Factors Influencing Psychological Help Seeking in Adults: A Qualitative Study*

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Abstract

The aim of the current research is to identify which factors, and in what direction these factors influence adults' decisions to seek psychological help for their personal problems. The research was designed as a phenomenology model; the data was gathered through the semi-structured interview technique, which is mostly used in qualitative research designs. In selecting the participants, the criterion sampling technique – one of the purposeful sampling techniques – was used. Two criteria were decided upon in selecting participants; being, never having pursued psychological help previously or having terminated a previous process early. There were 6 male and 4 female participants in the study. The interviews were conducted face to face and recorded by a voice-recorder. The interviews were then examined using descriptive analysis techniques. Two main themes emerged as a result of the analysis; namely, factors that inhibited and factors that facilitated psychological help seeking in adults. Social stigma, unwillingness to share problems with an unfamiliar person, the belief that private problems should be kept in the family, one's belief that he/she can solve his/her problems, and not knowing enough about the psychological help process were determined as the sub-themes for inhibiting factors. On the other hand, the availability of psychological services, the belief in the benefits of psychological services, trusting in the mental health professional, and receiving help free of cost were determined as the sub-themes for the facilitating factors. The results were discussed in relation to the literature and several suggestions were made regarding how to overcome the barriers preventing individuals from seeking psychological help and how to make facilitative factors more acceptable, so as to increase people's willingness to seek help.

Keywords: Psychological Help seeking • Barriers and Facilitators • Adults • Qualitative Study • Willingness to Seek Help

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Receiving psychological help is a coping behavior (Mojaverian, Hashimoto, & Kim, 2013), and in the literature about dealing with problems, it is seen as a reaction to stress and a mechanism that contributes to well-being (Wilson & Deane, 2010). Receiving psychological help is important because it decreases the long-term negative effects of mental health problems (Rickwood, Deane, & Wilson, 2007). The process of receiving psychological help starts when the necessity of these services is felt, and it ends when the necessity has been met by receiving psychological help (McKean, 2005). The results of studies in the literature demonstrate that just as there are both barriers effecting one's decision to receive psychological help, so are there facilitators (Hui, Wong, & Fu, 2014; Vogel, Wester, Wei, & Boysen, 2005).

In those studies citing barriers discouraging individuals from making the decision to receive psychological help (Wong, 2006), it has been found that 6% of the variance in individuals' willingness to seek help is explained by the barriers related to receiving that psychological help. This study demonstrate that the only meaningful factor explaining willingness to seek help is participants' own perception of how necessary it is for them to receive psychological help. This finding entails that the less a person feels help to be necessary, the less his desire to seek help is.

In another study, the factors preventing someone from seeking psychological help were studied (Sanders, Thompson, Brazile, & Akbar, 2004). It was seen that several factors impeded one from receiving psychological help such as the fear of stigmatization, lack of knowledge about psychological help process, lack of money, not trusting the practitioner, and feeling that the practitioner will be lack of cultural knowledge and differences.

In a study conducted by Setiawan (2006), the barriers to receiving psychological help from psychological services were studied, finding the most important of these barriers to be an individual's having friends or family. However, there were other barriers, including the price of the services, the desire to solve problems alone, the shame of sharing problems with other people, and not knowing which services are best. In Colloway's (2008) study, it was found that not only did one's fear of stigmatization, of treatment, and of being judged after expressing himself/herself hinder one from seeking and receiving psychological help, but so did individuals' tendency for suicide.

In an important study examining the obstacles to seeking help (Koydemir, Erel, Yumurtacı, & Şahin, 2010), it was found that people often believe that they can solve their own problems, a situation thought to be the most important obstacle in seeking help. The belief that a person can solve his/her own problems without help from others, the unwillingness to accept help from friends, and the desire not to share problems with an expert were listed as the other factors blocking psychological help. In his study conducted with adults, Bicil (2012) found a negative relationship between the intention to receive psychological help and practical barriers preventing one from seeking psychological help.

Setiawan (2006) discovered that there are a number of factors facilitating people's decision to pursue psychological services. These include the availability of information about psychological help, the location of the psychological help, work hours and procedure, confidentiality policies, arranging money for services, and understanding the world of students, their thinking styles, and functions.

