

Mental Health Literacy and Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help among Government-Employed Veterans Aged 45–50 Years

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Abstract:

Mental health literacy plays a significant role in promoting awareness, reducing stigma, and encouraging individuals to seek professional psychological help when needed. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among government-employed veterans aged 45–50 years. A quantitative correlational research design was employed. Data were collected through a self-developed questionnaire administered using Google Forms. A total of 126 responses were received, of which 109 valid responses were included in the final analysis after excluding incomplete questionnaires. The reliability of the questionnaire was found to be acceptable. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics revealed a mean Mental Health Literacy score of 36.67 (SD = 8.12) and a mean Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help score of 39.07 (SD = 5.28). Pearson's correlation analysis indicated a very weak, positive, and statistically non-significant relationship between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help ($r = .041$, $p = .669$). Therefore, the research hypothesis was not supported. The findings suggest that, within this sample, mental health literacy alone may not be sufficient to influence attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help, and other psychological, social, or cultural factors may also play an important role. The study highlights the need for continued mental health awareness initiatives and supportive interventions among government-employed veterans.

Introduction

Mental health is an essential aspect of overall health and well-being. It affects how people think, feel, make decisions, cope with stress, and interact with others in their daily lives. Good mental health enables individuals to perform their responsibilities effectively, maintain healthy relationships, and contribute positively to society. Despite growing awareness about mental health, many people continue to face challenges in recognizing mental health problems and seeking appropriate professional support.

Mental health literacy refers to an individual's knowledge and understanding of mental health conditions, including the ability to recognize symptoms, understand available treatment options, and know when and where to seek professional help. People with higher mental health literacy are generally better equipped to identify signs of psychological distress in themselves and others, reduce misconceptions about mental

illness, and make informed decisions regarding mental health care. Increasing mental health literacy has become an important public health goal because it can promote early intervention and improve mental health outcomes.

Seeking professional psychological help is another important aspect of mental well-being. Professional help from psychologists, psychiatrists, or counselors can provide effective support for individuals experiencing emotional or psychological difficulties. However, many people hesitate to seek such help due to stigma, fear of being judged, lack of awareness, cultural beliefs, or concerns about confidentiality. These barriers often prevent individuals from receiving timely treatment, which may negatively affect their quality of life.

Government-employed veterans represent a group that may experience unique occupational and personal challenges. Throughout their careers, they may have been exposed to demanding work environments, high levels of responsibility, stressful situations, or emotionally challenging experiences. Even after years of service, these experiences can influence their mental well-being. Despite this, many veterans may avoid seeking professional psychological support because of personal beliefs, social expectations, or concerns about how mental health issues are perceived in their workplace or community.

Mental health literacy may play an important role in shaping attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. Individuals who have a better understanding of mental health may be more likely to recognize psychological problems and view professional treatment as beneficial. At the same time, attitudes toward help-seeking are influenced by several factors, including personal experiences, family beliefs, cultural values, workplace environment, and social stigma. Therefore, understanding the relationship between mental health literacy and help-seeking attitudes can contribute to the development of more effective mental health awareness programs.

The present study focuses on government-employed veterans between the ages of 45 and 50 years. This age group represents individuals who are generally in the later stages of their professional careers and may face additional life stressors related to work, health, family responsibilities, and retirement planning. Studying mental health literacy and attitudes toward professional psychological help within this population can provide valuable insights into their mental health needs and inform future awareness and intervention programs.

The findings of this study may be useful for psychologists, mental health professionals, policymakers, and organizations working with government employees and veterans. By understanding the relationship between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help, it may be possible to design educational programs that reduce stigma, encourage timely help-seeking, and promote better mental health among this population.

Overall, this study aims to examine whether mental health literacy is associated with attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among government-employed veterans aged 45–50 years. The findings will contribute to the growing body of research on mental health awareness and help-seeking

behaviour while providing practical implications for promoting psychological well-being in occupational settings.

