

*Original Research Article*

## Attitude Towards Mental Health Help Seeking Behavior

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### Abstract

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This paper investigated attitude of secondary school students towards mental health help seeking behavior in Gem Sub County, Kenya. It adapted descriptive design with a sample of 346 students selected by stratified random sampling from 45 schools. The closed ended questionnaires and interview schedule were used to collect data. Reliability coefficient of the instruments was .78. Data on descriptive and inferential statistics was analyzed by statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) software. The research objective established the attitude of secondary school students towards help seeking behavior. Findings showed that secondary school students had positive attitude towards help seeking behavior ( $M=41.17$ ,  $SD=5.66$ ) girls and ( $M=40.24$ ,  $SD=6.97$ ) for boys. There was a non-significant difference in means ( $t= .023$ ,  $p= .184$ ). The interviews schedule showed 55% positive and 44% negative attitude towards help seeking behavior. The study concluded that in psychological distress, both boys and girls would have a positive attitude towards help seeking behavior. It recommended peer counseling programs in schools to maintain positive attitude of students towards help seeking behavior. These findings may be significant to educational stakeholders' in making mental health policies and programs for schools

**Keywords:** Mental health, Help seeking behavior, Psychological distress

## INTRODUCTION

Mental health has been recognized as an important issue in the world for several decades. The 1948 constitution of the World Health Organization precisely defines mental health as an all-round state of physical, mental, and social stability and a state of wellness in an individual. It further highlights the mental health status based on an individual's ability to cope and balance the day today's life stressors, at the same time remaining productive and fruitful in life endeavors (WHO, 2013)

Globally, more than 70% of people with mental illness receive no treatment from health care staff (Henderson, (2013). Evidence suggests that factors increasing the likelihood of treatment avoidance or delay before presenting for care include the Attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. These are however catalyzed by (1) lack of knowledge to identify features of mental illnesses, (2) ignorance about how to access treatment, (3) prejudice against people who have mental illness, and (4) expectation of discrimination against

people diagnosed with mental illness (Henderson, Evans-Lacko Thorneycroft, 2013).

Some examples of mental health disorders include bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, depression, generalized anxiety, social anxiety and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Henderson, 2013)

Studies in the western world indicate that mental health disorders are prevalent among students, and these disorders appear to be increasing in number and severity. People with mental health problems are likely to isolate, harm themselves or remain unproductive in day to days' life endeavors (Eisenberg, 2019)

In Europe tremendous strides has been made over the years to address mental health issues. Despite such, mental health issues have been stigmatized and misinterpreted leading to unjust practices. The European nations have initiated various mental health programs focusing on access to medical care, reduced stigma and focus on individuals' psychological wellbeing.

In the recent times the European Union has made tremendous efforts in addressing the mental health programs and funding initiatives. Despite the level of progress made, challenges still emerge, which include disparities in access to services, disparities in quality of care across countries. Overall, the mental health has been recognized as an integral part of the overall health in European countries.

The mental health state varies across the Asian countries depends on social, cultural and biological factors. These issues are common with current increasing rates of stress, anxiety and depression disorders. However, the stigma towards mental health remains a major barrier to psychological help seeking. Due to under development, access and treatment to mental health issues has remained limited in many countries especially in remote areas. In the recent times there has been growing public awareness and information towards mental health. Already some countries are on a pathway to implementation of mental health policies in order to reduce stigma.

Despite the prevailing mental health challenges, there has been a regular shift towards mental health treatment and help seeking in Asia.

Mental health situation in Africa is faced with glaring challenges which includes but not limited to shortage of professionals, emerging stigma and limited access to basic care. Despite positive strides made by many countries are faced with ineffective policies, funding and programs leading to high rate of untreated disorders. Socio Cultural beliefs often influence perceptions of mental health which can hinder individuals from seeking help. In the modern times there has been a growing input and recognition of mental health, with some countries initiating reforms that increase sensitization and awareness. Despite the bold steps the bottlenecks to mental health issues remain.

