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Man up: A Study on how men Deal with mental health issues

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Abstract

Men's mental health is a crucial yet frequently disregarded component of health care. The distinct challenges and coping mechanisms that men employ to cope with mental health issues are discussed in this paper. The analysis synthesizes the body of research on men's approach to asking for help, handling stress, and dealing with mental health issues, which are influenced by societal, cultural, and psychological factors. This study delves into a range of therapies and support systems specifically designed to improve the mental health of men. This study intends to educate policymakers, medical professionals, and the general public on the intricacies of men's mental health by shedding light on these findings, aiming to promote more efficient and inclusive mental health treatment methods.

Keywords: Men's mental health; Coping mechanisms; Help-seeking behavior; Societal influences; Cultural factors; Psychological barriers; Therapies for men, Support systems

1. Introduction

Men's mental health is an essential but frequently disregarded component of medical care, with significant implications for both personal and societal health. While mental health disorders impact individuals of all genders, research reveals that men encounter certain challenges in recognizing and managing these issues. Men are less likely than women to seek professional assistance or communicate their emotional challenges, despite the increasing recognition of mental health challenges worldwide (Krumm et al., 2017).

One cannot stress the significance of men's mental wellness. Substance misuse, depression, and suicide are among the mental health disorders that disproportionately impact men (Canetto & Sakinofsky, 1998; Substance Misuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019). Furthermore, conventional masculine norms frequently dissuade men from showing signs of vulnerability or asking for assistance when they're experiencing psychological discomfort (Levant & Wimer, 2014). This social expectation might aggravate mental health problems in males and obstruct appropriate intervention and care. Men's mental health is still a major concern even with increased awareness. The underrepresentation of men in mental health settings is a result of various factors, including stigma, the perception of weakness linked to seeking treatment, and restricted access to gender-sensitive mental health services (Mahalik et al., 2003; Seidler et al., 2016). To create inclusive and easily accessible mental health services, it is essential to comprehend these obstacles and investigate practical methods for promoting men's mental health. This paper aims to analyze the unique difficulties men encounter when dealing with mental health issues and explore the coping strategies men employ to control psychological anguish. Through a comprehensive analysis of extant literature, this study aims to elucidate the societal, cultural, and psychological elements that impact men's perspectives on mental health. In the end, this review hopes to raise awareness among policymakers, medical professionals, and the general public on the complexity of men's mental health and to support more efficient and inclusive methods of providing mental health care.

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2. Gendered perspective on mental health

Social standards, notably those pertaining to conventional masculine ideals, have a significant impact on men's attitudes regarding mental health. Men's perceptions and responses to mental health issues are profoundly impacted by gendered perspectives, which in turn affects their help-seeking behaviors and general well-being. The expectations imposed on men by society and cultural norms govern their behavior, including how they express their feelings and seek assistance for mental health issues (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Krumm et al., 2017). There is a stigma associated with mental illness in many cultures, especially for males who may experience pressure to uphold conventional ideas of masculinity that emphasize emotional stoicism and independence (Mahalik et al., 2003; Wong et al., 2017). Men may be apprehensive of being viewed as weak or fragile if they seek treatment, which can lead to hurdles in admitting and resolving mental health issues (Seidler et al., 2016). Consequently, men may prioritize emotional avoidance or suppression in their coping mechanisms, which exacerbates mental health issues (Levant & Wimer, 2014). The idea of seeking treatment for emotional difficulties might conflict with traditional masculine norms that frequently favor traits like toughness, independence, and power (Mahalik et al., 2003; Levant & Wimer, 2014). When it comes to meeting cultural expectations of masculinity, men who adhere closely to these norms could view asking for help as a sign of weakness. Men are therefore more likely than women to underuse mental health services, which delays the diagnosis and treatment of mental health illnesses (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Wong et al., 2017). To create interventions that support men's mental health outcomes, it is crucial to comprehend how conventional masculine standards affect men's help-seeking behaviors. In conclusion, traditional male values and societal and cultural norms have a significant effect on men's attitudes about mental health and behaviors related to seeking treatment. To address the unique challenges that men encounter when regulating their mental health and promote more inclusive and efficient psychological aid structures, it is imperative to acknowledge these gendered perspectives.

