

Mental health help-seeking in China

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WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

- Mental health disorders are considered the leading causes of disability in China, but treatment-seeking behaviors are low among individuals with mental health problems, with 91% of individuals who are in need of mental health care going without it.
- Untreated mental health problems may lead to high rates of disability and rising health care costs for both families and society.
- Conducting research on which personal characteristics are related to help-seeking attitudes contributes to a better understanding on how to deliver mental health services more successfully to individuals in China.

HOW WAS THIS RESEARCH CONDUCTED?

- A total of 500 participants completed this community-based survey in the Shanghai metropolitan area.
- Research examined many demographic variables, including, age, gender, education level, parental status, exposure to someone with mental health problems, and religiosity.
- Public and personal stigma, as well as help-seeking attitudes toward mental health were examined.
- An analysis was conducted examining the link between certain demographic features, public/personal stigma, and help-seeking attitudes.

WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?

- On average, participants held mildly positive attitudes toward seeking professional mental health help.
- Exposure or knowing someone with a mental health problem was associated with higher openness toward help-seeking for both men and women.
- Life experiences (age, marital status, and parental status) were associated with greater openness to help-seeking in men, but not women.

Help-seeking attitudes in China are mainly impacted by an individual's life experiences.

ACTION STEPS

As knowing someone who has experienced mental health problems is positively related to better help-seeking attitudes, support and interventions to assist individuals' disclosure decisions may be needed.

Future research is necessary to determine if the findings in this study generalize to other Chinese populations, as well as examine how individual life experiences and demographic factors impact help-seeking attitudes.



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