EXPLORING ONLINE MENTAL HEALTH RELATED HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS & ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND QUALITY OF LIFE

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Abstract

Background: In recent era, the advancement in media technology has changed the ways of acquiring information regarding mental health issues. Therefore, this study was carried out to provide an insight about the effective use of online mental health related help seeking behavior of psychiatric patients chiefly in connection whether it reduce the psychological problems of young adults suffering from stress anxiety and depression.

Method: For this purpose, a sample of (N=300) psychiatric patients with and without online mental health related help seeking behavior was approached by using purposive sampling technique. This was a quantitative research and the level of stress, anxiety and depression was measured by using DASS-42 item scale, level of psychological well being was measured by using Ryff & Keyes scale and the level of quality of life was measured by using WHOQOL scale. The collected data was analyzed by using SPSS-23.

Results: The results revealed that YouTube is the most frequent online source among psychiatric patients to seek mental health help. As 57% psychiatric patients use this source. It has also revealed that the severity of psychiatric illness was higher among non-users as compared to users. Similarly, level of depression, anxiety and stress was significantly correlated with psychological wellbeing and quality of life among users i.e. .807**, .816** &.854** respectively. Furthermore, analysis of variance (ANOVA) also showed significant differences in the level of psychological wellbeing and quality of life in comparison with depression, anxiety and stress among online mental health related information users and non-users.

Conclusion: On the basis of findings from results, this concluded that sharing online mental health related information is beneficial for the individuals suffering from psychiatric illness. Hence, it is suggested that mental health care providers including psychologists and psychiatrists should provide

online information for the users so that they can get help or seek online tips to manage their mental sufferings.

Keywords: Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Quality of life, Psychological Well-Being.

Introduction

It is considered that during the age of 19-24 years, all adults experience social, cognitive, and emotional developmental and physical changes. Therefore, three quarters of psychological disorders emerge during this period of age (Arnett & Tanner, 2006). According to an online survey, approximately 35% adults are suffering from emotional and psychological problems and it is because they could not seek mental health related information. In this connection, understanding the precipitators and triggers of these psychological disorders among young adults is vital but it is more than that crucial to inquire about how young adults seek help or share with other peoples and how much this sharing of information is linked with their psychological well-being and quality of life and how positively affect the level of their psychological ailments (Alonso et al., 2004).

Prevalence of Mental Health Issues in Pakistan

In the last few decades, the mental health related issues increased rapidly in Pakistan. This appalling level of mental problems is linked with violence, disruption in social set, family issues and exposure with life related traumatic events (Galea et al., 2003). In Pakistan, most of the mental health problems are associated with socio-economic adversities, family issues and lack of social support. So, due to these issues the most prevalent disorder is depression, anxiety, psychosomatic complaints (Mirza & Jenkins, 2004). Furthermore, there is a most serious issue related to substance misuse and drug addiction that is increasing day by day in Pakistan. A large number of injectable drug users particularly in urban areas creating the public health predicament. Similarly, child abuse as a consequence of violence is on the top prevailing in all over the areas of Pakistan (Khalily, 2009).

The Model of Mental Health Seeking Behavior

The mental health seeking models state that peoples follow different predictable methods to get help to overcome their psychological inadequacies. They use different adaptive mental copying strategies and attempts to get external help to tackle with their mental health problems. They also take well-organized cognitive and behavioral steps to solve their problems. The following figure depicts the model of help seeking behavior.
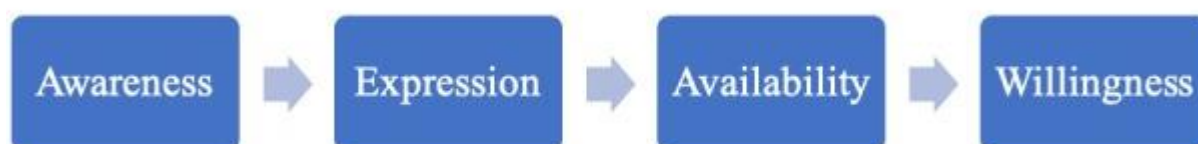
According to this model the help seeking behavior is considered as an intrinsic or chronological process within the people and move through recognition, expression and identification of different sources of help (Rickwood et al., 2005).

Online Mental Health Help Seeking Behavior

In the current era, the use of electronic sources for seeking mental health related guidelines are very common in all over the world. Usually, the adults during age of 16-24 years are very closely

attached with their own smart phone for seeking information. Some adults are also relied on watching TV, websites, you tube and online books or articles to seek mental health help. This is also because the people's wants anonymity and confidentiality to minimize the concerns related to social stigma (Gowen, 2013). Many researches revealed that the young adults prefer self reliance whenever they experience psychological concerns and use to use informal help instead of formal help. They use internet as source information for their physical, social and mental health related needs. In this way, the provision of good quality of online information related to mental health needs have a positive significant impact not only on the level of mental health but also promote the good quality of life among young adults (Kauer et al., 2014).