3. Coping mechanisms used by men

Men cope with mental health issues through a variety of coping mechanisms, shaped by personal experiences and cultural norms. It is crucial to comprehend these coping strategies to create tailored treatments that enhance men's mental health. Men often resort to specific strategies to cope with mental health issues. Men often handle stressors head-on by addressing the underlying source of their discomfort using problem-solving techniques (Mahalik et al., 2003; Levant & Wimer, 2014). This tactic supports the agency and control over one's circumstances that are traditionally associated with masculinity. In addition, men may try to deflect their focus from emotional suffering by using tactics of diversion, like playing sports or doing work-related tasks (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Distraction helps one feel competent while momentarily relieving distressing feelings. In addition, some men employ avoidance coping techniques, deliberately refraining from talking about or facing their emotions to preserve their emotional distance and their self-image (Levant & Wimer, 2014; Krumm et al., 2017). Avoidance behaviors might involve substance abuse, overwork, and social distancing from others. Many of these coping mechanisms, while useful and adaptive for brief periods, have the potential to become maladaptive when applied excessively or incorrectly. Positive mental health outcomes are facilitated by adaptive coping mechanisms, which constructively handle stressors through problem-solving and social support seeking (Levant & Wimer, 2014; Wong et al., 2017).

Contrarily, maladaptive coping mechanisms like substance abuse and avoidance can aggravate mental health conditions and have detrimental long-term effects (Krumm et al., 2017; Seidler et al., 2016). These tactics frequently offer brief respite but neglect to treat the underlying emotional anguish, which feeds negative cycles of mental illness. For interventions to be tailored to support men's adaptive coping skills, it is essential to comprehend the relationship between particular coping methods and mental health outcomes. Healthcare professionals can empower men to manage their mental health more successfully and lessen the influence of societal pressures on help-seeking behaviors by helping them identify and cultivate good coping mechanisms.

4. Societal barriers to help-seeking behavior in men

Social factors such as gender norms, stigma, and masculine stereotypes have a big impact on men's help-seeking behaviors when it comes to mental health difficulties. It is vital to comprehend these factors to enhance men's access to mental health services.

- **Stereotypes and Stigma:** Men are frequently deterred from getting help by the societal stigma associated with mental illness (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Men who acknowledge psychological distress may be reluctant to seek mental health assistance out of fear of being viewed as weak or emotionally unstable.

- **Gender norms and Masculinity:** Conventional notions of masculinity place a premium on emotional stoicism and independence, which may discourage men from getting the mental health care they need (Mahalik et al., 2003; Levant & Wimer, 2014). It might be interpreted as a challenge to one's masculinity to admit vulnerability or ask for emotional support.
- **Perceived lack of support:** The underutilization of available resources may result from men's perception that mental health services are not as supportive or customized to their needs (Wong et al., 2017). The impression of insufficient help is further exacerbated by a lack of knowledge about programs tailored specifically for men's mental health.
- **Healthcare system factors:** Men's access to mental health care might be hampered by structural hurdles in the healthcare system, such as a lack of male-friendly services or clinicians (Seidler et al., 2016). Finding healthcare professionals who recognize and cater to the specific mental health requirements of men may present challenges.
- **Cultural beliefs and values:** Cultural elements can influence men's attitudes against getting professional treatment, such as ideas about mental illness and help-seeking practices (Krumm et al., 2017). Men may be discouraged from candidly sharing their difficulties or seeking appropriate care due to the cultural stigma attached to mental health issues.

It takes a diverse strategy to address these societal factors, one that opposes stigma, advocates for gender-inclusive mental health services, and increases public understanding of the significance of getting mental health concerns treated. By removing obstacles that prevent men from receiving mental health care, we may offer them the confidence to put their mental health first and resist social pressures that discourage seeking help.

5. Psychological factors and mental health issues in men

To understand men's mental health and the frequency of certain mental health conditions, psychological elements are essential. Men often encounter unique psychological difficulties and stressors that affect their mental health. Conventional masculine norms, which prioritize emotional restraint and toughness, have the potential to cause internalized stress and pressure. (Levant & Wimer, 2014). The consequences of this can affect mental health by causing problems with emotional expression or seeking assistance for psychological distress. Gender disparities exist in the prevalence of several mental health ailments, with certain disorders being more prevalent among men. Although men may exhibit different manifestations from women, such as irritation, rage, or substance misuse as coping techniques, depression is one disorder that is frequently diagnosed (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2019), men are also much more likely to suffer from substance use disorders, such as drug and alcohol addiction and alcoholism, which frequently co-occur with depression. Suicide is a prominent mental health concern among men and continues to be a major global public health issue. Social isolation, untreated depression, and access to fatal means are among the factors that contribute to the gap in the suicide death rate between men and women (Canetto & Sakinofsky, 1998; Wong et al., 2017).

