

Public Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to examine how men's perception of barriers to help-seeking is predicted by a number of different variables, including conformity to masculine norms, gender role conflict, physical functioning, age, socioeconomic status, and prior history of healthcare engagement. In this study, statistical methods indicated a ranking of which variables predicted the greatest amount of variance in barriers to help-seeking. 275 male participants were recruited via online solicitation from the website Reddit.com, a popular website that has male users who represent a wide range of masculinity ideologies. Results from the study indicated that gender role conflict was the strongest predictor, accounting for 21.4% of the variance in barriers to help-seeking. Gender role conflict refers to the psychological experience when men have internalized values around masculinity conflict with behavioral expectations or situational demands. For example, subscales from the measure include Success, Power, & Competition; Restrictive Emotionality; Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men; and Conflict Between Work and Family Relations. In addition, two other variables predicted a statistically significant portion of variance in perception of barriers to help-seeking: socioeconomic status and resistance to encouragement from family/friends to seek help. These findings suggest that men who are sensitive to gender role conflict are most likely to perceive psychological barriers to help-seeking for physical health problems and are least likely to pursue to care for their healthcare concerns. This indicates that future interventions intended to target traditional men that underutilize healthcare may benefit by addressing gender role conflict by identifying help-seeking behavior in a way that upholds masculinity values and/or reduces their sense of gender role betrayal. For example, one Australian based intervention by Hall and Alston (2001) held a men's health screening event at automobile drag-races by dressing medical practitioners in coveralls and framing the event as "vehicle inspections" including "checking oil levels" (i.e., blood pressure) and spark plugs (i.e., testicular cancer). Further implications from this study and how it can be useful in targeting men's health interventions are identified in the paper.