Where Do People Get Mental Health Information? A Latent Class Analysis of Information-Seeking Profiles and Their Sociodemographic Predictors

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Abstract

Background: Access to reliable mental-health information can shape awareness, help-seeking, and engagement with available support. However, people differ in the sources they use, and these patterns may vary across sociodemographic groups. Understanding patterns of information seeking may help inform more targeted mental-health communication and outreach strategies.

Aims: We therefore aimed to identify distinct profiles based on the sources people use to obtain mental-health information and to examine which sociodemographic characteristics predict membership in different information-seeking profiles.

Methods: A cross-sectional quantitative study was conducted between July 2025 and July 2026, involving 793 participants (M_{age} = 42.3 years, *SD* = 16.4; 39.6 % men). Data were collected both online and using paper-and-pencil questionnaires. The survey included sociodemographic questions and a multiple-response question asking participants where they most often obtained information about mental health. Six information sources were listed: 1) family and friends, 2) health professionals (e.g. doctors, psychologists, therapists), 3) books, brochures, manuals, 4) television, radio, 5) the internet, social media, and 6) public awareness programmes (e.g., national campaigns, workshops). Participants could also indicate that they did not seek mental-health information. Latent class analysis was performed to identify distinct patterns of mental-health information seeking based on participants' use of the six information sources. Multinomial logistic regression was used to examine sociodemographic predictors of profile membership among 766 participants with complete covariate data, controlling for mode of participation.

Results: Descriptive results revealed that more than one-third of participants selected only one of the six listed sources (35.8%), while 6.4% indicated that they did not seek mental-health information. The most commonly used source was the internet or social media (selected by 56.2% of participants), followed by books or manuals (46.8%) and health professionals (37.5%). A three-class solution was retained. Class 1 comprised limited, predominantly online seekers (56.8%), Class 2 comprised broad, multi-source seekers (26.0%), and Class 3 comprised health-professional-oriented seekers (17.2%). Multinomial logistic regression revealed that gender, farming status, and mode of participation were associated with membership in the mental-health information-seeking profiles, whereas age, education, and socioeconomic status were not. Women were more likely than men to belong to both the broad multi-source and health-professional-oriented profiles rather than the limited, predominantly online profile. Moreover, women were more likely to belong to the broad multi-source profile than to the health-professional-oriented profile. Farmers, in contrast, were less likely than non-farmers to belong to either of the two more active profiles and were therefore relatively more likely to belong to the limited profile. Online participants were also more likely than paper-and-pencil participants to belong to the two more active profiles.

Conclusion: Overall, the findings suggest that gender primarily distinguished broad from more selective information seeking, whereas farming status distinguished limited from more active information seeking. The results highlight groups that may be less likely to engage with a broad range of mental-health information sources and may therefore be better reached through tailored information strategies.

Keywords

mental health information, mental health literacy, information-seeking, latent class analysis, gender, farmers

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