

THE RELATIONSHIP OF MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY TO HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR: *SYSTEMATIC REVIEW*

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ABSTRACT

Mental health is an important aspect in realizing overall health. It is estimated that one in four people will suffer from a mental disorder during their lifetime. There are approximately 450 million people suffering from mental and behavioral disorders worldwide where about 85% of people with severe mental disorders in developing countries do not receive treatment for their disorders. This study aims to determine the relationship between mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviors. This research method uses *Systematic review* to search for articles on several data based including: *PubMed, EBSCO, Science Direct, ProQuest, Taylor & Francis, Scopus, and Google Scholar*. Search results obtained with the keywords *Mental health literacy, mental health, help-seeking behavior* obtained 539 articles. After being filtered based on inclusion criteria, namely research articles relevant to the purpose of writing, *free full-text*, English or Indonesian, respondents' age of 15 years, and published in 2018-2022 produced 62 articles. The same article, not the result of a research or \geq review article, and different articles of targets and variables were issued so that 10 articles were obtained. The result of this study is that there is a significant relationship between mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviors. The relationship of mental health literacy to help-seeking behaviors is positive meaning that an increase in scores on mental health literacy also affects an increase in scores on help-seeking behaviors. It can be concluded that the higher the level of mental health literacy, the more it can improve help-seeking behavior.

Keywords: *Help-seeking behavior, Mental health literacy, mental health*

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INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an important aspect of realizing overall health. In addition to physical health, mental health should also be important to pay attention to as well as physical health. *The World Health Organization* (WHO) defines health as a condition or state of mental, physical, and social well-being that becomes a whole and not just free from disease or disability. Good mental health allows people to realize their potential, cope with the pressures of a normal life, work productively, and contribute to their community (Pusat Data dan Informasi Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2019).

It is estimated that one in four people will suffer from a mental disorder during their lifetime. There are approximately 450 million people suffering from mental and behavioral disorders worldwide. According to the WHO Asia Pacific region (WHO SEARO) the highest number of cases of depressive disorder in India (56,675,969 cases or 4.5% of the total population), the lowest in the Maldives (12,739 cases or 3.7% of the population). Meanwhile, in Indonesia there are 9,162,886 cases or 3.7% of the population (WHO, 2014, 2017)

About 85% of people with severe mental disorders in developing countries do not receive treatment for their disorders. This is because the world's health system has not been sufficient in handling cases of mental disorders. In line with this, it is also known that a year's expenditure on mental health is still low, which is less than US \$ 2 per person, as well as mental health workers who are less than 1 per 100,000 population. Similarly, in Indonesia, with various

biological, psychological and social factors with population diversity, the number of cases of mental disorders is likely to continue to grow. In fact, severe mental disorders can cause a decrease in patient productivity and eventually cause a large cost burden that can burden families, communities, and governments. Neuropsychiatric conditions account for 13% of the total *Disability Adjusted Life Years* (DALYs) lost due to all diseases and injuries in the world and are expected to increase to 15% by 2020. Cases of depression alone account for 4.3% of the burden of disease and are one of the largest causes of disability worldwide, particularly for women (Pusat Data dan Informasi Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2019; WHO, 2014, 2017).

Kemenkes (2013) states that severe mental disorders exist in as many as 1.7 per mile with the most distribution in DI Yogyakarta, Aceh, South Sulawesi, Bali, and Central Java. Data on the proportion of mental patients as a whole based on Riskesdas data in 2018 also experienced a significant increase when compared to Riskesdas 2013 data, up from 1.7% to 7%. The proportion of households that have had severe mental illness household assistants was 14% and the highest in the rural living population was 17.7% and those shackled in the last 3 months was 31.5%. The prevalence of depression is 6.1% at the age of 15 years and over while the prevalence of emotional mental disorders in the Indonesian population is 9.8%.

Adolescence and early adulthood are prone to mental health problems. This age is considered to have a great risk of developing mental disorders. This is because at this stage it is the transitional stage from adolescence that is still dependent on parents to independent adulthood, this period is considered full of instability (Kartikasari & Ariana, 2019; Pusat Data dan Informasi Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2019). According to Arnett et al (2014), early adulthood does not yet have a stable life structure, often changing jobs or love life is one of the causes before finally, an early adult makes a long-term commitment decision to his life.

