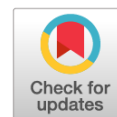


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# The influence of attitudes and social norms on seeking psychological help among Russian adults

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## ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND:** In Russia, the rising prevalence of psychological distress potentially leads to reduced work capacity, a lower quality of life, and an increased risk of suicidal behavior. The utilization of psychological services remains low, necessitating further research to enhance the effectiveness of mental health disorder prevention and suicide prevention strategies.

**AIM:** To assess the influence of attitudes and social norms on seeking psychological help among Russian adults.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:** The study included residents of Saint Petersburg aged 18 and older and was conducted through a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). The survey focused on experiences with seeking psychological help and attitudes toward it. The sample, comprising 1,200 participants, was representative of gender and age distribution, in accordance with St. Petersburg demographic data provided by Rosstat. The survey was conducted in July 2023. Factors influencing help-seeking behavior were analyzed using binary logistic regression.

**RESULTS:** Key factors influencing the decision to seek psychological help were identified. These included gender, age, and social norms, which manifested in the perceived prevalence of psychological help-seeking among acquaintances and expectations of social approval. Additionally, attitudes toward psychological help played a significant role, particularly perceptions that such assistance is only necessary for individuals with mental illnesses or those of high financial status.

**CONCLUSION:** The findings indicate a need to increase psychological help-seeking rates, considering the specific needs of different social groups, particularly men and older adults. This underscores the importance of destigmatization efforts and informational campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the accessibility and effectiveness of psychological services.

**Keywords:** psychological help; help-seeking behavior; social norms; attitude.

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# Влияние установок и социальных норм на обращение за психологической помощью среди взрослого населения России

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## АННОТАЦИЯ

**Обоснование.** В России наблюдается рост психологического неблагополучия, что потенциально влечёт за собой снижение трудоспособности, качества жизни и повышенную вероятность суицидальной активности. Обращение населения за психологической помощью в России остаётся низким и требует дополнительных исследований для повышения эффективности профилактики психических расстройств и суицидального поведения.

**Цель.** Оценить влияние установок и социальных норм на обращение за психологической помощью среди взрослого населения России.

**Материалы и методы.** Исследование охватило жителей Санкт-Петербурга старше 18 лет и было проведено с использованием телефонного опроса по системе CATI. Опрос фокусировался на опыте обращения за психологической помощью и отношении к ней. Выборка, включающая 1200 человек, была репрезентативной по полу и возрасту. Репрезентативность достигалась в соответствии со статистическими данными о половозрастном составе жителей Санкт-Петербурга, представленными в сборнике Росстата. Опрос проведён в июле 2023 г. Анализ факторов, влияющих на обращение за психологической помощью, выполнен с использованием бинарной логистической регрессии.

**Результаты.** Выявлены ключевые факторы, влияющие на обращение за психологической помощью. К ним относятся пол, возраст, а также социальные нормы, которые проявляются в оценках распространённости обращения за психологической поддержкой среди знакомых и ожиданиях одобрения такого обращения. Кроме того, на решение обратиться за психологической помощью влияют установки, связанные с восприятием её как необходимой только для людей с заболеваниями, психическими расстройствами или высоким уровнем благосостояния.

**Заключение.** Результаты исследования свидетельствуют о необходимости увеличения числа обращений за психологической помощью, учитывающей специфику различных социальных групп, включая мужчин и старшее поколение. Это подчёркивает важность проведения мероприятий по дестигматизации психических расстройств и информационных кампаний, направленных на повышение осведомлённости о доступности и эффективности психологической помощи.

