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AN EXAMINATION OF ATTITUDES TOWARD HELP-SEEKING AND

ATTRIBUTIONS MADE FOR A PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM BY

AN UNDERGRADUATE ADOLESCENT POPULATION

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ABSTRACT.

The aim of the present study was to examine the help-seeking attitudes held by an adolescent undergraduate student population using the modified version of the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale, (ATSPPH). An investigation was also held into the type of attributions made as to the cause of a psychological problem and the particular help-source chosen to deal with this problem. Four hundred and forty-four hostel resident undergraduate students participated in a three component descriptive study within a quasi-experimental design which included a pre-test pilot study group, a main study matched group and a control group. The results obtained showed that this particular adolescent population held less positive help-seeking attitudes than a wider heterogeneous population. Both females and those subjects who had a prior contact with psychological professionals held more positive pro-help attitudes than either those who had no prior contact and male subjects. Two thirds of the subjects made external (situational) attributions as to the cause of the psychological problem and one-third internal attributions. The majority of subjects from the two attribution groups chose a friend as the preferred help-source to deal with a psychological problem. Help-source significantly discriminated the help-seeking score on the ATSPPH scale with those with less positive attitudes choosing a friend as the preferred help-source whereas those with more pro-help positive attitudes chose a psychologist or psychiatrist. Informal and formal help-sources were defined and the stated preferences of subjects in the present study were evaluated in relation to the mental health resources currently available. Changes that the psychological professionals themselves may need to consider in matching supply to demand were also discussed.

For Jacqueline and Robert James

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