



## A Descriptive Study on Attitudes toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help among Emerging Adults in a K-pop Fan Community

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### Keywords

Attitude Towards Help-Seeking, Professional Psychological Help, ATSPPH-SF, Emerging Adult, K-pop Fan Community.

### Abstract

Emerging adulthood is a transition period between adolescence and adulthood, where most psychological disorders occur. Emerging adults with K-pop music preferences could also join a fan community, which brings benefits and vulnerability toward mental health because of the dynamics among fans and artists. Hence, emerging adults with mental health problems are suggested to seek a professional to get the appropriate treatment. This study aims to describe the attitude towards psychological professional help. Using the Indonesian ATSPPH-SF as the main instrument, 156 participants from a K-Pop fan community participated voluntarily. The result indicated that most participants had moderate attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. There was no significant difference in help-seeking attitude by mental health information and visiting professional help. This study implies the importance of better education about help-seeking by introducing mental health professionals to the K-pop fan community. Future studies may consider gathering extensive data from many K-pop fan communities in Indonesia.

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## INTRODUCTION

The period of emerging adulthood is a transitional phase between adolescence and adulthood, occurring between the ages of 18 and 25 (Arnett, 2000). This developmental period causes individuals to experience the feeling of being “in-between,” in which they no longer feel like children but still have not fully reached adulthood (Arnett, 2004). During the period of emerging adulthood, individuals typically undergo significant life changes, including the transition from living with their parents to living independently, entering a new level of education, or embarking on a career. (Lane, 2014). This period also allows individuals to explore the areas of love, work, and worldview because it provides them with many possibilities (Arnett, 2004). So when they encounter difficulty in finding a path to take in finding a job or relationship, instability in the face of change, or having immature feelings, these could impact their mental health (Arnett et al., 2014).

Emerging adults should be cognitively, psychologically, and socially mature enough to face various life problems compared to children (Wood et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the prevalence rates of psychological disorders increase during emerging adulthood. Most occur at 24, although some appear before 15 and grow in the 20s (Kessler et al., 2005; Lijster et al., 2017). In Indonesia, according to the data from Basic Health Research, 18.5% of people aged 15 - 34 suffered from an emotional mental disorder, and 11.6% experienced depression (Kementrian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2019). Studies among Indonesian college students as a part of emerging adulthood also supported previous data by finding that anxiety, stress, and depression are the most prevalent mental health issues among this population (Astutik et al., 2020; Kaligis et al., 2021). It puts importance on the mental health of emerging adults.

To deal with mental health problems, we need to seek help from others. Help-seeking is a form of coping that relies on others for understanding, advice, treatment, and general support for problems or distressing experiences (Rickwood et al., 2005, p.4). According to the planned behavior theory, a behavior occurs when an individual has a high intensity in doing it (Ajzen, 1985). Rickwood et al. (2005) outlined that help-seeking is a process that commences with an individual's awareness of symptoms and the appraisal of having a problem, progressing to the willingness to disclose themselves to potential help-seekers. Therefore, to generate a high intensity of seeking help, it is necessary to have a positive attitude toward seeking professional help (Nurhayati, 2013). The overall evaluation of seeking help from a mental health professional is called a help-seeking attitude (Hammer et al., 2018).

The younger generation in Indonesia has better mental health awareness, encouraging them to seek help (Cipta & Saputra, 2022). They acknowledged psychologists or other health professionals as a source of help, even though friends remain the primary source of assistance (Kaligis et al., 2021). The normalization of

seeking help from professionals also increased during the global health emergency caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus because of the efforts among mental health professionals to destigmatize mental health issues, which could help younger people have a better perception of mental illness (Nealon, 2021). However, some Indonesian people still believe spiritual factors to be a cause of mental illness, which may prevent patients from seeking help from mental health professionals (Marchira et al., 2016; Marthoenis et al., 2016). There are also some personal factors such as self-reliance, a tendency to cope with problems with help from family/friends, worry about the diagnosis, negative stigma from others, negative experiences with sources of help, and lack of information about counseling services that could prevent from seeking help (Rasyida, 2019; Natalie et al., 2023).

In dealing with various stressors in life, people use music as one of their coping strategies to manage their mental well-being (Henry et al., 2021). Music also has been a part of life among emerging adults. A survey by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) found that the age group between 16 and 24 is the largest group of music lovers (Santoso, 2020). Globally, Korean music pop (K-pop) has become famous because of its music and performances. In 2021, Indonesia became the country with the highest number of K-pop fans worldwide (Alifah, 2022). Many fans of a particular artist gather and establish a fan community called fandom.

