

**MENTAL HEALTH - HELP SEEKING INTENTIONS OF SOCIAL
WORK STUDENTS IN THIRUVANATHAPURAM DISTRICT**

*A Dissertation submitted to the University of Kerala in Partial Fulfilment of
Requirements for the Master of Social Work Degree Examination*

SUBMITTED BY

Name: Ms. Afsana N

Candidate code: LC24PSW02

Subject code: SW 2.4.5



**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
LOYOLA COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (AUTONOMOUS)
SREEKARIYAM, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

UNIVERSITY OF KERALA

2024- 2026

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled “**Mental health - help seeking intentions of youth in Trivandrum district.**” is a record of genuine work done by Ms. Afsana N, fourth semester Master of Social Work student of this college under my supervision and guidance and that it is hereby approved for submission. Date: 10-07-2023 Thiruvananthapuram

Dissertation Supervisor

Rev. Dr. Saji J

**Department of Social Work
Loyola College of Social Sciences
Autonomous
Sreekariyam,
Thiruvananthapuram**

Recommended for forwarding to the University of Kerala

**Dr. Francina PX Head,
Department of Social Work
Loyola College of Social Sciences
Autonomous Sreekariyam,**

Thiruvananthapuram

Forwarded to the University of Kerala

**Dr. Prakash Pillai R
Principal
Loyola College of Social Sciences**

**Autonomous Sreekariyam,
Thiruvananthapuram**

DECLARATION

I, AFSANA N, do hereby declare that the dissertation titled “**Mental health - help seeking intention of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram district.**” is the result of my original research conducted during the academic years 2024-2026. This work is submitted to the University of Kerala as part of the requirements for the **Master of Social Work** Degree Examination. I confirm that it has not been previously submitted for any other degree, diploma, fellowship, or similar academic recognition.

Candidate Name: AFSANA N

Place: Sreekariyam

Date: 10/07/2025

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

With immense gratitude and deep respect, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to all those who have supported and guided me throughout the journey of completing this research study

*titled “**Mental health - help seeking intention of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram district.**”*

*First and foremost, I extend my sincere thanks to my esteemed research guide **Dr. Saji J**, whose valuable guidance, constant encouragement, and insightful feedback have been crucial at every stage of this research. Your patience, expertise, and belief in my abilities have been a source of inspiration.*

*I express my profound gratitude to **Dr. Prakash Pillai R**, Principal of Loyola College of Social Sciences, **Dr. Francina P X**, Head of the Department, and My gratitude extends to **Dr. Jasmine Sarah Alexander, Ms. Melbin Joseph and Dr. Kannan G.S** faculty members of the Department of Social Work, Loyola College of Social Sciences, Sreekariyam, for their unwavering support, constructive suggestions, and encouragement throughout my academic journey. Your wisdom and guidance have shaped my learning and growth.*

*My sincere gratitude goes to **Dr. Sunil Kumar**, Librarian, and **Mr. George Mathew**, Assistant Librarian, of Loyola College of Social Sciences, for their timely help and assistance in accessing resources and facilitating the smooth progress of my research work.*

My special thanks go to all the Social work students from Thiruvananthapuram District who willingly took time to respond to my questionnaire and shared their experiences and opinions. Without their cooperation, this study would not have been possible. To my dear friends and classmates, your companionship, encouragement, and constant support have made this journey lighter and more joyful. Thank you for standing by me through the highs and lows.

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ABSTRACT

*Mental health is an integral component of overall well-being and plays a significant role in students' academic performance, professional development, and quality of life. Social work students, owing to the nature of their academic curriculum and fieldwork responsibilities, are exposed to various academic and emotional challenges that may influence their mental health and help-seeking intentions. Understanding the factors affecting their willingness to seek professional psychological support is essential for strengthening mental health services within educational institutions. The present study, titled "**Mental Health: Help-Seeking Intentions of Social Work Students in Thiruvananthapuram District**," aimed to explore and understand the help-seeking intentions of social work students. The specific objectives were to identify the barriers and academic life balance influencing help-seeking behaviour, understand students' perceptions regarding mental health support systems, and examine the challenges in the existing mental health services.*

*The study adopted a **quantitative research approach** with a **descriptive cross-sectional research design**. A purposive sampling technique was used to select **65 Master of Social Work (MSW) students** from selected social work colleges in Thiruvananthapuram District. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire through both online and offline modes, while secondary data were obtained from journals and research articles. The collected data were analysed using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)** with the help of descriptive statistics.*

The findings indicated that although the respondents possessed positive attitudes towards mental health and professional counselling, their help-seeking intentions were influenced by barriers

such as academic and fieldwork demands, preference for self-reliance, concerns regarding confidentiality, accessibility of services, and perceived inadequacy of institutional counselling support. The study concludes that strengthening campus mental health services, improving accessibility and confidentiality, and enhancing collaboration between educational institutions and mental health professionals are essential to promote positive help-seeking behaviour among social work students.

Keywords: Mental Health, Help-Seeking Intentions, Social Work Students, Counselling Services, Academic Life Balance, Mental Health Support Systems.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to their community. It has intrinsic and instrumental value and is a basic human right. Mental health exists on a complex continuum, which is experienced differently from one person to the next. (World Health Organisation , 2025) (American psychological Association, n.d.) defined mental health as a state of mind characterized by emotional well-being, good behavioral adjustment, relative freedom from anxiety and disabling symptoms, and a capacity to establish constructive relationships and cope with the ordinary demands and stresses of life

Help-seeking intentions refer to **a person's willingness to seek professional psychological help** to alleviate psychological distress (Research Review: Help-seeking intentions, behaviors, and barriers in college students – a systematic review and meta-analysis, 2025)

The IBM-HS suggests that the three help-seeking mechanisms of attitude, perceived norm, and personal agency collectively lead to the formation of *intention* (i.e., readiness to exert effort to seek mental health help from a professional; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). In general, people with a more favorable attitude, perceived norm, and personal agency will form a greater intention to seek help. (Hammer, 2024)

According to (Behav, 2002) mental health can be understood as a syndrome of positive feelings and positive functioning in life, where individuals experience emotional, psychological, and social well-being rather than merely the absence of mental illness.

Mental health is a fundamental component of overall health and well-being, influencing how individuals think, feel, behave, and interact with others throughout their lives. It extends beyond the mere absence of mental illness and encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health enables individuals to recognize their abilities, cope effectively with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Good mental health allows individuals to develop resilience, maintain healthy interpersonal relationships, make informed decisions, and adapt to the various challenges encountered during different stages of life. Consequently, mental health is increasingly recognized as a crucial determinant of individual development and overall quality of life.

Among various population groups, college students represent one of the most vulnerable segments with respect to mental health concerns. The transition from adolescence to adulthood is characterized by significant developmental, emotional, and social changes. During this period, students often experience increased independence, greater academic responsibilities, career-related uncertainties, and evolving interpersonal relationships. These transitions require considerable emotional adjustment and coping abilities. The developmental stage of **emerging adulthood**, typically between the ages of 18 and 28 years, is recognised as a distinct period marked by exploration, instability, and identity formation, all of which increase susceptibility to psychological distress (Arnett, 2000). Furthermore, qualitative evidence on educational transitions demonstrates that changes in academic and social environments contribute to loneliness, uncertainty, and performance anxiety among university students (Sundqvist, 2024). While many students successfully navigate these developmental challenges, others experience varying levels of psychological distress that negatively affect their academic performance, interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, and overall well-being.

The higher education environment itself presents numerous challenges that can influence students' mental health. Academic workloads, examinations, assignment deadlines, peer competition, financial pressures, expectations from family members, and concerns regarding future employment often create substantial psychological stress. Additionally, students may experience loneliness, homesickness, relationship difficulties, identity-related conflicts, and reduced social support while adapting to university life. The cumulative impact of these stressors may result in anxiety, emotional exhaustion, depressive symptoms, burnout, and other psychological difficulties if adequate support systems are unavailable or underutilised. Research consistently confirms that psychological distress among university students has become an increasingly important public health concern, requiring greater institutional attention and comprehensive mental health support.

Despite the increasing prevalence of mental health concerns among university students, professional help-seeking behaviour remains considerably low across many higher education settings. Evidence from the review *Help-Seeking Intentions, Behaviors, and Barriers among College Students*, published in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, which synthesised findings from **62 studies**, reported that only approximately **one-third** of students experiencing significant psychological distress sought professional mental health support. The review identified the most common barriers as a preference to manage problems independently, lack of time, and concerns related to mental health stigma. These findings suggest that the

availability of counselling services alone does not necessarily ensure their utilisation. (Ruiying Zhao 1, 2025)

Several individual and social factors contribute to the underutilisation of mental health services among university students. One of the most significant barriers is the preference for selfreliance. The study *Self-reported Barriers to Professional Help Seeking Among College Students*, published in the *Journal of American College Health*, found that approximately **55%** of respondents preferred to cope with emotional difficulties independently rather than seek professional assistance. This preference reflects the developmental need for autonomy that characterises emerging adulthood but may inadvertently delay timely intervention for psychological concerns. In addition, stigma associated with mental illness, concerns about being judged by peers or family members, fear of discrimination, and misconceptions regarding professional psychological care continue to discourage students from seeking appropriate support.

Mental health literacy also plays a crucial role in shaping help-seeking behaviour. Although awareness regarding mental health has improved considerably over recent years, many students continue to experience difficulties in recognising symptoms of psychological distress and identifying appropriate sources of professional care. Limited knowledge regarding available counselling services, uncertainty about treatment procedures, misconceptions about mental health interventions, and a preference for relying on informal support systems often contribute to delayed help-seeking. Consequently, students may choose to seek support from friends or family members while postponing or avoiding professional mental health services.

Beyond individual factors, structural and institutional barriers further influence students' helpseeking intentions. (Kus Hanna Rahmi, 2025)highlights that inadequate staffing, fragmented service delivery, poor institutional integration, accessibility issues, financial constraints, and stigma-related concerns continue to limit students' utilisation of available mental health services across diverse educational settings. Even where counselling services exist, concerns regarding privacy, long waiting periods, limited awareness of available resources, and doubts about service effectiveness may discourage students from accessing professional care.

Research also demonstrates that barriers to help-seeking are influenced by cultural and contextual factors. The study (Kennicia, 2026)reported that experiences of discrimination, cultural beliefs, and concerns regarding stigma significantly affected students' willingness to seek psychological

support. These findings emphasise that help-seeking behaviour is shaped not only by individual attitudes but also by broader social and cultural contexts, highlighting the importance of developing mental health services that are culturally responsive, inclusive, and sensitive to the diverse needs of student populations.

Social work students experience unique psychological challenges due to the nature of their professional education, which combines rigorous academic coursework with emotionally demanding fieldwork experiences. In addition to managing assignments, examinations, and academic expectations, they are frequently exposed to vulnerable individuals, families, and communities experiencing complex psychosocial issues. Such exposure requires continuous emotional engagement, empathy, and professional responsibility, which may increase students' susceptibility to stress, emotional exhaustion, and compassion fatigue. Although social work education equips students with knowledge regarding mental health and the importance of professional support, research indicates that many students continue to underutilize mental health services. Help-seeking behaviour among social work students is often influenced by individual factors such as self-reliance, stigma, and limited mental health literacy, as well as institutional barriers including inadequate counselling services, concerns about confidentiality, accessibility issues, and financial constraints. Furthermore, the demanding balance between academic responsibilities and field practicum may discourage students from seeking timely professional support. As future mental health and social service professionals, the psychological well-being of social work students is of particular importance, as their ability to maintain good mental health directly influences their academic performance, professional competence, ethical practice, and capacity to provide effective support to individuals, families, and communities. Therefore, understanding the help-seeking intentions of social work students is essential for strengthening institutional mental health support systems and fostering a resilient and psychologically healthy future social work workforce.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite growing global and national recognition of the escalating crisis in youth mental health, a pervasive and deeply concerning disconnect remains between the psychological distress experienced by university students and their actual utilization of professional mental health services. While approximately 20% to 25% of youth globally—and a significant proportion in India—suffer from mental health and substance use disorders (K, 2018), nearly two-thirds of students experiencing severe distress choose to suffer in silence rather than access professional

help (Ruiying Zhao, 2025). This massive treatment gap poses a severe threat to the academic performance, personal development, and overall well-being of the student population, frequently resulting in prolonged non-fatal disability, academic attrition, and diminished quality of life.

The problem is uniquely amplified among social work trainees. Social work students operate under a distinct "double-burden" that separates them from the general student population. In addition to navigating standard, high-stakes academic stressors—such as intensive examinations, stringent deadlines, financial pressures, and performance anxiety—they are simultaneously embedded in professional fieldwork placements. These practicums routinely expose them to systemic poverty, structural violence, family breakdowns, and severe crisis situations within vulnerable communities. This dual mandate requires continuous emotional expenditure, intense empathy, and advanced ethical accountability, making these trainees highly susceptible to burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and compassion fatigue.

Paradoxically, while social work education provides students with advanced literacy regarding mental health conditions and explicitly trains them to advocate for professional help-seeking among clients, this theoretical knowledge does not seamlessly translate into their personal lives. Social work trainees are trapped in a professional socialization dilemma: they are acutely aware of the symptoms of psychological distress, yet their help-seeking intentions are heavily suppressed by unique individual and structural barriers. Individual factors such as a heightened developmental need for autonomy manifest as rigid self-reliance, with a significant majority of students attempting to manage psychological crises independently. Furthermore, deep-seated social stigma, internalized shame, and acute fears of peer judgment or professional discrimination create powerful psychological barriers. Within professional social work circles, these barriers are often worsened by an institutional culture that implicitly expects caregivers to be resilient, causing trainees to view their own psychological struggles as a sign of professional incompetence or weakness.

Structurally, the underutilization of resources is further compounded by institutional deficits. Fragmented service delivery, valid concerns regarding confidentiality within close-knit academic and professional departments, fear of negative academic evaluations, and long waiting periods heavily discourage students from transitioning their distress into formal helpseeking behavior. When distress peaks, trainees consistently resort to informal support networks (friends and family) while indefinitely postponing or actively avoiding professional psychological services.

