

## Understanding Attitudes Toward Mental Health Help-Seeking: The Interplay of Cognitive Insight and Self-Stigma in Indian College students

**Ganavi. G**

Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), Bengaluru Campus - Yelahanka, Karnataka, India

**Dr. Harini Gunasekaran**

Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), Bengaluru Campus - Yelahanka, Karnataka, India

### Abstract

The substantial increase in mental health awareness campaigns and content on social media should have led college-going youth in India to be more positive regarding help-seeking yet in 2025, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has identified that the treatment gap ranges between 70% and 92% for mental health disorders in India. The present study aimed to understand the role of cognitive insight in relation to self stigma and attitude to help seeking in college going students in India.

A cross-sectional correlational design was employed. Data were collected from undergraduate and postgraduate students aged 18–25 using standardized self-report measures assessing cognitive insight, self-stigma, and attitudes toward help-seeking. The standardized measures included Beck's Cognitive Insight Scale, the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form, the Self-Stigma of Seeking Help Scale-7, and Kessler's Psychological Distress Scale. Preliminary analyses suggested an association between cognitive insight, self-stigma, and attitudes toward mental health help-seeking among Indian college students. Higher levels of self-stigma appeared to be related to less favourable attitudes toward seeking psychological help, whereas greater cognitive insight was associated with more positive help-seeking attitudes. These relationships are tentative and subject to confirmation through final statistical analyses.

The findings may help inform preventive and promotive mental health awareness programs and intervention models. Additionally, initiatives aimed at enhancing mental health literacy and reducing stigma may be most effective when introduced at earlier developmental stages, when belief systems are still forming.

### Keywords

Attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help, Cognitive insight, Mental health, Self-stigma, Young adults.