Being in a fan community could provide some benefits. Virtual communities could help individuals get information, social support, and friendship (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). Interactions between fans in an online community could also impact their well-being (Kim et al., 2023b). Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, interaction within communities, even in virtual spaces, is a better strategy for maintaining an individual's well-being (Esposito et al., 2022). Not only impacting the fans, but being in a K-pop fan community could help individuals contribute to society through charity activities (Muslikhah & Isbah, 2022).

On the other hand, being in the K-pop fan community could make individuals experience uncomfortable situations that could impact their mental health. There is a possibility of experiencing a fan war, a fight between fans or fandoms to protect their favorite idols (Yulianti, 2022) by expressing verbal aggression on social media. Fan war became one of the fandom activities in the internet community. During fan wars, some fans could post malicious posts or comments that bring discomfort to other fandoms. With the intention to hurt the other party's feelings, the fan war could become cyberbullying (Maros & Basek, 2022). In terms of the relationship between fans and idols, some K-pop artists also grapple with mental health issues and suicides (Kim et al., 2023a). This situation could impact fans and public mental health (Niederkrötenhaler et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2023a).

Seeing the prevalence of mental health problems in emerging adults and the potential impact on mental health while being in a K-pop fan community, the

exploration of a professional help-seeking attitude is essential. Even though some studies explored the help-seeking attitudes and behaviors among adults (Nurdiyanto et al., 2023) and emerging adults (Luca et al., 2020; Spence, 2016; Rasyida, 2019; Natalie et al., 2023), to date, there has been no study that specifically discussed help-seeking attitudes among emerging adult among K-Pop fans. The objective of this study is to describe the attitudes of emerging adult fans of K-pop in Indonesia towards seeking professional psychological help.

## **METHOD**

### **Design**

This study uses a quantitative descriptive research method with a cross-sectional approach to describe the attitude toward seeking professional help among emerging adults in a K-pop fan community.

### **Participants**

The study population is a K-pop fan community from iKON, a 9-year South Korean idol group. The fan community, called Indonesian iKONIC, consists of fans of various ages and from different places in Indonesia. Sampling participants was conducted using a non-probability sampling method through purposive sampling. The study's criteria for participation were individuals aged 18 - 25 who were willing to complete the survey—the decision to use purposive sampling aligned with the study objective of examining emerging adults. One hundred fifty-six people participated in the study by filling out informed consent forms and online questionnaires.

### **Instruments**

This study used the Indonesian Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form (ATSPPH-SF), adapted by Nurdiyanto et al. (2021), to measure the attitude toward seeking professional psychological help. All items in The Indonesian ATSPPH-SF fit well with the Rasch model and were reliable. This instrument comprises ten items, with six favorable and four unfavorable statements. The Indonesian ATSPPH-SF uses a Likert scale of four response categories (0=Disagree; 1=Slightly Disagree; 2=Slightly Agree; 3=Agree). All responses were calculated to get one total score from this scale.

The Indonesian ATSPPH-SF is comprised of three factors that collectively explain the motives behind seeking professional psychological help. First factor is openness to seek professional help, with the example of statement: "Jika saya mengalami krisis emosional yang serius, saya yakin terapi psikologis akan bermanfaat". The second factor is the appreciation of the idea of looking for professional assistance, with the example of statement: "Saya akan mencari layanan konseling psikologis di kemudian hari". The last factor is the preference to solve

problems independently, with the example of statement: “Permasalahan pribadi dan emosional, seperti berbagai persoalan dalam hidup, cenderung akan terselesaikan dengan sendirinya”.

In addition to gathering data on attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help, this study also collected socio-demographic data, including age, sex, location, and information regarding mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviors. Using the Cronbach alpha technique, the reliability coefficient of this study was 0.664, whereas the validity measured from the corrected item-total correlation score ranges between 0.195 and 0.453.

### **Procedure**

Researchers collected data from one K-pop fan community, namely Indonesian iKONIC. The data was gathered during the iKONIC online seminar (webinar) using the Indonesian Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form (ATSPPH-SF). The second researcher gathered the community in a webinar, and the first researcher became the speaker for the event. The process of data collection was conducted indirectly via the online survey that was distributed at the beginning of the webinar. Before filling out the survey, participants get informed consent to understand the purpose and confidentiality of their participation.

Since the webinar participants were of varying ages, the researchers selected them by setting up a survey form to filter the participants. Those who did not qualify the requirements were unable to complete the survey. Throughout the study, the first researcher was responsible for preparing the instrument, analyzing the data, and writing the results. The second researcher contributed to gathering the participants and writing the study results.

