

## Understanding and Measuring Stigma, Barriers and Attitudes Associated with Seeking Psychological Help Among Young Adults in Czech Republic

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**Abstract :** 200 million people globally experience serious mental health problems, and only one third seek professional help, and help-seeking is described as a last resort. Adolescents and young adults have a high prevalence of mental illness. Mental stigma is a key element in the decision to seek help and is divided into (i) self-stigma (self-stigmatization), including internal beliefs, low self-esteem, and lower quality of life, and (ii) public stigma (social stigma) containing stereotypes, beliefs and society's disapproval of help-seeking having a negative effect on help-seeking and our attitudes. Previous research has mainly focused on examining the construct of help seeking, avoidance, and delaying separately and trying to find out why people do not seek help in time and what obstacles stand in the way. Barriers are not static and may change over time and the stage of help-seeking. Attitudes are closely related to self-stigma and social stigma and predict whether a person will seek help. Barriers (stigmatization, a sense of humiliation, insufficient recognition of the problem, preferences, solving it alone, and distrust of a professional) and facilitators (previous experience with mental problems, social support, and help from others) are factors influencing help-seeking. The current research on the Czech population of young adults responds to the gap between a person with mental health problems and actually seeking professional help. The aim of the study is to describe in detail the individual constructs and factors, to understand the person seeking help, and to define possible obstacles on this path of seeking help. A sample of approximately 250 participants (age 18-35) would take part in the online questionnaire, conducted in May-June 2023, and would be administered a demographic questionnaire and four scales measuring attitudes (Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help - Short form), barriers (Barrier to Help Seeking Scale), self-stigma (Self Stigma of Seeking Help) and stigmatization (Perceptions of Stigmatization by Others for seeking help). Firstly, all four scales would be translated into the Czech language. The aim is (I) to determine the validity and reliability of the Czech translation of the scales, (II) to examine the factors of the scales on the Czech population and compare them retrospectively with the results of reliability and validity from the original language of the scales and (III) to examine the connections between attitudes towards seeking, avoidance or delaying the search for professional psychological help due to the demographic and individual differences of the participants, barriers, self-stigmatization and social stigmatization. We expect to carry out the first study on the given topic in the Czech Republic, to identify and better understand the factors leading to the avoidance of seeking professional help and to reveal the relationships between stigmatization, attitudes and barriers leading to the avoidance or postponement of seeking professional help. The belief is to find out whether the Czech population of young adults differs from the data found on the foreign population in individual constructs, as cultural differences in individual countries were found.

**Keywords :** mental health, stigma, problems, seeking psychological help

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