The mental health situation in Kenya has been of great concern among the stakeholders. This has been characterized by high prevalence of psychological disorders. The situation has been complicated with rural counties facing inadequate access of mental health care. The Stigma surrounding mental health remains an obstacle, limiting individuals from seeking psychological help. Public awareness campaigns are increasing but challenges, funding and policy implementation have not yielded desired results. Persists. There has been a recommendation of the need for advanced mental care and strong support systems.

To guarantee that people are mentally healthy, everyone is expected to be involved individuals, families, employers, educators and communities (Mental Health Strategy, 2011)

Despite increasing acceptance and public awareness of the mental illness, seeking help by those affected is still faced with obstacles, yet seeking help is often the first step towards getting and staying well (Carnally and

McCarthy, 2021). Even among those who are not affected, it became important to find out how attitude, perceived subjective norms are associated with seeking help if they needed to. The above factors: Attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control were rated top by the global Australian survey (2012) as the leading obstacles to psychological help seeking behavior.

### Statement of the problem

According to "World Health Organization (WHO) Mental Health Action Plan (2013-2020)", persistent low psychological help seeking behavior remains a worrying trend globally. The report further cites attitude, social norms, lack of awareness and inadequate services as key impediments to service utilization. In Europe low level of psychological help seeking is associated with attitude and stigma linked to mental health issues. Many individuals fear discrimination, unjust criticisms, judgment and discrimination which hinder them from seeking psychological assistance. The process is further complicated by inadequate access to support services especially in remote rural areas and disparity across countries and regions. Despite the efforts by several organizations Language barrier and cultural differences complicates the process of bridging the gap.

In Sub Saharan Africa, "World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) pinpointed Attitude, inadequate resources, socio cultural values as hindrance to psychological healthcare services utilization. It recommends further efforts in improving mental health services provision and awareness to boost the general help seeking rates.

The Kenya mental health policy report (2015-2030) outlined attitude, inadequate mental health resources, as barriers to psychological help seeking. It further proposed an urgent need for improved psychological care and awareness as steps to address the help seeking avoidance menace. This challenge was associated with attitude, limited access to services, and inadequate trained mental health personnel. These conditions were noted as key barriers to psychological help seeking especially in rural areas.

The Edu- Afya records at Siaya County referral hospital (2019) revealed that 80 students were diagnosed of depression in the county. It further reported that Gem sub-county had the highest prevalence at 19 out of 80 cases noted. This was the highest prevalence rate at 23.75% in comparison to neighboring sub counties of Bondo with 16 cases (20%), Rarieda 9 (11.25%), Ugunja 10 (12.5%), Alego Usonga 12 (15%) and Ugenya 14 (17.5%) (See table 1). Gemsub county also had the lowest rate of voluntary help seeking in the county. This prompted a study in the sub county to establish the attitude of secondary school students in Gem sub county, Kenya towards mental health help seeking behavior.

## The Purpose of the study

Purpose of this study was to determine the attitude of secondary school students of Gem sub county, Kenya.

## Objective

The objective of this study was to;

- i. To establish the attitude of secondary school students towards mental health help-seeking behavior, in Gem Sub-County across gender.

## Theoretical Perspective

Theoretically this study was anchored on Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior

## Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior

This theory was advanced by Icek Ajzen's who asserted that the mental health help seeking behavior is influenced by variables e.g. Attitude (independent variable) with help seeking behavior (dependent variable) with source of assistance as intervening variable. The model was best suit for the study since it had similar variables as those of the current study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Attitude on Mental Health help-seeking behavior

In the context of this study, Attitude referred to perceived psychological threats and benefits associated with mental health help-seeking behavior. Positive Attitude was found to have an increase in mental health help seeking behavior. Negative attitude on the other hand decreased the mental health help seeking behavior (Ajzen's, 1991).

Wendy, (2019) conducted a study on the attitude of students towards professional counseling. This research was done among the students of University of Florida. The study findings showed that the students had positive attitude towards professional counseling. It similarly observed that mental health help seeking behavior was higher among the female than male students. This study was carried out among university students in the USA and its findings might have not been relevant to secondary school students. To address this gap, there was need for a similar study among secondary school students in Kenya.

