

# Attitudes and Professional Help-Seeking Motivation Towards Mental Health of Selected SHS Students

Ma. Antonette B. Leonod, Maria Azela L. Tamayo, PhD

College of Arts and Sciences, Manuel S. Enverga University Foundation, Lucena City, Quezon, Philippines

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### \*Corresponding author:

Ma. Antonette B. Leonod (antonetteleonod10@gmail.com), Maria Azela L. Tamayo, PhD (mazela.tamayo@mseuf.edu.ph)

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## ABSTRACT

*Despite the large body of knowledge on adolescent mental health, their professional help-seeking behaviors remain underexplored. This descriptive cross-sectional survey research explores the professional help-seeking behavior of 300 Senior High School student adolescents, specifically, the demographic profile, attitudes, and motivations. The findings highlight that only 8.7 percent of the sample has previously sought professional help. In comparison, 38.3 percent reported having current mental health concerns. Results show that the competence to seek professional help affects the respondents' professional help-seeking motivation, with the highest weighted average mean of 3.25. Most respondents exhibit positive affect and cognitive attitudes regarding professional help-seeking attitudes, indicating favorable behavior. At a 5% significance level ( $p < .05$ ), there is no significant difference in the respondents' professional help-seeking attitudes when grouped according to their demographic profile. Furthermore, using a standardized scale, more appropriate probability sampling, and conducting a larger sample size are discussed to improve the study.*

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## Introduction

Adolescents' mental health issues have become a significant public health concern worldwide since they are pervasive yet undertreated. According to the World Health Organization (2022), about 10% of children and adolescents experience a mental disorder worldwide, which is

troubling given that only one-third of young people with severe mental health disorders get the help they need (Merikangas et al., 2011). Seeking professional help for mental health concerns can be complex for many adolescents experiencing related problems. Thus, this phenomenon understands that it affects the capacity to access the proper care and treatment for mental health issues.

Attitude and motivation are essential psychological concepts that could influence human behavior, specifically help-seeking behavior. Findings in the different related studies about the attitudes and motivations of people show a significant impact on the actual professional help-seeking behavior. Negative attitudes, poor literacy toward mental health, and help-seeking were significant barriers to why individuals are reluctant to seek professional help. Furthermore, internalized motivation seems to predict seeking mental health help (Sifat et al., 2022). Based on the available studies investigating the impact of attitudes and motivations on help-seeking behavior, the current research aimed to explore professional help-seeking attitudes by assessing their cognitive and affective component, while motivation was assessed in terms of competence and relatedness among adolescents.

An individual's attitude significantly affects how someone behaves. These are internal forces that affect an individual's external behavior. Attitudes have three main components, which include cognitive, behavioral, and affective (Abun et al., 2019). Attitudes toward professional help-seeking behavior could be defined as a learned tendency to evaluate negatively or positively a specific behavior (help-seeking) which includes evaluations of people (mental health professionals/practitioners) and issues (mental health problems) (Cherry, 2022a). Ajzen posited that attitudes become individual dispositions to react favorably or unfavorably toward a particular subject, object, institution, or event (as cited in Firmante, 2017). Research on the attitudes toward professional help-seeking behavior suggests that it either predicts or impedes professional help-seeking intentions.

Regarding professional help-seeking behavior, an individual's beliefs, ideas, and opinions about seeking professional help are known as its cognitive component. A

positive component of cognitive attitude includes having favorable beliefs and perceptions about seeking professional help. The affective attitude refers to the individual's subjective emotional response to professional help-seeking behavior. An attitude's conative, or behavioral, aspect relates to how their cognitive and affective attitude influences an individual's behavior toward professional help-seeking. According to Mcleod (2022), a person's behavior is usually expected to be consistent with their attitudes, which indicates that having a positive affect comes with positive consequences in the same way as having an adverse affect. The positive aspect of an affective attitude pertains to an individual's optimistic belief regarding the efficacy of professional assistance in addressing mental health issues and the favorable results that may be achieved via seeking professional help. The measurement of an individual's trust in the ability of mental health professionals to give adequate support is also a relevant factor to consider. Stigma and other impediments to accessing professional assistance, such as apprehension of societal categorization, lack of confidence in the system, and uncertainty, are detrimental elements of an affective attitude.