Another study revealed that encouraging someone to receive psychological help and knowing another who had previously received psychological help facilitate the seeking of psychological help (Vogel, Wade, Wester, Larson, & Hackler, 2007). Kakhnovets (2011) has shown that people who trust the psychological counselor, who think that the psychological counselor will also accept and trust them (facilitating conditions), and who think that the counselor will take a keen interest in their problems (support) have more positive attitudes toward receiving psychological help. Thus, the facilitating conditions are directly associated with potential help seekers' positive attitudes toward receiving psychological help, a finding found to be true for both male and female students.

In another research, it was concluded that both individuals' intention to receive psychological help and the help-seeking behavior increased as a result of increased psychological distress (Franz, 2012). Li, Dorstyn, and Denson (2014) stated in their meta-analysis studies analyzing psychosocial variants related to one's intention to receive psychological help, that one's attitude toward seeking psychological help and the expected benefit felt as a result of self-disclosure to a counselor have the most significant relationship in one's decision to receive psychological help. In other words, positive attitudes toward receiving psychological help and believing in the benefits of the process are two important factors that facilitate receiving psychological help.

Research results have shown that the number of people in need of psychological help is greater than the number of people who actually receive psychological help (Erol, Kılıc, Ulusoy, Kececi, & Simsek, 1998;

Kessler et al., 2001). Andrews, Issakidis, and Carter (2001) have put forward that, on an average, less than one-third of the people who will benefit from psychological services actually receive psychological help. Additionally, it was found that although people often came into contact with various informal sources, such as their friends, family, and faculty members, they wanted to continue to receive help from a consultant who would provide professional guidance for them (Hinson & Swanson, 1993). Similarly, Pshenishny (2012) has found that individuals generally get informal help from three different people from within their social environment before receiving help from a consultant providing professional psychological help.

The fact that psychological services are not sought out or used by those in need of help has been a major problem (Masuda et al., 2009). A positive relationship was found between perceived barriers towards using psychological help services and perceived need for these services. Therefore if one perceives a lot of barriers, the one's need increase as well (Lord-Flynn, 1989). Although there are research studies on examining the factors that impede receiving psychological help and their roles, existing literature lacks studies that investigate whether those facilitating factors play a role, if so to what extent they are effective in seeking psychological help either individually or combined together. Examining the factors effective in increasing one's likelihood to seek psychological help is important for improving our understanding as to why those in need of psychological services refrain from pursuing them (Wong, 2006). Although quite a few surveys (Arslantaş, 2003; Bicil, 2012; Topkaya, 2011) have been conducted examining a variety of psychological factors (e.g. attitude in relation to receiving psychological help, psychological distress, and treatment fears) effective on the attitudes and intentions of adults toward seeking psychological help in Turkey, no direct research has been conducted aiming to determine which factors facilitate or prevent adults from receiving psychological help. Therefore, the aim of this study has been to examine which factors play a role in adults' decisions to seek psychological help.

Method

This Study

The study uses a phenomenology model. Since there have only been a few empirical studies conducted on the factors leading adults to seek psychological help, this study has adopted a qualitative research technique.

Participants

The participants of the study were determined by using the 'criterion sampling' method from among the various purposeful sampling methods. The main objective here was to focus on the factors that play a role in adults' decision to seek psychological help. For this reason, participants of different educational backgrounds were selected on the basis that they had not previously sought psychological help or, in the case that they had, that they terminated the process early. A total of ten individuals participated in the study, six of whom were men and four of whom were women. Participants' characteristics have been defined below.

Participant 1: 24 years old. Female. Holds a bachelor's degree. She has been working as a research assistant at a university. She went to the psychiatrist because of the stress that she had experienced while preparing for her university exams. She consulted to a psychologist for 1-2 sessions.

Participant 2: 43 years old. Male. Holds an MA degree. He has been working as a lecturer at a university. Previously, he had gone to a psychologist after his mother's death.

Participant 3: 23 years old. Male. Holds a bachelor's degree. He has been working as a research assistant at a university. He has not received any psychological support before.

Participant 4: 24 years old. Male. A high school graduate. He has been working as a janitor at a university. He has not received any psychological support before.

Participant 5: 28 years old. Male. High school graduate. He has been working as a janitor at a university. Previously, he consulted a psychologist while in the army.