Research done by Kirk and Davis (2017) focused on the attitude of students towards psychological help seeking. This study was conducted among a purposively

sampled population of 150 high school students in Britain. The results showed that the students had a positive attitude towards psychological help seeking. The researcher used purposive sampling technique which is biased and cannot accurately represent the characteristics of the entire population. To address this, gap the current study used a larger sample of 346 selected by stratified random sampling to find out if similar results could be attained

These results were similar to those reported by Sydney (2020) who investigated the attitude of students towards mental health help seeking behavior. This research was conducted among college students in Australia. Their findings revealed that the college students had positive attitude towards mental health help seeking behavior with female students scoring higher than their male counterparts. This was a foreign study prompting a need for a local study among Kenyan students to find out if the results could replicate.

Different results were reported by the United States National Co Morbidity (2018) examined the attitude of adolescents towards psychological help seeking. This study was conducted among a small sample of 80 adolescents in urban population. The findings showed that the adolescents generally had negative attitude towards help seeking behavior. This study used a smaller sample of 80 students which could not accurately represent the characteristics of the entire population. Therefore, there was a need to conduct a similar study among school going adolescents by use of a larger sample of 346 students and compare the results.

Ramin et al. (2014) examined the attitude of the adult South African population towards psychological counseling. This study was conducted among the rural adult population in Cape Province. The findings of this study revealed that there was a generally positive attitude of the people towards psychological help seeking. It further showed that the female had higher scores in psychological help seeking than their male counterparts. This study was conducted among randomly selected rural adults' population in Cape Town and there is need to conduct a similar study among the secondary school students and compare the results.

Abraham (2021) investigated the attitude of university students towards psychological help-seeking. This study was conducted among 2,785 randomly sampled public university students in Malawi. The results revealed that the students had negative attitude towards psychological help seeking. This research used a large sample of 2785 respondents which could not give accurate results. It's important to conduct a similar study among an accurately selected sample of 346 students and find out if the results could be the same

A study by Sarah (2019) focused on the attitude of secondary school students towards mental health help seeking. This study was carried out among high school students in Kampala. The results showed that the

students had a positive attitude towards help seeking behavior. It also reported that the female students had a higher score on attitude than their male counterparts. This study was conducted among the university students whose age and life experience advance is thus posing a need for a similar study among the secondary school students to find out if similar results could be achieved.

Baraza and Nyavanga (2016) examined the attitude of students towards mental health help seeking behavior. This research was conducted among students of four selected teacher training colleges in Kenya. The findings showed that the students had generally negative attitude towards help seeking behavior. It also observed that the female students had higher scores on the attitude towards mental health help seeking behavior. This research was conducted among students of teachers training colleges. This prompts a need for a similar study among the secondary school students in Kenya and find there could be similarity in the results

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Designs

This research used descriptive research design to explain the nature of independent and dependent variables of the study. The correlational design was used to express the relationship between independent variables (Attitudes,) and dependent variables (Mental health help seeking behaviour). The Descriptive research design was appropriate for this study since it is simple and appropriate for expressing the nature of the variables of the study. It also expressed the respondents' feelings, attitudes and opinions. Correlation design on the other hand was relevant since it enabled the researcher to analyse the relationships between attitudes and help seeking behaviour. Mugenda and Mugenda (2017),

### Area of Study

This study was carried out in secondary schools in Gem sub-county, Kenya. The area is geographically located between latitudes 0.0991N and longitudes 34.5376 E. The total area covered is 44,884. Km sq. with a population of 179,792 at a density of 44 People per square kilometer. Compared to 85.15 sq. km nationally.(KNBS, 2012)

### Population of Study

The population for this study included 3500 form two students and 45 heads of guidance and counseling from schools in the sub county. The form 2 students were relevant for this study since they are in crucial

adolescence stage marked by emotional challenges faced by teenagers. The guidance and counseling teachers were relevant since they keep day to day guidance and counseling records, and also attend to student's psychological needs.

### Sample and Sampling Techniques

This study used stratified random sampling technique to select a sample of 354 students based on gender. The sampling technique was most appropriate due to the fact that students' population consist of two groups based on gender. The population of 9000 was first placed into two strata in the ration of 5:4 i.e. 5000 girls and 4000 boys. To arrive at the sample size from the population, Kjrecie and Morgan (1970) formula was used to select a sample of size of 354 consisting of 154 boys and 192 girls.