**Ключевые слова:** психологическая помощь; обращение за психологической помощью; нормы; установки.

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# 俄罗斯成年人寻求心理帮助的态度及社会规范的影响

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## 摘要

**背景。**近年来，俄罗斯社会中心理困扰（psychological distress）问题日益突出，这不仅可能导致劳动能力下降和生活质量降低，还可能增加自杀行为的风险。然而，心理健康服务的利用率仍然较低，因此，有必要进一步研究如何提高心理疾病预防和自杀预防措施的有效性。

**研究目的。**评估态度和社会规范对俄罗斯成年人心理帮助寻求行为的影响。

**材料与方法。**本研究针对圣彼得堡 18岁及以下的居民，采用计算机辅助电话访谈（Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing, CATI）系统进行调查。调查内容包括个人寻求心理帮助的经历及其对心理帮助的态度。样本量：1,200人。抽样方法：依据俄罗斯联邦统计局（Rosstat）提供的圣彼得堡人口年龄和性别数据进行代表性抽样。调查时间：2023年7月。统计分析：采用二元逻辑回归分析（Binary Logistic Regression）评估影响心理帮助寻求行为的因素。

**结果。**研究发现，性别、年龄及社会规范是影响心理帮助寻求行为的关键因素。社会规范：个体对其社交圈成员是否寻求心理帮助的认知，以及对社会支持和认可的期望，均对其行为产生影响。态度因素：个人对心理帮助的主观认知也起到了重要作用，尤其是将心理帮助视为仅适用于精神疾病患者或经济状况较好人群的观点，会显著降低寻求心理帮助的可能性。

**结论。**研究结果表明，需要提高心理帮助的利用率，尤其是针对男性和老年群体。这进一步凸显了去污名化工作的必要性，并强调了开展心理健康宣传活动的重要性，以提升公众对心理帮助的可及性和有效性的认知。

**关键词：**心理帮助；心理健康服务利用；社会规范；态度。

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## BACKGROUND

Recent years in Russia have seen a significant increase in the proportion of people with mental disorders<sup>1</sup>. By 2023, the proportion of respondents experiencing depression symptoms reached 39%, and 23% of those surveyed reported symptoms of uncontrollable anxiety [1]. Prior studies also indicated high levels of psychological issues in society. For example, in 2018, approximately 40% of the adult population in Vologda Region reported symptoms of anxiety, depression, and neurosis [2]. This concerning trend has been linked to various factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021) [3], escalating international tensions, and increased perceptions of future uncertainty [4].

WHO mental health studies highlight the issue of unmet mental health needs, manifested by low utilization rates of relevant services [5]. Unmet needs prolong the period during which individuals live with the burden of poor mental health and are associated with higher disability rates, reduced quality of life, and increased likelihood of suicidal ideation and attempts.

Studies on seeking psychological help typically examine four primary sources of psychological and emotional support: professional (psychologists, psychotherapists, and other specialists), alternative (religious leaders, fortune-tellers, psychics, etc.), close social networks (family, friends), and self-help (obtaining information and support through books and the Internet) [6]. Surveys among the Russian population indicate that psychological challenges are most commonly overcome with support from relatives and friends. When explaining refusal of professional help, Russians cite stoicism, distrust of psychologists, and perceptions of high cost and ineffectiveness of services<sup>2</sup>. A significant portion of the population prefers managing psychological challenges with antidepressants and sedatives [7], likely due to rapid and pronounced symptomatic relief. Actual adult help-seeking rates remain low. According to the Russian Public Opinion Research Center, only 12% sought psychological help in 2022<sup>3</sup>. According to HSE University reports, 5.2% sought help in 2022, which is almost similar to the 2021 rates (5.3%) [7]. Help-seeking is more common among youth, women, and university-educated individuals<sup>4</sup>. The gap between recognized mental health issues and professional help utilization is likely to widen.