Motivation is one of the most significant indicators of human behavior in psychology that develops out of needs and aims to achieve a particular objective. According to Cherry (2022b), motivation is a driving force behind human behavior. It serves as the "why" behind human actions, and the "why" intensity of such behaviors varies among individuals. Some motives become the motivation to act until they manifest in an individual's behavior. For instance, the perceived need to treat or reduce tension caused by psychological distress could be a motive to seek professional help. Thus, motivation is rooted in a motive for tension reduction. Here, the motive is viewed as an internal inclination that drives an individual toward

a desired end-state in which the motivation is met, and a goal is defined as an individual's mental representation of that result that an individual strives to attain. Recent studies concerning motivational factors that facilitate help-seeking behavior indicate that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation increases the likelihood of an individual seeking professional help.

When trying to figure out why someone is motivated to perform such behavior, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a helpful foundation (Sifat et al., 2022). The basic assumptions of self-determination theory focus on fulfilling the three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These three psychological needs serve as a motivational drive for human behavior. Competence here describes the experience of feeling in control of one's behavior; it is measurable by analyzing one's self-reported level of expertise in a particular area. Feeling cared for, connected, and concerned about one another are all aspects of relatedness. Previous researchers on motivation and help-seeking behavior recommend that future studies examine internalized motivation related to seeking mental health care. The study findings of Sifat and colleagues (2022) revealed that seeking mental health help stems from internalized motivation. The findings indicate competency's significance in directing a person's positive views about mental health care. Competency was associated with having positive views about mental health services. Higher mental health knowledge, including knowing how to help and support someone with a mental health issue, and having accurate information and awareness about the efficacy of therapy, medication, and utilization of mental health services, was a significant predictor of being competent in mental health care. Also, relatedness reflected a perceived need and use of mental health care. Their findings

confirmed their hypothesis that autonomy, relatedness, and competency predict the perceived need for mental health support, the use of nonclinical practices and clinical services, and positive beliefs toward using clinical services. Future research should establish a chronology of motivation and investigate the pathways between positive emotions toward mental health services, perceived necessity, and involvement in mental health care.

As the researchers understand, there is a limitation of evidence regarding the professional help-seeking attitudes and motivations among adolescents toward mental health problems in adolescents. The lack of literature about this behavior among youth makes treating mental health problems difficult and creates a massive gap in the unmet needs of the treatment for mental health problems. The consequences of failing to manage mental health problems experienced by adolescents extend into adulthood, compromising both physical and mental health and limiting people's potential to live fulfilling lives. Academic performance and emotional well-being are affected aspects of an adolescent student suffering from mental health issues, including emotional and social development, which is crucial during this period. Mental health conditions may profoundly affect school attendance and schoolwork, can exacerbate isolation and loneliness, and, worse, can lead to suicide (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).

Adolescents' attitudes and motivations toward seeking professional help remain largely unexplored within local research. There is a significant need for an expanded investigation into adolescents' professional help-seeking behavior, specifically focusing on their attitudes and motivations. This research would contribute valuable insights to the global understanding of professional help-seeking behaviors across diverse populations.

The existing gap between the underutilization of mental health services and adolescents' professional help-seeking behavior propelled the researchers' interest in conducting this study. The mounting concern centers around the intricate web of factors influencing professional help-seeking among Filipino adolescents, encompassing their attitudes and motivations.

Consequently, this study was undertaken to delve into adolescents' attitudes and motivations related to seeking professional help to find ways to enhance and cultivate such behaviors among young individuals. Recognizing the pivotal role of mental health in overall student development, the researchers acknowledge that comprehending adolescents' professional help-seeking behavior offers a pathway for educational institutions worldwide to acknowledge and integrate mental health support into their systems.

Educational institutions can elevate adolescents' academic, emotional, and social well-being. By doing so, they equip the younger generation with the skills and resilience necessary to triumph in their future endeavors.