### Instruments for Data Collection

For data collection the researcher involved the use both student's questionnaire and the interview schedule for heads of guidance and counseling department in school. The questionnaire was closed-ended in that the responses were rigid with limited responses (Dudovskiy, 2019). The open questionnaire was used to collect information on the attitude of secondary school students towards mental health help seeking behavior in Gem sub county, Kenya See Appendix B

The interview schedule for heads of guidance and counseling department was used by to collect opinions, views and ideas regarding their perceptions on Students attitude towards mental health help seeking behavior. It provided additional information which could not be provided by the questionnaires (Mugenda and Mugenda 2013) See appendix C

#### Student Questionnaire (SQ)

Section A of the students' questionnaire was the assent form which sought the students' consent before providing information. The students being under age could not provide direct consent to provide information. It also provided guidelines and instructions which were followed in data collection.

It evaluated the attitude of students towards mental health help seeking behavior. The responses were ranked on a 6-point scale. Example: If I have any issue disturbing my mind the first thing I will do is to seek assistance from any available source. The positive students' responses were rated as follows. 6- Strongly Agree 5- Moderately Agree, 4- Agree, 3 - Disagree, 2- Moderately Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree.

The negative responses were sorted as follows: Strongly disagree =6, moderately disagree =5, Disagree=4, Agree =3, Moderately Agree =2, Strongly

Agree =1. The scores for each student for the 10 items were be summed up.

The students were required to mark the most appropriate statement for each of the 10 statements. The summation was then done to produce a measure for the attitude towards mental health help seeking behavior. For this questionnaire the highest and lowest possible scores were 60 and 30 respectively. Scores above 30 implied positive attitudes while those below implied negative attitudes towards mental health help seeking behavior. The students marked the most appropriate statement for each of the 10 items given.

### **Interview schedule for Heads Of Guidance And Counseling Department**

This was administered through face-to-face interviews sessions. It enabled the researcher to follow and note emotive together with non-verbal cues. It similarly helped the researcher to obtain information on the attitude of students towards mental health help seeking behavior. In addition, the researcher was in a position to interrogate and ask more questions on the attitude of students towards mental health help seeking behavior. See Appendix C.

### **Validity of the instruments**

The validity of the instruments was ascertained by judgment and assessment from lecturers from the Department of Educational Psychology, Maseno University. After their advice, scrutiny and judgment the recommendations of the experts were used to improve accuracy, face and content validity of the instruments and modifications done.

### **Reliability of the instruments**

To test the reliability of the instruments, piloting was first done among 38 (10% of the sample size). This was among students who did not participate in the final study. It is recommended that 10% of the sample is ideal for pilot study (Connelly, 2008). Reliability was done by test-retest whereby the instruments were administered twice. In the first instance the scores were labeled as X. The exercise was repeated after a fortnight after which the, scores were labeled Y. The reliability coefficient was then calculated of which a coefficient of .78 was attained and was acceptable. (Jackson, 2014).