According to modern concepts, seeking psychological help represents the pursuit of external support to cope with mental health-related issues [8]. While no universally accepted theory or model exists in this domain, the Theory of Planned Behavior developed by Ajzen [9] is considered the predominant approach for explaining factors influencing psychological help-seeking [10, 11]. Of note is that research typically analyzes three core components of this process: help-seeking readiness (primarily determined by attitudes), intention (conscious plan to seek help), and behavior (actual help-seeking actions) [6]. Eritsyana et al. examined barriers and drivers of psychological help-seeking among young adults in general education using the Theory of Planned Behavior [12]. This study confirmed the impact of subjective standards: stronger belief in approval from significant others correlates with greater help-seeking intention. Anikina et al. report that gender socialization contributes to help-seeking behaviors [13], noting that masculinity correlates with denying the need for support. Additionally, men demonstrate lower mental health literacy, further negatively impacting their intention to seek help when needed. Studies on seeking psychotherapeutic help [9, 10] reveal that attitudes (e.g., beliefs about psychotherapy's safety and efficacy), social norms (experiences with and attitudes toward therapy of a person's close ones), and prior personal therapy experience significantly influence this process.

The extent to which anticipated social reactions actually impact help-seeking behavior when considering other factors remains understudied. To better understand societal attitudes toward psychological help and help-seeking practices, research must identify facilitating and impeding factors.

**AIM** To assess the influence of attitudes and social norms on seeking psychological help among the adult population in Russia.

## METHODS

### Study Design

This is a cross-sectional study. Empirical data were collected through a structured telephone survey of individuals aged 18 years and older permanently residing in St. Petersburg.

The theoretical framework is the Theory of Planned Behavior. Table 1 shows the variables analyzed (dependent and independent) alongside question wordings. The tool used was an original questionnaire specifically developed for this research.

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, social norms denote perceived social pressure regarding whether to perform a particular behavior. Subjective norms help individuals evaluate their social circle's views on this behavior, which may either encourage or deter it [9]. Grounded in this definition, statements were developed to assess acquaintances' help-seeking experiences and attitudes toward help.

<sup>1</sup> Russia is facing an increase in mental health issues [Internet]. Available at <https://www.vesti.ru/article/3593532> Accessed on June 26, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Who do people seek mental health help from? [Internet]. Available at <https://fom.ru/Obraz-zhizni/14183> Accessed on February 26, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Seeking for mental health help [Internet]. Available at <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskiy-obzor/v-poiskakh-psikhologicheskoi-pomoshchi> Accessed on February 26, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Analyze it: why are Russians seeking psychological help more often? [Internet]. Available at <https://wciom.ru/expertise/analizirui-ehto-pochemu-rossijane-stali-chashche-obrashchatsja-k-psikhologam> Accessed on February 26, 2024.

Within this theory, attitude is defined as an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the specific action. This is reflected in the following statements: «help is only accessible to the wealthy», «only people with disorders seek help», «psychological help is infallible», «belief in magic».

## Eligibility Criteria

The sample population comprised 1,200 residents of St. Petersburg—a group representative by sex and age: the mean age was 46.1 years ( $SD = 15.6$ ), with 45% men and 55% women. Table 2 shows sex-age group proportions in the sample population matching those of the general population during the study year. Representativeness was achieved according to St. Petersburg residents' official sex-age statistics from Rosstat publications [14].

The CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) system was used for data collection. The survey was conducted at St. Petersburg State University Center for Applied Sociology, focusing on psychological help-seeking experiences, help-seeking practices, significant others' attitudes toward psychological help, and respondents' overall attitudes toward psychological help. Interviews were performed throughout July 2023. The study did not collect personal information, and random digit dialing (post area code/carrier prefix) was implemented.

Sample size calculation principles: the sample size was calculated for a 2.83% confidence interval and 95% confidence probability; sex and age were representativeness parameters; sex-age composition was determined using current Rosstat data.

Statistical methods: binary logistic regression identified psychological help-seeking predictors. The analysis was conducted in SPSS statistical package. The differentiation criterion was respondent answers to «Have you ever consulted a psychologist?» («yes, multiple times/yes, once» = 1; «no» = 0). Significance of intergroup differences (help-seekers vs. non-help-seekers) was assessed using Pearson's chi-square test.