While existing literature has extensively evaluated help-seeking behaviors among general college populations in Western contexts, there remains an acute shortage of empirical research specifically addressing social work trainees within the Indian context—particularly in regions like Thiruvananthapuram, where rapid socio-developmental and technological transitions are shifting youth vulnerability. If future social work professionals cannot or will not seek psychological care for themselves, their long-term clinical competence, ethical practice, and capacity to deliver objective support to marginalized populations will be severely compromised. Therefore, a critical problem exists regarding how the interplay of attitude, perceived social norms, and personal agency shapes the help-seeking intentions of social work trainees facing unique occupational hazards. This study directly addresses this empirical gap by systematically investigating the specific help-seeking intentions, operational barriers, and underlying behavioral mechanisms within this vital, yet highly vulnerable, future workforce

1.3 Background of the study

The transition into higher education coincides with emerging adulthood, a developmental phase spanning ages 18 to 28 that is uniquely characterized by identity exploration, academic pressures, and shifting interpersonal dynamics (Arnett, 2000; Sundqvist, 2024). While this stage fosters independence, it also introduces substantial psychological vulnerability. Globally, mental health and substance use disorders (MSUDs) affect approximately 20% to 25% of the youth population, presenting a chronic burden that severely disrupts individual functioning, academic success, and long-term societal productivity (K, 2018). In India, this psychiatric burden has emerged as a primary driver of non-fatal disability among young adults, exacerbated by rapid socioeconomic transitions and digital advancements that expose students to novel stressors such as cyberbullying, behavioral addictions, and reduced face-to-face social support (K, 2018).

Despite the documented escalation of psychological distress within university settings, a pervasive disconnect persists between the prevalence of mental health symptoms and the actual utilization of professional services. Epidemiological evidence indicates that a remarkably low percentage of college students actively seek professional care, with nearly half of the student population demonstrating a resistance to executing help-seeking behaviors even when experiencing clinical levels of anxiety or depression (Adipriya Boruah, 2023). This reluctance highlights a critical deficit in help-seeking intentions—the cognitive willingness and readiness to actively engage with professional psychological services (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). When young people do choose to navigate the multi-step process of seeking help, they typically do so

only after reaching threshold points of extreme distress, heavily relying on informal support networks like family and friends before considering institutional interventions (Louise Lynch, 2025).

Systematic literature reveals that help-seeking behavior is not merely a product of clinical need, but is heavily mediated by an intersection of individual attitudes, structural parameters, and socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, and ethnicity (Gan Geok Chew, 2025). For instance, female students consistently demonstrate a higher likelihood of seeking professional psychological care than their male peers, who frequently underutilize services due to gendered socialization and a preference for self-reliance. While robust mental health literacy and positive attitudes serve as primary facilitators for service utilization, pervasive social stigma and deep-seated feelings of shame remain monumental barriers that actively depress a student's intention to seek care (Gan Geok Chew, 2025).

This barrier is particularly complex within the context of professional socialization. Interestingly, individuals trained within social service disciplines—such as female social workers—exhibit a higher baseline likelihood of seeking help from mental health professionals compared to the general public, suggesting that professional education can positively reshape help-seeking attitudes (Maya Kagan, 2020). However, professional knowledge does not offer total immunity; high levels of internalized or public stigma continue to significantly diminish help-seeking intentions across all populations, completely overriding the positive effects of professional background or gender (Maya Kagan, 2020).

Addressing these gaps through institutional interventions has proven remarkably challenging. Structural and workplace-based interventions designed to foster help-seeking often yield mixed or short-lived success; while some programs achieve minor, short-term improvements in help-seeking intentions, these changes rarely sustain past six months or translate into long-term behavioral changes due to deep-seated organizational stigma and fear of negative reputational or career consequences (Susumi Fukita, 2025).

For social work students, this dynamic creates a unique double-burden. They must successfully navigate standard institutional stressors—such as intrapersonal conflicts, performance anxieties, and financial strains—while simultaneously managing the secondary trauma and emotional exhaustion inherent in intensive field practicums. As future frontline mental health and social service providers, their psychological resilience directly dictates their future clinical competence

and ethical practice. Consequently, investigating the specific help-seeking intentions, barriers, and underlying mechanisms within this population is vital for designing sustainable, culturally responsive institutional frameworks that protect the future social work workforce.

The relevance of this study lies at the critical intersection of public health priority, psychiatric risk management, and the preservation of professional social work integrity. In an era marked by rapid societal changes, shifting digital landscapes, and escalating systemic pressures, the mental health of youth—particularly those in higher education—has emerged as an urgent public health concern (K, 2018). Within this demographic, social work trainees present a distinct and highly acute profile of psychiatric risk that sets them apart from the general student population. As a core requirement of their professional education, these students are systematically exposed to chronic psychosocial stressors, human suffering, and marginalized communities during their field practicums. This specialized exposure demands continuous emotional expenditure and advanced clinical empathy, placing these trainees at an elevated risk for empathy exhaustion, burnout, and secondary traumatization. Investigating help-seeking intentions specifically through the lens of the Integrated Behavioral Model of Mental Health Help Seeking (IBM-HS) provides an advanced behavioral diagnostic framework (Hammer, 2024). By evaluating how specific psychological mechanisms—namely, attitude, perceived norms, and personal agency—interact to dictate an individual's willingness to seek professional care, this study directly addresses the psychological "treatment gap" (Ruiying Zhao, 2025). Understanding these underlying dynamics is highly relevant to ensuring the clinical and ethical competence of the future social service workforce. If future social workers cannot navigate their own psychological barriers to access professional care, their long-term capacity to provide objective, ethical, and high-quality interventions to vulnerable families and communities will be significantly compromised. Thus, this study provides vital data required to transition student mental health strategy from reactive crisis management to proactive, preventative institutional care.

1.4 Relevance and Significance

The findings of this study offer substantial value across theoretical, institutional, and professional dimensions within the field of social work education and public health. For social work educators and academic institutions, this study provides a data-driven foundation to recognize the invisible occupational hazards embedded in field practicums, offering empirical justification for

restructuring social work curricula to explicitly incorporate formal help-seeking skillsets, peer-led support networks, and structured debriefing sessions within field coordination frameworks to mitigate clinical burnout before graduation. For institutional counselling services and policy makers, isolating the distinct structural and individual barriers highlighted by trainees—such as deep-seated fears regarding confidentiality, department-level stigma, or rigid self-reliance—will guide campus mental health professionals in building targeted outreach campaigns. It provides actionable insights for creating highly confidential, low-barrier, and culturally responsive mental health services that match the specific schedules and privacy needs of professional trainees. On a theoretical level, while the majority of literature utilizing behavioral prediction models originates from Western community samples, this study significantly contributes to the global empirical literature by validating the constructs of the IBM-HS model within an Eastern, localized academic context, providing a rare comparative glimpse into how professional socialization interacts with deeply ingrained sociocultural stigma. Ultimately, the significance of this study extends to the vulnerable communities that social workers serve; by fostering a healthier, more self-aware, and psychologically resilient generation of social work trainees, this research directly helps protect the ethical standards, clinical empathy, and overall quality of delivery within the broader social development sector

1.5 Chapterization

The present dissertation is systematically organized into five chapters, each dealing with a specific aspect of the research process. The arrangement of these chapters ensures a logical progression from the conceptual foundation of the study to the interpretation of findings and the formulation of conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter One: Introduction

The chapter presents the statement of the problem, background of the study, relevance and significance of the research, and the overall organization of the dissertation. It establishes the rationale for undertaking the study and highlights the need to explore the mental health helpseeking intentions of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

The chapter critically examines previous research findings to identify existing knowledge and research gaps. It also discusses the theoretical framework that guides the present study and explains how the selected theory supports the understanding of mental health help-seeking intentions. The chapter concludes with the identification of the research gap that justifies the need for the present investigation.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the procedures followed to ensure the scientific rigor, validity, and reliability of the research process.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Interpretation

The fourth chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the respondents. The findings are organized according to the objectives of the study and include demographic characteristics of the respondents, objective-wise analysis, descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, and testing of hypotheses where applicable. Appropriate tables, figures, and statistical interpretations are used to present the findings in a clear, systematic, and meaningful manner.

Chapter Five: Findings, Discussion, Suggestions and Conclusion

The final chapter summarizes the major findings of the study and discusses them in relation to the existing literature and the theoretical framework. It highlights the implications of the findings for social work education and practice and presents practical suggestions for educational institutions, mental health professionals, policymakers, and future researchers. The chapter concludes by outlining the overall conclusions of the study, emphasizing its contribution to understanding mental health help-seeking intentions among social work students and identifying areas for further research.

1.6 Conclusion

Mental health is an essential component of overall health and well-being, influencing individuals' ability to cope with everyday challenges, maintain meaningful relationships, and function effectively in academic, professional, and social settings. Although awareness of mental health has increased globally, a substantial gap continues to exist between the prevalence of psychological distress among university students and their utilization of professional mental health services. This gap is particularly significant among social work students, who experience the dual demands of intensive academic responsibilities and emotionally challenging fieldwork, making them especially vulnerable to stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout. Despite their educational exposure to mental health concepts and professional helping practices, various personal, social, and institutional barriers continue to influence their willingness to seek professional psychological support.

The present study recognizes that help-seeking behaviour is shaped by a complex interaction of individual attitudes, perceived social norms, personal agency, and structural factors such as accessibility, affordability, confidentiality, and institutional support systems. Considering the limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on postgraduate social work students in the

Indian context, particularly in Thiruvananthapuram District, this research addresses an important gap in the existing literature. The study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of the factors influencing mental health help-seeking intentions among future social work professionals while providing evidence that may guide educational institutions, mental health practitioners, and policymakers in strengthening student mental health support systems.

The chapter highlights the importance of promoting positive help-seeking intentions among social work students to support their psychological well-being, academic success, and future professional competence. The succeeding chapter reviews the relevant literature and theoretical framework that provide the conceptual basis for understanding mental health help-seeking intentions and identifying the research gap addressed by the present study

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE 2.1 Introduction

A literature review is a critical analysis and synthesis of existing published material on a particular topic. It does more than simply summarize sources; it evaluates and connects them, drawing out themes, contradictions, methodological strengths and weaknesses, and gaps in current knowledge. (Editage , n.d.) In the context of the present study, the review of literature focuses on mental health and help-seeking intentions among university students, with particular emphasis on social work students. The literature examines various dimensions of mental health, including psychological well-being, help-seeking behaviour, barriers to accessing professional mental health services, mental health literacy, stigma, institutional support systems, and the influence of academic and fieldwork-related stress on students' mental health. In addition, the review explores studies related to counselling services, accessibility of mental health care, and factors influencing the utilization of available support systems within higher educational institutions.

This chapter presents the theoretical framework underpinning the study, providing a conceptual basis for understanding the factors influencing help-seeking intentions among social work students. The chapter also identifies the research gaps emerging from previous studies and establishes the rationale for conducting the present investigation. By synthesising existing literature and theoretical perspectives, this chapter provides the foundation for the study and supports the formulation of the research objectives, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the mental health and help-seeking intentions of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District.

2.2 Review of Literature

Mental Health Among Youth, University Students, and Social Work Students

Mental health has increasingly become a significant area of concern among young people, particularly university students, as they encounter multiple developmental, academic, and psychosocial challenges during the transition to adulthood. Existing literature consistently indicates that the university years are associated with heightened vulnerability to psychological distress due to increasing academic responsibilities, changing social relationships, career uncertainties, and personal development. These challenges are often compounded by inadequate

coping mechanisms, thereby affecting students' overall psychological well-being and their willingness to seek professional support.

An article titled "**Youth and Mental Health Challenges Ahead**", published in the *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, emphasizes that optimal mental health is fundamental to individual functioning, productivity, and quality of life. The authors highlight that rapid societal transformations, particularly the widespread influence of information technology, have introduced new mental health challenges among young people. Factors such as reduced face-to-face interactions, behavioural addictions, cyberbullying, substance use, violence, and inadequate family support have significantly increased young people's vulnerability to psychological disorders. The study further reports that mental and substance use disorders affect nearly **20–25 percent of youth worldwide**, with many disorders beginning during adolescence and continuing into adulthood, thereby influencing educational attainment, employment opportunities, and long-term productivity (K, 2018).

The same study further argues that mental disorders among youth constitute one of the leading causes of non-fatal disability globally. It identifies several social determinants that contribute to poor mental health, including poverty, family conflict, abuse, academic pressure, and adverse childhood experiences. Simultaneously, supportive family environments, quality education, and community participation are recognised as important protective factors that enhance resilience among young people. The authors advocate adopting a public health approach that prioritizes early identification of mental health problems, school-based interventions, community awareness programmes, and the integration of mental health services within primary healthcare and educational institutions to reduce the existing treatment gap (K, 2018).

While these findings demonstrate that university students constitute a psychologically vulnerable population, the academic experiences of **social work students** present additional challenges. Unlike students in many other disciplines, social work students are required to balance intensive classroom learning with continuous field practicum experiences involving direct interaction with individuals, families, groups, and communities facing complex psychosocial problems. Such professional exposure demands high levels of emotional engagement, empathy, and critical reflection, increasing the likelihood of emotional exhaustion and psychological stress.

Supporting this perspective, **Criss (2020)** investigated the relationship between professional socialization, academic burnout, and personal help-seeking among **342 social work students**. The study revealed that balancing rigorous academic requirements with emotionally intensive field practicum significantly increased emotional exhaustion among trainees. Interestingly, although students acquired greater professional knowledge regarding mental health throughout their education, their willingness to seek professional psychological support progressively declined. The study attributed this paradox to an internalized professional expectation that future helping professionals should demonstrate psychological resilience and self-reliance. Consequently, many trainees delayed seeking professional help until their distress became severe, perceiving help-seeking as inconsistent with their emerging professional identity.

Similar findings were reported by **Wilks (2022)**, who examined the mental health trajectories of social work students engaged in concurrent field placements. The study established that exposure to clients' traumatic experiences frequently resulted in secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and emotional exhaustion among trainees. These experiences substantially disrupted students' academic-life balance while simultaneously reducing their motivation to seek professional psychological assistance. Students experiencing demanding field schedules, financial strain, and limited personal agency frequently adopted avoidant coping strategies, including social withdrawal and emotional suppression, rather than utilizing available counselling services. Many participants perceived psychological distress as an unavoidable component of professional training and consequently viewed help-seeking as unnecessary until their emotional difficulties reached crisis levels.

Evidence regarding the broader university student population also supports these observations. **Kimberly (2018)** investigated the relationship between stress, mental health symptoms, and help-seeking behaviour among **564 college students**. The study identified four principal categories of stress experienced by students: intrapersonal stress, interpersonal stress, academic performance stress, and financial stress. Intrapersonal and interpersonal stress emerged as significant predictors of anxiety and depression among both male and female students, while academic performance stress was particularly influential among female students. Despite experiencing considerable psychological distress, only a relatively small proportion of students sought professional psychological assistance. Female students were more likely than male students to utilize mental health services, and those who did seek professional help reported

considerably higher levels of stress and psychological symptoms compared to students who did not seek assistance.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that psychological distress among university students arises from the interaction of developmental transitions, academic demands, financial pressures, interpersonal relationships, and environmental stressors. For social work students, however, these challenges are further intensified by emotionally demanding field education and the professional expectation of resilience. The literature consistently indicates that although social work students possess greater knowledge regarding mental health than students in many other disciplines, this knowledge alone does not necessarily translate into positive help-seeking behaviour. Instead, professional identity, emotional labour, academic burnout, and field practicum responsibilities create additional psychological burdens that distinguish social work students from the broader university population. These findings establish the importance of examining mental health and help-seeking intentions specifically among social work students and provide a strong foundation for the present study conducted in Thiruvananthapuram District.