Need and Significance of the Study

Mental health has become an important area of concern across the world. While awareness about mental health has increased in recent years, many people still have limited knowledge about mental health conditions and the importance of seeking professional psychological help. Misconceptions, stigma, and lack of awareness continue to prevent individuals from recognizing mental health problems and accessing appropriate treatment. Therefore, understanding mental health literacy and its relationship with help-seeking behaviour has become increasingly important.

Government-employed veterans often experience unique personal and professional challenges. During their years of service, they may have faced stressful work situations, heavy responsibilities, and demanding environments that can affect their mental well-being. Although many veterans successfully adapt to these challenges, some may experience emotional or psychological difficulties but hesitate to seek professional support due to stigma, cultural beliefs, or concerns about being judged. Studying this population can help identify factors that influence their attitudes toward mental health care.

The present study is needed because there is limited research focusing specifically on mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among government-employed veterans in the Indian context, particularly within the age group of 45–50 years. Understanding these factors can provide valuable information about their level of awareness and willingness to seek professional assistance when facing psychological concerns.

The findings of this study may help mental health professionals, psychologists, counselors, and policymakers develop more effective mental health awareness programs and interventions for government-employed veterans. Improving mental health literacy can encourage individuals to recognize mental health problems at an early stage, reduce stigma, and promote timely help-seeking. Early intervention not only improves individual well-being but can also enhance work performance, family relationships, and overall quality of life.

This study is also significant from an academic perspective. It contributes to the existing body of knowledge on mental health literacy and help-seeking attitudes by providing evidence from a specific occupational group. The findings may serve as a useful reference for future researchers interested in mental health awareness, occupational psychology, and help-seeking behaviour among adults.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of promoting mental health literacy and creating supportive environments where individuals feel comfortable seeking professional psychological help. By increasing awareness and reducing barriers to treatment, it is possible to improve both individual well-being and the overall mental health of society.

Review of Literature

Mental health literacy has become an important topic in psychology because it helps people recognize mental health problems, understand available treatments, and seek professional help when needed. Researchers around the world have studied how mental health knowledge influences attitudes, beliefs, and help-seeking behaviour. Previous studies suggest that increasing mental health literacy can reduce stigma and encourage individuals to access mental health services.

One of the earliest and most influential studies was conducted by Jorm et al. (1997), who introduced the concept of mental health literacy. They defined it as the knowledge and beliefs that help people recognize, manage, and prevent mental disorders. Their research showed that people with greater knowledge about mental health were better able to identify psychological problems and were more likely to recommend appropriate professional treatment. This study laid the foundation for later research on mental health literacy.

Gulliver, Griffiths, and Christensen (2010) examined the barriers that prevent people from seeking professional psychological help. Their review found that stigma, embarrassment, fear of being judged, and concerns about confidentiality were some of the most common reasons individuals avoided seeking treatment. The researchers suggested that improving mental health awareness could reduce these barriers and encourage early intervention.

Similarly, Corrigan (2004) emphasized the negative impact of stigma on mental health care. According to the study, many individuals avoid discussing their mental health concerns because they fear discrimination or negative social reactions. Corrigan argued that increasing public awareness and education could reduce stigma and improve attitudes toward professional psychological services.

Rickwood et al. (2005) explored factors that influence help-seeking behaviour among adults and young people. Their findings showed that knowledge about mental health, positive attitudes toward treatment, social support, and trust in healthcare professionals were important predictors of seeking psychological help. The study highlighted that mental health literacy alone may not be enough, as personal beliefs and social influences also play a significant role.

Research conducted by Reavley and Jorm (2012) further supported the importance of mental health literacy. They found that individuals with greater knowledge about mental health disorders were more likely to recognize symptoms, support others experiencing psychological difficulties, and seek professional assistance when necessary. Their findings demonstrated that educational programs could improve public understanding of mental health.