To generate binary logistic regression consistent with theoretical model assumptions and those outlined in the sources review, the following independent variables were included: sex, age, education, minor children, income, social norms, and attitudes toward psychological help.

## RESULTS

### Participants

The age ranged from 18 to 79 years, with a median age of 44 years. The respondent education was distributed as follows: 14.8% had secondary professional education, 68.9% had higher education, and the rest had secondary general education or below. A total of 47.4% were employed, 15.3% were pensioners, 20.1% were self-employed, and 3.2% were students. One-third of respondents (33.0%) had

minor children. Financial well-being indicators revealed the following: approximately 2.0% reported lacking sufficient funds for basic food, 9.0% could afford only food expenses, 12.0% had sufficient means for both clothing and food, nearly 41.0% could purchase small household appliances, 29.0% could afford major appliances, and approximately 7.0% could make substantial purchases (e.g., a car or property).

### Primary Results

Regarding changes in psychological state over the past year, 38.2% reported no change, 43.5% indicated it «rather worsened» or «significantly worsened», and 16.6% noted it «significantly improved» or «rather improved». A total of 15.4% currently require psychological help; 38.2% ever consulted a psychologist (including 11.5% single-session users); 20.8% attended psychologist for several sessions within  $\leq 1$  month/several months; 5.4% attended psychologist for  $\geq 1$  year.

A significant place among help-seeking sources for psychological support is held by professional help. Family members (33.8%), partner/spouse (29.6%), psychologist/psychotherapist (28.2%) were those to turn to in case of mental health issues and life challenges. Spiritual and paranormal support options were relevant for <8.0%. A total of 18.4% would not seek any help.

Primary reasons for the latest psychologist consultation included anxiety/depressive symptoms (28.2% of help-seekers), partner relationship issues (19.6%), parent-child dynamics (13.7%), personal growth and self-development (16.6%), and relations with parents or other older relatives (11.1%).

Paid psychological services predominated (57.7%), followed by free access (28.1%); 13.3% used both modalities. Most help-seekers reported full (39.0%) or partial (27.0%) satisfaction with received services during their last consultation. Table 3 shows descriptive statistics for the dependent variable and its associations with independent variables.

Approximately  $\frac{3}{5}$  residents of Saint-Petersburg indicated their acquaintances hold positive/rather positive views toward psychological help; 63.0% reported acquaintances who sought such help. The prevailing belief towards seeking psychological help agrees with the statement that such help is accessible only to the wealthy (32.0% of responders). Approximately  $\frac{1}{10}$  of responders believe that psychological help is sought by people with mental disorders (12.0%). The same proportion (13.0%) believes in magic. In contrast, every third respondent (31.0%) expressed confidence in psychological help infallibility.

Attitudes towards psychological help demonstrated the most significant differences between help-seekers and non-help-seekers. Notably, respondents who consulted psychologists exhibited a realistic outlook on psychological help efficacy: they less frequently endorsed beliefs about psychological help being infallible or exclusively accessible to the wealthy. The «psychological help is accessible only to the wealthy» belief did not significantly differ between help-seekers and