Psychological Well-Being and Quality of Life
It is an acknowledge fact that the individual's level of psychological well-being is strongly connected with the level of quality of life among the peoples of all ages. In particular, it has also been observed that the individuals with mental illness report lower level of quality of life. It is due to their mental issues that make it harder for them to function at optimal level in their daily life. Not restricted that, the mental health issues not only connected with poor quality of life but also lower down the level of self-confidence, self-efficacy and self esteem as well (Morton et al., 2017). Studies also reported a lower level of quality of life among the individuals with mental health issues. Uzaina (2019) reported that the individuals with higher level of depression, anxiety and stress scored lower on quality of life scale. They also reported lower level of self esteem and work performance in their daily life.

Literature Review
According to an estimate approximately 280 million individuals in all over the world are suffering from depression. Due to social stigma attached with the mental illness hardly 10% seeks mental health help from the psychiatrists. Majority of people avoid going to hospitals and showed delayed behavior. Their mental conditions become worse due to not getting mental health at early stage (Pearson & Hyde, 2021). In order to minimize the mental problems our young generation use online resources. A study revealed that 73% young adults seek help from TV, radio, social networks and use different websites. It has also been reported that using online facilities the individuals in healing their mental illness. Young adults are very much satisfied with these services and also share such material or information with their friends (Gowen, 2013). Uptill now approximately, more than 10,000 apps are available for seeking mental health related information or help for the individuals with mild and moderate mental health issues. Due to this availability the mental health related information seeking behavior on you tube is increasing day by day (Bowely, 2023). A research conducted in US adults revealed that about 80% individuals are using internet services to seek mental health related information. The most frequent use of websites are Medline, Health finder and WebMD. They use not only these sites but also make decisions about their mental health (Koskan et al., 2012). A study reported that a majority of young adults use internet and other online sources to seek mental health about depression, anxiety and stress (Fox & Jones, 2009). The increase in mental health problems is at staggering rates in all over the globe. During the wave of Covid-19 Pandemic when there was a complete lock down and people were afraid and avoid face to face interaction there was only a way to get mental health related information from online resources like YouTube, face book and TV (Liu et al., 2020). Previous researches indicated that use of online help seeking behavior was increased in China during Covid-19 Pandemic to overcome the mental health related issues such as depression, stress and anxiety (Shen et al., 2020).

Rationale of the Study
It is an acknowledged fact that exposure to the relevant appropriate mental health related contents are helpful and also increase the level of mental health and psychological well being among adults. In this connection, there is an abundant amount of literature available that explore the negative

effects of online social media usage but a very rare is explored about the positive effects of online social media use particularly in relation with mental health support. There is a lack of discussion and dialogues about mental health related information seeking behavior and attitude and its impact on the level of psychological well being and quality of life among young adults. Hence, there was a huge gap in the existing literature. The aim of this research was to fill the gap in research and to explore not only the online mental health related help seeking behavior among adults but also check its effects on their level of psychological well being and quality of life.

Significance of the Study

Due to social stigma connected with mental illness, a majority of young adults avoid going to psychiatric and psychologists' clinics to get mental health assistance and resultantly their mental illness become worsen day by day. They are not aware about the alternative resources to heal the level of their mental illness. This study was aimed to check the impact of online mental health seeking behavior on psychological well being and quality of life among young adults. The results of this study will contribute and provide awareness to young adults that they can use online mental health related videos on YouTube, face book and from e-books available on Google at any time to reduce the level of their mental illness.

Objectives

1. To explore the trends and practices of online mental health related help- seeking behavior among psychiatric patients.
2. To check the impact of online information seeking behavior on the level of their mental illness.
3. To check the relationship of online mental health related help seeking behavior with psychological well being and quality of life among psychiatric patients.

Hypotheses

1. The psychiatric patients who use online mental health related information will be less mentally disturbed as compared with those who do not use.
2. Level of psychological well being and quality of life will be higher among the psychiatric patients who use online mental health related information as compared with those who do not use.
3. There will be a strong significant positive relationship between psychological well being, quality of life and level of psychiatric illness among the psychiatric patients who use online mental health resources as compared with those who do not use.

Method of the Study
Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were the adults having mild, moderate, sever and extremely sever level of psychiatric illness belonging from different demographic backgrounds. Out of which (n=113) were depression patients, (n=98) were anxiety patients (n=89) were stress patients.

Location and Data Collection

This study was conducted in Bahawalpur, Punjab Pakistan. Data of this research was collected from the psychiatric patients attending BVH, hospital, SMI, hospital and Falah Brain Centre in 2023.