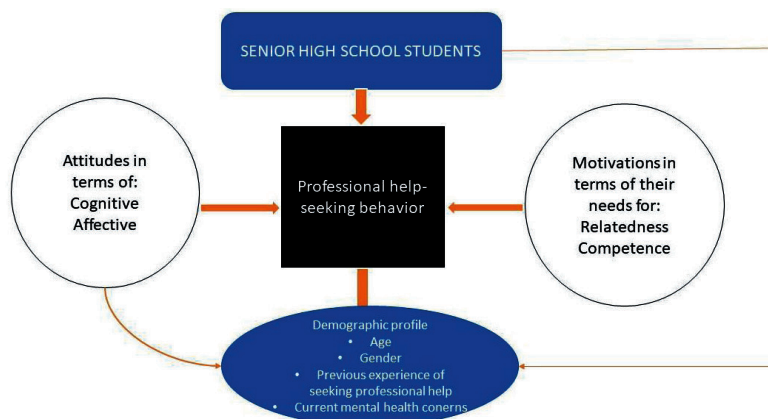
## Purpose of the Research

The main objective of this study is to describe the professional help-seeking behavior of selected Senior High School students by investigating their attitudes and motivations to seek professional help for mental health concerns. The results of this investigation will help develop intervention programs that will enhance adolescents' help-seeking behavior. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following specific objectives: 1.) to identify the respondents' motivations to seek professional help for mental health concerns in terms of competence and relatedness; 2.) to identify the respondents' attitudes towards professional help-seeking behavior in terms of affective component and cognitive component and; 3.) to test whether there is a significant difference in the respondent's attitudes towards professional help-seeking behavior for mental health grouped according to the respondent's demographic profile.

Figure 1 shows the interconnections between the various concepts and variables applied during the research process. This study focused on understanding adolescents' professional help-seeking behavior for mental health concerns according to

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework of the Study.*



the theories provided in the theoretical framework—specifically, the theory of planned behavior, the tripartite model of attitude, and the self-determination theory.

From the foregoing statement of the problem, the null hypothesis was tested:

Ho: There is no significant difference in the respondents' attitudes towards professional help-seeking behavior when grouped according to their demographic profile.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was utilized in conducting the study to gain insight into the attitudes and motivations to seek professional help for mental health concerns of select study's main objectives. The descriptive cross-sectional survey design allowed the researchers to collect data from many different individuals at a single point in time, and the observation and measurement of variables relied on self-reported data from the respondents without being influenced by the researchers (Thomas, 2020). To obtain a description of professional help-seeking behavior among adolescents and to contribute to increasing the behavior, a survey data collection method helped measure the following variables: motivations to seek professional help for mental health concerns and attitudes towards the behavior. Furthermore, the survey approach allowed research findings to be generalized to the entire population.

### *Participants*

The participants of this study were selected Senior High School students of University A, a private, non-sectarian university situated mainly in Lucena, Quezon. In

recruiting the respondents of the study, the researchers utilized quota sampling. In which the population was divided into smaller subgroups known as strata. With a margin of error of five percent (5%) out of 1334 of the student population, 300 students were selected to participate in the study. The researchers' target sample size of 300 respondents was divided into male and female subgroups. The researchers drew a sample of 150 respondents in each subgroup. Finally, the researchers recruited respondents until they reached the quota of 150 respondents for each subgroup. According to Nikolopoulou (2022), quota sampling can help get a broad picture of attitudes, behaviors, or circumstances, such as understanding respondents' concerns about an issue.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

| Demographic Profile                                  | Percentage  |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Age</b>   |             |
| 16 years old   | 16.7%       |
| 17 years old   | 33.7%       |
| 18 years old   | 44.3%       |
| 19 years old   | 5.3%        |
| <b>Gender</b>  |             |
| Female   | 50%         |
| Male   | 50%         |
| <b>Previous Experience Seeking Professional Help</b> |             |
| Yes  | 8.7%        |
| No   | 91.3%       |
| <b>Presence of Mental Health Concerns</b>            |             |
| Yes  | 38.3%       |
| No   | 61.7%       |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>100%</b> |

The researchers informed all the participants about the nature and purpose of the study and provided their voluntary consent to partake. Further, the confidentiality of their responses was guaranteed. They were also informed of their right to refuse and/or withdraw anytime in this study.

### *Instruments*

This study utilized a self-constructed structured survey questionnaire guided by the purpose of the research and analyses of various related literature surveys. The researchers opted to utilize a self-made questionnaire to measure the specific components of attitudes and motivations, which is not covered by available standardized help-seeking questionnaires, which only measure general attitudes. The survey questionnaire is a four-point Likert Scale that aims to identify the respondent's professional help-seeking attitudes and motivations. The questionnaire was content validated by the Subject Matter Experts (SME) with a .8 content validity index, which means it is acceptable. The questionnaire was pilot tested and indicated an acceptable internal consistency index of .833.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

The researchers initiated the data collection process by seeking approval from the Principal of the Basic Education Department. A formal request letter was submitted personally to the Principal to obtain permission to gather data from Senior High School students. Upon receiving approval, the researchers collaborated with the Senior High School coordinator to identify and engage potential respondents.