Participant 6: 33 years old. Female. Primary school graduate. She has been working as a janitor at a university. Previously, she had gone to a psychologist because she would wash her hands continuously.

Participant 7: 49 years old. Female. Primary school graduate. She has been working as a janitor at a university. She has not received any psychological support before.

Participant 8: 43 years old. Male. Holds a bachelor's degree. He has been working as a cleaning staff member at a university. He has not received psychological help before.

Participant 9: 24 years old. Female. Holds a bachelor's degree. She has been working as a research assistant at university. She has not received any psychological help before.

Participant 10: 36 years old. Male. High school graduate. He has been working as an cleaning staff member at university. He has not received any psychological help before.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected through interviews with the participants. The Semi- structured interview type was used. The utmost care was taken so as to render the questions asked to participants clear, consistent, and easy to understand. After preparing the interview questions, four experts shared their opinions about the clarity and appropriateness of the questions. Furthermore, before the interviews were actually held, a pre-experiment was conducted. The final interview form was derived and designed in accordance to the feedback received from the experts and the results of pre-experiment. The following questions were included in the form and asked to the interviewees.

1. Could you tell me about yourself shortly?

2. Do you have, or have you previously had any psychological problems?

3. Have you ever felt the need to receive psychological help before? Why?

4. What do you do when you think you need expert help but are not able to receive it? From whom and how do you try to solve your psychological problems?

5. When do you think that people should receive psychological help from a mental health professional?

6. Could you mention the factors that prevent, or have prevented you from receiving psychological help from a mental health professional?

7. In your opinion, what does the society in which you live think about one's receiving psychological help for interpersonal or emotional problems?

8. What do a psychiatrist, a psychologist, and a counselor do? Do you know the differences between these occupations? Could you mention a little information about them?

9. What is the role of the cost of psychological services in using them?

10. If you try to overcome an emotional problem, is it helpful for you to share private information about your problem with a mental health professional?

11. Is it hard for you to share your private information with a mental health professional?

12. What kinds of things make it easy for you to seek psychological help from a mental health professional?

Interviews were carried out under the researcher's control who prepared the location in which they were to be conducted and who tested the essential technical equipment to be used so as to avoid any technical problems during the interviews. Participation was completely voluntary. At the beginning of each interview, information about the topic being researched was given to the participants and the interview process was explained. Before the interview started, participants were asked to read the interview questions and were informed that the interview was to be recorded. Participants were asked to sign the prepared approval form. After signing, the researcher asked the questions to the participants who then answered the questions. Finally, the researcher asked the participants whether they had any additional comments that they wanted to share regarding psychological support in particular. Recordings for the ten semi-structured interviews lasted 142 minutes in total. The researcher then analyzed the recordings and then transcribed the data with the help of senior undergraduate students who worked free of charge. The researcher and the two research assistants helped to confirm the accuracy of the data collected. Differences found between the recordings and the written documents were eliminated. Based on the data collected, the researcher and a second expert worked independently from the other in composing themes and sub-themes. The expert who assisted the researcher was a lecturer on qualitative research methods, holds a Ph. D degree, and is highly experienced in his field. The researcher and the expert then came together and agreed that the data should be collected under two main themes and nine sub-themes under these main themes. The reliability of the research was calculated using the formula "reliability = the rate of agreement / (the rate of agreement + the rate of disagreement) x 100" (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and was found to be %85. The descriptive analysis technique was used to process the data collected.

Results

Adults' views about the factors that contribute to their decision to seek psychological help have been discussed under the two main themes of *preventing factors* and *facilitating factors*. Information related to these two themes is presented in this section. So as not maintain participants' confidentiality, their names have been coded and their real names hidden. Participants are listed according to the order in which they were interviewed (e.g. P1, P2).

Participants' Views on the Factors that Prevent Them from Receiving Psychological Help

The factors preventing participants from receiving psychological help have been examined under five sub-themes in this study. These are: (1) *the social stigma for receiving psychological help,* (2) *an unwillingness to share one's problems with a unfamiliar person,* (3) *the belief that a person can solve his/her problems by himself/herself,* (4) *the belief that private matters should be known only by family members,* and (5) *not being aware of how to go about seeking psychological help.*

Participants generally referred to the sub-theme *social stigma because of receiving psychological help* as the most determinant factor preventing them from seeking psychological support. Participants expressed such ideas as, "Society sees people who receive psychological help as mad or crazy" under this sub-theme. Seven participants expressed their opinions on this sub-theme. These are as follows:

"I don't know what to do if people were to think I were crazy, saying things like, 'I think he's gone nuts.' I think people are afraid of this." (P3).