Help-Seeking Behaviour and Help-Seeking Intentions Among University and Social Work Students

Help-seeking behaviour has emerged as one of the most extensively investigated aspects of student mental health research because early access to professional psychological support is associated with improved mental health outcomes, enhanced academic performance, and greater overall well-being. Despite the increasing prevalence of psychological distress among university students, the utilization of formal mental health services continues to remain considerably low across diverse educational settings. Existing literature suggests that helpseeking behaviour is influenced by a complex interaction of psychological, social, cultural, and environmental factors that either facilitate or hinder an individual's willingness to access professional support.

A systematic literature review conducted by **Gan Geok Chew (2025)** examined the factors influencing mental health help-seeking behaviour among young people. The review revealed that mental illness is considerably more prevalent among youth than many other age groups, yet young people often demonstrate reluctance to seek professional psychological assistance. The study identified **mental health knowledge and positive attitudes toward psychological**

services as the primary facilitators of professional help-seeking. Conversely, **stigma, shame, and fear of negative social judgement** emerged as the most significant barriers preventing young people from accessing available mental health services. The review further highlighted that socio-demographic variables, including **gender, age, and ethnicity**, significantly influence help-seeking behaviour, indicating that students' willingness to seek professional support is shaped by both personal characteristics and broader socio-cultural contexts. The authors concluded that strengthening mental health literacy, implementing targeted awareness programmes, and reducing stigma are essential strategies for improving help-seeking intentions among young people (Gan Geok Chew, 2025).

Similar findings were reported by **Adipriya Boruah (2023)**, who explored help-seeking behaviour among university students with particular emphasis on the barriers associated with accessing mental health services. The study found that nearly **half of the participating students indicated that they would not seek professional psychological assistance even when experiencing mental health concerns**. Fear, insecurity, uncertainty regarding counselling services, and misconceptions about mental health care were identified as major obstacles influencing students' decisions. The study emphasized that delayed help-seeking often results in the worsening of psychological problems, thereby highlighting the importance of **early intervention, mental health awareness programmes, and initiatives aimed at addressing students' fears and insecurities**. The findings suggest that increasing the availability of services alone may not improve utilization unless students also develop confidence in professional mental health care.

The process through which young people decide to seek professional assistance was further examined by **Louise Lynch (2025)**. Unlike studies that primarily focused on barriers, this research explored **the sequential nature of help-seeking among young people aged 16–25 years**. The findings demonstrated that help-seeking is rarely an immediate response to psychological distress; rather, it is a gradual and multi-stage process. Most participants initially attempted to manage emotional difficulties independently or sought support from family members and close friends before considering professional intervention. Formal psychological assistance was generally sought only when emotional distress became severe or when existing coping strategies proved ineffective. The study also found that help-seeking behaviour closely resembled individuals' broader problem-solving approaches, suggesting that students who

possess stronger adaptive coping skills are more likely to seek appropriate professional support. Consequently, the study recommended the development of structured help-seeking skills within educational settings to encourage earlier utilization of mental health services and prevent the escalation of psychological problems (Lynch, 2025).

The relationship between professional identity and help-seeking behaviour was specifically explored by **Maya Kagan (2020)**, who compared help-seeking tendencies among **social workers and individuals from non-social work professions**. The findings demonstrated that social workers, particularly female professionals, were significantly more likely to seek assistance from fellow social workers than respondents belonging to other professional groups. This suggests that professional socialization and familiarity with psychosocial interventions may positively influence attitudes toward seeking support. However, the study simultaneously revealed that **high levels of perceived stigma substantially reduced help-seeking behaviour regardless of profession or gender**. Even among helping professionals who possessed greater knowledge regarding mental health services, concerns about stigma continued to discourage professional help-seeking. These findings indicate that professional education alone is insufficient to eliminate psychological barriers and that efforts to reduce stigma remain essential, even within professions dedicated to promoting mental health and psychosocial wellbeing (Kagan, 2020).

The reviewed literature collectively demonstrates that help-seeking behaviour is influenced by far more than the availability of mental health services. Individual attitudes, mental health literacy, perceived stigma, coping styles, professional identity, and social influences collectively determine whether students choose to access professional psychological support. While greater awareness regarding mental health contributes positively to help-seeking intentions, persistent fears of judgement, concerns regarding confidentiality, and preferences for self-management continue to discourage many students from utilizing available services. Furthermore, the evidence indicates that help-seeking is a dynamic behavioural process rather than a single decision, often involving multiple stages of problem recognition, informal support-seeking, and eventual consideration of professional intervention.

These findings are particularly relevant to **social work students**, whose professional education equips them with substantial knowledge regarding mental health while simultaneously exposing them to expectations of resilience, emotional competence, and self-sufficiency.

Although their educational background may foster favourable attitudes toward counselling and psychological support, professional identity and concerns regarding stigma may continue to influence their personal help-seeking intentions. Consequently, understanding the factors that shape help-seeking behaviour among social work students is essential for developing educational environments that encourage timely utilization of mental health services. The present study therefore seeks to examine these factors within the specific context of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District, where empirical evidence remains limited.

Institutional Support Systems and Structural Barriers Influencing Help-Seeking Intentions

The effectiveness of mental health support systems within higher educational institutions extends beyond the availability of counselling services and encompasses factors such as accessibility, confidentiality, organizational support, institutional culture, and the responsiveness of available services. Existing literature indicates that although universities increasingly recognize the importance of promoting student mental health, institutional barriers continue to limit the utilization of professional psychological services. These barriers are particularly relevant for social work students, whose demanding academic schedules and field practicum responsibilities often create additional challenges in accessing timely and appropriate mental health support.

A cross-sectional study conducted by **Horton (2022)** examined undergraduate and postgraduate social work students' perceptions regarding university-based mental health services. The findings revealed that although social work students possessed high levels of mental health literacy and generally recognized the importance of professional psychological support, concerns regarding **privacy and confidentiality** significantly influenced their willingness to access institutional counselling services. More than sixty percent of the participants reported that the physical location and structural positioning of university counselling centres increased the likelihood of being seen by peers or faculty members, thereby discouraging help-seeking behaviour. The study further demonstrated that students' positive personal attitudes toward counselling were frequently overshadowed by negative departmental norms regarding psychological vulnerability. Consequently, concerns related to confidentiality and perceived social judgement emerged as important institutional barriers limiting the effective utilization of available mental health services (Horton, 2022).

The organizational characteristics of university mental health services were further explored by **Reohr (2023)**, who investigated systemic deficiencies affecting students enrolled in professional helping disciplines, including social work. The study found that existing psychological support services were frequently characterized by fragmented service delivery, inadequate coordination, rigid operational schedules, and shortages of qualified mental health professionals. One of the most significant findings was that counselling service hours often conflicted with compulsory academic classes and field practicum schedules, thereby limiting students' opportunities to access professional support during periods of psychological distress. Long waiting periods for appointments and insufficient staffing further reduced students' confidence in institutional counselling services. The study concluded that these organizational deficiencies substantially decreased the perceived usefulness of mental health services and ultimately discouraged students from seeking professional assistance (Reohr, 2023).

Institutional culture also emerged as a critical determinant of help-seeking behaviour among future helping professionals. **Siebert (2024)** examined the influence of public stigma and selfstigma on the help-seeking intentions of social work students preparing for careers within the mental health profession. The findings revealed that students experienced a distinctive form of **professional self-stigma**, whereby acknowledging personal psychological difficulties was interpreted as evidence of professional weakness or ethical inadequacy. Many participants believed that seeking professional psychological support might negatively influence faculty perceptions, fieldwork evaluations, and future employment opportunities. This internalized expectation that social workers should consistently demonstrate emotional resilience created a departmental culture in which help-seeking was perceived as incompatible with professional competence. Consequently, students frequently concealed psychological distress and postponed seeking professional assistance despite recognizing their need for support (Siebert, 2024).

Complementing these findings, **Newcomb (2022)** investigated the factors predicting anxiety and professional help-seeking among **410 graduate social work students**. The study identified **academic performance pressure** and **interpersonal difficulties within fieldwork supervision** as the primary contributors to psychological distress among trainees. Although participants reported experiencing considerable anxiety, the utilization of formal counselling services remained relatively low. A major factor contributing to this pattern was the perceived absence of counsellors possessing adequate knowledge of the ethical responsibilities, emotional demands,

and occupational challenges unique to social work education. Many participants believed that general university counselling services lacked sufficient understanding of the realities associated with professional social work training, leading students to perceive available services as less relevant to their specific needs. The study therefore emphasized the necessity of providing specialized and culturally responsive counselling services tailored to students enrolled in helping professions (Newcomb, 2022).

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that institutional and structural barriers play a important role in shaping help-seeking intentions among social work students. While positive attitudes toward counselling and high levels of mental health literacy are important facilitators of professional help-seeking, their influence may be substantially weakened by organizational deficiencies within educational institutions. Concerns regarding confidentiality, lack of privacy, inaccessible counselling schedules, fragmented service delivery, prolonged waiting periods, inadequate staffing, and limited availability of specialized mental health professionals collectively reduce students' confidence in institutional support systems. Moreover, departmental cultures that implicitly equate psychological vulnerability with professional incompetence further discourage students from acknowledging personal mental health needs and accessing available services.

The reviewed literature also highlights that help-seeking intentions cannot be understood solely through individual psychological factors. Institutional environments, organizational practices, and professional cultures interact with personal beliefs to influence whether students perceive mental health services as accessible, confidential, relevant, and beneficial. These findings are particularly significant for social work education because students simultaneously occupy the roles of learners and future helping professionals, making them especially vulnerable to the influence of professional expectations and institutional norms. Therefore, strengthening institutional mental health support systems requires not only expanding counselling services but also creating organizational environments that ensure confidentiality, improve accessibility, provide profession-specific psychological support, and actively challenge the stigma associated with seeking professional mental health care.

The findings reviewed under this theme reinforce the importance of examining students' perceptions of mental health support systems and the structural challenges associated with existing services. These issues directly correspond with the objectives of the present study, which

seeks to understand how institutional support, accessibility, confidentiality, and service-related barriers influence the help-seeking intentions of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District. By exploring these dimensions within the local context, the study contributes to the development of more effective, accessible, and student-centred mental health support systems for future social work professionals.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The present study is guided by the Integrated Behavioral Model for Help-Seeking (IBM-HS), which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors influencing an individual's intention to seek professional mental health services. The model is derived from the Integrated Behavioral Model (IBM) proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) and was subsequently adapted to explain mental health help-seeking behaviour. The IBM-HS suggests that an individual's decision to seek professional psychological support is primarily determined by behavioural intention, which in turn is influenced by three major constructs: attitude, perceived norm, and personal agency (Hammer, 2024).

According to the framework, attitude refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of seeking professional psychological assistance. Students who perceive counselling and mental health services as beneficial, effective, and trustworthy are more likely to develop favourable help-seeking intentions. Conversely, negative perceptions regarding counselling, fear of being judged, or doubts about treatment effectiveness may discourage professional help-seeking. In the context of social work education, students' attitudes are influenced by their academic training, fieldwork experiences, mental health literacy, and personal beliefs regarding psychological well-being.

The second construct, perceived norm, refers to the social influences that shape an individual's decision to seek help. This includes the expectations, beliefs, and attitudes of significant others such as family members, friends, classmates, faculty members, and society. Social approval or encouragement may facilitate professional help-seeking, whereas stigma, fear of negative judgement, and cultural misconceptions regarding mental illness may discourage individuals from accessing mental health services. Since social work students are trained within professional environments that emphasize empathy, self-awareness, and psychosocial wellbeing, perceived social norms may substantially influence their willingness to utilize available mental health services.

The third construct, personal agency, represents an individual's confidence in their ability to seek professional help and overcome barriers that may hinder access to mental health services.

Personal agency encompasses self-efficacy, perceived behavioural control, and the belief that one possesses the necessary resources and opportunities to obtain appropriate care. Students who perceive counselling services as accessible, confidential, affordable, and responsive to their needs are more likely to demonstrate stronger help-seeking intentions. Conversely, barriers such as financial constraints, lack of awareness, limited accessibility, scheduling conflicts, concerns regarding confidentiality, and inadequate institutional support may weaken an individual's confidence in seeking professional assistance.

The Integrated Behavioral Model further proposes that behavioural intention serves as the strongest predictor of actual behaviour. However, intention alone may not necessarily result in help-seeking unless individuals possess adequate knowledge, practical skills, and access to appropriate mental health services. Environmental constraints, institutional policies, and the availability of supportive mental health systems also influence whether behavioural intentions are translated into actual utilization of professional psychological services (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

The present study adopts the IBM-HS as its theoretical foundation because it closely aligns with the research objectives. The study seeks to understand the help-seeking intentions of social work students by examining barriers related to academic life balance, students' perceptions regarding mental health support systems, and the challenges associated with existing mental health services. These dimensions correspond directly with the constructs of attitude, perceived norm, and personal agency proposed by the IBM-HS. Therefore, the framework provides an appropriate theoretical basis for explaining how individual beliefs, social influences, and institutional factors interact to shape help-seeking intentions among social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District.

The framework is particularly relevant to social work education because students are expected to possess sound knowledge of mental health while simultaneously coping with the emotional demands of academic learning and field practicum. Understanding the determinants of their help-seeking intentions through the IBM-HS enables the identification of both individual and institutional factors that facilitate or hinder the utilization of professional mental health services. Consequently, the framework provides a comprehensive lens for interpreting the findings of the

present study and contributes to the development of strategies aimed at strengthening mental health support systems for future social work professionals.

2.4 Research Gap Analysis

The existing body of literature provides substantial evidence regarding the increasing prevalence of mental health concerns and the factors influencing help-seeking behaviour among university students. Previous studies have consistently identified mental health as a significant public health issue affecting students' academic performance, psychological well-being, interpersonal relationships, and overall quality of life (Chandra et al., 2018). Similarly, several researchers have examined the barriers that discourage students from seeking professional psychological support, highlighting factors such as stigma, self-reliance, inadequate mental health literacy, financial constraints, concerns regarding confidentiality, and limited accessibility of mental health services (Gan Geok Chew et al., 2025; Zhao, 2025; Rahmi, 2025). These studies have significantly contributed to understanding the determinants of mental health help-seeking among young people.

The reviewed literature also demonstrates that help-seeking behaviour is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by psychological, social, cultural, and institutional factors. Research has shown that students often prefer to cope independently with emotional difficulties, despite experiencing considerable psychological distress, thereby delaying professional intervention (Boruah, 2023). Furthermore, previous studies indicate that students frequently rely on informal sources of support, such as family members and friends, before considering professional mental health services (Lynch et al., 2025). Other researchers have emphasized the importance of improving mental health literacy, reducing stigma, and strengthening institutional support systems to promote positive help-seeking behaviour among university students (Gan Geok Chew et al., 2025; Rahmi, 2025).

