

## Mental health literacy and awareness in young adults

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### Abstract

*Mental health problems are increasingly common among young adults globally, but stigma, low levels of awareness and resources, continue to be part of the challenges hindering access to appropriate care. This study aimed at investigating mental health literacy and awareness in young adults, specifically on barriers to help-seeking and preferred support mechanisms. The study used a mixed-method approach in deriving findings from 106 participants, drawing from surveys as well as secondary literature. The results indicate that although 66% of the respondents said they were knowledgeable about mental health, only 25.5% said they were very knowledgeable. Familiarity was highest with common conditions such as anxiety (88.7%) and depression (83%), while awareness of bipolar disorder (42.5%) and suicide prevention (41.5%) was significantly lower. Key barriers to seeking help included fear of stigma (72.6%), lack of knowledge about resources (50.9%), and distrust of mental health services (43.2%). The most in-demand resources were personalized counseling at 71.6%, workshops at 53.8%, and peer support programs at 51.9%. The government should, with all urgency, implement holistic strategies such as mental health education in schools, stigma reduction campaigns, more access to counseling, and inclusion of digital tools for mental health. An inclusive mental health framework requires collaborative efforts among educational institutions, healthcare providers, policymakers, and families. Helping plug the gaps encourages resilience, invites help-seeking behavior, and engenders supportive contexts that empower the management of young adulthood's mental wellness.*

**Keywords:** MentalHealth, Awareness, Stigma, Education, Resilience, Support, Interventions, Youth

### Introduction

Mental health issues among young adults are an increasingly prominent concern since they have considerable public health, social, and economic implications. Stigma, limited awareness, and insufficient resources remain major barriers to treatment accessibility and utilization despite more young adults developing mental health disorders. About 20% of adolescents report having a mental health disorder annually; however, a significant number remain undiagnosed and untreated, leading to long-term challenges in several life areas (Lehtimäki et al., 2021; Radez et al., 2021). Promoting mental health literacy, reducing stigma, and encouraging help-seeking behavior are important steps in bridging the gaps. School-based interventions and digital technologies offer some hope in improving outcomes, particularly in low-resource settings (Ma et al., 2023; Kumar &

Hanisha, 2023). Therefore, ensuring the involvement of community and cultural dynamics influencing mental health attitudes may in turn aid in rolling out pointed interventions addressing the diverse needs (Ahad et al., 2023; Raguram & Weiss, 2023). The research intends to explore mental health literacy and awareness among young adults, focusing on their knowledge in addition to the barriers that inhibit the process of seeking help and the preferred resources. Using both primary and secondary data findings, this research highlighted the value and significance of comprehensive and inclusive strategies in addressing mental health challenges within this demographic.

### Literature review

The rising prevalence of mental disorders among children and adolescents has become a significant public health concern, which includes health, social, and economic impacts. Institute-based programs

focused on enhancing mental health literacy and combating mental health stigma hold considerable promise for preventing mental disorders, fostering mental well-being, and alleviating the overall burden of these conditions. (Ma, K. K. Y., Anderson, J. K., & Burn, A. M. (2023).

Most adolescents are not diagnosed with mental health disorders and go untreated due to barriers that prevent them from accessing treatment, despite an estimated 1 in 5 experiencing the disorder annually. Additionally, psychopathology's early emergence leads to a lifelong pattern of difficulties in various functional areas, making it crucial to address this early stage. As digital connectivity grows in low- and middle-income countries, there is a potential for digital health technologies to improve the mental health of adolescents and young people. Lehtimäki, S., Martic, J., Wahl, B., et al. (2021).