Research Design of the Study

This was a quantitative research with cross-sectional research design.

Sample and Sampling Technique

In this research a purposive sampling method was utilized to approach the target population. The total number of sample size of this research was (N=300) adults including with or without using

online mental health practices. The sample of this research was calculated by using G. Power online sample calculator.

Instruments Used for Measuring the Variables

In this research the variables of the study was measured by using valid and reliable scales. Firstly, the level of psychiatric illness such as depression, anxiety and stress was measured by using DASS-42 items scale developed by Lovibond & Lovibond (1995) and translated and adapted by Hussain and Gulzar in 2020. Secondly, the level of psychological well-being was measured by using PWS-scale developed by Ryff & Keyes in (1995) this scale was consisted on 18 items. Thirdly, the level of quality of life was measured by using (WHOQOL) scale consisting 26 items. Furthermore, a self report measure regarding using or not using online mental health related information was also collected from the psychiatric patients.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

In this study the adults' psychiatric patients only with stress, anxiety and depression were included. The patients with other diseases or disorder were excluded from the research.

Ethical Measures

This study was conducted following the APA ethical standards. Informed consent was taken from the participants and they were assured that their information will be kept as confidential or will be used for research purpose. They were also assured that there is no any risk of harm in the study.

Results of the Study

The results from the collected data revealed that the psychiatric patients seek mental health related help by using multiple online resources. This behavior is also supportive for them to manage the level of their psychiatric illness. The detailed results with brief discussion are as under:

Table 1 Frequency (f) values and percentage% about the psychiatric population practicing different online mental health resources

Online Resources	Response	Frequency(F)	Percentage %
E-Book			
	No	193	64.3
	Yes	107	35.7
Facebook			
	No	160	53.3
	Yes	140	46.7
YouTube			
	No	129	43.0
	Yes	171	57.0
Instagram			
	No	213	71.0
	Yes	87	29.0
Tweeter			
	No	249	83.0
	Yes	51	17.0
Google			
	No	154	51.3
	Yes	146	48.7

Note: The above table shows the trends and practices of psychiatric patients who use online mental health related sources and who do not use.

Table 2 Severity of psychiatric illness among online mental health related information users or non-users

Levels of psychiatric illness	Online mental health related information		Total
	Users	Non-Users	
Mild	120	0	120
Moderate	35	72	107
Severe	0	51	51
Ex Severe	0	22	22
Total	155	145	300

Note: The above table shows level of severity of psychiatric illness among the patients in connection with online mental health related information users and non-users.

Table 3 Bivariate correlation among variables for Depression patients using or not using online mental health related information

Variables	Respondents	Quality of Life
Psychological Wellbeing	Users	.807**
	Non-Users	.533*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: The above table shows bivariate correlation among all the depression patients using mental health related information for clinical variables under study in this research. The results are showing there is highly significant at 1% positive correlation of psychological wellbeing and quality of life and significant at 5% positive correlation between psychological wellbeing and quality of life. The comparison of correlations is showing there is strong correlation among users as compared to non-users.

Table 4 Bivariate correlation among variables for Anxiety patients using or not using online mental health related information

Variables	Respondents	Quality of Life
Psychological Wellbeing	Users	.816**
	Non-Users	.662*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: The above table shows bivariate correlation among all the anxiety patients using mental health related information for clinical variables under study in this research. The results are showing there is highly significant at 1% positive correlation of psychological wellbeing and quality of life and significant at 5% positive correlation between psychological wellbeing and quality of life. The comparison of correlations is showing there is a strong correlation among users as compared to non-users.

Table 5 Bivariate correlation among variables for stress patients using or not using online mental health related information

Variables	Respondents	Quality of Life
Psychological Wellbeing	Users	.854**
	Non-Users	.414*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: The above table shows bivariate correlation among all the stress patients using mental health related information for clinical variables under study in this research. The results are showing there is highly significant at 1% positive correlation of psychological wellbeing and quality of life and significant at 5% positive correlation between psychological wellbeing and quality of life. The comparison of correlations is showing there is strong correlation among users as compared to non-users.

Table 6 Bivariate correlation among variables for overall patients using or not using online mental health related information

Variables	Respondents	Quality of Life
Psychological Wellbeing	Users	.826**
	Non-Users	.568*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: The above table shows bivariate correlation among overall patients using mental health related information for clinical variables under study in this research. The results are showing there is highly significant at 1% positive correlation of psychological wellbeing and quality of life and significant at 5% positive correlation between psychological wellbeing and quality of life. The comparison of correlations is showing there is strong correlation among users as compared to non-users.

