

FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDES TOWARD SEEKING PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP, SELF-STIGMA, AND SOCIAL STIGMA AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

Muhammet Sancaktar, Bahadır Demir, Gülçin Elboga, Feridun Bülbül, Abdurrahman Altındağ

Psychiatry, Gaziantep University, Gaziantep, Türkiye

BACKGROUND AND AIM: This study examined how self-stigma and social stigma influence attitudes toward seeking psychological help among university students and explored demographic and contextual factors shaping these variables.

METHODS: (Ethics Committee Approval must be obtained and the number should be specified). A cross-sectional design was conducted with 457 students at a large public university between January–June 2024. Participants completed the Attitudes Toward Seeking Psychological Help Scale–Short Form, the Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale, and the Social Stigma for Receiving Psychological Help Scale. Analyses included t-tests, ANOVA, correlations, and multiple linear regression ($p < 0.05$). Ethical approval was obtained from the Gaziantep University Non-Interventional Research Ethics Committee (Decision No: 2023/163).

RESULTS: Help-seeking attitudes (ASSPH-SF) were significantly higher among female students ($p = 0.001$), while males reported greater social stigma (SSRPH) ($p = 0.007$). Significant interfaculty differences were found for both

attitudes ($p = 0.033$) and social stigma ($p = 0.008$). Higher income correlated with increased social stigma ($p = 0.001$), and lower income with reduced self-stigma ($p = 0.045$). Family history ($p = 0.001$) and personal psychiatric diagnosis ($p = 0.023$) were linked to more positive help-seeking attitudes. Self-stigma and social stigma were positively correlated ($r = 0.38$) and negatively predicted help-seeking attitudes ($r = -0.23$, $r = -0.15$). Social stigma declined with age ($r = -0.14$). Regression models explained significant variance for ASSPH-SF ($R^2=0.292$), SSSPH ($R^2=0.435$), and SSRPH ($R^2=0.419$), with key demographic and stigma variables as significant predictors.

CONCLUSIONS: The findings suggest that a positive attitude toward seeking psychological help reduces stigma, whereas self-stigma and social stigma function as key, mutually reinforcing barriers to psychological help-seeking among university students. Targeted stigma-reduction strategies, particularly contact-based and cognitive interventions, should be prioritized.

Keywords: Psychological help-seeking, self-stigma, public stigma, university students, attitude