"There is a stigma about these issues in general, people act differently toward me, especially in my workplace. It doesn't happen so often when I'm with my family, but it does in my workplace, in the army, or in any workplace where groups of people work together. If you're in a group of 4 or 5 people and you have even a small psychological problem, the other people act toward you in a discriminatory manner." (P4).

"I mean, people usually judge you as someone who has a mental disorder." (P6).

"Everyone might have a different psychological problem and needs to get support from a psychiatrist even though it seems like a simple problem. But, like I said before, there's social pressure. I mean, talking to a psychiatrist? No way. You can't even pass by a psychiatrist's clinic because people around you would immediately label you as mad or mentally-ill." (P8).

One of the other factors preventing individuals from seeking psychological help is *an unwillingness to share one's personal problems with an unfamiliar person.* Under this sub-theme, such barriers as appearing to be unwilling to sharing one's problems with an unfamiliar person, the unwillingness to talk about one's problems experienced in his/her private life. Five participants stated opinions falling into this category, which have been presented below:

"Well, I mean, whatever the issue is, I keep it to myself, I don't share it with anyone." (P1).

"There are things I don't share. I went to both a psychologist and a psychiatrist. I mean, I shared some of my problems, but there were also some that I didn't." (P6).

"It's about the limits. I mean not every personal matter can be shared." (P8).

"This situation is the kind of problem that depends on the person's nature. As women, we hesitate to share something with someone we don't know. Actually, we don't know whether we can trust that person, or we think that they're going to say the underlying reason for our problem. It actually seems that it should be easier to talk to a stranger, but personally, I can't do it. First, I need to know and trust them up to the hilt." (P9).

"Nobody wants to talk to a stranger about these things. I mean, to go to a person and talk to them about the issues I have with my family, husband, and my children for a certain fee. Well, I wouldn't do that." (P10).

The third sub-theme among the factors preventing one from receiving psychological help is *the belief that people can handle their problems on their own.* Under this sub-theme, thoughts asserting that people should handle and solve their problems by themselves have been reported. On this issue, the opinions of three participants are stated below:

"I thought I could handle it and overcome it by myself." (P3).

"At first, you need to beat yourself all by yourself. I mean you can deal with these problems without anyone's help. Someone else can't solve your problems for you." (P4).

"I get over my psychological problems by comforting myself. This way, I keep myself in a good mood." (P7).

The forth sub-theme among the factors preventing one from seeking psychological help is *the belief that private matters should only be known by family members*. Under that sub-theme, such some ideas as personal problems are only to be shared among family members and family issues may not be exposed to others were discussed. Two participants stated the following ideas regarding this issue:

"I wouldn't tell much about the issues directly connected with my family or private life." (P1).

"This is completely about how these people's parents were raised them. For instance, in our culture, families are raised in a clan-like model. According to the moral laws of these clans, there are some strict rules about keeping family issues within the family. Therefore, people always try to solve family problems among themselves." (P10).

The last sub-theme among the factors preventing one from seeking psychological help is their *not being aware of how to go about seeking psychological help*. Three participants stated opinions under this sub-theme. It was also noticed that participants were unable to distinguish the difference among psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors. Generally, although participants had some knowledge of the difference between psychiatrists and psychologists, they had no idea about what a counselor did. Following are the related opinions:

"For instance, it's an issue for me whether I'll will find a solution or not. Will he just listen to me and give me some basic advice? Then what? I really don't know how this process will proceed, and I think it may cost me an arm and a leg, and it may just be a waste of time. Will I get my money's worth? I haven't even tried it because I'm not sure if it be worth my time, money, and effort to share my private problems with him." (P1).

"Now, it needs to be explained to people… In our society, this kind of stuff must be cleared up by seminars and conferences. People don't know what a psychological counselor is. They don't know…" (P5).

"Would they go now? Honestly, they would, if you were to tell them what a psychological counselor does." (P8).