Table 7 Comparison of users and non-users depression patients using inferential statistics T-test

Testing variables	Online mental health related information	Mean	SD	T-test Score	P-value
Psychological Well-Being	Using	64.74	14.27	17.33	0.000**
	Not using	26.32	8.89		
Quality of Life	Using	64.93	12.27	19.25	0.000**
	Not using	28.14	7.71		

**. $P<0.01$ test is significant at the 0.01 level
Note: This table shows the comparison of psychological wellbeing and quality of life for the depression patients in relation with using online mental health related information to check the significance of difference using T-test.

Table 8 Comparison of user and non-user anxiety patients using inferential statistics T-test

Variables	Online mental health related information	Mean	SD	T-test Score	P-value
Psychological Well-Being	Using	64.43	13.30	15.07	0.000**
	Not using	27.24	11.13		
Quality of Life	Using	63.25	12.17	15.64	0.000**
	Not using	29.15	9.41		

**. $P<0.01$ test is significant at the 0.01 level
Note: This table shows the comparison of psychological wellbeing and quality of life for the anxiety patients in relation with using online mental health related information to check the significance of difference using T-test.

Table 9 Comparison of user and non-user stress using inferential statistics patients T-test

Testing variables	Online mental health related information	Mean	SD	T-test Score	P-value
Psychological Well-Being	Using	64.56	14.85	12.70	0.000**
	Not using	27.16	10.02		
Quality of Life	Using	65.95	13.86	13.62	0.000**
	Not using	29.41	8.17		

**. P<0.01 test is significant at the 0.01 level
Note: This table shows the comparison of psychological wellbeing and quality of life for the stress patients in relation with using online mental health related information to check the significance of difference using T-test.

Table 10 ANOVA for comparison of variables as per psychological diseases for overall sample

Clinical variables with psychological disease		N	Mean	SD	F-score	p-value
Psychological Well-Being	Depression	113	44.68	22.557	2.90	0.057
	Anxiety	98	43.94	22.177		
	Stress	89	51.11	22.394		
	Total	300	46.35	22.527		
Quality of Life	Depression	113	45.72	21.042	4.34	0.014*
	Anxiety	98	44.46	20.118		
	Stress	89	52.81	21.372		
	Total	300	47.41	21.076		

*. P<0.05 test is significant at the 0.05 level
Note: This table shows the comparison of psychological wellbeing and quality of life for the overall respondents in relation with psychological disease to check the significance of difference using ANOVA test.

Findings and Discussion

The findings from the results depicted that from the overall population of (N=300) psychiatric patients, F=193(64.3%) patients were using E-Book, F=160 (53.3%) patients were using Facebook, F=129 (43%) patients were using YouTube, F=213 (71%) patients were using Instagram, F=249 (83%) patients were using Tweeter and F=154 (51.3%) patients were using Google as a source of online mental health related information. Among these online sources the most frequently used source is YouTube. Similar with these findings Brohan et al. (2011) also reported that the psychiatric patients with depression seeks information from internet and get mental health benefits. Moreover, the first hypothesis of the study was aimed to compare the level of psychiatric illness among online resources users and non-user. The results of this study pointed out that the patients who practice the online mental health related information reported mild and moderate level of psychological disease and on the other side the respondents that are not using online mental health related information reported moderate, severe and extremely level of psychological disease. Hence, the hypothesis accepted and its findings are in connection with other international studies. Such as Naslund et al. (2020) reported that connecting with online resources enable the psychiatric patients to overcome their fears or mental health related issues. The second hypothesis was aimed the compare the overall level of psychological wellbeing and quality of life among psychiatric patients who use online mental health related information or those who do not. The findings showed a higher level of psychological wellbeing and quality of life among those psychiatric patients who use online resources or as compared with those who do not use any online source. The results are in line with the findings of international studies such as Chen and Li (2017) reported that using social media connect with peoples, family, and friends and positively correlated with psychological wellbeing. Hence, this hypothesis also accepted. The third and last hypothesis was aimed to check the

relationship between psychological wellbeing, quality of life and the level of psychiatric illness among online mental health related information users or non-users. The findings revealed a significant positive strong correlation among the variables among online resources users as compared with non-users. Hence, this hypothesis also accepted. In this regard Bano et al. (2019) also reported strong positive correlation of bonding with social media, psychological wellbeing, and quality of life among university students.

Conclusion and Suggestion
The overall results of this study revealed a positive significant relationship between psychological wellbeing and quality of life among the psychiatric patients who get help from online resources to reduce their mental ailments in contrast who do not use. Similarly, the results of this study also depicted a reduce level of mental illness among online resources users. Hence, on the basis of these findings it is suggested that the psychiatrists, psychologist and mental health workers must promote mental health related information on social media because it improves not only mental sufferings but also increase the psychological wellbeing and quality of life of the individuals suffering from mental ailments.

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