### **Procedure for data collection**

Permission was first sought by seeking approval from

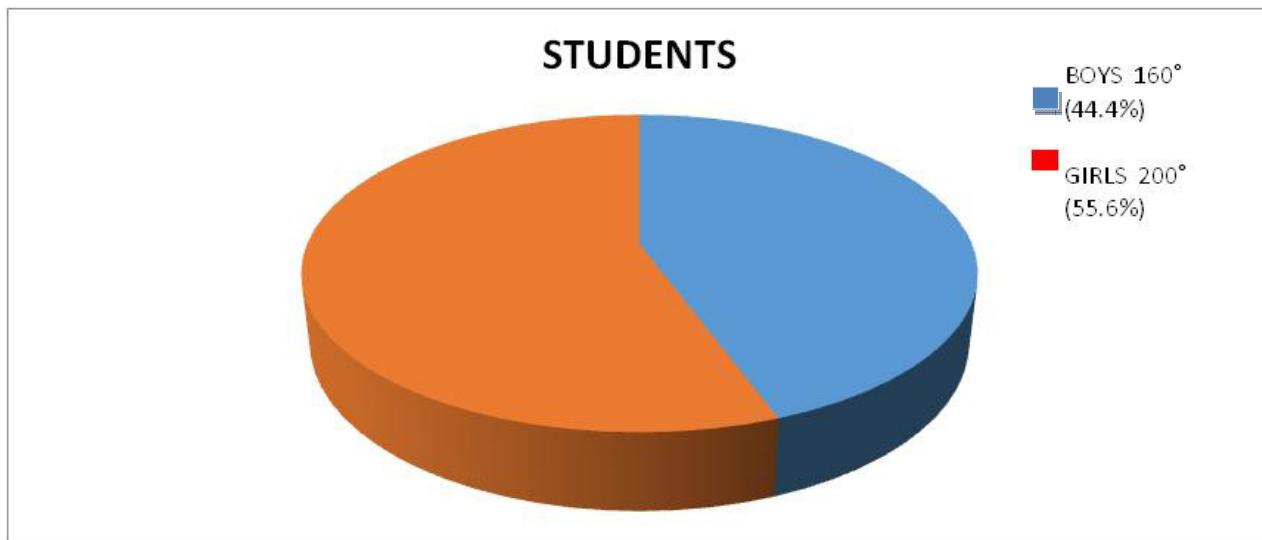
Maseno university school of graduate studies (SGS). Research permit then sought from Maseno University Scientific Ethics Review Committee. The researcher then received the permit with letters of notification to conduct research in Gem sub county, Kenya issued. The First visit was made to the sampled schools with briefing done to the heads of guidance and counseling departments and students on the intended data collection process. On the final visit the respondents were taken through the questionnaires where they rated the 10 items on the questionnaire. Each of the 10 items were on a 6-point scale rated from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The heads of guidance and counseling department in schools will be taken through the interview schedule and respond to issues regarding attitude of students towards mental health help seeking behavior. Both the students' questionnaire and the interview schedule were collected for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The Data analysis involved the following process. The data was first sorted, cleaned, coded and entered into Special Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS) for further scientific analysis. During analysis the Quantitative data will involve descriptive which involved frequency distribution tables. The descriptive statistics involved use of frequency counts, percentages with data summarized then recorded in table form. The inferential statistics involved use of independent sample t test, Spartz, (2018.) The Qualitative data obtained from the interview schedule was organized into themes and subthemes and reported in text form.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The ethical principles of this research were guided by the code of conduct enshrined in the American Psychological Association (APA,2017):This involved first seeking of approval from relevant Institutions in line with part 8.01 of the APA. This was obtained from Maseno University Ethical Review Committee. The research permit for this research was then sought from the National Council for Science and Technology (NACOSTI) Then researcher sought informed consent from the respondents before conducting a study. This was in line with section 8.02 of the guidelines. The study was conducted in a language that the respondents understood best. The consent for this study was documented with consent forms which were provided to the respondents prior to the intended date of study. According to the above guidelines the purpose, the intended duration, respondents' right to participate or withdraw, possible risks, benefits, confidentiality, possible limits as well as basic contact information were provided in a language best understood



**Figure 1.** Gender representation of the study sample

**Source:** The researcher

by respondents with a copy of informed consent attached at the appendices.

Equally the consent for recording voices and images was sought and for situations where it could be necessary to do the same the informed consent of the respondents was done this was in line with section 8.03 of the guidelines. To avoid possible harm that may occur to the respondents. It was important to abide by safety measures by avoiding participation or facilitating harmful actions during the study. The Confidentiality of the Data was taken care of and the researcher refrained from disclosing information which could lead to disclosure of the respondents thus the participants for the study remained anonymous with no information on identity given. Debriefing was done to the respondents to provide the full information pertaining the nature and conclusions of the study. All the misconceptions that the respondents could have concerned the study were corrected by availing s debriefing forms and support centers listed. Ethics pertaining to publishing and reporting of information was adhered to. The researchers took precaution on issues of plagiarism and falsifying data. This was done by providing citations and accurately reporting of data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents quantitative and qualitative results and discussions on the study findings based on the objectives set.

### Background information

The study sample comprised of 346 students drawn from

3500 students from 45 secondary schools of Gem sub county, Kenya. This consisted of 154 boys and 192 girls. The results are presented on Figure 1.