Providing a comprehensive understanding of the reasons why young people do not seek and access professional help for mental health disorders is crucial to bridge the gap between high prevalence of mental illness in young individuals and low treatment utilization, without taking into account gender or race-related factors. Radez, J., Reardon, T., Creswell, C., et al. (2021). Early intervention can significantly reduce the burden of mental illness. Youngsters have the lowest likelihood of seeking help for psychological issues. Sum, M. Y., Chan, S. K. W., Tsui,

H. K. H., et al. Mental health literacy interventions are needed to improve knowledge of mental health, promote help-seeking for mental illness, and reduce stigma and negative attitudes toward mental illness. (Marinucci, A., Grove, C., & Allen, K. A. (2023). Stigma characterized by negative stereotypes can hinder mental health, At the individual level, stigma can lead to fear and avoidance of mental health solutions or services causing delay in seeking help when the patient is in dire need. Delays in mental health can cause reduced quality of life (Ahad, A. A., Sanchez-Gonzalez, M., & Junquera, P. (2023).

Mental awareness and literacy are important to protect yourself from the negative impact of social media. Government and social media apps play a major role in addressing mental health problems as

they have the potential to provide valuable resources and information. (Yakobus,

I. K., Suat, H., Kurniawati, K., Zulham, Z., Pannyiwi, R., & Anurogo, D. (2023).

Virtual reality environments (VREs) are attracting more attention in psychological treatment and assessment. Research on the use of VREs in adults with psychological disorders is mainly limited to children and teenagers. In order to determine the literature's current state and explore potential research avenues, a systematic scoping process was conducted on studies that have examined the use of VREs in treating childhood mental health disorders. Blanco, D., Roberts,

R. M., Gannoni, A., & Cook, S. (2024).

Personalized digital psychological interventions (DPI) aim to provide solutions that are tailored to the needs of users. The use of DPI Personalization has been linked to improved treatment outcomes through increased user engagement. In this study, they analyzed previous studies on personalized DPIs for young adults, taking into account various aspects of personalization such as content/method and the actors involved. The measurement of DPI personalization in studies is a crucial step towards personalizing, which can improve the treatment of mental health conditions by increasing low user engagement. Jahedi, F., Fay Henman, P. W., & Ryan, J. C. (2024).

## Research methodology

The study aimed to understand mental health literacy, awareness, and attitudes among 106 young adults. Using a carefully designed systematic questionnaire, we explored key themes, including comfort levels in discussing mental health issues, knowledge of various mental health disorders, and the barriers—such as stigma or lack of information—that prevent individuals from seeking help. Responses were analyzed through visual tools like bar charts and percentages to uncover trends and insights. To ensure a comprehensive view, the study included secondary data from journal articles and scholarly papers that provided information on existing trends in mental health issues and treatment methods. The combination of the two research

methodologies not only offered a comprehensive understanding of the problem but also underlined some significant knowledge gaps and resource deficits. These findings will be the basis for suggesting interventions that will increase

resources, reduce stigma, and improve awareness of mental health among young adults. This study attempted to amplify the voices of over 100 individuals to foster a deeper connection with the community and drive meaningful change.

#### Data analysis and interpretation

PARAMETER	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDERS
Knowledge of Mental Health	Very knowledgeable	25.5
	Somewhat knowledgeable	66
	Not very knowledgeable	8.5
	Not at all knowledgeable	0
Comfort Discussing Mental Health	Comfortable	55.7
	Sometimes comfortable	34.9
	Not comfortable	9.4
Familiarity with Mental Health Issues	Anxiety	88.7
	Depression	83
	Stress	88.6
	Eating disorders	59.4
	Bipolar disorder	42.5
	Suicide prevention	41.5
	Not familiar with any	3.8
Barriers to Seeking Help	Fear of stigma	72.6
	Lack of knowledge about resources	50.9
	Lack of trust in mental health services	43.2
	Cultural/social barriers	34
	Lack of time/motivation	1
Use of Stress Management Techniques	Regularly	21.7
	Occasionally	47.2
	Rarely	29.2
	Never	1.9
Access to Mental Health Support	Sufficient support available	21.7
	Somewhat available	22.6
	Not available	55.7
Preferred Resources for Improvement	Workshops or seminars	53.8
	Peer support programs	51.9
	Mental health apps or online resources	35.8
	One-on-one counseling services	71.6
	Group therapy	48.1