Although these studies have substantially advanced the understanding of student mental health, several important gaps remain. A considerable proportion of existing research has focused on the general university student population without distinguishing between academic disciplines. Consequently, comparatively little attention has been given to social work students, whose educational experiences differ significantly from those of students in other professional programmes. Social work education combines classroom instruction with intensive field practicum, requiring students to engage directly with individuals, families, groups, and

communities experiencing complex psychosocial problems. This unique educational context exposes students to emotionally demanding situations that may increase their vulnerability to psychological stress while simultaneously shaping their attitudes towards professional helpseeking.

Furthermore, many previous studies have primarily examined individual-level determinants of help-seeking behaviour, including stigma, mental health literacy, self-reliance, and attitudes towards counselling. Comparatively fewer studies have explored the influence of institutional support systems, accessibility of counselling services, academic and fieldwork demands, referral mechanisms, service adequacy, and confidentiality within the context of social work education. These institutional and structural factors are particularly relevant because they directly affect students' opportunities to access appropriate mental health services during their academic training.

Another significant limitation identified in the reviewed literature is the scarcity of studies conducted within the Indian context, particularly in Kerala. Although international research provides valuable insights into student mental health and help-seeking behaviour, differences in cultural beliefs, educational systems, social norms, family structures, and the organization of mental health services may influence students' experiences differently across geographical settings. More specifically, there is a lack of empirical evidence focusing on the mental health and help-seeking intentions of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District, where institutional support systems, professional education, and access to mental health services operate within a distinct socio-cultural context.

The present study seeks to address these identified gaps by exploring the mental health and help-seeking intentions of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District. Unlike many previous studies that have concentrated primarily on general university students, the present research specifically examines social work students, recognising the unique academic, professional, and emotional demands associated with their education. Furthermore, the study extends existing knowledge by investigating barriers related to academic life balance, understanding students' perceptions regarding mental health support systems, and identifying challenges associated with existing mental health services. By focusing on these interrelated dimensions, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge and provides evidence that may support educational institutions, policymakers, and mental health professionals in

developing accessible, responsive, and student-centred mental health services for future social work practitioners.

Overall, the reviewed literature establishes the importance of mental health and professional help-seeking among university students while simultaneously revealing the limited empirical attention given to social work students within the local context. The present study therefore addresses a significant research gap by providing context-specific evidence on the help-seeking intentions of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District, thereby contributing to both social work education and the broader field of student mental health research.

2.5 Conclusion

The review of literature demonstrates that mental health is a critical determinant of students' overall well-being, academic performance, and professional development, particularly within higher education. The studies reviewed consistently indicate that university students are vulnerable to psychological distress due to developmental transitions, academic demands, financial pressures, interpersonal challenges, and the changing social environment. For social work students, these challenges are further intensified by the emotionally demanding nature of professional education, which combines rigorous academic coursework with extensive field practicum. Exposure to vulnerable populations, emotional labour, and professional responsibilities places social work students at a heightened risk of stress, burnout, compassion fatigue, and emotional exhaustion, making the promotion of mental health an essential component of their professional preparation. The literature further establishes that although awareness of mental health has increased, the utilization of professional mental health services among university students remains relatively low. Individual factors such as self-reliance, stigma, fear of negative judgement, inadequate mental health literacy, and preferences for informal support frequently discourage students from seeking professional psychological assistance. At the same time, institutional and structural barriers—including concerns regarding confidentiality, limited accessibility of counselling services, scheduling conflicts, inadequate institutional support, financial constraints, and fragmented service delivery—continue to restrict effective utilization of available mental health resources. These findings indicate that helpseeking behaviour is influenced by a complex interaction of personal beliefs, social influences, and environmental conditions rather than by psychological need alone. The Integrated Behavioral Model for Help-Seeking (IBM-HS) provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for understanding these influences by explaining how attitude, perceived norms, and personal agency collectively shape individuals' intentions to seek professional mental health

support. The reviewed literature supports the relevance of this framework in explaining the behavioural processes underlying help-seeking intentions among university students and highlights the importance of addressing both individual and institutional determinants to promote positive mental health behaviours.

The review also identifies significant gaps in the existing body of knowledge. Although numerous studies have explored mental health and help-seeking behaviour among general university students, comparatively limited research has focused specifically on social work students, whose educational experiences and professional expectations differ considerably from those of other disciplines. Furthermore, empirical evidence within the Indian context, particularly in Kerala and Thiruvananthapuram District, remains scarce. Existing studies have also given comparatively less attention to the combined influence of academic life balance, institutional mental health support systems, and structural barriers on the help-seeking intentions of social work students. In view of these identified gaps, the present study seeks to contribute to the existing literature by examining the mental health help-seeking intentions of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District. By exploring the barriers influencing help-seeking behaviour, students' perceptions of mental health support systems, and the challenges associated with existing mental health services, the study aims to generate context-specific evidence that can inform social work education, institutional mental health policies, and the development of accessible, student-centred mental health support services. Thus, the review of literature provides the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical foundation upon which the present research is based and establishes the necessity and relevance of the study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology has been defined by several scholars, each emphasizing different dimensions of the research process. According to C.R. Kothari (2004), research methodology refers to the systematic and logical procedures adopted to solve a research problem through scientific inquiry. John W. Creswell (2014) views research methodology as the integration of philosophical assumptions, research design, and specific methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that guide the entire research process. Similarly, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) describe research methodology as a comprehensive framework encompassing research philosophy, strategies, methodological choices, and techniques used to conduct a study. Clifford Woody (1927) defines research methodology as a structured and systematic process that begins with identifying a research problem and progresses through data collection, analysis, and interpretation to arrive at valid conclusions. Kerlinger (1986), on the other hand, emphasizes that research methodology is the specific strategy or plan designed to answer research questions and test hypotheses in a scientific and objective manner. Collectively, these definitions highlight that research methodology provides a systematic framework that ensures the scientific, logical, and rigorous conduct of research, enabling researchers to generate reliable and valid findings.

Research methodology constitutes one of the most essential components of any scientific investigation, as it provides the systematic framework through which research is planned, conducted, and evaluated. It outlines the procedures adopted by the researcher to achieve the objectives of the study and ensures that the findings are reliable, valid, and scientifically sound. A well-designed methodology enables the researcher to collect relevant data, analyse it objectively, and draw meaningful conclusions while maintaining consistency, transparency, and ethical standards throughout the research process. In the present study, the methodology was carefully selected to examine the mental health help-seeking intentions of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District. This chapter therefore describes the overall research design, study setting, population, sampling technique, sampling size, data collection tools and procedures, variables of the study, methods of data analysis, ethical considerations, assumptions, and limitations adopted to achieve the objectives of the research. By presenting these methodological aspects in a systematic manner, the chapter establishes the scientific rigor and credibility of the study and provides the foundation for the interpretation of the findings presented in the subsequent chapters.

3.2 Title of the Study

“Mental Health- Help-Seeking Intention of Social Work Students in Thiruvananthapuram District”

3.3 Objectives of the Study

General Objective

To explore and understand the help-seeking intentions of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District.

Specific Objectives

1. To identify the barriers and academic life balance influencing the help-seeking behaviour of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District.
2. To understand the perceptions of social work students regarding mental health support systems in Thiruvananthapuram District.
3. To understand the challenges in the existing mental health services for social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District.

3.4 Definition of Concepts

Based on the PowerPoint, here is the **Conceptualization table** in a dissertation-friendly format that you can directly copy into your methodology chapter.

3.5 Conceptualization of Key Concepts

Concept	Theoretical Definition	Operational Definition	Reference
Mental Health	A state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to the community.	The emotional, psychological, and social well-being of postgraduate social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District.	WHO (2001)
Help-Seeking	The adaptive coping process involving the intentional pursuit of	The self-reported willingness and actions of postgraduate social work students to seek professional,	Rickwood & Thomas

Intention	external assistance for mental health concerns.	informal, or self-help mental health resources when experiencing psychological distress.	(2012)
Social Work Students	Individuals enrolled in accredited social work programmes preparing for professional roles in social welfare.	Postgraduate students enrolled in Master of Social Work (MSW) programmes during the academic years 2024–2026 and 2025–2027 in selected social work colleges in Thiruvananthapuram District.	NASW (2017)
Attitude	A psychological tendency to evaluate an entity with favour or disfavour, influencing behaviours such as help-seeking.	The respondents' positive or negative evaluation of seeking professional mental health services, measured through questionnaire items related to attitudes toward help-seeking.	Ajzen & (1991); Fischer Turner (1970)
Academic Life	Encompasses students' educational experiences, including workload, academic performance pressures, and the learning environment.	The perceived balance between academic responsibilities, fieldwork, and personal life among postgraduate social work students, measured through items related to academic stress and life balance.	Tinto (1993)

3.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted among a small group of five respondents to assess the clarity, relevance, and feasibility of the research instrument. Necessary modifications were made based on the feedback obtained from the respondents and the research guide before conducting the final study.

3.7 Research Design

The present study adopted a **quantitative approach**. A **descriptive cross-sectional research design** was employed.

The descriptive design helped in identifying and describing the barriers, perceptions, and helpseeking intentions of social work students. The cross-sectional design enabled the collection of data at a single point of time from the respondents.

3.8 Universe and Unit of Study

Universe of the Study

The general universe comprised all social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District. The target universe consisted of postgraduate social work students enrolled in six social work colleges in Thiruvananthapuram District.

Unit of Study

MSW students enrolled in 2024-26 year and 2025-27 year under Kerala University constitutes the unit of study.

3.9 Sampling Design

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was employed for selecting the respondents.

Sample Size

The study consisted of 65 respondents.

Inclusion Criteria

The study included students who were enrolled in Master of Social Work (MSW) programmes in selected colleges of Thiruvananthapuram District. Participants comprised students belonging to the academic batches **2024–2026** and **2025–2027**. Additionally, only those students who expressed their willingness to participate voluntarily and provided informed consent were included in the study..

Exclusion Criteria

The study excluded undergraduate social work students, as the research was specifically focused on postgraduate students enrolled in the Master of Social Work (MSW) programme. Students who were unavailable during the data collection period were also excluded from the study. Furthermore, individuals who were unwilling to participate or did not provide informed consent were not included in the research.

3.10 Data Collection

The present study made use of both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected from postgraduate social work students enrolled in selected social work colleges in Thiruvananthapuram District. A structured questionnaire was employed as the main tool for data

collection. The questionnaire consisted of items pertaining to mental health, help-seeking intentions, academic life balance, barriers to help-seeking, perceptions of mental health support systems, and challenges in accessing mental health services.

Data collection was carried out through both online and offline modes. The researcher initiated data collection at National College among students belonging to the MSW batch (2025–2027). To facilitate participation through different modes, students were alternately assigned either to respond through Google Forms or to participate in the structured interview schedule. Accordingly, five respondents completed the interview schedule while the remaining students responded through Google Forms. The interactions with the respondents enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of their help-seeking practices, coping mechanisms, and the ways in which they balanced academic demands with their personal lives.

During the first phase of data collection, twenty-two responses were obtained, comprising seventeen responses through Google Forms and five responses through the interview schedule. Data collection continued in the second phase, during which three additional interview schedules were completed. The remaining responses were collected through Google Forms distributed among eligible respondents from the selected institutions. Altogether, sixty-five responses were obtained for the study, of which fifty-seven responses were collected through Google Forms and eight responses were obtained using the structured interview schedule.

Secondary data for the study were collected from books, journals, research articles, dissertations, reports, and electronic sources related to mental health, help-seeking behaviour, and social work education. These sources provided the conceptual and empirical foundation for the study and supported the interpretation and discussion of the findings.

3.11 Pre-Test

Prior to the actual data collection, a pre-test of the research instrument was conducted to assess the clarity, relevance, appropriateness, and feasibility of the questionnaire. The purpose of the pre-test was to identify ambiguities, ensure that the questions adequately reflected the objectives of the study, and determine whether the respondents could understand and respond to the items without difficulty.

The pre-test was carried out among six postgraduate social work students who possessed characteristics similar to those of the target population. These respondents were selected from outside the final sample to avoid any influence on the actual study findings. The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms, which enabled the researcher to evaluate the accessibility, sequence, and comprehensibility of the items in an online format.

Feedback obtained from the respondents indicated the need for certain modifications in the questionnaire. Some questions were found to be repetitive and a few statements required rewording to improve clarity and ease of understanding. Based on the suggestions received from the respondents and discussions with the research guide, necessary revisions were made to the wording, arrangement, and structure of certain items. Additional response options were incorporated where required, and minor changes were introduced to enhance the content validity and overall reliability of the instrument.

The pre-test also helped the researcher estimate the time required to complete the questionnaire and assess the suitability of the online mode of data collection. The revised questionnaire, after incorporating the necessary modifications, was used for the final data collection among the respondents selected for the study.

3.12 Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, tables, and graphs were used to analyse the data. Inferential statistics, including Chi-square tests, were employed to test the hypotheses.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection, and participation in the study was entirely voluntary. The respondents were adequately informed about the purpose, objectives, and nature of the study before their participation. The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were strictly maintained, ensuring that no personally identifiable information was disclosed. Furthermore, the data collected from the respondents were used solely for academic and research purposes, and all information was handled with the utmost care and responsibility.

3.14 Assumptions, Limitations and Scope Assumptions

The study was conducted based on certain assumptions. It was assumed that the respondents would provide honest, accurate, and unbiased responses to the questionnaire. It was also assumed that the participants possessed an adequate understanding of the questions included in the research instrument, enabling them to respond appropriately. Furthermore, the study assumed that the help-seeking intentions of social work students could be effectively measured through their self-reported responses, thereby providing a reliable basis for understanding their perceptions and behavioural intentions regarding mental health support.

Limitations

The present study was subject to certain limitations. It was confined to selected social work colleges in **Thiruvananthapuram District**, thereby limiting the geographical scope of the research. The sample size was restricted to **65 respondents**, which may not fully represent the views and experiences of the entire population of social work students. In addition, the findings were based on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by social desirability bias or respondents' subjective perceptions. Consequently, the results of the study cannot be generalized to all social work students in Kerala, and should be interpreted within the context of the selected study area and sample.

Scope of the Study

The present study focuses on understanding the mental health help-seeking intentions of postgraduate social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District. Specifically, the study examines the various factors influencing help-seeking behaviour, including academic life balance, coping strategies, barriers to seeking professional assistance, and perceptions regarding the existing mental health support systems available to students. It also seeks to identify the challenges encountered by social work students in accessing and utilizing mental health services.