The study sample also comprised of the 40 heads of guidance and counseling departments from the schools.

All the interview schedules were returned with no missing data encountered.

### Attitude of Secondary School students on mental health help seeking behavior

The objective of the study was to establish the attitude of secondary school students towards mental health help seeking behavior among secondary school students in Gem Sub County, Kenya across gender.

To establish this, the researcher used a closed ended questionnaire on attitude, consisting of 10 items measured on a 6-point Likert scale. Each respondent was asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the 10 items in part A, Section A1 of the questionnaire (See Appendix A).

The positive items were scored as: Strongly Disagree 1, Moderately Disagree 2, Disagree 3, Agree 4, Moderately Agree 5 and Strongly Agree 6. While the negative items were scored as: Strongly Disagree 6, Moderately Disagree 5, Disagree 4, Agree 3, Moderately Agree 2 and Strongly Agree 1. For each respondent, scores from the 10 items were summed up. Each of the items on attitude had possible maximum score of 6 and a minimum of 1. In this study the maximum score was 60, minimum 10 while the mean score was 40.70. The respondents who scored above 30 had positive attitude while those who scored below 30 had negative attitude towards help seeking behavior.

**Table 1.** Gender difference of Attitude

Gender	N	Mean	SD.	Df	Sig (2 tailed)
Boys	154	40.24	6.97	1.331	.184
Girls	192	41.17	5.66		

**Source:** The researcher

**Table 2.** HOD Views on Attitude

	N	%
Sub themes		
Negative Attitude	18	45%
Positive Attitude	22	55%

**Source:** The researcher

### Attitude of secondary school students towards mental health help seeking behavior across gender,

To establish the attitude of secondary school students towards mental health help seeking behavior across gender, an independent sample t test was conducted and the results are reported on Table 1.

The results showed that secondary school students of Gem sub county, Kenya had positive attitude towards mental health help seeking behavior girls ( $M=41.17$ ,  $SD=5.66$ ) and boys ( $M=40.24$ ,  $SD=6.97$ ) who displayed a wider spread of views regarding attitude towards mental health help seeking behavior.

There was a non-significant difference in means ( $t=.023$ ,  $p= .184$ ) in the scores for girls and boys. The interpretation of independent sample t test was guided by Fawad (2020) interpretation and reporting of t test values. In his view, the values are significant if ( $P<.05$ ) significance level.

This result meant that when secondary school students in Gem sub county Kenya are faced with mental health challenges they would respond positively towards seeking assistance.

These results were consistent with those reported by Tesfaye et al (2020) who examined the attitude of students towards psychological help seeking behavior. This research was done among college students in United States of America. The independent sample t test results showed that the students had positive attitude towards psychological help seeking with female scoring ( $M=40.43$ ,  $SD=7.00$ ) and male ( $M=40.12$ ,  $SD=7.20$ ). There was a non-significant difference in means of male and female students ( $t= .028$ ,  $p=.172$ ).

These findings were supported by Misran (2023) who investigated the attitude of students towards mental health help seeking behavior. This study was conducted among high school science students in India. The results showed that the students had a positive attitude towards mental health help seeking behavior with boys scoring

( $M=42.21$ ,  $SD=7.05$ ) and girls ( $M=41.00$ ,  $SD=7.00$ ). The difference in means for boys and girls was non-significant ( $t=.029$ ,  $p=.054$ )

Different results were reported by Metz (2023) who investigated the attitude of students towards mental health help seeking behavior. This research was conducted among the college students in France. The independent sample t test results showed that the students had negative attitude towards help seeking behavior with male ( $M=25.75$ ,  $SD=6.31$ ) and female ( $M=20.02$ ,  $SD=6.50$ ). There was a significant difference in ( $t=.025$ ,  $p=.023$ ) in the scores of female and male students. The current study, Metz and Tesfaye looked at the attitude of students towards mental health help seeking behavior. They found that the students had positive attitude towards mental health help seeking. The findings also showed a non-significant difference in the means of boys and girls. This was probably due to utilization of available sources of assistance. Misran on the other hand focused on students of science-based courses probably who had poor utilization of the available sources of assistance due to busy schedules. Equally the courses were male dominated thus a probable reason for a significant difference in means of male and female students.