The onset and aggravation of mental health issues in men are attributed to multiple risk factors. They consist of:

- **Social isolation:** In light of societal expectations of autonomy, men may find it challenging to form and sustain social bonds, which may result in feelings of loneliness and isolation (Seidler et al., 2016).
- **Work-related stress:** Demanding careers and high-pressure work situations can lead to burnout and anxiety, which can negatively impact mental health (Krumm et al., 2017).
- **Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms:** The Substance Misuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2019) states that unhealthy coping techniques can exacerbate mental health difficulties. Risky behaviors, such as excessive drinking or substance misuse, can be maladaptive coping mechanisms.
- **Adverse childhood events and trauma:** According to Krumm et al. (2017), these experiences can raise an individual's chance of subsequently acquiring mental health disorders.

To establish tailored interventions and support systems that meet the unique requirements of men suffering from mental health issues, it is imperative to comprehend these psychological variables, prevalent mental health illnesses, and associated risk factors. We can enhance mental health outcomes for men in diverse groups, lessen stigma, and encourage early intervention by addressing these concerns holistically.

6. Therapies, interventions, and support systems for men

To effectively address men's mental health challenges and promote good outcomes, tailored therapeutic techniques and interventions are needed. A noteworthy method is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which aims to recognize and

alter harmful thought processes and behavioral patterns that underlie mental health problems (Mahalik et al., 2003). With an emphasis on useful tactics and problem-solving methods that connect with men's experiences, CBT has been modified to challenge masculine norms and preferences (Levant & Wimer, 2014). Mindfulness-based therapies, such as Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), offer another promising therapeutic approach. According to Wong et al. (2017), these methods support men in developing higher levels of emotional regulation and stress management by helping them become more conscious of their thoughts and feelings.

Furthermore, men benefit greatly from group-based therapies such as support groups and seminars on men's well-being since they offer a safe space for them to interact with others and exchange stories (Seidler et al., 2016). Discussions on mental health among males are less stigmatized in these group settings because they normalize help-seeking behaviors and promote camaraderie. Effective support networks and available community resources are essential components of men's mental health care, in addition to therapy therapies. Men can anonymously voice their worries and seek support on helplines and online forums dedicated to men (Krumm et al., 2017). These resources offer men a secure environment in which they can discuss mental health issues and get important information and assistance.

Additionally, outreach activities and awareness campaigns—both community-based and private—are essential in lowering stigma in local areas and advancing mental health literacy (Wong et al., 2017). These programs enable early intervention and promote help-seeking behaviors among men by involving communities and equipping bystanders to identify symptoms of distress. Workplace accommodations and employer-sponsored wellness initiatives that address work-related pressures and encourage a healthy work-life balance additionally promote men's mental health (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019). Businesses can foster supportive cultures that value mental health and encourage men to seek professional treatment, when necessary, by placing a high priority on the well-being of their employees.

In conclusion, specialized treatment strategies, strong support networks, and local resources are essential elements of comprehensive mental health services for men. Enhancing mental health outcomes and promoting a resilient and well-being-oriented culture among men dealing with mental health issues can be achieved through the integration of these treatments into clinical practice and community settings.

7. Conclusion

The intricate interaction of societal, cultural, and psychological elements that influence how men deal with mental health difficulties has been elucidated by this paper. We addressed the unique difficulties men encounter in acknowledging and managing their mental health, along with the coping strategies they employ to cope with psychological distress. Men's views about mental health and help-seeking behaviors are significantly shaped by traditional masculine norms and cultural expectations, as this study has shown. Men are disproportionately underrepresented in mental health treatments because of the need to live up to expectations of stoicism and independence. Furthermore, significant obstacles to receiving appropriate mental health care remain the stigma of mental illness in society and the belief that asking for assistance indicates weakness. These obstacles play a part in the concerning rates of undiagnosed and untreated diseases as well as the increased frequency of several mental health issues among men. Promoting gender-sensitive methods of mental health care that take into account the particular needs and preferences of men is essential to addressing these issues. Destigmatizing conversations about mental health, encouraging candid conversations about vulnerability and masculinity, and offering accessible, specialized support services for men are some examples of how one can accomplish this. To establish inclusive and supportive environments that encourage men to prioritize their mental well-being, governments, healthcare professionals, and communities must work collaboratively.

Through questioning established conventions and promoting gender-sensitive mental health laws, we may encourage more positive views of mental health and eventually, help men who are struggling with mental health issues. In conclusion, a thorough knowledge of men's mental health concerns necessitates a multifaceted strategy that tackles societal pressures, dispels myths, and gives men the confidence to seek the help they require without fear of prejudice or condemnation. With these initiatives, we can move toward a mental health care system that is more inclusive and compassionate and that benefits communities, families, and individuals equally.

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