The data collection phase involved the administration of questionnaires to the 300 Senior High School students. The researchers ensured a comprehensive coverage of the selected participants, achieving a retrieval

rate of 100%. Before administering the survey, each participant was provided with an informed consent form, and an assent form was also obtained for those minors. The researchers thoroughly explained the study's context, outlining potential risks and benefits associated with participation. It was emphasized that participants retained the right to decline or withdraw their involvement at any point. The survey itself was completed within a time frame of 10-15 minutes.

After completing the survey, the collected data underwent thorough tallying and was transcribed into an Excel spreadsheet, ensuring precise representation. The data was then subject to a series of analyses, including both descriptive and inferential statistics, utilizing the IBM-SPSS tool. This process aimed to derive meaningful insights from the gathered information while maintaining the confidentiality of the participant's responses. The outcomes were subsequently interpreted in the context of the study's objectives and existing literature.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Before conducting the study, the research study with approval code "BS-2023-453" has undergone the approval of the university ethics committee. After the ethics committee's approval, the researchers conducted the study immediately. The researchers discussed and explained the nature of the research, including the potential risks and benefits that will arise from participating in the related study procedures. Moreover, the respondents were assured that the data obtained would remain confidential and solely used for research purposes and that no identifying information would be reported in any part of the study upon signing the informed consent and assent form. The respondents were also informed that they might withdraw from participating in the study at any time should they deem it necessary. The researchers

provided the contact details that allowed the participant to contact the researchers once they had decided to withdraw from the study, and they were not forced to partake in the study further.

## Results and Discussion

### *Professional Help-Seeking Motivations*

As shown in Table 2, most items have a qualitative description of Agree, with a weighted average mean of 3.25. Additionally, most of the respondents are motivated to seek professional help when they gain a sense of competence in seeking professional help by being aware that there are healthcare facilities available for people with mental health problems. Moreover, most respondents appear to be aware that mental health problems can be treated, supporting

their belief that seeking professional help can provide effective treatment for people with mental health problems. Meanwhile, only some respondents assert that they can quickly identify problems that need professional attention, with the lowest weighted mean. The findings suggest that the respondents have sufficient knowledge about mental health help-seeking. Knowing the positive effects of mental health help-seeking and being aware of the available mental health care facilities can enhance the motivation to seek professional help. Romppanen et al. (2021) state that social competence is crucial to mental health care. There is a longitudinal link between teenage competence and adult adaptive functioning. Their research confirms previous findings that there is a link between higher levels of social competence during adolescence with fewer internalizing issues in young adulthood.

**Table 2**

*Respondent's Professional Help-Seeking Motivations in Terms of Competence*

| Statements  | Weighted Mean | Verbal Description |
|---|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. I am aware that there are health facilities available for people with mental health problems.                    | 3.53          | Strongly Agree     |
| 2. I am aware that mental health problems can be treated.   | 3.49          | Strongly Agree     |
| 3. I believe that seeking professional help can provide effective treatment for people with mental health problems. | 3.42          | Strongly Agree     |
| 4. I can learn new behaviors and skills through seeking professional help.  | 3.29          | Strongly Agree     |
| 5. I will become aware of when, how, and where to seek professional help for mental health concerns.                | 3.24          | Agree              |
| 6. I can refer a friend to a professional to get professional help.   | 3.06          | Agree              |
| 7. I will seek professional help to be guided in solving my problems.   | 3.06          | Agree              |
| 8. I can easily identify my problems which needs professional attention.  | 2.87          | Agree              |
| <b>Weighted Average Mean</b>  | <b>3.25</b>   | <b>Agree</b>       |

*Legend:*

3.26 – 4.00 Strongly Agree

1.76 – 2.50 Disagree

2.51 – 3.25 Agree

1.00– 1.75 Strongly Disagree

**Table 3***Respondent's Professional Help-Seeking Motivations in terms of Relatedness*

| Statements   | Weighted Mean | Verbal Description |
|--|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. I understand that it is important for me that a mental health professional is trustworthy.            | 3.38          | Strongly Agree     |
| 2. I consider the characteristics/attitudes of mental health professional before I seek help from them.  | 3.18          | Strongly Agree     |
| 3. I consider what my family might think, say, do or feel in seeking professional help.                  | 2.96          | Strongly Agree     |
| 4. I am uncomfortable talking about my feelings, emotions, or thoughts to a mental health professional.  | 2.88          | Strongly Agree     |
| 5. I do not care if people might not take me seriously if they found out I was having professional care. | 2.86          | Agree              |
| 6. I sometimes fear that I might be seen as weak for having a mental health problem.                     | 2.77          | Agree              |
| 7. I worry that mental health professionals might not be interested to my problems.                      | 2.58          | Agree              |
| 8. I sometimes fear that I might be seen as 'crazy' when I seek professional help.                       | 2.54          | Agree              |
| <b>Weighted Average Mean</b>   | <b>2.89</b>   | <b>Agree</b>       |