To encourage people who have a good awareness of mental health also rely heavily on the individual behavior of their community, the behavior of seeking help in the context of mental health is defined as an adaptive coping process that aims to seek outside assistance to solve problems related to one's mental health. This help-seeking behavior is important to explore and understand why a patient prefers to postpone or instead encourage other actions related to his or her health condition. The behavior of seeking help is influenced by demographic factors such as education, age, marital status, gender, and income. In addition, the severity and level of health literacy also look for behavioral factors of seeking help (Rickwood et al., 2012).

Research conducted by Cheng et al (2018) on 1535 student respondents in America. Found that mental health literacy is able to predict attitudes toward help-seeking behaviors and a person's self-stigma on mental health services. Where high mental health literacy will be in line with attitudes towards high help-seeking. The results of another study conducted by Kartikasari & Ariana (2019) showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between mental health literacy and the intention to seek help in early adulthood, which means that the higher the mental health literacy, the higher the intention to seek help possessed by an early adult.

METHOD

This research method uses *Systematic review* to search for articles on several data based including *PubMed*, *EBSCO*, *Science Direct*, *ProQuest*, *Taylor & Francis*, *Scopus*, and *Google Scholar* with the keywords *Mental health literacy*, *mental health*, and *help-seeking behavior*.

Article identification is done using PRISMA guidelines. Figure 1 presents a flow chart of the search for the reviewed article.

Based on the results of the article search, 539 articles were obtained. After being filtered based on inclusion criteria, namely research articles relevant to the purpose of writing, *free full-text*, English or Indonesian, respondents' age of 15 years, and published in 2018-2022 produced 62 articles. The same article, not the result of a research or \geq review article, and a different article of goals and variables was issued resulting in 10 articles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the article search found 10 studies related to the relationship between mental health literacy and help-seeking behavior. The results of the article search are presented in Table 1.

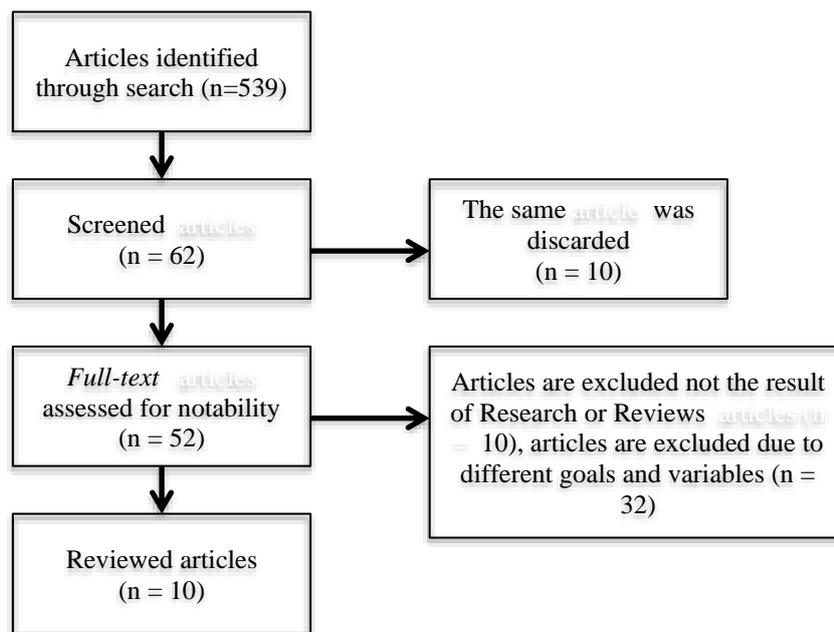


Figure 1. Article Search Flowchart

Table 1. Review of Articles According to Inclusion Criteria

No.	Author's Name	Article Title	Location	Sample Population	Research Methods	Result
1.	Novia Kartikasari and Atika Dian Ariana, 2019	The Relationship between Mental Health Literacy, Self-Stigma to Aid-Seeking Intentions in Early Adulthood	Indonesian	Sample: 571 early adults spread across various regions in Indonesia	Quantitative Approach with survey method	The results show that mental health literacy is positively correlated with the intention to seek help, self-stigma is negatively correlated with the intention to seek help, self-stigma is negatively