#### Findings

Our updated research provides a deeper and more nuanced understanding of young adults' mental health awareness and practices. While a majority of respondents **66%** described themselves as about mental health issues, only **25.5%** felt **very knowledgeable**. This suggests a substantial portion of young people recognize mental health's

importance but may lack the depth of understanding needed to navigate complex issues. Comfort in discussing mental health was uneven, with a majority **55.7%** feeling comfortable about discussing it and only **34.9%** sometimes felt comfortable, but still had inhibitions or discomfort in discussing these issues. Familiarity with specific mental health conditions painted a similar picture. **Anxiety (88.7%), depression (83%), and stress**

(88.6%) were widely recognized, reflecting the prevalence of these issues in everyday life. Awareness of more complex challenges like **bipolar disorder (42.5%)** and **suicide prevention (41.5%)** remained notably lower, suggesting gaps in education and public discourse on these critical topics. The barriers preventing young adults from seeking help are deeply rooted in societal and systemic issues. **Fear of stigma** was the most commonly cited obstacle (72.6%), a powerful reminder of the judgment and misconceptions still attached to mental health struggles. **Lack of knowledge about available resources (50.9%)** and **distrust in mental health services (43.2%)** further hindered help-seeking behaviors. **Cultural and social barriers (34%)** were also significant, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive and inclusive approaches. Stress management was another area of concern. Although a small proportion (21.7%) reported **regularly** engaging in stress-reducing activities such as exercise or meditation, nearly half (47.2) only practiced these techniques **occasionally**, and 29.2% rarely used them. This inconsistency underscores the need for more accessible and engaging tools to promote emotional well-being. It is, thus, apparent that mental health resources are far from adequate; for, over half (55.7%) of respondents claim that **resources were inadequate to meet needs**. The scenario thus demands serious institutional, governmental, and social efforts toward developing proper mental health infrastructure. When asked about their preferred ways of enhancing mental health support, 71.6% of the respondents wanted **one-on-one counselling**, which indicates the need for individualized care. **Workshops and seminars (53.8%)** and **peer support programs (51.9%)** were also highly sought after, showing a great demand for group-based and educational programs. Group therapy (48.1%) and digital resources like mental health apps (35.8%) were also considered useful in promoting mental well-being.

These findings not only point out where the challenges exist but also call us to action, as young adults are asking for better education on mental health matters, more easily accessible resources and a concerted fight against stigma. By filling such gaps

with sensitivity and inclusivity, we can construct an environment supportive of open conversations about mental health, easy resource access, and making everyone feel confident enough to help themselves when such a need may arise.

## Implementation

### 1. Schools and Colleges

Schools and colleges play an important and pivotal role in shaping the minds of young adults with regard to mental health awareness. Given that only 55.7% of respondents experienced inadequate access to mental health resources, schools and colleges can fill this void by:

**Curriculum inclusion of mental health education** as a base building knowledge on more complex topics, such as bipolar disorder and suicide prevention, which currently lack awareness at the levels of 42.5% and 41.5%, respectively.

**Organizing periodic seminars and workshops on stress management** as it was identified as one of the sources of preferred choice by 53.8% of the participants.

**Extend counseling services** to offer personal care for everyone; 71.6% want one-on-one counseling.

Promote a non-stigmatizing environment by initiating peer support groups (51.9%) and group therapy (48.1%) sessions.

### 2. Health Professionals

Mental health professionals will play a very important role in filling the gap between knowing about mental illness and taking appropriate action. Their potential activities could be:

Target outreach programs to develop targeted outreach programs for specific demographics such as young adults to improve mental health literacy.

Collaboration with educational institutions through workshops and mental health screenings that ensure early detection and intervention.

**Using telemedicine and other digital resources**, since most prefer online mental health services (35.8%). This would enhance accessibility, especially for people in under-resourced

communities.

### 3. Governments and Policymakers

Governments and policymakers can make a big difference in raising awareness and providing support for mental health by:

**Increase funding in mental health service provision** to take care of the 55.7% that said they had inadequate support. This includes counseling services and access to mental health centers.

**Start mass awareness programs** that are aimed at desensitizing mental health conditions, targeting 72.6% of the respondents, who said that stigma was their main challenge.