*Legend:*3.26 – 4.00      *Strongly Agree*1.76 – 2.50      *Disagree*2.51 – 3.25      *Agree*1.00– 1.75      *Strongly Disagree*

Similarly, in the study by Sifat et al. (2022), competency was associated with having positive views about mental health services. Having higher mental health knowledge, including knowing how to help and support someone with a mental health issue and having accurate information about the efficacy of therapy, medication, and utilization of mental health services, was a significant predictor of having positive attitudes toward mental health care, thus increasing the motivation to seek professional help. Providing youth with more information about mental health help-seeking and increasing their willingness to seek professional help may enhance their mental health and reduce suicide ideas and behaviors (Lindow et al., 2020).

The item questionnaires were composed of the need to experience a sense of belonging and attachment to other people. Table 3 shows that most items have a qualitative description of Agree, with a

weighted average mean of 2.89. Apparently, most of the respondents strongly agree that it is essential for them that a mental health professional is trustworthy. Likewise, most of the respondents assert that they consider the characteristics or attitudes of a mental health professional when seeking professional help. Apart from these characteristics, they also tend to emphasize what their family might think, say, do, or feel when they seek professional help. Meanwhile, some respondents agree that they sometimes fear being seen as 'crazy' when they seek professional help.

The results imply that respondents are concerned about what other significant and non-significant people will say and the characteristics of a mental health professional when they seek professional help for mental health concerns. The study by Samuel and Kamenetsky (2022) shows that students who had already experienced seeking help from individuals who could provide advice



and guidance were less concerned about what significant people might think if they learned that they were seeking professional assistance for psychological problems. Given that only 8.7% of the current study sample reported having previous experience seeking professional help, most respondents were still concerned about what other people say and the characteristics of a mental health professional when they seek professional help for mental health concerns due to lack of experience and fear of being stigmatized. According to Martinez et al. (2020) societal and self-stigmatizing views about mental illness impede obtaining help in the Philippines. They argued that self-stigma presents itself in beliefs that mental illness is a sign of personal weakness or failure of character, fear of loss of face, feelings of humiliation or embarrassment, self-blame, and a sensation of being a disgrace or regarded adversely. Nevertheless, adolescents are at an age

where societal standards and norms have the potential to influence their decisions strongly. The study's findings by Ciranka and van den Bos (2019) provide evidence that social sensitivity in adolescents can result in secure, health-promoting behavior.

#### *Attitudes towards Professional Help-Seeking Behavior*

The result (Table 4) indicates that most items have a qualitative description of Agree, with a weighted average mean of 2.77. Accumulating the highest weighted mean, most respondents agree that they feel confident that seeking professional help would improve their problem-solving skills. Likewise, most respondents agree that the protection of confidentiality makes it feel good talking to a mental health professional, which also makes them feel that seeking professional help is interesting for them. On the other hand,

**Table 4**

*Respondent's Attitudes Towards Professional Help-Seeking Behavior in Terms of Affective Component*

| Statements  | Weighted Mean | Verbal Description |
|---|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. I am confident that seeking professional help will improve my skills in handling problems. | 3.23          | Agree              |
| 2. I feel good talking to a mental health professional because of confidentiality.            | 3.13          | Agree              |
| 3. I feel like seeking professional help for mental health problems is interesting to do.     | 2.88          | Agree              |
| 4. I feel nervous when just have the mere thought of seeking professional help.               | 2.76          | Agree              |
| 5. I find it difficult to seek professional help.   | 2.74          | Agree              |
| 6. I am confident that I am seeking professional help.  | 2.69          | Agree              |
| 7. I feel incompetent when I seek professional help in dealing with my own problems.          | 2.65          | Agree              |
| 8. I feel like seeking professional help for mental health problems is exciting.              | 2.64          | Agree              |
| 9. I feel uneasy in seeking professional help.  | 2.62          | Agree              |
| 10. I feel like it is embarrassing to seek professional help.                                 | 2.32          | Agree              |
| <b>Weighted Average Mean</b>  | <b>2.77</b>   | <b>Agree</b>       |