						correlated with mental health literacy.
2.	Azmul Fuady Idham, Puji Rahayu, and Azzah A. As-Sahih, 2019	Mental Health Literacy Trends	Indonesian	Sample: 501 students from various universities in Indonesia	Quantify Approach	The results showed that most students (54.1%) had a high level of mental health literacy. Increasing mental <i>health literacy</i> will automatically increase individual knowledge of handling mental disorders, both in oneself and when providing first aid to other individuals.
3.	Nanda Maya, 2021	Contribution of Mental Health Literacy and Perceptions of Public Stigma to Attitudes to Seeking Professional Help in Psychology	Bandung	Sample: 349 adolescents aged 18-24 years	Quantitative	The results of this study suggest that mental health literacy significantly contributes to the attitude of seeking the help of psychology professionals ($F = 63,130$; $p < 0.05$)
4.	Anita Novianty, 2019	Mental Health Literacy: Public Knowledge and Perception of Mental Disorders	Indonesian	Sample: 89 people aged 15-28 years	Quantitative . Descriptive Studies	Based on a descriptive study of the research results, it can be concluded that public mental health literacy is still relatively low. It is characterized by low recognition of mental disorders, confidence in causes that still emphasize the stresses of daily life or social factors,

						to the type of referral for help to informal help.
5.	Malisa Falasifah and Dian Ufieta Syafitri, 2021	Mental Health Literacy and Public Stigma as Predictors of Attitudes towards Psychologic Assistance in Mahasantri	Semarang	Sample: 174 mahasantri Unissula	Quantitative	The results showed that mental health literacy and public stigma were simultaneously able to significantly predict attitudes towards psychological assistance in Mahasantri with an effective contribution of 8.2%. But it was partially found that only mental health literacy could predict attitudes toward psychological assistance, whereas public stigma did not contribute. Thus, mental literacy becomes an important factor in determining Mahasantri's attitude in seeking psychological help.
6.	S. Tomczyk et al, 2018	<i>Is knowledge "half the battle"? The role of depression literacy in help-seeking among a non-clinical sample of adults</i>	German	Sample: 207 adults with untreated mental health problems	Quantitative	<i>Depression literacy was lower in men and older participants, and higher in participants with prior treatment experience.</i>

with currently untreated mental health problems

Depression literacy was negatively linked to informal help-seeking (aOR = 0.33 [0.13; 0.84]) when included as a dichotomous predictor (i.e., 'high' versus 'low' literacy).

7.	Genis Seera et al, 2020	<i>Help-seeking behaviors for mental health problems in medical students: Studies in Thailand and India</i>	Thailand and India	Sample: 593 health students	Quantitative . Cross Sectional Studies	<i>The rate of help-seeking behaviors for mental health problems and factors associated differed between medical students in Thailand and India. A high GHQ score was a common risk factor of not seeking help from MHPs in both countries.</i>
8.	Paul Gorczyński, Wendy Sims-Schouten and Clare Wilson, 2020	<i>Evaluating mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviours in UK university students: a country wide study</i>	English	Sample: 300 students	Quantitative . Cross Sectional Studies	<i>Participants indicated they were most likely to seek support from intimate partners and least likely to seek support from religious leaders. No significant correlations were found between mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviours</i>
9.	Prishini Ratnayake and	<i>Mental Health Literacy, Help-Seeking</i>	Australia	Sample: 32 students	Quantitative	<i>Results did not indicate a relationship</i>

	Chelsea Hyde, 2019	<i>Behaviour and Wellbeing in Young People: Implications for Practice</i>		aged 16-18 years		<i>between MHL levels and intentions to seek help.</i>
10.	Paul Gorczynski & Wendy Sims-Schouten, 2022	<i>Evaluating mental health literacy amongst US college students: a cross sectional study</i>	United States	Sample: 326 students	Quantitative	<i>The mean mental health literacy score was 123.96 (SD=16.01). Women scored significantly higher than men. Our research also found a significant positive relationship between mental health literacy, self-compassion, and help-seeking behavior.</i>

Discussion

Behavior seeking help

Research finds that help-seeking behavior is high in individuals who have experienced a mental disorder. This is also influenced by mental health literacy where individuals who have used mental health services have a higher level of mental health literacy (Maya, 2021).