**Incorporating mental health studies** in national curricula at schools and colleges to uniformly provide knowledge and resource availability across regions. Incentivize research and innovation in the field of mental health tools, including apps and online platforms, targeting the more tech-savvy younger generation.

#### Community Organizations

Community-based programs can establish a network of support for individuals who may be dealing with mental health issues. Such organizations can:

**Organize peer-led support groups:** 51.9% value these programs, and such groups can create open spaces for the discussion of any issue. Conduct stigma-reduction campaigns by tapping into community influencers to normalize help-seeking behavior about mental health. Collaborate with schools and local governments to build resource availability while ensuring comprehensive coverage in both urban and rural settings.

### 4. Families and Peers

Families and close friends play a crucial role in influencing attitudes toward mental health. They can:

**Promote open communication** at home, discuss concerns, and normalize discussions about mental health challenges.

**Promote help-seeking behavior** by supporting access to counseling or other resources. This is

important because many young adults prefer one-on-one counseling (71.6%).

**Model healthy stress management practices**, helping integrate them into daily life. This could improve consistency in stress management behaviors, which only **21.7% of respondents** currently practice regularly.

By implementing these strategies in unison, society can create a comprehensive and inclusive mental health framework that meets the needs of young adults, reduces stigma, and fosters resilience.

#### Limitations and scope of study

This study was an attempt to yield useful insights in mental health literacy and awareness of young adults. Though we took all the care in designing and executing a rigorous and methodologically sound study, several limitations that need to be recognized are:

- **The Sample Was Not Sufficiently Diverse:** The sample consisted predominantly of a certain demographic group that might not give an idea about the experiences or perceptions of others.
- **Self-Reported Data:** With the use of self-reported questionnaires, such data is reliable in terms of gathering personal insights into a person, but it presents a possibility to have biases of social desirability bias. There is always potential for this if not well articulated.
- **The nature of the study:** Our survey gives a 'snap shot' of mental health literacy and awareness at one given point in time. Although the data was statistically analyzed, a cross-sectional nature does not reveal trends over periods or causations.
- **Geographical Limitation:** Data was from a small, restricted geographical location. We find our results meaningful; however, these may not hold true or applicable to regions or populations generally.
- **The complexity of mental health issues** entails that our study could not highlight each nuance and factor influencing this important issue.



Even with all this, we took every possible step to ensure the quality and relevance of the data collected to input into our study. The integration of primary and secondary research was crucial in creating a solid foundation for understanding how the mental health literacy of young adults can be addressed through actionable solutions.

## Conclusion

This research emphasizes the critical need for the mental health literacy, awareness, and resources available to the young adult. The results indicate that though 66% of respondents self-report as knowing about mental health issues, 25.5% report themselves to be very knowledgeable, suggesting a significant deficit in knowledge. There is concerning low familiarity with the critical issues like bipolar disorder at 42.5% and suicide prevention at 41.5%. Targeted education and awareness programs are needed for such issues.

Stigma, lack of knowledge about available resources, and mistrust in mental health services were the top three barriers for seeking help: 72.6%, 50.9%, and 43.2%, respectively. Stress management practice was not uniform with only 21.7% practicing it regularly, emphasizing the need for easily accessible and engaging tools for the promotion of well-being.

However, our study also discovers promising avenues for improvement. There is a great demand for one-on-one counseling (71.6%), peer support programs (51.9%), and workshops or seminars (53.8%). This shows a great desire among young adults to seek mental health resources when available. There is also room for growth with group therapy at 48.1% and digital solutions at 35.8%.

By integrating the efforts of schools, colleges, health professionals, policymakers, community organizations, and families, society can create a supportive framework to address these gaps. A collaborative approach of this nature will be facilitative in building resilience, reducing stigmas, and ensuring that there are integrated mental health resources and systems in place.

In conclusion, research calls for all parties involved to strive towards a future where young adults are

allowed to discuss freely their mental health and receive help with open arms toward the ultimate flourishing of themselves in every regard.

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