*Legend:*

|             |                       |             |                          |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| 3.26 – 4.00 | <i>Strongly Agree</i> | 1.76 – 2.50 | <i>Disagree</i>          |
| 2.51 – 3.25 | <i>Agree</i>          | 1.00 – 1.75 | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> |

**Table 5***Respondent's Attitudes towards Professional Help-Seeking Behavior in terms of Cognitive Component*

| <b>Statements</b>  | <b>Weighted Mean</b> | <b>Verbal Description</b> |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 21. I believe that seeking professional help is necessary to better understand one's self.                       | 3.26                 | Strongly Agree            |
| 25. I think seeking professional help would help people be able to lead a more productive life.                  | 3.20                 | Agree                     |
| 23. I believe only mental health professionals could provide help to find solutions to problems.                 | 2.66                 | Agree                     |
| 24. I think seeking professional help is a complicated process.  | 2.64                 | Agree                     |
| 29. I believe seeking professional help is the only way to understand the cause of the problem.                  | 2.63                 | Agree                     |
| 22. I believe seeking professional help is only useful when dealing with professional problems.                  | 2.63                 | Agree                     |
| 27. I believe individuals should make every effort to solve their own problems before seeking professional help. | 2.51                 | Agree                     |
| 26. I think it is probably best not to know everything about oneself.  | 2.43                 | Disagree                  |
| 30. I believe seeking professional help is irrelevant to solve mental health concerns.                           | 2.23                 | Disagree                  |
| 28. I believe mental health concerns do not need special attention to be resolved.                               | 2.04                 | Disagree                  |
| <b>Weighted Average Mean</b>   | <b>2.62</b>          | <b>Agree</b>              |

*Legend:*3.26 – 4.00      *Strongly Agree*1.76 – 2.50      *Disagree*2.51 – 3.25      *Agree*1.00– 1.75      *Strongly Disagree*

some respondents tend to feel embarrassed to seek professional help.

As shown in Table 4, most respondents tend to positively affect professional help-seeking behavior. This indicates a potential professional help-seeking intention. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, all human behavior is the by-product of behavioral intention influenced by three factors: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, with PBC also having a direct impact on behavior. The purpose of these components is to anticipate intention, which leads to behavioral performance. The significant aspect of this paradigm is behavioral intent, characterized by the attitude towards the likelihood that the activity will have the desired consequence and the subjective norms of the risks and advantages associated with

that outcome. The professional help-seeking intention is unlikely to develop when an individual tends to negatively affect the attitude object. According to Mcleod (2022), a person's behavior is usually expected to be consistent with their attitudes, which indicates that having a positive affective attitude comes with positive consequences in the same way as having an adverse affect. The results of the current study imply that the respondents have high-level confidence in mental health professionals, which is related to having trust in mental health professionals in helping to improve handling and managing their problems and keeping confidentiality. This suggests that adolescents' affective attitudes towards mental health professionals are another important factor in increasing their professional help-seeking behavior. The treatment-seeking process could be

compromised by unfavorable attitudes such as embarrassment, a desire to handle symptoms independently, and a poor judgment of treatment, on the other hand, being open and having a good outlook on professional care were regarded as helpful in facilitating professional help-seeking behavior (Eigenhuis et al., 2021).

With the highest weighted mean, most respondents believe seeking professional help is necessary to understand oneself better and that it would help people lead a more productive life (Table 5). Also, the majority of respondents believe only mental health professionals could provide help to find solutions to problems. However, they find seeking professional help a complicated process. Indeed, the results suggest that their perception of seeking professional help as a complicated process is a barrier preventing them from seeking help. It appears that assisting individuals in recognizing they need help, being able to articulate their feelings about the issue at hand, being aware of available resources, and being open to receiving those resources are all crucial steps in ensuring they receive the assistance they require.

This is in line with the study by Orji (2021), which indicates that psycho-education affected the attitude of young adults, which invariably predisposed them to seek help for mental health. Similarly, Ramdass et Al. (2020) assert a strong positive relationship between students' lack of knowledge of counseling services and how to access help and lack of trust in the mental health professional. Thus, it is crucial to understand that having positive beliefs and adequate and accurate knowledge about mental health help-seeking contributes to enhanced professional help-seeking behavior.