The study is confined to students enrolled in Master of Social Work programmes in selected social work colleges in Thiruvananthapuram District. Since social work students are future professionals who are expected to provide psychosocial support and advocate for mental health, understanding their own attitudes and practices related to help-seeking becomes particularly important. The findings of the study provide insights into the psychological well-being and support needs of this specific population.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the limited body of regional literature on mental health help-seeking among social work students in Kerala. The findings are expected to provide valuable information for educators, institutions, counsellors, and policymakers in designing interventions that promote mental health literacy, reduce barriers to help-seeking, and strengthen referral mechanisms and support services within educational institutions. The study also highlights the importance of incorporating self-care practices and mental health promotion into social work education, thereby contributing to the development of competent, resilient, and psychologically healthy future social work professionals.

Although the findings are specific to postgraduate social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District and may not be generalized to all student populations, they provide a basis for further

research on mental health and help-seeking behaviour among social work students and other professional trainees across different settings.

3.15 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the methodological framework adopted for the present study on the mental health help-seeking intentions of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District. It outlined the research design, objectives, conceptualization of key concepts, pilot study, sampling design, data collection procedures, methods of data analysis, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and scope of the study. The selection of a quantitative descriptive cross-sectional design, supported by purposive sampling and the use of a structured questionnaire, was considered appropriate for achieving the objectives of the research. Furthermore, the adoption of both primary and secondary sources of data, together with systematic procedures for data collection and statistical analysis, ensured the reliability, validity, and scientific rigor of the study.

The chapter also emphasized the importance of maintaining ethical standards by ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the responsible use of research data throughout the investigation. By clearly defining the methodological procedures and establishing the scientific basis of the study, this chapter provides a strong foundation for the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings. The methodology adopted enables a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the help-seeking intentions of social work students and facilitates meaningful interpretation of the collected data. The subsequent chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from the respondents, organized according to the objectives of the study, thereby providing empirical evidence to address the research problem and answer the research questions.

CHAPTER IV DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the interpretation and analysis of the data collected for the study on **mental health - help-seeking intentions of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District**. The purpose of this chapter is to systematically examine, interpret, and present the findings derived from the responses of the participants in relation to the objectives of the study. It aims to convert the raw data collected through the research process into meaningful information that can be used to understand the patterns, trends, and relationships present within the study population. The analysis in this chapter is structured in a clear and organized manner to ensure coherence and academic clarity. The findings are presented through appropriate tables and figures, followed by detailed interpretations. Each table and figure is carefully examined to highlight the significant observations emerging from the data. This helps in understanding the mental health status of social work students, their intentions to seek professional psychological help, and the factors influencing such behaviours.

The interpretation of data is closely aligned with the objectives of the study. The analysis focuses on identifying the barriers that influence help-seeking behaviour, particularly those related to academic pressure and work-life balance among social work students. It also examines the perceptions of students regarding available mental health support systems in Thiruvananthapuram District, including their awareness, accessibility, and perceived usefulness of such services. Furthermore, the chapter explores the challenges existing within mental health services, as experienced or perceived by the respondents, which may impact their willingness or ability to seek help. In addition, the chapter moves beyond mere presentation of data by offering a structured interpretation of the findings in relation to the research questions. It identifies key patterns and discusses their possible explanations in the context of existing literature and theoretical understanding of help-seeking behaviour. This enables a deeper understanding of how personal, academic, and systemic factors interact in shaping mental health-related decisions among social work students.

Overall, this chapter serves as a crucial component of the study by bridging the gap between data collection and the discussion of results. It provides the analytical foundation necessary for drawing conclusions and making recommendations regarding mental health and help-seeking intentions among social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District.

4.2 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Understanding the demographic characteristics of respondents is essential to contextualize the findings of any study. In this research, data were collected from 65 post graduate participants aged between 22 and 35 years, all residing within the Thiruvananthapuram District. This section presents the demographic profile of the respondents based on the frequency analysis conducted in SPSS.

Age Distribution

Table 4.1: Age of the Respondents (N = 65)

	Frequency	Percentage
		No table of figures entries found.
18-24	54	83.1
25-34	10	15.4
35+	1	1.5
Total	65	100.0

Table 4.1 presents the distribution of respondents according to their age. The findings indicate that the respondents' ages were distributed across the designated age categories. The majority of the respondents, 54 (83.1%), belonged to the **18–24 years** age group, while 10 respondents (15.4%) were in the **25–34 years** age group. Only a very small proportion of respondents belonged to the remaining age category, indicating minimal representation from older age groups. The predominance of respondents in the 18–24 years age group indicates that the study primarily represents young adults who are pursuing postgraduate education in social work. This age group generally corresponds to the period of emerging adulthood, during which individuals experience significant academic, personal, and professional transitions. Students at this stage are often required to balance academic responsibilities, field practicum, interpersonal relationships, and future career aspirations, all of which may influence their mental health and their willingness to seek professional support when experiencing psychological distress.

The presence of respondents in the 25–34 years age group, although comparatively smaller, contributes additional perspectives from students who may possess relatively greater life experiences and academic maturity. The inclusion of participants from different age groups therefore enhances the diversity of the study sample while ensuring that the findings capture variations in mental health help-seeking intentions across the selected age categories. Overall, the age distribution indicates that the findings of the present study predominantly reflect the perceptions, experiences, and mental health help-seeking intentions of young adult postgraduate social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District.

.Gender

Figure 4.1: Gender of the Respondents (N =65)

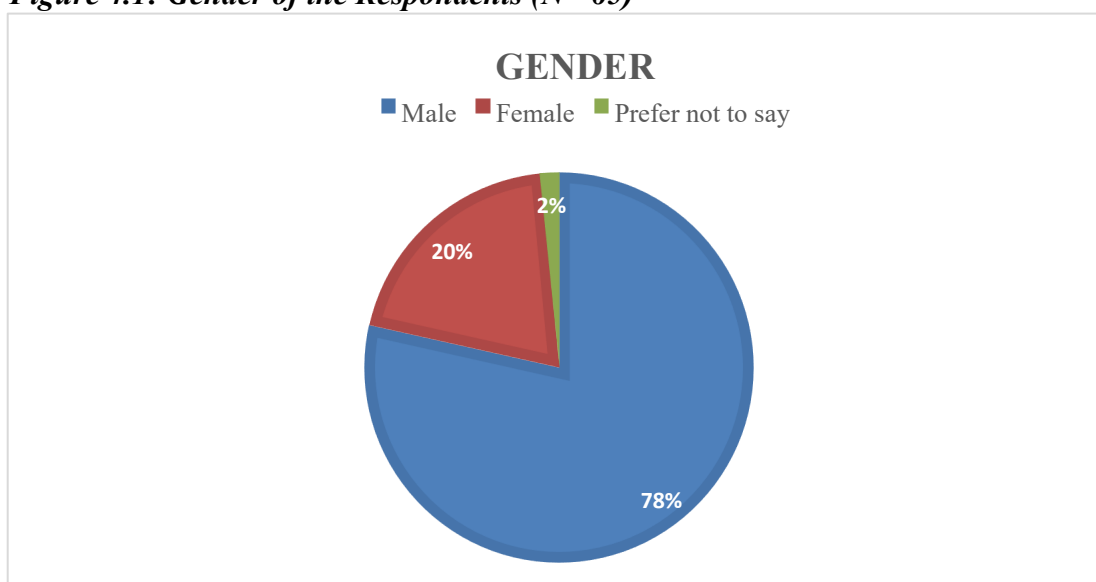


Figure 4.1 denotes that out of the 65 respondents, 51 (78.5 %) were female, while 13 (20 %) were male. This slight skew toward female respondents reflects the perspectives and experiences of female respondents to a greater extent than those of males. The predominance of female respondents may reflect the higher enrolment of women in postgraduate social work programmes within the selected institutions. The findings of the present study are more representative of the perceptions and experiences of female postgraduate social work students regarding mental health help-seeking intentions. Nevertheless, the inclusion of respondents from both genders provides a broader understanding of the study phenomenon within the selected population

Academic Year

Table 4.2: Current academic year of the Respondents (N=65)

	Frequency	Percentage
MSW (2024 - 2026)	41	63.1
MSW (2025 – 2027)	24	36.9
Total	65	100.0

The table 4.2 denotes the distribution of respondents based on their current year of study indicates that the majority of the participants, 41 (63.1%), belonged to the second-year MSW (2024–2026 batch), while 24 respondents (36.9%) were from the first-year MSW (2025–2027 batch). This indicates that a greater proportion of the study participants were in the final year of their postgraduate programme. The higher representation of second-year students reflects their greater availability during the period of data collection. As second-year students have relatively more academic exposure, field practicum experience, and professional training compared to first-year students, their responses may provide valuable insights into mental health helpseeking intentions developed through their educational and field experiences. Nevertheless, the inclusion of respondents from both academic years ensured that the study captured perspectives from different stages of the Master of Social Work programme, thereby enhancing the comprehensiveness of the findings.

Enrolment

Table 4.3 Enrolment of the Respondents. (N=65)

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Full-time	65	100.0
Part-time	0	0.0

Distance Education	0	0.0
Total	65	100.0

The of respondents based on their mode of enrolment reveals that all 65 respondents (100%) were enrolled as full-time Master of Social Work (MSW) students, while none of the respondents distribution were enrolled as part-time or distance education students. This indicates that the study exclusively represents the perspectives of full-time postgraduate social work students. Since full-time students are continuously engaged in academic activities, field practicum, seminars, assignments, and other curricular requirements, their responses provide insights into the mental health help-seeking intentions of students who are actively involved in professional social work education. The absence of part-time and distance learners suggests that the findings of the study are confined to the experiences of full-time MSW students within the selected institutions.

4.3 Objective- based discussion.

Objective 1

“To identify the barriers and academic life balance influencing the help-seeking behaviour of social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District.”

i) Academic Balance

Figure 4.2 Academic Balance (N = 65)

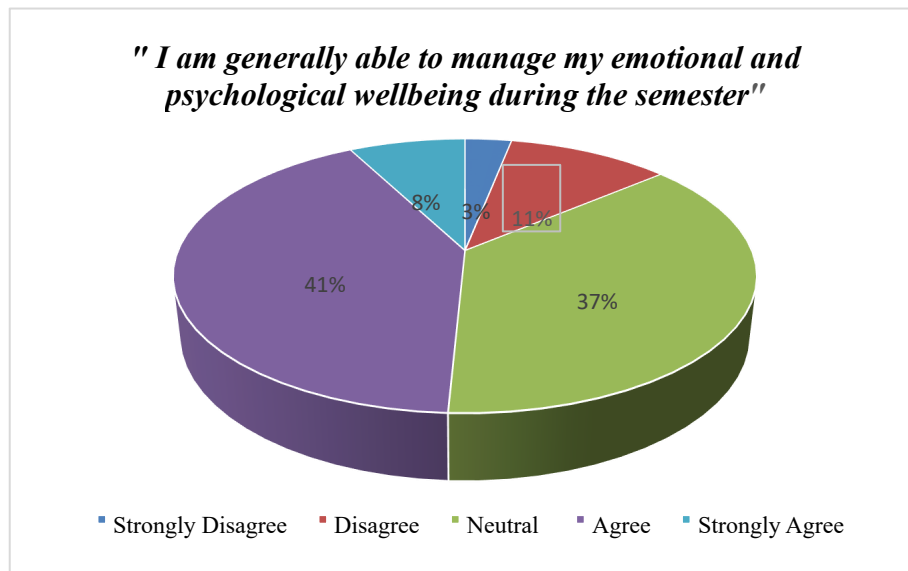


Figure 4.2 illustrates the respondents, perceived ability to manage their emotional and psychological wellbeing during the semester. The findings indicate that 41% of the respondents agreed and 8% strongly agreed that they were generally able to manage their emotional and psychological wellbeing, suggesting that nearly half of the participants perceived themselves as capable of maintaining emotional balance and coping with academic and personal demands. This may reflect the presence of effective coping strategies, social support systems, or resilience developed through their academic and fieldwork experiences. However, 37% of the respondents expressed a neutral opinion, indicating uncertainty regarding their ability to manage their emotional and psychological wellbeing. This substantial proportion suggests that many students may neither experience significant distress nor possess complete confidence in their coping abilities. Such ambivalence may point to fluctuating emotional states, inconsistent coping mechanisms, or a lack of awareness regarding available mental health resources. Furthermore, 11% of the respondents disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating that a section of the students experiences difficulty in managing their emotional and psychological wellbeing. Although this proportion is comparatively smaller, it highlights the presence of emotional and psychological challenges among some students and underscores the need for timely support and intervention.

Table 4.4 Perceptions regarding the impact of academic workload on their mental health

	<i>Frequency(f)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Yes</i>	38	58.5
<i>No</i>	27	41.5
<i>Total</i>	65	100.0

Table 4.4 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of academic workload on their mental health. The findings indicate that the majority of the respondents, 38 (58.5%), reported that the academic workload associated with the Master of Social Work programme negatively affects their mental health, whereas 27 respondents (41.5%) reported that it does not have a negative impact. This finding suggests that more than half of the respondents perceive academic demands, including coursework, assignments, field practicum, seminars, and research-related activities, as factors that may adversely influence their psychological wellbeing. However, a considerable proportion of respondents indicated that they were able to manage their academic responsibilities without experiencing a negative impact on their mental health. Overall, the findings highlight that academic workload is a significant factor influencing the mental wellbeing of many postgraduate social work students and may subsequently affect their help-seeking intentions.