Participants' views on the Factors that Facilitate Receiving Psychological Help

The factors that facilitate one's receiving psychological help have been examined under four sub-themes. These are (1) *expanding psychological services*, (2) *believing in the benefits of psychological services*, (3) *trusting in the expert*, and (4) *receiving psychological services for free*.

The participants stated that the most important factor that would make it easier for them to receive psychological help is *expanding psychological services*. Participants' views on expanding psychological help services, making them accessible for everyone, and normalizing them have been collected under this sub-theme. Six participants mentioned their ideas on this issue below:

"If it were more widespread, it might become a new trend. I think it would become common more quickly in our culture if it were to spread from person to person." (P2).

"Secondly, I can't get psychological services from anyone in Kütahya. But I could in Eskişehir. Of course, it is difficult for me to go Eskişehir. If we had a psychological counselor in our faculty, it would be much easier to receive psychological help because, that way, you can always find someone to talk with." (P3).

"I think such services are so rare. And that's the real problem. There are insufficient services in our city because of the huge demand. Therefore, people avoid getting help. But I think if there were sufficient facilities, everyone would go." (P5).

"A psychological counselor... Like you said, if we had one here, I think it'd be easy. Well, it would be good if there were a counselor that we could go and talk to." (P6).

"If only psychological counselors or psychologists' services were easier to access, it would be easier to get help." (P8).

"If it were something like a family practice, if everyone were aware of it, and if it were a normal thing in society, if it were seen as a normal thing, people would go." (P9).

The second factor that makes it easier for one to seek psychological help is *believing in the benefits of psychological services*. Participants stated such issues as believing that they can solve their own problems and seeing psychological services as a last resort under this sub-theme. Five participants expressed their ideas on this issue:

"If I thought that the person I received such services from had gotten over this same problem, I would seek psychological help and listen to the advice and treatments he recommended." (P1).

"Although I might not be able to resolve this problem, our psychological counselor may be able to. If he can't, then he could suggest how to proceed. When people attempt to resolve it on their own, I don't know anyway except by murdering or fighting… They try to resolve their problems like this. But if they were to get help from a counselor, then they may find a solution. Well, to me, the solution is not fighting, breaking stuff, or getting angry. I think, it's just about getting help from a counselor and following the roadmap he draws up for you." (P5).

"Well, being aware of these facts may provide some benefit. Our society doesn't know the difference between a psychiatrist and psychologist. I faced the same situation about 10 years ago, it could have been more useful knowing that psychological services may help people. Maybe when felt the difference between these. It was like around 2002, there was a psychologist named Sinan who Meltem was always visiting on the TV series, 'Çocuklar Duymasın.' It was around that time when I realized that people might need psychologists." (P8).

"The moment I believe that the problems will be resolved, the feeling doesn't get me over so much." (P9).

"As a last resort, people visit a psychologist and told him all their problems. Well, at the same time, your family has to make changes and support you, too." (P10).

The third sub-theme that facilitates one's receiving psychological help is *'trusting in the expert.'* Under this sub-theme, participants expressed such views as trusting in psychologists, receiving appropriate advice, and knowing the expert. Four participants expressed ideas about this issue:

"If I trusted that the expert wasn't doing this simply for financial gain and if he were to keep my secrets." (P1).

"It's necessary to trust the expert. He has to make me feel that I can trust him. First of all, what he advice is the most important thing for me to gain his trust." (P4).

"I really need to know and be able to trust the expert." (P9).

The fourth sub-theme that facilitates one's receiving psychological help is *'receiving psychological services for free.'* Under this sub-theme, participants' expressed such view as services' costs being low and their being supported or covered by the government. Four participants expressed their ideas about this issue:

"If the government built a psychological support center, it might be more effective." (P3).

"If it were free, people would make use of it." (P6).

"If it were free, it might be good. Because it's related with the people's financial situation." (P8).

"If the government supported it financially, that would so helpful. Because people's financial situation really affects one's decision." (P9).

When the findings are examined as a whole, the social stigma for receiving psychological help, the desire not to share personal problems with someone unfamiliar, one's belief that he/she can solve his/her problems, the belief that private problems should be kept within the family, and not knowing enough information about the psychological help process were found to be the reasons preventing a person from receiving psychological help. The factors that facilitate receiving psychological help are the availability of psychological services, the belief in the benefits of psychological services, trusting in the expertness of the help provider, and psychological services being offered for free.