### **Data Analysis**

This study used a descriptive and comparative approach. The objective of these approaches is to describe the data from the research variable, rather than to carry out hypothesis testing (Azwar, 2022). Descriptive analysis (mean, SD, range, maximum, and minimum score) from the ATSPPH-SF scale was used to describe the participant's demographic. Using a formula, this study divided participants' scores into low, middle, and high categories (Azwar, 2022). The Mann-Whitney u Test was utilised in order to determine the difference in attitude toward help-seeking based on mental health information. We applied the Mann-Whitney U Test because the data from both groups were not normally distributed. We also used ANOVA to find differences in help-seeking attitudes based on visitation to professional help. Statistical analysis in this study was performed using Jeffrey's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) 0.18.3.0 for Windows.

## RESULT

Here is the demographic data overview of the research participants in this study.

**Table 1**

*Participant's Demographic Data (n = 156)*

No	Criteria	Sample (n)	Percentage/Mean
1	Gender		
	a. Female	151	97
	b. Male	2	1
	c. Decided not to answer	3	2
2	Age (18 – 25 years old)	156	21,244
3	Location (based on island)		
	a. Sumatera	21	14
	b. Java	118	76
	c. Kalimantan	5	3
	d. Sulawesi	7	5
	e. Bali, Maluku, Nusa Tenggara, Papua	4	2
4	Mental Health Information		
	a. Yes	102	65
	b. No	54	35
5	Visitation to Professional Help		
	a. Yes	25	16
	b. No.	123	79
	c. Decided not to answer	8	5

The demographic data table showed that the mean age of the participants was 21,244 years old. Most of the participants in this study were female (97%, n=151), while male participants were only 1% (n=2), and the rest, 2% (n=3), decided not to disclose their gender. Participants came from several areas in Indonesia. However, most of them came from Java Island (76%, n=118), followed by Sumatera (14%, n=21), Sulawesi (7%, n=7), Kalimantan (4%, n=5), and the minor participants located in the combination of Bali, Maluku, Nusa Tenggara, and Papua Island (2%, n=4).

Regarding the participants' previous information about mental health, most participants (65%, n=102) had information about mental health through seminars or workshops. At the same time, 35% of participants (n=54) reported that they never had the mental health information from seminars or workshops. Participants also had various experiences in terms of seeking help from mental health professionals. Most of them never had previous experience visiting professional help (79%, n=123), followed by 16% of participants (n=25) who had a history of visiting professional help, and 5% of participants (n=8) decided to keep their answers private from this question.

A descriptive analysis was carried out to determine the description of the attitude toward seeking professional psychological help. The resulting score ranged from 7 to 30 (M = 19.917, SD = 4.262, min = 7, max = 30). From the scores obtained,

three categories were formed based on the normal distribution model. The high category indicates a positive attitude toward seeking professional psychological help, the middle category indicates a moderate or neutral attitude toward seeking professional psychological help, and the low category suggests a negative attitude toward professional psychological help among emerging adults. Table 2 summarizes the three categorizations of attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help in this study.

**Table 2**  
*ATSPPH - SF among Emerging Adults in a K-Pop Fan Community*

Formula	Interval	Category	Sample (n)	Percentage (%)
$X \geq M + 1SD$	$X \geq 24$	High	23	15
$M - 1SD \leq X < M + 1SD$	$16 \leq X < 24$	Middle	106	68
$X < M - 1SD$	$X < 16$	Low	27	17
Total			156	100

Table 2 shows the help-seeking attitude categorization results of 156 emerging adults from a K-pop fan community in Indonesia. A total of 23 participants (15%) were categorized as having a high help-seeking attitude, 106 participants (68%) as having a moderate help-seeking attitude, and 27 participants (17%) as having a low attitude toward seeking professional psychological help.

**Table 3.**  
*ATSPPH - SF Differences by Mental Health Information and Visitation to Professional Helps*

Category		m	p	Low (%)	Middle (%)	High (%)
Mental Health Information	Yes	20.275	0.193*	14 (14)	67 (66)	21 (20)
	No	19.241		9 (17)	39 (72)	6 (11)
Visitation to Mental Health Professionals	Yes	21.680	0.067**	2 (8)	14 (56)	9 (36)
	No	19.528		21 (17)	87 (70)	15 (13)
	Decided not to answer	20.375		0 (0)	5 (63)	3 (37)

\* Mann-Whitney U Test \*\*ANOVA

Table 3 showed no significant difference between ATSPPH-SF and mental health information ( $p > 0.05$ ). Nevertheless, the result showed that the mean value of participants who had information about mental health through seminars/workshops is higher compared to the mean of participants who never had information about mental health through seminars/workshops. Additionally, it was found that the majority of participants with previous mental health information had

moderate ATSPPH-SF (66%), followed by high ATSPPH-SF (20%) and low ATSPPH-SF (14%). On the other hand, most of the participants with no mental health information had moderate ATSPPH-SF (72%), followed by low ATSPPH-SF (17%) and high ATSPPH-SF (11%).