Figure 4.3 Balance between personal and professional life

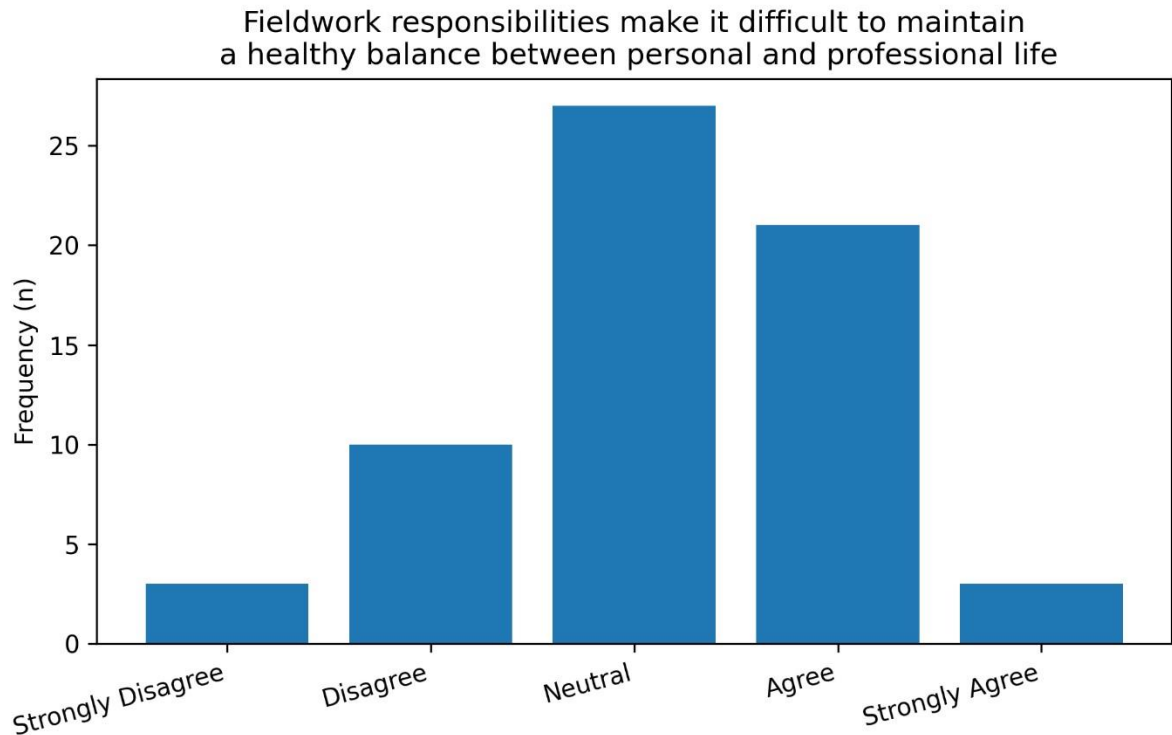


Figure 4.3 present the respondents' opinions regarding whether fieldwork responsibilities make it difficult to maintain a healthy balance between personal and professional life. The findings indicate that the largest proportion of respondents, 27 (41.5%), expressed a **neutral** opinion regarding the statement. This was followed by 21 respondents (32.3%) who **agreed** that fieldwork responsibilities make it difficult to maintain a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives. A smaller proportion, 3 respondents (4.6%), **strongly agreed** with the statement. Conversely, 10 respondents (15.4%) **disagreed**, while only 3 respondents (4.6%) **strongly disagreed**.

Table 4.5 Emotional Exhaustion in balancing assignments and Field work. (N = 65)

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	1	1.5
Disagree	9	13.8
Neutral	24	36.9

Agree	26	40.0
Strongly Agree	5	7.7
Total	65	100.0

Table 4.5 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding whether balancing academic assignments and fieldwork responsibilities is emotionally exhausting. The findings indicate that the largest proportion of respondents, 26 (40.0%), agreed that balancing assignments and fieldwork is emotionally exhausting. Additionally, 5 respondents (7.7%) strongly agreed with the statement, while 24 respondents (36.9%) expressed a neutral opinion. On the other hand, 9 respondents (13.8%) disagreed and only 1 respondent (1.5%) strongly disagreed. It suggests that a considerable proportion of postgraduate social work students experience emotional exhaustion while attempting to balance academic coursework and field practicum. Together, nearly half of the respondents (47.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that managing these dual responsibilities is emotionally demanding, indicating that the combined academic and practical requirements of the Master of Social Work programme may contribute to increased emotional strain. The substantial proportion of respondents who remained neutral suggests that the impact of balancing assignments and fieldwork may differ depending on individual coping abilities, time management skills, personal resilience, and the level of support available from academic institutions. The findings indicate that balancing assignments and fieldwork constitutes a significant challenge for many social work students. The emotional demands associated with these responsibilities may influence students' psychological well-being and emphasize the importance of promoting effective stress management strategies, academic support mechanisms, and mental health services within higher educational institutions to foster a healthier academic environment.

Figure 4.4 Influence of Academic life balance in help seeking. (N =65)

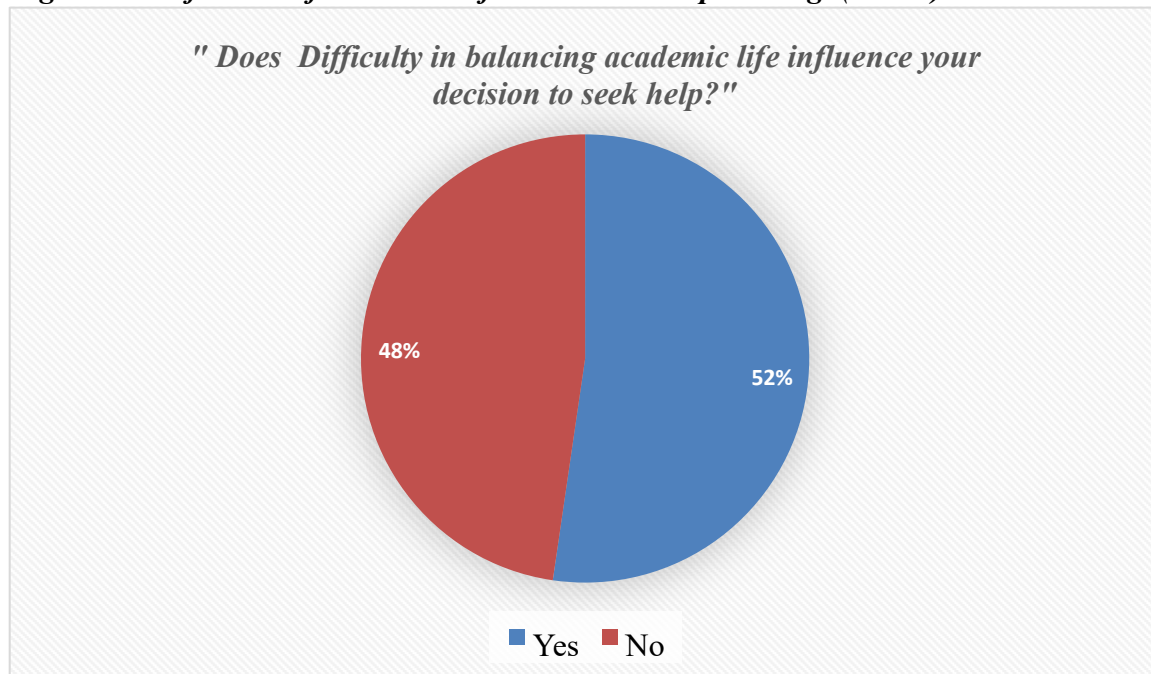


Figure 4.4 illustrates the respondents' views on whether difficulty in balancing academic life influences their decision to seek professional mental health support. The findings reveal that a slight majority of the respondents, 34 (52%), reported that difficulties in balancing academic life influence their decision to seek help, while 31 respondents (48%) indicated that such difficulties do not affect their help-seeking decision. The findings suggest that academic life balance plays an important role in shaping the help-seeking intentions of postgraduate social work students. The fact that more than half of the respondents acknowledged that challenges in managing academic responsibilities influence their decision to seek professional support indicates that academic pressures may act as a motivating factor for recognizing the need for psychological assistance. The demanding nature of the Master of Social Work programme, which combines classroom learning, field practicum, assignments, seminars, and research activities, may contribute to increased stress and encourage students to consider seeking help when they experience emotional or psychological difficulties. At the same time, nearly half of the respondents reported that difficulties in balancing academic life do not influence their helpseeking decisions. This may indicate that these students rely on alternative coping strategies, perceive themselves as capable of managing academic stress independently, or base their decision to seek professional support on factors other than academic workload. The relatively balanced distribution of responses demonstrates that help-seeking intentions are influenced by multiple factors and that academic

life balance is one of several considerations affecting students' willingness to access mental health services.

The findings highlight that academic life balance is a significant factor influencing helpseeking intentions among social work students. This underscores the importance of creating supportive academic environments, promoting effective stress management and self-care practices, and strengthening accessible mental health support services within higher educational institutions to encourage timely help-seeking among students.

ii) Barriers to help seeking.

Table 4.6 Fear of Negative Judgement from mental health Professionals. (N= 65)

	<i>Frequency (f)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>29.2</i>
<i>Disagree</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>38.5</i>
<i>Neutral</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>27.7</i>
<i>Agree</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4.6</i>
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0.0</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 4.6 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the statement, *"I worry that mental health professionals will judge me negatively."* The findings indicate that the majority of the respondents, 25 (38.5%), **disagreed** with the statement, while 19 respondents (29.2%) **strongly disagreed**. A further 18 respondents (27.7%) expressed a **neutral** opinion. Only 3 respondents (4.6%) **agreed** that they were concerned about being judged negatively by mental health professionals, and none of the respondents **strongly agreed** with the statement.

The findings suggest that most postgraduate social work students do not perceive negative judgement from mental health professionals as a significant barrier to seeking psychological support. More than two-thirds of the respondents (67.7%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating a generally positive level of trust and confidence in the professionalism, ethical conduct, and non-judgmental approach of mental health practitioners. This finding may also reflect the influence of social work education, which promotes awareness of ethical practice, confidentiality, empathy, and the importance of professional mental health

care. The substantial proportion of respondents who expressed a neutral opinion indicates that some students may be uncertain about how they would be perceived in a professional mental health setting. Nevertheless, the very small proportion of respondents who agreed with the statement suggests that fear of negative judgement by mental health professionals is not a major deterrent to help-seeking among the study participants. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents generally hold favourable perceptions of mental health professionals, which may positively influence their willingness to seek professional psychological support when required.

Figure 4.5 *Fear of being labelled as ‘Mentally ill’*

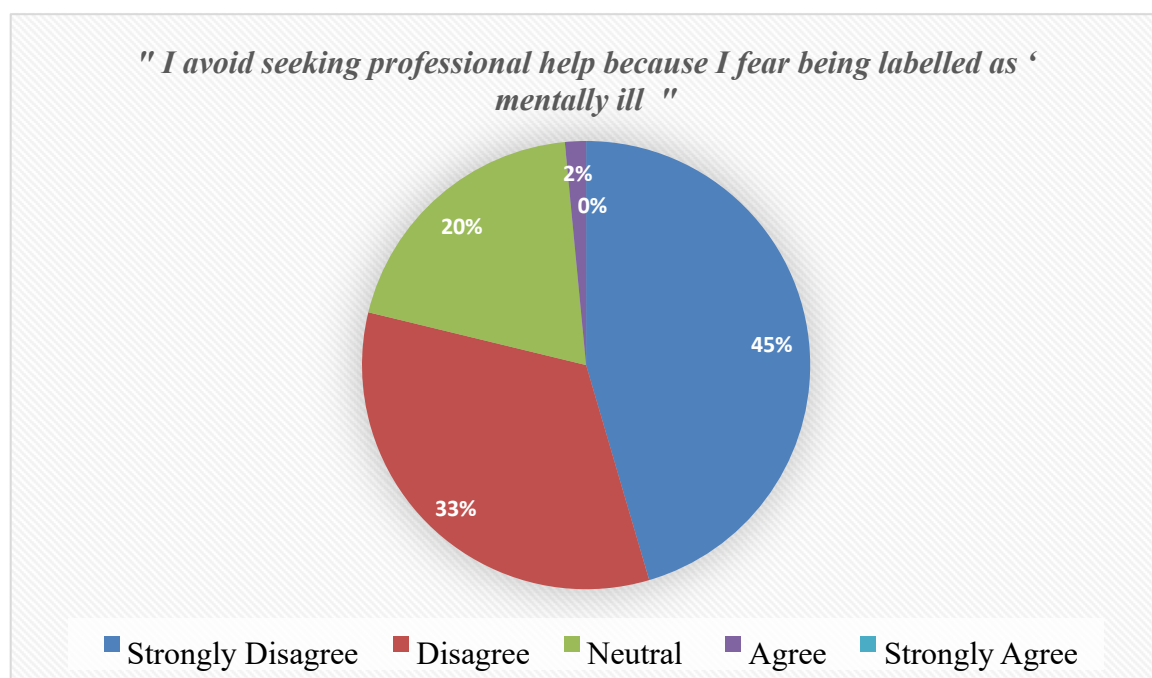


Figure 4.5 illustrates the respondents' perceptions regarding the statement, *"I avoid seeking professional help because I fear being labelled as mentally ill."* The findings reveal that the largest proportion of respondents (45%) **strongly disagreed** with the statement, followed by 33% who **disagreed**. Additionally, 20% of the respondents expressed a **neutral** opinion, while only 2% **agreed** with the statement. None of the respondents **strongly agreed** that fear of being labelled as mentally ill prevents them from seeking professional mental health support. The findings indicate that fear of being labelled as mentally ill is not a major barrier to professional help-seeking among the majority of postgraduate social work students. More than three-fourths of the respondents (78%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, suggesting that they do not perceive social labelling as a significant deterrent to accessing mental health services. This positive perception may be attributed to their academic exposure to mental health concepts,

professional values, and the ethical principles emphasized within social work education, which encourage acceptance of mental health concerns and promote the utilization of professional support services without stigma. The proportion of respondents who expressed a neutral opinion (20%) suggests that some students may remain uncertain about the potential impact of societal labelling on their help-seeking behaviour. Nevertheless, only a very small percentage (2%) acknowledged that fear of being labelled influences their decision to avoid professional help, indicating that stigma associated with mental illness has a relatively limited effect on the help-seeking intentions of the respondents. The findings suggest that most social work students demonstrate positive attitudes towards seeking professional psychological support and are generally not discouraged by concerns of being labelled as mentally ill. This reflects a favourable orientation towards mental health helpseeking and highlights the potential role of social work education in reducing stigma and promoting acceptance of mental health care.

Table 4.7 Perceptions on negative judgement from classmates (N = 65)

	<i>Frequency (f)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>52.3</i>
<i>Disagree</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>27.7</i>
<i>Neutral</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>18.5</i>
<i>Agree</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0.0</i>
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1.5</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 4.7 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the statement, "I am concerned that my classmates will think negatively of me if I use counselling services." The findings indicate that more than half of the respondents, 34 (52.3%), strongly disagreed with the statement, while 18 respondents (27.7%) disagreed. A further 12 respondents (18.5%) expressed a neutral opinion. None of the respondents agreed, and only one respondent (1.5%) strongly agreed that they were concerned about being viewed negatively by their classmates if they sought counselling services. The findings suggest that perceived negative judgement from classmates is not a significant barrier to professional help-seeking among the majority of postgraduate social work students. Nearly four-fifths of the respondents (80.0%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that they do not believe that accessing counselling services would adversely affect how they are

perceived by their peers. This may reflect the supportive learning environment within social work education, where awareness of mental health, empathy, acceptance, and professional ethics are emphasized, thereby contributing to reduced stigma surrounding the utilization of counselling services.

The respondents who expressed a neutral opinion may be uncertain about the attitudes of their classmates or may perceive that peer reactions could vary depending on individual circumstances. The absence of respondents who agreed and the presence of only one respondent who strongly agreed indicate that concerns regarding peer judgement have minimal influence on the respondents' willingness to seek professional mental health support. The findings demonstrate that fear of negative perceptions from classmates is not a major obstacle to help-seeking among postgraduate social work students. This reflects a generally positive peer culture towards mental health and suggests that students feel relatively comfortable accessing counselling services when needed.

