitudes, perceived social norms, and knowledge shape help-seeking intentions.

- **Mental Health Literacy** fosters recognition of mental distress and awareness of treatment options.
- **Perceived Social Support** strengthens confidence and reduces stigma, creating a safe context for disclosure.
- **Help-Seeking Behaviour** represents the outcome of these interactions—an expression of readiness to seek professional or informal assistance.

The interconnections suggest that higher mental health literacy and social support jointly enhance help-seeking tendencies, particularly when cultural and linguistic factors are acknowledged.



3. Methodology (Conceptual Approach)

This paper follows a **conceptual and literature review design**. Relevant literature published between 2015 and 2025 was systematically reviewed using databases such as **PubMed, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate**.

Search terms included: *mental health literacy, help-seeking behaviour, perceived social support, young adults, multilingual populations, and cultural diversity*.

The review process focused on identifying conceptual trends, theoretical models, and empirical findings that collectively illuminate how these constructs interact among young adults from linguistically diverse backgrounds. Studies meeting inclusion criteria were analyzed thematically to identify recurring frameworks and research gaps.

4. Discussion

4.1 Mental Health Literacy and Help-Seeking Behaviour

Mental health literacy (MHL) enables early recognition of psychological distress and enhances confidence in seeking professional help. Studies (Yang et al., 2023; Dias et al., 2018) demonstrate that higher MHL correlates with greater willingness to seek help and lower stigma. Conceptually, knowledge empowers individuals to normalize mental health discussions and engage proactively in self-care.

4.2 Perceived Social Support and Stigma Reduction

Perceived social support moderates the negative effects of self-stigma on help-seeking. Punla and Regalado (2022) found that individuals with strong social support networks are less affected by stigma and more open to professional help. Conceptually, supportive social networks foster psychological safety and reinforce adaptive coping strategies.

4.3 Cultural and Linguistic Contexts

Cultural norms and language differences significantly shape help-seeking tendencies (Nguyen, Nguyen, & Vuong, 2019). Multilingual contexts introduce unique challenges, such as communication barriers with professionals and cultural misconceptions about therapy. Integrating linguistic sensitivity into mental health promotion is therefore essential.

4.4 Integrated Conceptual Understanding

Combining these findings reveals a dynamic model where **mental health literacy** and **social support** interact to enhance **help-seeking behaviour**, moderated by cultural and linguistic influences. This integrated understanding emphasizes prevention, education, and inclusive health communication.

5. Conclusion

This conceptual review concludes that mental health literacy, perceived social support, and help-seeking behaviour are interdependent constructs influencing young adults' mental well-being. Strengthening literacy and social support systems reduces stigma and enhances psychological resilience. Developing culturally sensitive, linguistically inclusive programs can empower young adults to seek appropriate help and sustain mental health.

6. Implications

- Develop **multilingual, culturally sensitive interventions** that improve literacy and help-seeking confidence.
- Implement **university-based awareness programs** reducing stigma and promoting early intervention.
- Encourage **peer-support models** that build safe spaces for sharing and emotional support.
- Utilize **digital mental health platforms** to enhance accessibility for diverse language groups.

7. Limitations

- Limited inclusion of non-English studies.
- Conceptual reliance on secondary data limits empirical validation.
- Inconsistent cross-cultural definitions of “support” and “help-seeking” in literature.
- Further **empirical testing** of the conceptual relationships is recommended.

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