### Views of Head of guidance and counseling

The objective aimed at establishing the attitude of secondary school students towards mental health help seeking behavior. The heads of guidance and counseling department from various secondary schools in Gem sub county, Kenya were asked to comment on the attitude of their students towards mental health help seeking behavior. The data was analyzed thematically. Two sub themes emerged on the attitude of students towards psychological help seeking. The common responses were reported on Table 2

### Positive attitude

A section of students was reported to have positive attitude towards mental health help seeking behavior. Several heads of guidance and counseling departments interviewed (73%) stated that students with positive attitude would seek psychological help more.

According to HOD 1:

"Some students are quite open and regularly visit the guidance and seek counseling department for help."

When the attitude of a student is positive, they would seek psychological assistance as many times as they can." Such students seeking psychological help whenever distressed were always well, happy and socially healthy"

In another school HOD 2 said "There are students who believe that if they have psychological problems, they cannot solve it alone but have to seek psychological assistance from available sources".

HOD: 3 explained it as follows:

"Some students are very positive and appreciate the guidance and counseling department. The department is very important in a school and students should visit as many times as possible to get psychological assistance. There is a category of students who believe that a problem shared is half way solved and they always appreciate the idea of seeking psychological help. The students who regularly sought psychological help when mentally distressed were generally happy with peace in mind and always encouraged their peers to seek assistance in times of need"

In another group it was highlighted that if all students can be sensitized to keep seeking psychological help then several challenges and indiscipline in the school would be highly reduced as a number of them are closely related to psychological issues

" HOD 4: described the situation in their school as follows.

"It is very easy for me to tell that a particular student has been regularly seeking psychological help". These category of students are always open, talks freely and they would always be like" Mwalimu I always come to your office and doesn't find you" or "Mwalimu nowadays getting you for assistance is normally very difficult" While some attributed this positive attitude to the students' exposure, others thought that it's somehow attributed to inner behavior guided by natural discipline to seek assistance whenever in need.

### Negative Attitude

Some heads of department indicated that a number of their students would do not seek psychological help due to embarrassment. While others strongly emphasized that the treatment avoidance of several students was occasioned by the fact that they always want to keep

their psychological issues secretive. Some also reported that there are students who perceive psychological help seeking as indication of lack of control for one's situation. For instance,

HOD: 1 said

"Most students do not perceive psychological help seeking as a bold measure. If anything, they should applaud such students for taking such action instead of fighting the situation for them"

"Because of the school environment, students claim that sharing out their problems is considered a poor way of getting rid of their challenges. They believe that those who are able to persevere without sharing with other parties their challenges are perceived to be stronger and admirable. There are some students who don't see any possibility of getting meaningful assistance from the guidance *and counseling department*". The students in this category on many occasions 'avoid seeking assistance whenever mentally disturbed.

Some participants however felt that seeking psychological assistance as well as psychological treatment would be interpreted differently by others. They do not seek help for fear that they would be perceived as weak by their fellow students.

HOD; 2 said

"A number of students perceive psychological help seeking as a waste of time and a poor way to get rid of psychological challenges. They are always negative and discourage their peers from seeking psychological assistance"

Some heads of guidance and counseling departments indicated that despite the existence of counseling services in their schools some students did not know that such services were very instrumental in sorting their psychological needs.

A HOD: 3 stated that

"The students always think that there are problems which they can sort out by themselves whereas there are those graves enough that may need the services of an expert" From these views, this study concluded that students have both positive and negative attitude towards mental health seeking behavior. Therefore, a student with positive attitude is more likely to seek psychological help while one with a negative attitude would completely ignore or evade psychological help seeking.

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary of the Study Findings

This section presents a summary of the study finding based on the objective of the study. The purpose of this study was to determine the attitude of secondary school students towards mental health help seeking behavior in Gem sub-county, Kenya.

## Attitude Towards Mental Health help-seeking behavior

The objective was to establish the attitude of secondary school students of Gem Sub County, Kenya towards mental health help seeking behavior across gender. This study found that secondary school students in Gem Sub County have positive attitude towards mental health help seeking behavior. However, there was a non-significant difference in the means of girls than boys.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the study finding for this objective, it was concluded that secondary school students in Gem sub county, Kenya have a positive attitude towards mental health help seeking behavior. However, there was a non-significant difference in the means of girls and boys.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendation was made.