**Table 1.** Variables used in analysis, question and answer wordings

Variables	Question wording	Options
Independent		
Acquaintances' attitude toward seeking help	How do you think most people you know would feel if you went to a psychologist for counseling?	1 — rather approve; approve 0 — disapprove; rather disapprove; neutral attitude
Help-seeking experience of your friends	Have sought or are seeking psychsological help	1 — some friends; many friends; 0 — nobody or almost nobody among my friends
Help is only accessible to the wealthy	High-quality psychological help is only accessible to the wealthy	1 — completely agree; rather agree; 0 — rather disagree; completely disagree
Only people with disorders seek help	Only people with mental disorders seek psychological help	1 — completely agree; rather agree; 0 — rather disagree; completely disagree
Psychological help is infallible	Psychological help cannot make the situation worse, it will only make it better	1 — rather disagree; completely disagree; 0 — completely agree; rather agree
Belief in magic	Do you believe that you can influence the fate, health or solve problems using witchcraft or magic?	1 — absolutely believe; rather believe; 0 — rather disbelieve; absolutely disbelieve
Controls		
Higher education	What is your current educational level?	1 — higher education; 0 — basic general education; secondary general education; secondary professional education
Minor childern	Do you have minor children (under 18 years of age)?	1 — yes; 0 — no
Female sex	Instructions for an interviewer: Mark the respondent's gender	1 — female; 0 — male
High and middle income	Evaluate general income of your family (your family means all people you are living with)	1 — I have enough money to buy small household appliances, but have to save for major purchases; I have enough money to buy something major, but have to save for a car or property; I have enough money to buy a car or property; 0 — I don't have enough money to buy foods and clothing; I have enough money to buy foods, but buying clothing is something challenging; I have enough money for foods and clothing, but not for small household appliances
Age above the median	Specify your age (age at last birthday)	1 — 44 years and older; 0 — 44 years and younger
Dependent		
Seeking psychological help	Have you ever consulted a psychologist?	1 — yes, multiple times; yes, once; 0 — no, I have not

**Table 2.** Sex-age respondent composition, %

Gender	Population	Age (years)					
		18–25	26–35	36–45	46–55	56–65	66–79
Males	Study sample	4.25	10.67	10.25	7.75	7.08	5.00
	St. Petersburg	4.21	10.68	10.21	7.79	7.08	5.02
Females	Study sample	4.42	11.00	10.83	8.83	10.25	9.67
	St. Petersburg	4.43	10.96	10.85	8.86	10.24	9.65



**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics of the variables used in the analysis and their differences for different categories of the dependent variable, Pearson's chi-square test (seeking psychological help)

Variables	Overall for the sample, <i>n</i> (%)	Yes, repeatedly; yes, once, <i>n</i> (%)	No, I didn't have to, <i>n</i> (%)	The significance of differences, <i>p</i> -value
Acquaintances' attitude toward seeking help	452 (37.7)	227 (49.5)	225 (30.4)	43.997 <0.001
Help-seeking experience of your friends	757 (63.1)	360 (78.4)	397 (53.6)	75.187 <0.001
Help is only accessible to the wealthy	385 (32.1)	385 (33.3)	232 (31.3)	0.533 0.465
Only people with disorders seek help	145 (12.1)	26 (5.7)	119 (16.1)	28.829 <0.001
Psychological help is infallible	367 (30.6)	165 (35.9)	202 (27.3)	10.075 <0.001
Belief in magic	152 (12.7)	66 (14.4)	86 (11.6)	1.970 0.095
Higher education	827 (68.9)	323 (70.4)	504 (68.0)	0.733 0.214
Minor children	396 (33.0)	167 (36.4)	229 (30.9)	3.849 0.029
High and middle income	789 (65.8)	310 (67.5)	479 (64.6)	1.055 0.167
Female sex	660 (55.0)	321 (69.9)	339 (45.7)	66.987 <0.001
Age above the median	602 (50.2)	266 (58.0)	336 (45.3)	18.022 <0.001

non-help-seekers. Psychological help-seeking predominated among younger individuals, women, and child-rearing respondents. Education level and income demonstrated no statistically significant differences between help-seekers and non-help-seekers.