This study also revealed that there was no significant difference between ATSPPH-SF by the history of visitation to mental health professionals ( $p > 0.05$ ). Still, participants who had a history of visitation to professional help had a higher mean value than participants with no history of professional help or did not want to answer this question. Most of the participants who had previous visits to mental health professionals had moderate ATSPPH-SF (56%), followed by high ATSPPH-SF, and few of them had low ATSPPH-SF. For participants with no experience of visiting mental health professionals, most of them had moderate ATSPPH-SF (70%), followed by high ATSPPH-SF by the number of 13%, and 17% of participants had low ATSPPH-SF.

**Table 4**  
*Correlation between ATSPPH - SF and Age*

Variable	Spearman Correlation	Sig.
Help-seeking attitude * Age	0.125	0.121

Table 4 shows the correlation between two variables, namely the help-seeking attitude and age. The normality test used Shapiro-Wilk and found that the data of ATSPPH-SF from this study were not normally distributed ( $p = 0.007$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, the correlation analysis used Spearman's rho, and the result illustrated no significant correlation between the participants' help-seeking attitude and age ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

This study described the help-seeking attitude among emerging adults in a K-pop fan community in Indonesia. The findings showed that most emerging adults (68%) had a moderate attitude toward professional psychological help (see Table 2). This reality indicates that the majority of participants have moderate openness and preference for getting professional help for their psychological problems. The openness and preference for professional help among emerging adult participants might be affected by their familiarity with mental health issues. Currently, young individuals in Indonesia have a good awareness of mental health, encouraging them to seek professional help (Cipta & Saputra, 2022). They acknowledged psychologists and psychiatrists as mental health professionals (Shabrina et al., 2022) and mentioned psychologists as their second priority in seeking help while facing mental health problems (Kaligis et al., 2021).



However, the moderate help-seeking attitude also indicated that emerging adults also prefer or consider seeking help from parties other than psychological professionals when they have mental health problems. Based on the result of this study, 17% of participants even had a negative attitude toward seeking professional psychological help. The period of emerging adulthood is a transitional phase between adolescence and adulthood, during which individuals gain greater autonomy in problem-solving. They desire to cope with their problems independently, making them refuse to seek help (Radez et al., 2021; Shabrina et al., 2022). Past studies also showed that emerging adults have some preferences while facing mental health problems. They preferred to seek help from informal sources, e.g., friends, family, and the internet/social media (Shabrina et al., 2022) rather than mental health professionals. They also preferred to visit formal but non-psychological resources, e.g., health practitioners, spiritual leaders, and teachers (Kaligis et al., 2021).

The result of a moderate help-seeking attitude was consistent with the study among Indonesian college students (Nurfadilah et al., 2021) and also adults (Nurdiyanto et al., 2023). It illustrates that the help-seeking attitude does not depend on the age of the participants. The result of this study, which found no significant correlation between the participants' help-seeking attitude and age, also supported this idea. A similar result regarding help-seeking attitudes among varying ages implies that societal or cultural factors could impact the help-seeking attitude. Some Indonesian people hold a belief that spiritual or non-psychological factors could cause psychological problems (Marchira et al., 2016; Marthoenis et al., 2016). Additionally, the judgment and belief about the source of psychological problems, which was non-medical, could affect the attitude toward non-professionals (Altweck, 2015). Hence, the belief perceived by society in Indonesia about non-psychological problems as the source of illness might prevent people from seeking help from professionals. In the context of young people, the perceived stigma and their anticipated embarrassment of public consequences also became one of the most significant barriers that hindered them from seeking professional help (Radez et al., 2021).

The study found that there is no difference in attitudes toward seeking professional help by mental health information through the seminars/workshops category. Nevertheless, this study considered the difference in mean values, showing that participants who received mental health information had more positive attitudes toward seeking professional help than other groups. Information about mental health could be part of mental health literacy. Past studies showed the impact of mental health literacy in increasing help-seeking attitudes and behavior (Maya, 2020; Iswanto & Ayubi, 2023). Jorm (2020) explained that mental health literacy could support the skill to recognize, manage, and prevent mental health problems. It made individuals understand the symptoms of mental health disorders

and led them to seek professional help. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts were accelerated to educate people about mental health (Nealon, 2021), including in Indonesia (Cipta & Saputra, 2022). Hence, people could find information about mental health without participating in seminars or workshops. Emerging adults in the K-pop fan community could easily access the internet and social media to find information about their idols. They use social network services (SNS) as a common platform to communicate with fans worldwide (Jang & Song, 2017). With this online behavior, they may find much information, including mental health information, from social media since social media could also become a potential means to access information related to mental health (Pretorius et al., 2022).

