

Mental Health Help-seeking in Nepal
— The Effects of Stigma, Self-disclosure, Social Support and Social Network —
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Purpose

The present research investigated the mental health help-seeking in different sociodemographic groups and the effects of psychosocial factors, including social stigma, self-disclosure, social support, and social network on the mental health help-seeking.

Background

Nepal is one of the lowest income countries in Asia, which has a severe mental health treatment gap. Recently, there have been initiatives for integrating mental health service into the district level primary health care. However, there have been scarce researches about the user's help-seeking behaviours. This study aimed to investigate help-seeking and related factors such as stigma, self-disclosure, and social network among Nepali adults.

Methods

A total of 240 Nepali adults completed the survey voluntarily. The samples were consisted of three sociodemographic groups; College students ($n = 124$), urban sample ($n = 54$), and rural sample ($n = 62$). The questionnaire included: Help-seeking measurement using scenarios describing initial symptoms of mental illnesses (i.e., depression, anxiety disorder, and schizophrenia), social stigma, self-disclosure, social support, and social network scales.

Results

The one-way ANOVA analyses were conducted to investigate (a) the difference in the means of help-seeking between sample groups, (b) the difference in the means of different help-seeking resources within the groups, and (c) the difference in the means of psychosocial factors. Analysis (a) revealed that the likelihood of using a mental health professional in case of a psychological symptom was significantly higher in the college sample, and significantly lower in the rural sample compared to other sample groups. Analysis (b) revealed that while the use of physician and informal help-seeking were prevalent across the sample groups, the use of mental health professionals and traditional methods varied between groups. Analysis (c) yielded that stigma, social support, and social density was higher in the rural sample compared to those in college and urban samples. Multiple regression analyses were also conducted in each group to investigate the effects of psychosocial factors on help-seeking. The results showed various associations between psychosocial factors and help-seeking for different resources, as well as the effects of demographic factors.

Conclusion

The results from the current study indicated that the likelihood of mental health help-seeking varied significantly between student, urban, and rural populations. The psychosocial and demographical factors contributing to people's help-seeking in Nepal also varied between those sociodemographic groups. These findings suggest that the variations in the tendencies of help-seeking between sociodemographic groups should be given consideration when planning and applying the interventions to reduce the treatment gap in Nepal.