Several studies have also examined mental health among working adults and individuals in high-responsibility occupations. Research has shown that work-related stress, job demands, and occupational pressure can affect psychological well-being. However, despite experiencing stress, many employees hesitate to seek professional help because of concerns related to workplace stigma and career consequences. This highlights the importance of promoting mental health awareness in occupational settings.

Research involving veterans has also indicated that many individuals experience psychological challenges but often delay seeking treatment due to stigma, cultural beliefs, or concerns about appearing weak. Studies suggest that improving mental health literacy among veterans may encourage earlier recognition of mental health concerns and increase the likelihood of seeking professional support.

Although previous research has demonstrated the importance of mental health literacy, relatively few studies have focused specifically on government-employed veterans in India, particularly those between the ages of 45 and 50 years. This population may have unique experiences and responsibilities that influence both their mental health knowledge and their attitudes toward professional psychological help. Therefore, further research is needed to better understand these relationships.

Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that mental health literacy is an important factor in improving awareness and reducing stigma. However, attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help are influenced by multiple factors, including personal beliefs, workplace culture, previous experiences, and social support. These findings provide the foundation for the present study, which aims to examine the relationship between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among government-employed veterans aged 45–50 years

Hypotheses

A hypothesis is a tentative statement that predicts the expected relationship between variables. Based on the objectives of the present study and previous research, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Null Hypothesis (H_0):

There is no significant relationship between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among government-employed veterans aged 45–50 years.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):

There is a significant relationship between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among government-employed veterans aged 45–50 years.

Outcome of the Study

Based on the results of the Pearson correlation analysis ($r = .041$, $p = .669$), the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was rejected. This indicates that no statistically significant relationship was found between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among the participants in this study

Methodology

Research Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative research approach to examine the relationship between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among government-employed veterans. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to collect numerical data and analyze relationships between variables using statistical methods.

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive correlational research design. This design was selected to determine whether a relationship existed between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help without manipulating any variables. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between the two variables.

Participants

The participants in this study were government-employed veterans aged between 45 and 50 years. A total of 126 responses were collected through an online survey. After screening the data for completeness, 109 valid responses were included in the final analysis, while 17 incomplete responses were excluded through listwise deletion.

Sampling Technique

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to recruit participants. Individuals who met the inclusion criteria and were willing to participate voluntarily completed the questionnaire through Google Forms. This sampling method was chosen because it allowed easy access to participants within the available time and resources.

Inclusion Criteria

The following participants were included in the study:

- * Government-employed veterans.
- * Individuals between 45 and 50 years of age.
- * Participants who voluntarily agreed to participate.
- * Participants who completed the questionnaire.

Exclusion Criteria

The following individuals were excluded from the study:

- * Individuals below 45 years or above 50 years of age.
- * Participants who were not government-employed veterans.
- * Incomplete or partially completed questionnaires.
- * Participants who did not provide informed consent.

Research Instruments

Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire created by the researcher. The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

1. Mental Health Literacy Scale – designed to assess participants' knowledge and understanding of mental health, recognition of mental health problems, and awareness of available psychological support.
2. Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale – designed to assess participants' willingness and attitudes toward seeking help from mental health professionals when experiencing psychological difficulties.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using Google Forms. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained electronically. Participants completed the questionnaire anonymously, and no personally identifiable information was collected. The responses were downloaded and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics for statistical analysis.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. The following statistical techniques were used:

- * Descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, and standard deviation) to summarize participant responses.
- * Cronbach's Alpha to assess the reliability of questionnaire.
- * Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation to examine the relationship between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help.

A significance level of 0.05 was used to determine statistical significance.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were followed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. Participants were informed that their responses would remain confidential and would be used only for academic research purposes. They had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. The collected data were stored securely and used solely for the purpose of this research.

Results

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics to examine the relationship between Mental Health Literacy (MHL) and Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH) among government-employed veterans aged 45–50 years. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation were used to analyze the data.