Some studies also reported no significant correlation between mental health literacy and help-seeking attitude (Lumaksono et al., 2020; Hasibuan & Indriani, 2023). Not all attributes of mental health literacy could impact help-seeking attitudes. Lumaksono et al. (2020) found that only the attitude that promotes appropriate help-seeking impacted the attitude toward seeking professional help. Other attributes, e.g., knowledge about the disorder, how to find information about mental health, risk factors and causes, treatments, and the accessibility of professional help, showed no correlation (Lumaksono et al., 2020). However, information from seminars/workshops might be presented by reliable sources or professionals who support help-seeking rather than information read through social media, which has limited information or is shared by unreliable parties. This may answer why mental health literacy might not be the only factor in increasing help-seeking attitudes.

Lastly, the study findings showed no significant difference in help-seeking attitudes among participants with a history of visiting mental health professionals and participants who never visited mental health professionals. Nevertheless, individuals who had consulted with mental health professionals exhibited a more favourable disposition towards seeking professional psychological help than those with no prior history of seeking help. Even though most of them had moderate help-seeking attitudes, they also had more positive help-seeking attitudes than negative help-seeking attitudes. The K-pop industry has been exposed to mental health issues among its artists. Nevertheless, some K-pop artists have started to reveal the importance of mental health and professional help-seeking to their fans (Kim, 2022). The information exposed by public figures can become an educational tool related to mental health problems (Lee, 2019), thus influencing fans' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Gronholm & Thornicof, 2022). So, emerging adult fans could have a positive attitude toward seeking professional psychological help without visiting the professional.

On the other hand, visiting a professional could help individuals to feel better or worse. Individuals who feel helped could change their perception, have a sense of relief, and believe that the source of help was competent (Natalie et al., 2023). This

good experience while visiting professionals would give them a positive attitude toward professional psychological help. However, a study showed that clients might perceive negative experiences in psychotherapy (Vybírál et al., 2024). This negative experience with the source of help could hinder the individual from seeking help (Natalie et al., 2023). Moreover, being stigmatized as the consequence of seeking help also becomes a reason for people to have a negative view of professional help and stop seeking it (Broglia et al., 2021). Hence, the experience perceived by emerging adults during therapy could potentially change their attitude toward psychological professional help.

This study had several limitations to consider while reading and interpreting the findings. The participants were limited to emerging adults in one K-pop fan community. The data also had unequal numbers of male and female participants. Moreover, the information gathered in this study did not include information about the participants' mental health conditions. The study has yet to explore the impact of other factors on help-seeking attitudes. Lastly, the sample size could also be more significant to ensure generalization.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concluded that most emerging adults in a K-pop fan community's attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help were moderate, with 68% of the participants. Furthermore, few participants had a positive help-seeking attitude, 15%, and even a negative attitude toward seeking professional psychological help, 17%. Additionally, the study also revealed no significant differences in help-seeking attitudes between participants with previous mental health information and participants with no mental health information. The findings also found no significant difference in help-seeking attitudes between participants with a history of visiting mental health professionals and participants who never visited mental health professionals.

The results implied the importance of better education about help-seeking and mental health among emerging adults, especially among K-pop fan communities. It was also essential to introduce mental health professionals to the K-pop fan community to explain the benefits and possible discomfort during counseling services to better understand the process of seeking help. The promotion regarding mental health promotion for emerging adults in the K-pop fan community may also seek to reduce the stigma associated with seeking professional psychological help by sharing information about when we can seek professional help through the appropriate knowledge regarding the symptoms of mental disorders. The reader is expected to understand more about the tendency of help-seeking attitudes among emerging adults in the K-pop fan community. Knowing about the help-seeking attitude could be a good reason to establish a public normalization that can encourage emerging adults to seek help.

For future research, there were some suggestions based on the limitation. First, for comprehensive findings, future research may consider gathering extensive data from many K-pop fan communities in Indonesia. Second, future research can attract more male participants to get balanced participants, which could portray the average population. Third, future research is expected to explore emerging adults with specific mental health problems for a better comprehension of the help-seeking attitude among people who need professional help. Lastly, future research may examine the correlation between help-seeking attitudes and other factors, for example, educational background, help-seeking behaviors, barriers to help-seeking, and cultural or religious factors.

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