Help-seeking behavior is generally representative of the decision-making process of the perceived problem. It is also combined with evidence that optimism, self-esteem, and social support are often associated with mental decline. Stressed individuals tend to seek professional help. The behavior of seeking help is also influenced by the stigma associated with mental disorders (S. Tomczyk, H. Muehlan, S. Freitag, S. Stolzenburg, G. Schomerus, S. Schmidt, 2018).

Help-seeking behavior is a form of coping that relies on others and therefore is often based on social relationships and interpersonal skills. Help can be sought from a variety of different sources at the level of formality. Informal seeking help is from informal social relationships, such as friends and family. Formal assistance in seeking professional sources of assistance is: professionals who have a recognized role and appropriate training in providing assistance and advice, such as mental health and health professionals, teachers, or even religious experts (Rickwood et al., 2012).

Help-seeking behavior is influenced by demographic factors such as education, age, marital status, gender, and income. In addition, severity also looks for factors of help-seeking behavior. A person who believes the disease is severe will be less likely to seek help in the traditional form. This is because a person considers a mental disorder to be a severe disease and requires modern treatment (Manumba & Hamid, 2020).

Mental Health Literacy

Several studies have shown that most respondents have mental health literacy levels that vary between high, moderate, and low. Student respondents had high levels of mental health literacy. Research also shows that gender in this case women have a higher level of mental health literacy than men. In addition, Individuals who had a previous diagnosis of mental health disorders had much higher rates of mental health literacy compared to those who had no previous diagnosis (Fuady et al., 2019; Gorczynski & Sims-Schouten, 2022; Kartikasari & Ariana, 2019; Maya, 2021; Novianty, 2017).

Other studies have shown that demographic factors are associated with high levels of mental health literacy. Gender, age, level of education, religiosity, and experience of suffering from mental disorders are associated with low mental health literacy (Fuady et al., 2019).

Mental health literacy is related to help-seeking behaviors. Mental health literacy by definition includes the ability to distinguish mental health conditions from stress, the attribution of mental disorders, and knowledge and beliefs about risk factors and available professional assistance. Good knowledge of mental health issues can encourage a person to seek help. This knowledge includes knowledge of symptoms to information on how to seek treatment (Cheng et al., 2018; Manumba & Hamid, 2020).

The Relationship of Mental Health Literacy to Help-Seeking Behavior

Most studies have found a link between health literacy and help-seeking behaviors. This suggests there is a significant link between mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviors. The contribution made by mental health literacy to help-seeking behaviors is positive, which means that the increase in scores on mental health literacy also affects the increase in scores on help-seeking behaviors. Thus, the role of mental health literacy can improve help-seeking behaviors (Falasifah & Syafitri, 2021; Gorczynski et al., 2020; Kartikasari & Ariana, 2019; Maya, 2021; S. Tomczyk, H. Muehlan, S. Freitag, S. Stolzenburg, G. Schomerus, S. Schmidt, 2018).

The relationship between mental health literacy and help-seeking behavior indicates that someone who has good/high mental health literacy means having knowledge of the efficacy of good mental disorder care, awareness of the importance of mental health, knowing the right source of help when experiencing a psychological disorder, and knowing the jobs related to mental health care, where a person's stigmatizing view tends to go down regarding mental disorders. The findings of this study support Jorm's (2000) theory that mental health literacy can support the ability to recognition, manage, and prevention. Knowledge related to mental health and the symptoms of mental disorders was found to have a significant influence in providing an understanding of the importance of recognizing the symptoms of certain mental disorders so that prevention actions arise in the form of behavioral tendencies to seek professional help when needed (Kartikasari & Ariana, 2019; Maya, 2021).

Several other studies have shown that there is no significant link between mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviors. This can be due to differences in the characteristics of respondents in the research conducted. Respondents indicated that they were most likely to seek help from their closest relatives/core and were least likely to seek support from religious leaders (Gorczynski et al., 2020; Ratnayake & Hyde, 2019).

CONCLUSION

In this study, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviors. This suggests the higher the level of mental health literacy, the more helpful it can be.

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