A logistic regression model (Table 4) explaining 18.6% of dependent variable variance was used to analyze the correlation between the factors selected and help-seeking experiences. The result demonstrated that significant predictors for help-seeking include sex (OR = 2.576;  $p < 0.001$ ), age (OR = 1.404;  $p = 0.015$ ), acquaintances' positive attitudes toward psychological help (OR = 1.545;  $p = 0.001$ ), and acquaintances' help-seeking experience (OR = 2.366;  $p < 0.001$ ). The model indicates greater help-seeking probability among women, older individuals, those with acquaintances holding favorable psychological help attitudes, and those with acquaintances experienced in help-seeking. Attitudes toward psychological help emerged as significant predictors. Help-seekers were less likely to agree with the statement that «psychological help is only for people with mental disorders» (OR = 0.479;  $p < 0.001$ ). Belief in the potential fallibility of psychological help positively influenced help-seeking (OR = 1.370;  $p = 0.024$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Key factors influencing psychological help-seeking identified in the study include sex, age, social norms (reflected in respondents' assessments of help-seeking prevalence among acquaintances and expectations of approval should they seek help), and attitudes rejecting beliefs that psychological help is sought exclusively by people with illnesses or mental disorders or that psychological help is always beneficial.

These findings align with international and Russian psychological help-seeking research. Particularly, Cheng et al. [15] demonstrated that male sex and attitudes toward psychological help negatively correlate with help-seeking intentions. Türküm [16] reports significant gender differences in help-seeking readiness among Turkish university students. Traditional masculinity norms, including stoicism and emotional restraint, likely constitute major barriers to professional help-seeking. Studies show that this effect is particularly pronounced among men groups experiencing multiple vulnerabilities (refugees, migrants, low-income individuals, long-term unemployed, health-stigmatized groups, etc.) [17].

Social norms reflected in assessments of respondents in terms of the prevalence of help-seeking behaviors among

**Table 4.** Regression models for help-seeking factors (Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup> = 18.6)

Variables	B	Standard error	Wald Criterion	p-value	Odds ratio
Female sex	0.946	0.135	49.411	<0.001	2.576
Friends approve seeking psychological help	0.435	0.134	10.478	0.001	1.545
Friends have help-seeking experience	0.861	0.151	32.722	<0.001	2.366
Agree that help is only accessible to the wealthy	0.056	0.138	0.166	0.684	1.058
Agree that only people with disorders seek help	−0.737	0.242	9.282	0.002	0.479
Agree that psychological may fail	0.315	0.140	5.091	0.024	1.370
Believe in magic	0.198	0.192	1.063	0.303	1.219
Have higher education	−0.178	0.147	1.460	0.227	0.837
Have minor children	−0.050	0.144	0.123	0.726	0.951
Have high or middle income	−0.054	0.142	0.148	0.701	0.947
Age above the median	0.339	0.139	5.932	0.015	1.404
Constant	−2.795	0.282	98.556	<0.001	0.061

*Note.* Method: binary logistic regression adjusted for all variables; direct step-by-step method.

acquaintances and anticipated approval are supported by studies focusing on the Russian young population. Eritsyan et al. [12] found peer approval expectations (but not peers' actual help-seeking) were associated with predicted intentions to seek help among Russian students. These differences were largely mitigated among adult respondents in our study. Moreover, perceived help-seeking prevalence among acquaintances emerged as a stronger predictor in our regression model than anticipated approval or disapproval. These patterns may reflect generational differences in attitudes toward psychological help and distinct social norm influences on adolescent versus adult behavior.

Approximately one-third of survey respondents reported actual psychological help-seeking behavior, indicating relatively high help-seeking rates. This help-seeking experience among St. Petersburg residents significantly exceeds 5.2%–12.0% rates documented in Russian national surveys by the Public Opinion Foundation and Russian Public Opinion Research Center. Enhanced environmental accessibility encompassing financial and geographical service availability appears to play a major role for St. Petersburg citizens. In this region, free psychological services are rendered through municipal polyclinics, hospitals, multidisciplinary medical centers, family and childhood support centers, and psychological hotlines<sup>5</sup>. Paid psychological services are available via non-governmental medical centers, independent practitioners, and online platforms.

Topkaya's research [18] agrees with our findings regarding psychological help not being exclusively for individuals

with disorders. However, while Topkaya identifies optimism about psychological help as a facilitating factor, our respondents rejected beliefs of its invariably beneficial nature. This difference may stem from Topkaya's methodology. Topkaya's interviews included not only questions regarding the views on psychological help but also its benefits with requests for specific examples. Such contextual framing may have influenced participants' interpretations of benefit-related questions.