On the other hand, most of the responses indicate a positive cognitive attitude towards professional help-seeking

behavior among the respondents. This is a good indication of potential positive behavior. However, there are instances that attitude alone is insufficient to elicit behavior congruent to their attitudes. Later research on the role of attitudes in behavior performance has shown negative results, suggesting that attitudes have little or no role in shaping human actions. In the literature review about the influence of attitudes on behavior by Abun et al. (2019), such findings of these later studies have shown that a person's attitudes have no or little correlation with behavior. Circumstances are not the only variable influencing the attitude-behavior relationship.

#### *Comparison of Respondents' Attitudes and Professional Help-Seeking Behavior*

Table 6 reveals no significant difference in the respondents' attitudes toward professional help-seeking behavior regarding their age. At a 5% level of significance ( $p < .05$ ), the result shows that there is no significant difference between the age and attitudes of the respondents toward professional help-seeking behavior in terms of Affective component ( $p = .168$ ) and Cognitive component ( $p = .123$ ). These results imply that most students between 16 and 19 years old tend to demonstrate the same attitudes toward professional help-seeking behavior. It could also be deduced from the result that age does not significantly predict professional help-seeking attitudes. Since the age bracket of the respondents is in the adolescent stage, it explains why their attitudes are not significantly different from each other. Thus, the researchers recommend further exploring the attitudes toward seeking professional help in a wide age range.

Furthermore, it discloses no significant difference in the respondents' attitudes when grouped according to gender. At a 5% level of significance ( $p < .05$ ), it shows that there is no significant

**Table 6**

*Significant Difference in the Attitudes of the Respondents Towards Professional Help-Seeking Behavior when Grouped according to their Demographic Profile.*

| Profile  | Variables           | P-value | Decision<br>( $p < .05$ ) | Conclusion      |
|--|---------------------|---------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Age  | Affective Component | .168    | Accept $H_0$              | Not Significant |
|  | Cognitive Component | .123    | Accept $H_0$              | Not Significant |
| Gender   | Affective Component | .224    | Accept $H_0$              | Not Significant |
|  | Cognitive Component | .010*   | Reject $H_0$              | Significant     |
| Current Mental Health Concern                    | Affective Component | .397    | Accept $H_0$              | Not Significant |
|  | Cognitive Component | .242    | Accept $H_0$              | Not Significant |
| Previous Experience of Seeking Professional Help | Affective Component | 1.312   | Accept $H_0$              | Not Significant |
|  | Cognitive Component | .372    | Accept $H_0$              | Not Significant |

*Legend:*

|             |                       |             |                          |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| 3.26 – 4.00 | <i>Strongly Agree</i> | 1.76 – 2.50 | <i>Disagree</i>          |
| 2.51 – 3.25 | <i>Agree</i>          | 1.00 – 1.75 | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> |

difference between the attitudes of the respondents toward professional help-seeking behavior in terms of Affective ( $p = .224$ ) for males and females.

Meanwhile, there exists a significant difference between the gender and attitudes of the respondents toward professional help-seeking behavior in terms of the Cognitive component ( $p = .010$ ), with males gaining higher scores than females. Regarding cognitive components, male respondents are likelier to have positive attitudes toward professional help-seeking behavior. The result shows that male respondents tend to have positive beliefs, opinions, and ideas about seeking professional help. Having higher intentions is linked to a positive attitude towards the behaviors.

Moreover, it shows no significant difference in the attitudes toward professional help-seeking behavior grouped according to their previous experience seeking professional help. At a 5% level of significance ( $p < .05$ ), it shows that there is no significant difference in the attitudes toward professional help-

seeking behavior in terms of Affective component ( $p = .397$ ) and Cognitive components ( $p = .242$ ) for respondents who have and have not previous experience seeking professional help. As seen from the demographic profile, a few respondents previously sought professional help for mental health concerns, which may significantly affect the result.

This result contradicts prior studies,, which reported that previous experience in seeking professional help facilitates help-seeking behavior. A study about the barriers, facilitators, and interventions targeting help-seeking behaviors for common mental health problems in adolescents by Velasco et al. (2020) found that previous positive experiences with health services and mental health literacy were the most cited facilitator of help-seeking behavior. In line with this, the study by Radez et al. (2021) indicates that adolescents with past (positive) experience of professional help-seeking are more likely to hold positive expectations, are less afraid of professional help, and more likely to seek professional help in the future than those without these past experiences. This only indicates that familiarity and prior

good experience with mental health services mitigate the stigma associated with those who use them and the professionals who provide them.