Figure 4.6 Knowledge to recognise help needed situations. (N=65)

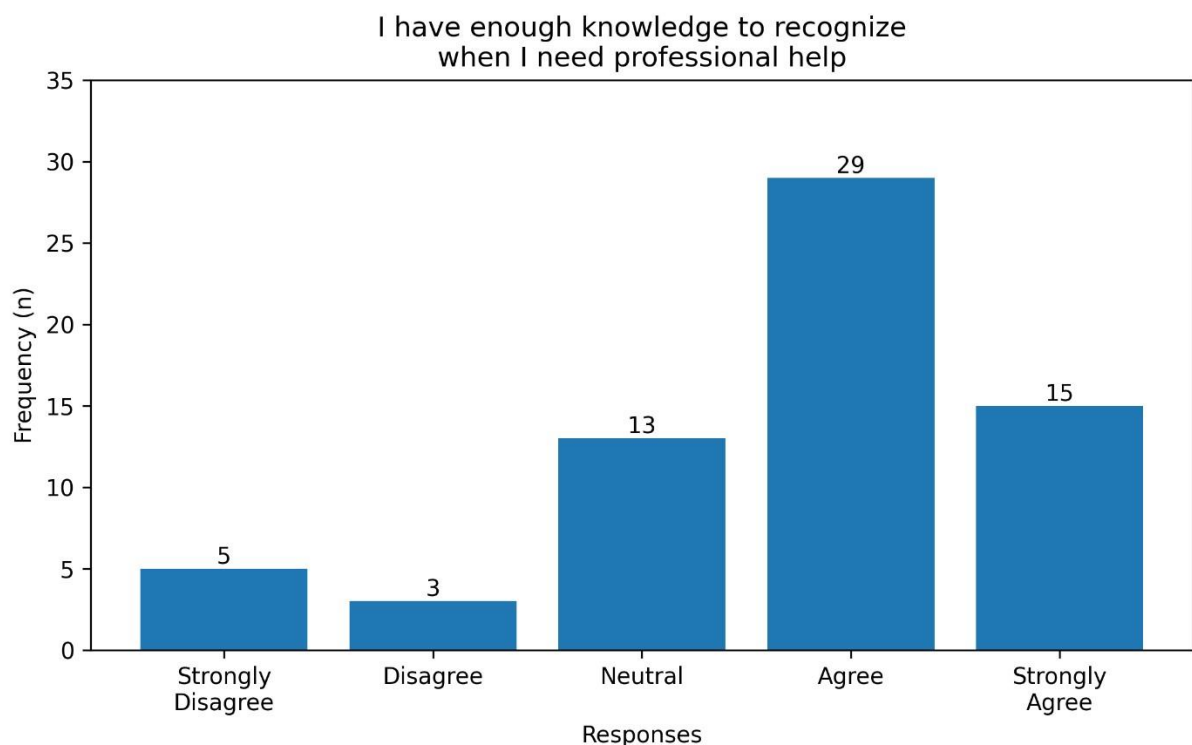


Figure 4.6 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the statement, "I have enough knowledge to recognize when I need professional help." The findings indicate that the largest proportion of respondents, 29 (44.6%), agreed with the statement, while 15 respondents (23.1%) strongly agreed. A further 13 respondents (20.0%) expressed a neutral opinion. In contrast, 3

respondents (4.6%) disagreed, and 5 respondents (7.7%) strongly disagreed. The findings suggest that the majority of postgraduate social work students possess confidence in their ability to recognize when professional mental health support is required. More than two-thirds of the respondents (67.7%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they have sufficient knowledge to identify the need for professional assistance. This may reflect the influence of social work education, which provides students with knowledge of mental health, psychosocial well-being, early identification of psychological concerns, and the importance of timely professional intervention.

The respondents who expressed a neutral opinion indicate that some students may be uncertain about their ability to accurately recognize situations requiring professional mental health support. Meanwhile, only a small proportion of respondents (12.3%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that comparatively few students lack confidence in recognizing their mental health needs.

Table 4.8 Family encouragement in seeking help

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Yes	39	60.0
No	26	40.0
Total	65	100.0

Table 4.8 presents the respondents' responses regarding whether their family encourages them to seek professional help when they experience emotional or psychological difficulties. The findings reveal that the majority of the respondents, 39 (60.0%), reported that their families encourage them to seek professional help, while 26 respondents (40.0%) indicated that they do not receive such encouragement from their families. The findings suggest that family plays a significant role in influencing the help-seeking behaviour of postgraduate social work students. The fact that a majority of respondents reported receiving encouragement from their families indicates the presence of a supportive family environment that may facilitate timely access to professional mental health services. Family encouragement can contribute to reducing hesitation, reinforcing positive attitudes towards mental health care, and promoting early intervention when psychological concerns arise. However, a considerable proportion of respondents (40.0%)

reported that their families do not encourage them to seek professional help. This finding indicates that a substantial number of students may lack familial support in accessing mental health services, which could discourage or delay professional help-seeking. Such responses may reflect variations in family attitudes, awareness of mental health issues, or perceptions regarding professional psychological care.

The findings indicate that while family support serves as an important facilitator of mental health help-seeking among many postgraduate social work students, a notable proportion of respondents continue to experience limited encouragement from their families. This underscores the importance of strengthening mental health awareness not only among students but also within families to foster supportive environments that encourage timely and appropriate help-seeking behaviour.

Figure 4.7 Belief in stress Management through professional help (N = 65)



Figure 4.7 illustrates the respondents' perceptions regarding the statement, *"I believe talking to a professional would help me manage stress effectively."* The findings indicate that the largest proportion of respondents (49%) **agreed** that talking to a mental health professional would help them manage stress effectively. In addition, 22% of the respondents **strongly agreed** with the statement, while 28% expressed a **neutral** opinion. Only 1% of the respondents **strongly disagreed**, and none of the respondents **disagreed** with the statement. The findings suggest that the majority of postgraduate social work students hold favourable attitudes towards professional

mental health services and recognize their potential effectiveness in managing stress. More than two-thirds of the respondents (71%) either agreed or strongly agreed, indicating a high level of confidence in the ability of mental health professionals to provide appropriate guidance, emotional support, and evidence-based interventions for stress management. This positive perception may be associated with the respondents' academic exposure to mental health concepts and their understanding of the role of professional psychological services in promoting well-being. The respondents who expressed a neutral opinion (28%) may be uncertain about the effectiveness of professional counselling or may have limited personal experience with mental health services.

However, the negligible proportion of respondents who strongly disagreed and the complete absence of respondents who disagreed indicate that negative perceptions regarding professional psychological support are minimal among the study participants.

iii) Help seeking intentions Table 4.9 Sources of Help (N = 65)

	<i>Unlikely (%)¹</i>	<i>Neutral (%)</i>	<i>Likely (%)²</i>
Close friend	27.8	21.5	50.8
MSW faculty/Field supervisor	53.8	21.5	24.7
Professional counselor/Psychologist/Psychiatrist	32.3	9.2	49.1
Religious/Spiritual leader	78.5	4.6	17.0
Family member	52.3	10.8	36.9
Online/Tele-mental health service	66.1	16.9	16.9

¹*Unlikely = Extremely unlikely + Very unlikely + Somewhat unlikely*

²*Likely = Somewhat likely + Very likely + Extremely likely*

From the **table 4. 9** respondents showed the highest likelihood of seeking help from **close friends (50.8%)** and **professional mental health practitioners (49.1%)**, followed by **family members (36.9%)**. In contrast, respondents were less inclined to seek help from **religious or spiritual leaders (17.0%)** and **online or tele-mental health services (16.9%)**. More than half of the respondents reported being unlikely to seek help from **MSW faculty/field supervisors (53.8%)**, suggesting possible concerns related to confidentiality, stigma, or perceived role boundaries.

Overall, the findings indicate a preference for informal support systems and professional mental health services over institutional, spiritual, or digital sources of support.

Figure 4.8 Use of Constructive Strategies (N=65)

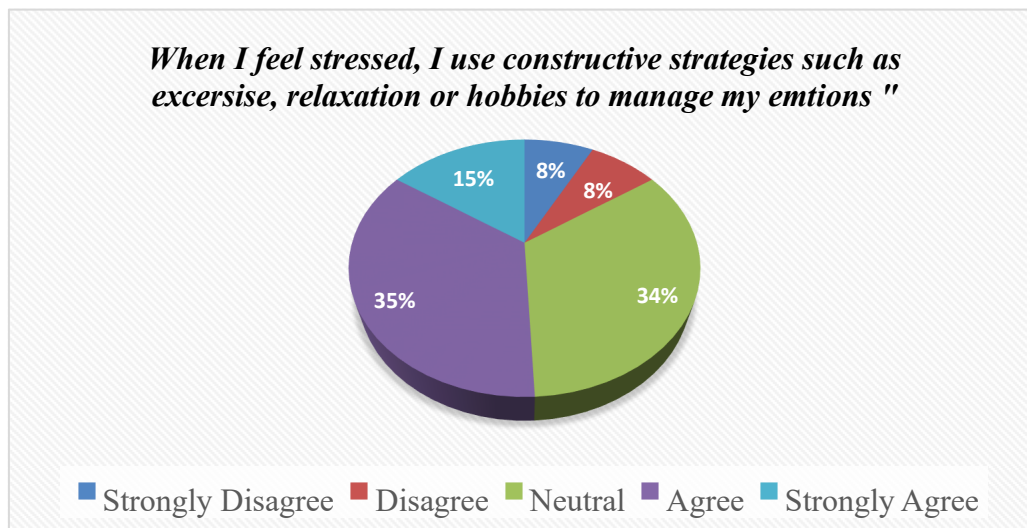


Figure 4.8 illustrates the respondents' use of constructive coping strategies, such as exercise, relaxation, or engaging in hobbies, to manage stress and emotions. The findings indicate that 35% of the respondents agreed and 15% strongly agreed that they use constructive strategies when experiencing stress, suggesting that half of the participants actively employ healthy coping mechanisms to regulate their emotions. Such practices may contribute to better psychological wellbeing, resilience, and the ability to cope with academic and fieldwork-related challenges. However, a considerable proportion of respondents (34%) expressed a neutral opinion. This finding may indicate inconsistency in the use of constructive coping methods or uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of such strategies. It is possible that these students adopt healthy coping practices only occasionally or rely on multiple approaches depending on the nature and intensity of stress. This highlights the need for greater awareness and skill-building regarding adaptive stress management techniques.

On the other hand, 8% of the respondents disagreed and another 8% strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating that 16% of the participants do not generally rely on constructive methods to manage stress. This may place them at a greater risk of emotional distress, poor coping, and difficulties in maintaining psychological wellbeing. Such students may be more vulnerable to burnout, especially considering the demanding nature of social work education and fieldwork responsibilities.

Table 4.10 Use of Problem-Solving Methods to Manage Academic and Fieldwork Stress (N = 65)

	<i>Frequency (n)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Yes</i>	52	80.0
<i>No</i>	13	20.0
<i>Total</i>	65	100.0

Table 4.10 indicates that out of the 65 respondents, a majority of 52 (80%) reported that they use problem-solving methods, such as planning and time management, to cope with academic and fieldwork stress, while 13 respondents (20%) stated that they do not adopt such strategies. The predominance of students using problem-solving approaches suggests that social work students generally rely on adaptive coping mechanisms to manage the academic and practical demands of their course. As social work education involves intensive classroom learning, fieldwork, assignments, and direct engagement with clients and communities, effective planning and time management appear to play an important role in reducing stress and maintaining academic performance. The findings further indicate that most respondents demonstrate constructive coping behaviours, which may contribute to better mental well-being and resilience. However, the presence of one-fifth of the respondents who do not use problemsolving methods highlights the need for interventions such as stress management programmes, time management training, and counselling support to equip students with effective coping skills and promote healthier help-seeking behaviours.

Figure 4.9 Use of avoidance strategies (N =65)

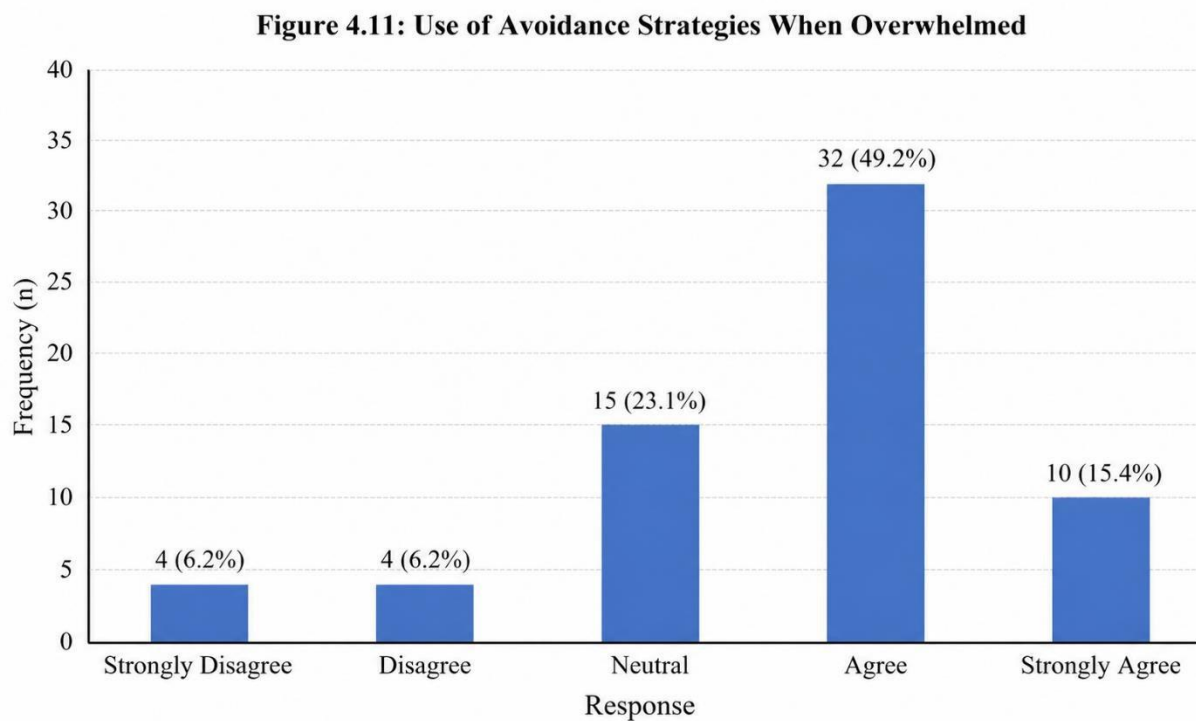


Figure 4.9 reveals that nearly half of the respondents (49.2%, $n = 32$) agreed that they often use avoidance strategies, such as sleeping more, spending time on social media, or procrastinating, when they feel overwhelmed. Additionally, 15.4% ($n = 10$) strongly agreed with the statement, indicating that a considerable proportion of social work students tend to rely on avoidancebased coping mechanisms during periods of stress. In contrast, only 6.2% ($n = 4$) strongly disagreed and another 6.2% ($n = 4$) disagreed, while 23.1% ($n = 15$) remained neutral. Overall, the findings suggest that avoidance coping is a common response to academic and fieldworkrelated stress among the respondents. This highlights the need for interventions that promote healthier coping strategies, such as problem-solving, emotional regulation, and timely helpseeking, to enhance the psychological well-being and resilience of social work students.