In our study, young and middle-aged women (18–44 years) were the most frequent help-seeking age group. International research on barriers to help-seeking among older adults yields conflicting results. On one hand, studies indicate that help-seeking is habitual for older generations, who display minimal stigma-related concerns [19]. We suppose that in Russia, reduced help-seeking among older adults may stem from limited mental health literacy, stigma, and fears of losing independence or life control upon acknowledging psychological needs [20].

Our cross-sectional design precluded help-seeking intentions, a critical precursor to actual behavior. However, a systematic review of 49 studies established subjective norms as statistically significant predictors of help-seeking intentions in 23 studies (59.0%); additionally, 7 of 8 studies examining intention-behavior links confirmed statistically significant associations [6].

Study Limitations

Geography is among key study limitations. While the observed effects may exist in other Russian cities, their magnitude likely applies specifically to St. Petersburg residents. Telephone surveys as a data collection tool limited both questionnaire length and response options for specific questions due to heightened refusal risks and auditory processing

<sup>5</sup> Mental health services [Internet]. Available at <https://gorzdrav.spb.ru/information/content/poleznaya-informatsiya/kontakty/psihologicheskie-sluzhby> Accessed on February 26, 2024.



difficulties with complex scales. The mere fact of seeking help does not indicate that the respondent's issue has been addressed. We excluded other factors influencing help outcomes: service quality, client adherence to recommendations, treatment completion, therapy selection methods, etc. A total of 13,644 individuals participated in the survey, with 12,444 refusing participation at various stages and 1200 completing the full survey. These methodological drawbacks combined with the inability to account for non-participants' perspectives constitute significant study limitations. Additionally notable is our replacement of standardized scales with more flexible variables assessing self-perceived psychological state, social norms, and attitudes toward psychological help.

## CONCLUSION

The study findings yield several practical implications. Understanding of identified factors (sex, age, and social

norms) will optimize programs promoting psychological help-seeking. Particularly, interventions should specifically target sex and age groups to broaden the coverage.

Recognizing the critical role of social approval in help-seeking underscores the need to destigmatize mental health challenges and cultivate environments where seeking support is socially endorsed. Attitudes toward psychological help revealed in results may provide foundations for awareness campaigns dispelling myths about mental health help. Such campaigns can engage diverse social groups to enhance understanding of psychological help's accessibility and benefits. Future research should explore barriers to help-seeking through in-depth interviews and standardized instruments measuring psychological needs, attitudes, and norms. Although our analysis shows women seek psychological help more frequently, it does not directly investigate explanatory factors for this correlation. Detailed examination of these factors represents another perspective for further research.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**Authors' contribution.** S. Tkach — design of survey methods, description and interpretation of results, discussion, literature review; V.A. Odiookova — statistical analysis, description and interpretation of results, discussion, literature review; O.I. Burdina — literature review, problem statement, discussion. All authors confirm that their authorship meets the international ICMJE criteria (all authors have made a significant contribution to the development of the concept, preparation of the article, read and approved the final version before publication).

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**Patients' consent.** Verbal consent was obtained from all the study participants before the study.

## ДОПОЛНИТЕЛЬНАЯ ИНФОРМАЦИЯ

**Вклад авторов.** С. Ткач — проектирование опросных методик, описание и интерпретация результатов, дискуссия, обзор литературы; В.А. Одинокова — проведение статистического анализа, описание и интерпретация результатов, дискуссия, обзор литературы; О.И. Бурдина — обзор литературы, постановка проблемы, дискуссия. Все авторы подтверждают соответствие своего авторства международным критериям ICMJE (все авторы внесли существенный вклад в разработку концепции, подготовку статьи, прочли и одобрили финальную версию перед публикацией).

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