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to determine which factors play a role in adults' decisions whether to seek or avoid seeking psychological help. Based on the results of the participants' interviews, several factors were identified that either inhibit or facilitate psychological help seeking in adults.

The social stigma toward receiving psychological help was reported as the most important factor preventing one from seeking psychological help. Seven of the ten participants emphasized this sub-theme. The stigma toward receiving psychological help is the most studied variable in those studies seeking to identify barriers preventing one from seeking psychological help (Barney, Griffiths, Jorm, & Christensen, 2006; Bathje & Pryor, 2011; Bicil, 2012; Choi & Miller, 2014; Corrigan, 2004; Iwasaki, 2005; Miville & Constantine, 2007; Topkaya, 2011). This finding corroborates the previous research findings showing that stigma play a vital role in hindering psychological help

seeking (Calloway, 2008; Komiti, Judd, & Jackson, 2006; Sanders-Thompson et al., 2004; Vogel, Wade, & Hackler, 2007). Thus, adults refrain from seeking psychological help due to the fear of being stigmatized for having a mental health problem. This specific finding can be associated with individuals' choices to avoid seeking psychological help when it is discovered that they have undergone psychological help. Specifically, participants exhibit concerns about being seen as weak and insufficient, feeling shame for having such a condition, losing respect in one's community, being excluded, and the possibility of being subject to discrimination.

The second barrier reported by participants as a hindering factor was the unwillingness to disclose personal issues to an outsider. Barriers such as being unwilling to disclose oneself to an unknown individual, being unwilling to explain private problems, and feeling shame in explaining one's problems were emphasized in this sub-theme. This finding is in line with previous research findings. For instance, Vogel and Wester (2003) found that comfort with self-disclosure were two of the predictors of one's seeking psychological help. In another study conducted by Vogel, Wade, and Hackler (2008), one's being able to express his/her emotions was identified as being one of the factors effective in predicting one's intention behind whether he/she would seek psychological help. Similarly, Cantazaro (2009) found that one's comfort level in disclosing personal problems and general attitude toward seeking psychological help predicted one's intention to seek psychological help.

The third sub-theme reported by participants was the belief that they could solve their own problems. Under this theme, two barriers emerged: the first, the idea that people should solve their own problems and the second that people should cope with their problems. This finding is in line with previous research examining factors preventing one from seeking psychological help in diverse populations (Kuhl, Jarkon-Horlick, & Morrissey, 1997; Sheffield, Fiorenza, & Sofronoff, 2004). For most people, asking for help from an expert means that one is not able to cope with his/her own problems and that he/she feels uncomfortable when asking for help from others. Seeking help means confessing weakness and the inability to cope by oneself (Fischer et al., 1982 as cited in Vogel, Wester, & Larson, 2007). This situation damages one's positive self-concept, and thus may prevent individuals from seeking psychological help (Miller, 1985 as cited in Vogel, Wester, et al., 2007). In other words, participants appraise receiving psychological help from an expert as a threat to their self-esteem. Another study on receiving psychological help revealed that feeling threats toward one's level of self-esteem and receiving psychological help were negatively correlated (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991). Another explanation for this finding is that participants simply evaluate daily hassles and problems as things not requiring psychological help.

The fourth sub-theme reported by participants as a barrier was the belief that private topics should be kept in the family and not disclosed to the outside world. This finding is in line with those of Smart (2010) who determined that participants believed that specific personal problems should not be shared with outsiders. One possible explanation for this finding is the conflict between the Western based psychotherapy processes and the conventional values belonging collectivist cultures such as those in Turkey. For example, the importance of open communication and expressing feelings in psychotherapy does not conform to the conventional values of Turkey, thus hindering adults from receiving psychological help when needed (Wong, 2006). Another explanation for this finding is that since interpersonal communication is more intense in collectivistic cultures (Sato, 2010), it is a more suitable behavior for participants to consult with their families and relatives in Turkish culture. Research carried out with university students revealed that although students value the psychological services offered in university counseling centers, they seek help from informal sources such as friends and their families (Kızıldağ, Demirtaş-Zorbaz, Gençtanırım, & Arıcı, 2012). Another research study including university students also found that family and friends were the main help sources (Topkaya & Meydan, 2013).

