



## International Journal of Current Research and Academic Review

ISSN: 2347-3215 Special Issue-5 (April-2018)  
Journal home page: <http://www.ijcrar.com>



### Gender Differences in General Health and Attitude towards Professional Psychological Help Seeking Among Corporates

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#### KEYWORDS

Psychological help seeking; corporates; survey

#### A B S T R A C T

This study was aimed at finding whether there are any differences between the attitudes of men and women working in corporates towards seeking professional psychological support when necessary and at examining if there is a correlation between the same and their general mental health using survey method. Convenience sampling was used. The total sample consisted of 62 women and men between 22 and 33 years of age. They were given 2 questionnaires, the 12-item general health questionnaire (Goldberg and Williams, 1970) and the Attitudes toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help, (ATSPPH, Fischer and Turner, 1970). 't' test revealed no significant difference in the help seeking attitude and general health between males and females unlike previous research finding where women had a more positive attitude. No significant correlation was found between general health and help seeking attitude among the sample. The overall moderate negative attitude towards seeking psychological help reveals the need to create awareness about psychological help and its benefits.

#### Aim

This study is aimed at finding whether there is any significant difference between the attitudes of men and women towards seeking professional psychological support when necessary and to study any correlation between general mental health and attitude towards seeking professional psychological help. The National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS) found that the number of people diagnosed with depression

has increased by 450% since 1987. This needs attention and intervention otherwise the consequences can be long term and chronic.

A client's negative attitude towards and expectations of receiving psychological help might be associated with a less favorable therapy process and may thus affect the prognosis (Goldstein, Feb. 1962). The

placebo effect shows the importance of and the influence that our expectations can have on us.

Due to globalization there has been a rapid increase in the number companies in India and people working in the corporate sector. Their nature of work like shift work, long working hours, work from home and working on weekends to meet deadlines leaves them no personal time. They are especially prone to depression, stress and other such disorders, which can have adverse effects on the physical health and productivity of those affected. Positive attitude towards seeking psychological help on their part is essential to ensure their well-being and productivity, which is important for the society and economy.

Fischer and Turner (1970), Mackenzie *et al.*, (2007), and Barwick *et al.*, (2009) studied the gender differences in attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help and found that women had consistently more positive attitudes than men. Komiya and Eells (2001) and Yoo *et al.*, (2005) studied the same and their findings reflect similar results.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Need for the study**

Stress and mental illness are problems that are becoming increasingly common among corporates in India (Bhattacharyya and Vijayaraghavan, 2016). How people feel about something is an important determinant of whether they will do it or not and therefore, the attitudes of men and women toward seeking professional psychological help can help predict if they will seek help if the need for it arises. Thus, exploring this topic is essential in the present day scenario. Has globalization affected the attitude of the Indian young and employed who have more

exposure to the global scenario in this regard? Do Genders differ in their attitude?

The study aims to probe answers for these questions.

## **Method of Investigation**

### **Objective of the study**

The objective of this study is to find the gender difference in general mental health and attitude towards seeking professional psychological help and the relationship between general mental health and psychological help seeking attitude.

### **Problem**

Is there a difference between men and women in their attitude towards seeking professional psychological help?

Is there a relationship between general mental health and attitude towards seeking professional psychological help?

Is there a difference between men and women in their general mental health?

### **Research design**

This study is an exploratory study using Survey method.

### **Variables**

The independent variables are Gender and General mental health while the dependent variable is attitude towards seeking professional psychological help.

### **Operational definitions**

The Attitudes towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH) is the level of openness towards help seeking, the value

given to professional help and the preference to cope on one's own.

The General health looks at well-being getting affected at two areas the inability to carry out normal functions and the appearance of distress

### **Description of the sample**

The sample was made up of 62 individuals 31 males and 31 females from 22 to 33 years of age, based in Chennai.

### **Technique of sample selection**

The data was gathered by convenient sampling. Inclusion criteria. Males and females working in private Corporate establishments who are between 23 and 33 years of age.

### **Tools used**

Two questionnaires were used to obtain the data. They are:

Attitudes towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH) (Fischer and Turner, 1970). This 29 Item scale measures the attitude that the respondent holds towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help. Items are rated on a 4-point scale (3 = Agree, 0 = Disagree). Scoring: The weight age given for each response were; 0 = Disagreement 1= Probable disagreement 2= probable agreement 3= agreement.

General health questionnaire 12(Goldberg, 1970). This version of GHQ contains 12 questions and is thus quick to administer and score. It is used to detect psychiatric disorder in the general population. It is sensitive to short-term psychiatric disorders but not to long-standing attributes of the respondent. The items are scored as 1=

Often, 2= Sometimes, 3= Seldom, 4=Never. The Reliability of the scale was found to be = 0.83.