Finally, at a 5% level of significance ( $p < .05$ ), it shows that there is no significant difference between the attitudes toward professional help-seeking behavior in terms of the Affective component ( $p = .191$ ) and Cognitive components ( $p = .372$ ) for respondents who have and have not current mental health concerns. These findings are consistent with previous research by Cheng et al. (2018), suggesting that current mental health concerns do not solely significantly predict attitudes toward seeking psychological help. Accurately recognizing their symptoms of mental health issues is a predictor of help-seeking attitudes.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study aims to describe the professional help-seeking behavior of selected Senior High School student adolescents, particularly their attitudes and motivations. The underutilization of mental health care services has created more severe problems in adolescents' mental health. Professional help-seeking behavior serves as an adaptive coping mechanism to improve managing and handling mental health problems. Understanding their attitudes and motivations towards professional help-seeking for mental health concerns provides essential insights for educators, practitioners, and policymakers to create programs to enhance and strengthen professional help-seeking behavior among the youth.

Based on the preceding findings, adolescent students' motivation to seek professional help lies within their need to gain competence in managing and handling their problems. However, the findings indicate that the respondents still find seeking professional help complicated, and

only a few know how to identify issues that need professional attention. Despite the available services and raising awareness projects, the underutilization of mental health services and general attitudes toward mental health has become another problem, especially among adolescents. Thus, adolescents need to be appropriately educated about mental health help-seeking to improve their attitudes and motivations to seek professional help using psychoeducation modules. This suggests the importance of comprehensive mental health literacy in the educational system. Developing a psychoeducation program to promote the active seeking of professional mental health help should focus on enhancing their attitudes, especially regarding their cognitive and affective attitudes and motivations regarding their need to feel a sense of belongingness. The researchers also recommend considering available platforms for promoting mental health services and strategizing their content according to their professional help-seeking attitudes and motivations.

Regarding relatedness, most adolescent students are still concerned about what other significant and non-significant people will say and the characteristics of a mental health professional when they seek professional help for mental health concerns. Adolescents are at an age where societal standards and norms have the potential to influence their decisions strongly. Self and public stigma affect the decision-making process wherein people fear other people's judgment. This is in line with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which states that all human behavior is the by-product of behavioral intention influenced by three factors: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, with PBC also having a direct impact on behavior. People develop subjective norms according to the social norms that a person belongs to. Thus, a supportive environment may result in more secure and healthy behavior.

Another aspect of the findings indicates that most respondents have a positive affect and cognitive attitude toward professional help-seeking behavior, which implies positive behavior. This is important since it indicates a possible positive behavioral attitude toward seeking professional help among adolescents. Positive affect and beliefs about seeking professionals are predictive of positive behavior. The Tripartite Model of Attitude maintained the three aspects of attitude, which are affective, cognitive, and behavioral, may interact and overlap in each situation. It is important to note that cognitive and affective components of attitude are essential to consider in increasing the desired behavior. Thus, it is vital to consider the aspects of cognitive and affective attitude, such as developing programs to increase adolescent knowledge of mental health help-seeking and boosting their confidence in mental health professionals to elicit enhanced professional help-seeking behavior.

Overall, a significant difference in the cognitive attitudes toward professional help-seeking behavior in terms of gender indicates that gender to predict attitudes toward professional help-seeking behavior. Evidence shows that men and women cope differently, with women relying more on emotional coping. However, gender's role in seeking professional help remains less studied.

Furthermore, this study utilized a self-structured survey questionnaire, limiting the study's objective to identify and describe respondents' attitudes and motivations toward professional help-seeking behavior. This type of data gathering cannot explain the respondent's in-depth responses and is prone to response bias and limited respondents' engagement. Hence, it may result in inaccurate data. Also, another limitation of this study was that quota sampling only provides information

about the responding sample. It cannot be generalized to the broader population. Thus, the researchers recommend using a more appropriate probability sampling and conducting a larger sample size. Using a standardized scale that measures their ability to recognize their symptoms to accurately identify those with mental health concerns is also suggested. The researchers also recommend further exploring other variables that affect the professional help-seeking behavior of adolescents using a qualitative approach such as phenomenological studies. Moreover, the researchers highly recommend testing the significant difference in motivation when grouped according to the demographic profile, which the present study lacked. In addition, they are encouraged to explore in depth the culture's role in help-seeking behaviors.

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