Not knowing enough information about how to procure psychological help was the last barrier that participants reported. Not knowing the differences among the roles of psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors was revealed under this sub-theme. It was noticed that while participants, in general, have an idea about the differences between a psychiatrist and psychologist; they have no idea as to what counselors do. Although it is stated in the literature that having information about psychological services does not always lead to one seeking psychological help (Masuda & Boone, 2011), the results of the studies conducted on this subject have demonstrated that a lack of information regarding such services can cause people not to use them (Pullmann, Vanhooser, Hoffman, & Heflinger, 2010; Yorgason, Linville, & Zitzman, 2008). More

importance should be given to informing society about the psychological help process. Thus, two of the functions of psycho-social education services should be to explain what psychological help is and to work toward normalizing the notion of receiving psychological help (Masuda et al., 2009).

Participants reported that promoting psychological help services is the most important factor in facilitating one's decision to seek psychological help as it results in easy access and normalization. Previous research revealed that easy access to psychological help services is a major agent in facilitating psychological help seeking (Lord-Flynn, 1989; Wong, 2006). These findings highlight that both the increasing number of services offering psychological help and easy access to them may enhance the percentage of those using psychological help services. In terms of the practicality of these research findings, establishing centers that only offer psychological help services, and offer them directly, is the most appropriate course of action in Turkey.

Second, under the theme of those factors facilitating psychological help seeking, participants specified the usefulness of beliefs about psychological services. Facilitating factors included seeking psychological help as a last resort, the belief the one may sometimes need help in handling his/her problems, and the expected benefits. A study by Topkaya (2011) on adults showed that the perceived benefit of disclosing one's personal issues to a psychological counselor, contrary to the expected risk of doing so, predicted directly and indirectly one's likelihood to seek psychological help. In other words, this study demonstrates that individuals who believe in the benefits of the psychological counseling process are more likely to not only to be more willing to seek psychological help, but also more likely to benefit from the use of such psychological help services. From the practical point of these research findings, it is deemed that the campaigns about psychological help aiming to increase public awareness should focus on the benefits of the psychological help process.

Under the theme of facilitating psychological help seeking agents, trusting an expert ranked third. This theme revealed three components, including knowing the expert, receiving advice from the expert, and trusting the individual's expertise. This finding is in agreement with Wong's (2006) results. A study by Sanders-Thompson et al. (2004) states that non-personal services and mistrust of experts are among the basic factors preventing individuals from seeking psychological help. When psychological help services

and the role of counselors are explained, and they are consistent with client-centered psychological counseling theory, emphasizing fulfilling the conditions of consistency, unconditional positive respect, empathy, and enabling an atmosphere for the client to reveal his/her potential (Şirin & Akkoyun, 2012) may constitute the steps for establishing trust between an expert and the individual who seeks psychological help.

Among the participants, the last factor under the theme of facilitating psychological help seeking agents is free psychological help services. Participants identified such factors as high fees, lack of state reimbursement, or lack of state stimulus as impeding their access to the required services. Dearing, Maddux, and Tangney (2005) and Pfohl (2010) reported that psychological expert fees and lack of time are two of the most important factors impeding psychological help seeking for individuals. In terms of the practical application of these research findings, policy makers should ensure that general insurance covers the fees charged by institutions offering psychological help to give individuals access to free services.

Investigating facilitating and hindering factors for psychological help seeking behavior provides new insights into understanding the problem of not seeking psychological help and producing the necessary solutions. When the research findings were evaluated, individual, cultural, and practical barriers were identified as impeding psychological help seeking. However, by taking the necessary steps, practical barriers in particular can be overcome. Although the social stigma for receiving psychological help has been reported to be the main barrier in the study, it is more important to inform the public about psychological services. Therefore, experts offering psychological help should provide information to the public about what psychological help is and how they work in order to dispel such a stigma. Psychoeducational studies about psychological help seeking, inform individuals about therapy and its benefits, diminish individuals' fear of being stigmatized by normalizing the experience, and increase service providers' competencies in mental health services and psychological help (Martielli, 2006). Future studies may also examine the effectiveness of various psychoeducational programs aiming to reduce the fear of stigmatization of psychological help. Moreover, future studies should investigate in-depth the role of religious factors and self-esteem in psychological help seeking and the perceived risks and benefits related to psychological help seeking to increase the willingness to seek help.

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