The Secondary Schools need to clearly take the following step

In line with the objective there is need to develop peer counseling programs in schools to change the attitude of students towards mental health help seeking behavior. This was driven by the finding from the heads of guidance and counseling departments that only 55% of students had positive attitude towards mental health help seeking behavior.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: ASSENT FORM FOR FORM TWO STUDENTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN GEM SUBCOUNTY KENYA

Name of the study.....  
I understand that I have been asked to participate in a study about.....

I will be asked to..... which will take about .....minutes.

I understand that I do not have to participate but if I do I can quit at any time. I also understand that I do not have to answer any question that I do not want to, or do anything I do not want to do.

My parents, teachers or guardian will not have to know what I have said or done in the study no one but the researcher will know.

This study is being done by.....

At.....University, phone number.....and his/her email address is.....

If I have any question or concern about this study, I can call or ask him/her about them.

When I sign that means that I agree to participate in the study and that all my questions have been satisfactorily answered and I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature.....Date.....

**Source : Researcher**

### APPENDIX : B

#### Appendix : A2 Students Questionnaire

This questionnaire is made to collect information on (Attitude, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioral control) and how they influence mental health help-seeking behavior of secondary school students in Gem sub-county, Kenya. Kindly know that your views and opinions will remain confidential.

#### INSTRUCTIONS

Kindly read carefully and respond to the statements below by ticking on the spaces provided.

Do not write your name on this questionnaire

Kindly fill all blank spaces and do not leave any space unfilled

Fill the questions alone without asking for assistance from other students

Kindly return all questionnaires, do not keep any for yourself

Kindly be as genuine as possible and give only truthful answers

Each student must fill his /her own questionnaire no student is allowed to fill for the other

#### PLEASE INDICATE YOUR GENDER

BOY..... GIRL.....

Kindly use a 6-point scale below to respond to the statements provided in each section by using:

**Strongly Disagree (SD), moderately Disagree (MD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), moderately Agree (MA). Strongly Agree (SA)**

**N/B:** The interpretation of this questionnaire was based on the General help seeking questionnaire (2005) whereby higher scores implied more positive while lower scores implied negative attitude towards mental health help seeking behavior

**APPENDIX: B: ATTITUDES TOWARDS MENTAL HEALTH HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOUR**

Below are 10 statements rate each of them by ticking one number based on the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements:

	STATEMENT	S A	M A	A	D	M D	S D
1.	If I have an issue disturbing my mind the first thing I will do is to seek help from any available source.						
2.	The issue of talking about my problems with anybody to me is a poor way of seeking help.						
3.	If I am distressed at any time of my life I always feel relieved when I seek psychological help						
4.	I always admire the students who persevere with their problems without seeking help.						
5.	I would only seek psychological help if an issue has disturbed my mind for a very long time.						
6.	I might want to have psychological counseling in future but not right now.						
7.	I believe that a student who has an emotional problem cannot solve it alone but needs the help of a counselor;						
8.	I feel guidance and counseling needs a lot of time and money so I don't see if it can add any value to me.						
9.	I always believe that a student should try and solve his or her problems alone; getting guidance and Counseling should always be the last resort.						
10.	There is no need of always seeking for help since the personal and emotional problems do just work out by themselves.						

Source: General Help seeking questionnaire, Wilson et al (2005)

**APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HEADS OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING**

**INFORMED CONSENT**

Dear sir/ Madam

You are requested to participate on this study whose aim is to establish the attitude of secondary school students in Gem sub county, Kenya towards mental health help seeking behavior. This study will take a maximum of 30 minutes of your time. Kindly do not write your name and ensure your responses remain as truthful as possible.

1. Briefly comment on the attitude of your students towards mental health help seeking behavior?.....

2. According to the records at your department, what is the approximate percentage of students whose attitude is positive and negative respectively??.....

3. Briefly recommend ways of improving attitude of your students towards mental health help seeking behavior.....

Source: Researcher