### **Procedure**

The questionnaires were administered to participants in person while some participants were requested to complete the questionnaires online using Google forms. Snowball sampling was used through mediums like Whatsapp. The data was entered into excel and statistical analyses was done using SPSS 19.

### **Statistics**

Independent measure t test was used to compare the means of two independent groups to determine if they are significantly different and Pearson's correlation were used to analyze the linear correlation between two variables.

### **Results and Discussion**

Both men and women are of average general mental health as their scores fall on the moderate range. The respondents hold a generally negative attitude towards seeking professional psychological help as higher scores indicate more positive attitudes and any score lesser than 44 is considered low for men while any score lesser than 52 is considered low for women.

The mean score for the men in our sample was 43.87, a value slightly greater than the mean of women, which was 43.74.

The t value did not indicate any significant difference between men and women in their attitude towards seeking psychological help. Thus, there is no statistically significant gender difference in attitude towards

seeking professional psychological help among corporates.

Further exploring the gender difference in general health; the mean for the women of the sample was 18.65, a value slightly greater than the mean for men, which was 18.23 in General Health. From the t value, we conclude that the results were not significant at 0.05 level, indicating that there is no statistically significant gender difference in general mental health.

Pearson correlation revealed the values as  $r=0.56$ ,  $n=62$  and  $p=0.67$ . From the data, we conclude that there is no statistically significant relationship between general mental health and attitude towards seeking professional psychological help among corporates.

These results contrast with the research that was conducted on this topic in the past, which showed that, women have a more positive attitude towards seeking professional psychological help (Komiya and Eells, 2001; Yoo *et al.*, 2005; Mackenzie *et al.*, 2007; Barwick *et al.*, 2009). These worrying results could also be

due to lack of awareness. The respondents' socialization process in the Indian context and the dramatic portrayal of mental illness and mental health professionals by the media in might have also contributed to this.

One of the possible explanations for these results is the fact that the sample that was studied in this study was quite small ( $n=62$ ). It may also be because our sample was quite young and have therefore not thought much on the topic. The lack of correlation between general health and the same might simply be because the other factors that were previously mentioned play a greater role in the formation of psychological help seeking attitude. The lack of gender difference in general health might be because of the fact that our participants were young and at the peak of their youth.

Based on the results of the statistical analysis, the following conclusions were drawn.

There is a generally negative attitude towards seeking professional psychological help.

**Table.1** Gender difference in attitude towards seeking professional psychological help

GROUP	N	MEAN	S.D	S.ED	t	SIGNIFICANCE
MALE	31	43.8710	8.20870	2.15911	.060	p> 0.05, NS
FEMALE	31	43.7419	8.78244			

NS-Not Significant

**Table.2** Correlation between general mental health and attitude towards seeking professional psychological help

	<b>Attitude towards seeking professional psychological help.</b>
<b>General Mental Health</b>	<b>0.056</b>
<b>Significance Value</b>	<b>0.666 NS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>62</b>

NS-Not Significant

**Table.3** Gender difference in general mental health

GROUP	N	MEAN	S.D	S.ED	T	SIGNIFICANCE
MALE	31	18.2258	3.19071	0.67721	-.0619	p> 0.05, NS
FEMALE	31	18.6452	2.00912			

NS-Not Significant

Both men and women are of average health as their scores falls on the moderate range.

There is no significant gender difference in attitude towards seeking professional psychological support.

There is no significant gender difference in general health.

There is no correlation between a person's health and attitude towards help seeking

### **Implications**

The results of our study that there is no gender difference in attitude towards seeking professional psychological help will help further psychology professionals and policymakers' understanding of help seeking attitude.

The results show that there is a need to educate the corporate work force in India about the seriousness of physical and mental health issues and the importance of seeking professional help. The absence of a significant correlation between general health and attitude towards seeking professional psychological help has shown that the latter may be influenced by other greater factors like upbringing, education and an individual's beliefs about the effectiveness of therapy. The population is a young population, higher scores were expected in the overall general health. Awareness about seeking help and steps to remove stigma associated with it is the need of the hour.

### **Limitations and future directions**

The sample size was small, n= 62. The study was limited to corporates in Chennai. As Chennai is a city in south India, cultural differences can be studied by including other Indian cities.

The study was limited to corporates. People with other kinds of occupations that involve health hazards can also be studied.

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**How to cite this article:**

Pratheebha, G., Ida Joseph, Kathryn Nivedita David and Sandhya Rani, P.J. 2018. Gender Differences in General Health and Attitude towards Professional Psychological Help Seeking Among Corporates. *Int.J.Curr.Res.Aca.Rev. Special Issue-5: 121-126*.