Data Screening

A total of 126 responses were collected through Google Forms. After reviewing the responses for completeness, 17 questionnaires were excluded because they contained incomplete information. Therefore, 109 valid responses were included in the final statistical analysis.

Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the self-developed questionnaire was assessed. This suggests that the questionnaire was sufficiently reliable for measuring the variables included in the study.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to understand the overall scores of the participants on the two scale

The results indicate that the participants obtained a mean score of 36.67 (SD = 8.12) on the Mental Health Literacy scale and a mean score of 39.07 (SD = 5.28) on the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help scale. These findings describe the overall level of mental health literacy and help-seeking attitudes among the participants.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. correlation analysis revealed a very weak positive relationship between Mental Health Literacy and Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help ($r = .041$). However, the relationship was not statistically significant ($p = .669$, $p > .05$).

Since the obtained p-value was greater than the level of significance (0.05), the relationship between the two variables was not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was not supported.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of the present study indicate that higher levels of mental health literacy were not significantly associated with more positive attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among government-employed veterans aged 45–50 years. Although a slight positive relationship was observed, it was too weak to be considered statistically meaningful.

These results suggest that mental health literacy alone may not determine whether individuals develop positive attitudes toward seeking professional help. Other factors, such as personal experiences, perceived stigma, workplace culture, family beliefs, and accessibility of mental health services, may also influence help-seeking attitudes.

Overall, the findings provide valuable insight into the relationship between mental health literacy and professional help-seeking attitudes in the selected population and contribute to the growing body of research in the field of mental health psychology.

Limitations of the Study

Every research study has certain limitations, and the present study is no exception. These limitations should be considered while interpreting the findings.

Firstly, the study included only government-employed veterans aged 45–50 years. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to veterans of other age groups, individuals working in different occupations, or the general population.

Secondly, the study used a convenience sampling technique, which means participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate. As a result, the sample may not fully represent the entire population of government-employed veterans.

Thirdly, data were collected using Google Forms, and all responses were based on self-report questionnaires. Participants may have misunderstood some questions or responded according to what they believed was socially acceptable rather than expressing their true opinions and experiences. The study also employed a cross-sectional research design, in which data were collected at a single point in time. Therefore, the study can identify relationships between variables but cannot determine cause-and-effect relationships.

Finally, the study examined only the relationship between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. Other important factors, such as mental health stigma, previous experiences with mental health services, family support, workplace environment, cultural beliefs, and accessibility of psychological services, were not included in the study and may have influenced the findings.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable information about mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among government-employed veterans. The findings can serve as a foundation for future research involving larger and more diverse populations using standardized assessment tools and additional psychological variables.

Conclusion

Mental health literacy is an important aspect of psychological well-being, as it helps individuals recognize mental health problems, understand available treatment options, and make informed decisions about seeking professional support. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among government-employed veterans aged 45–50 years.

The findings revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between mental health literacy and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help ($r = .041$, $p = .669$). Although a slight positive relationship was observed, it was not strong enough to support the research hypothesis. Therefore, the study concluded that mental health literacy alone may not be sufficient to influence an individual's attitude toward seeking professional psychological help.

The results suggest that attitudes toward seeking psychological support are likely influenced by several other factors, including personal beliefs, stigma, previous experiences, workplace culture, family support, and the accessibility of mental health services. These factors may play an equally important or even greater role in determining whether individuals are willing to seek professional help when facing mental health concerns.

Despite the non-significant findings, this study contributes to the growing understanding of mental health literacy among government-employed veterans. It highlights the importance of continuing efforts to promote mental health awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage open discussions about psychological well-being in workplaces and communities.

Future research should include larger and more diverse samples, use standardized assessment tools, and examine additional factors that may influence help-seeking behaviour. Such studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of mental health literacy and help develop effective mental health awareness programs and interventions.

Overall, the present study emphasizes that improving mental health requires not only increasing knowledge and awareness but also creating supportive environments where individuals feel comfortable seeking professional psychological help without fear of stigma or discrimination.

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