Table 4.11 *Contribution of Social work Education in help seeking intentions (N =65)*

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	1	1.5
Neutral	9	13.8
Agree	26	40.0

Strongly Agree	29	44.6
Total	65	100.0

Table 4.11 shows that a majority of the respondents reported that their social work education has positively influenced their attitude toward mental health services. Among the 65 respondents, 29 (44.6%) strongly agreed and 26 (40.0%) agreed with the statement, indicating that more than four-fifths (84.6%) of the respondents perceived their educational experience as having contributed to a positive outlook on mental health services. Meanwhile, 9 respondents (13.8%) remained neutral, suggesting that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Only 1 respondent (1.5%) disagreed, and none of the respondents strongly disagreed.

The findings suggest that social work education has been effective in promoting positive attitudes toward mental health services among students. Through academic learning, professional training, and fieldwork exposure, students are likely to have developed a greater understanding of mental health issues and the importance of professional support. This positive attitude may, in turn, strengthen their willingness to seek help when needed and enable them to advocate for mental health services in their future professional practice.

Objective 2:” To understand the perceptions of social work students regarding mental health support systems in Thiruvananthapuram District.” Figure 4.10 Accessibility to mental health support services in college (N =65)

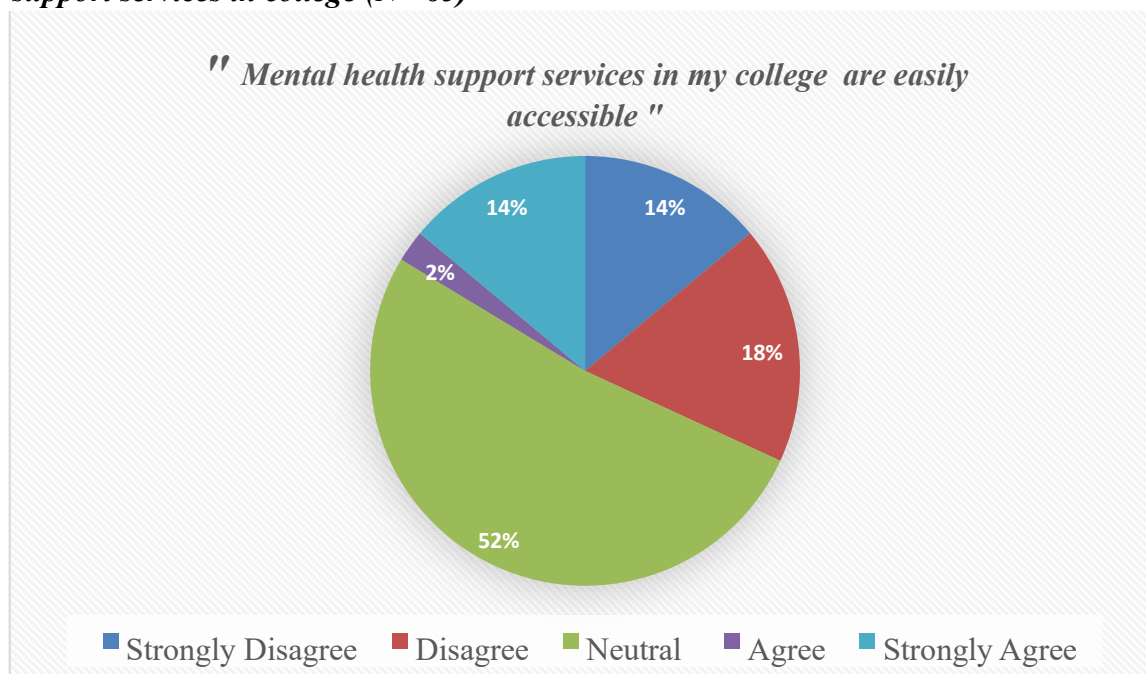


Figure 4.10 illustrates the respondents' perceptions regarding the accessibility of mental health support services in their colleges. More than half of the respondents (52%) remained **neutral**, indicating uncertainty or mixed opinions about the accessibility of these services. A considerable proportion of respondents (32%) expressed a negative perception, with **18% disagreeing** and **14% strongly disagreeing** that mental health support services are easily accessible. In contrast, only **16%** of the respondents held a positive view, with **2% agreeing** and **14% strongly agreeing** that such services are easily accessible.

The findings suggest that although some students perceive mental health support services to be accessible, a large proportion either remain uncertain or believe that these services are not readily available. The predominance of neutral responses may indicate limited awareness or inconsistent utilization of available mental health resources within colleges. Furthermore, the relatively higher percentage of respondents expressing disagreement highlights the need to improve the visibility, accessibility, and awareness of institutional mental health support services to ensure that students can easily seek professional assistance when required.

Table 4.12 Adequacy of counselling services provided by college.(N = 65)

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	46.2
No	35	53.8
Total	65	100.0

Table 4.x reveals that a slight majority of the respondents perceived the counselling services in their institution as inadequate to meet students' needs. Out of the 65 respondents, 35 (53.8%) reported that the existing counselling services are not adequate, while 30 respondents (46.2%) believed that the services are sufficient. The difference between the two groups is relatively small, indicating varied perceptions regarding the effectiveness of institutional counselling services.

The findings suggest that although a considerable proportion of students are satisfied with the available counselling services, more than half believe that these services require improvement. This may reflect concerns related to the availability, accessibility, quality, or capacity of counselling services to address students' mental health needs effectively. The results highlight the importance of strengthening institutional mental health support by expanding counselling facilities, ensuring timely access to professional support, and creating a more student-friendly mental health care environment. Such improvements may enhance students' confidence in institutional support systems and encourage greater utilization of mental health services.

Figure 4.11 Perceptions on Mental health services in Thiruvananthapuram(N=65)

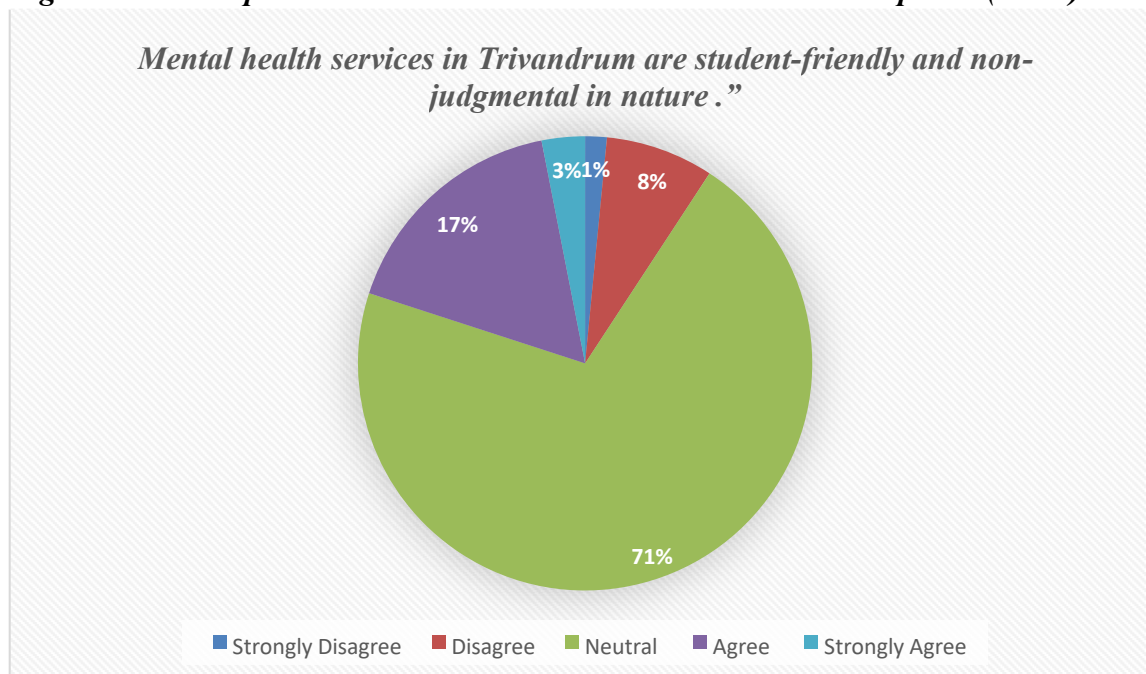


Figure 4.11 illustrates the respondents' perceptions of whether mental health services in Thiruvananthapuram are student-friendly and non-judgmental in nature. The majority of the respondents (71%) remained neutral, indicating that most students were either uncertain or did not have sufficient experience to form a definite opinion regarding the nature of mental health services available in the district. Among those who expressed a clear opinion, 17% agreed and 3% strongly agreed that the services are student-friendly and non-judgmental, accounting for a total of 20% with a positive perception. Conversely, 8% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed, representing only 9% of the respondents with a negative perception.

The predominance of neutral responses suggests a lack of awareness, limited utilization, or inadequate exposure to mental health services among social work students. While a greater proportion of respondents viewed the services positively than negatively, the overwhelming neutrality indicates that many students may be unfamiliar with the quality and nature of available mental health support. These findings highlight the need for increased awareness initiatives, improved outreach, and greater visibility of mental health services to enable students to make informed judgments and access professional support with confidence.

Table 4.13 Trust in the Confidentiality Maintained by Mental Health Professionals in Thiruvananthapuram (N = 65)

	<i>Frequency (n)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	1	1.5
<i>Disagree</i>	3	4.6
<i>Neutral</i>	36	55.4
<i>Agree</i>	22	33.8
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	3	4.6
<i>Total</i>	65	100.0

Table 4.13 indicates that the majority of the respondents remained neutral regarding their trust in the confidentiality maintained by mental health professionals in Thiruvananthapuram. Out of the 65 respondents, 36 (55.4%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, suggesting uncertainty or limited experience with professional mental health services. Meanwhile, 22 respondents (33.8%) agreed and 3 (4.6%) strongly agreed that they trust mental health professionals to maintain confidentiality, accounting for a total of 38.4% of respondents with a positive perception. In contrast, only 3 respondents (4.6%) disagreed and 1 respondent (1.5%) strongly disagreed, representing 6.1% of the total respondents.

The findings suggest that although a considerable proportion of social work students have confidence in the confidentiality maintained by mental health professionals, the predominance of neutral responses indicates that many students may be uncertain or lack sufficient exposure to mental health services to form a definite opinion. Since confidentiality is a fundamental aspect of professional mental health practice and plays a crucial role in encouraging helpseeking behaviour, the results underscore the need to increase awareness about ethical standards, confidentiality policies, and the professional practices followed by mental health practitioners. Strengthening students' trust in these services may contribute to greater willingness to seek timely psychological support when needed.

Objective 3

“To understand the challenges in the existing mental health services for social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District. “

Figure 4.12 *The influence of cost of private mental health services(N =65)*

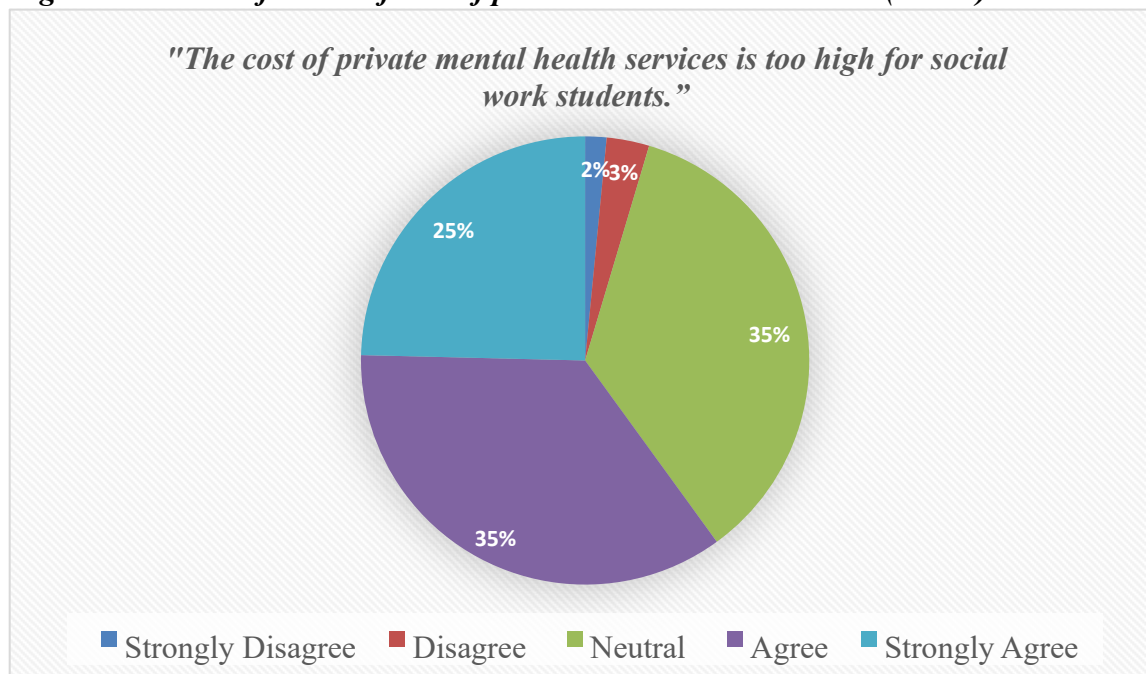


Figure 4.12 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding whether the cost of private mental health services is too high for social work students. The findings indicate that a majority of the respondents perceive the cost of private mental health services as a financial barrier. Specifically, 35% of the respondents agreed and 25% strongly agreed with the statement, accounting for a total of 60% who believed that private mental health services are expensive for social work students. In contrast, 35% of the respondents remained neutral, suggesting uncertainty or a lack of direct experience with private mental health services. Only a small proportion of respondents disagreed (3%) or strongly disagreed (2%), representing a combined 5% who did not perceive cost as a significant issue.

The findings suggest that the affordability of private mental health services is a major concern among social work students and may act as a barrier to seeking professional psychological support. The high proportion of respondents agreeing with the statement highlights the financial constraints faced by students and underscores the importance of strengthening affordable or subsidized mental health services through educational institutions and public healthcare systems. Improving access to low-cost counselling and mental health services may help reduce financial barriers and encourage timely help-seeking among students.

Table 4.14 *Perception of Distance as a Barrier to Accessing Government Mental Health Services (N = 65)*

	<i>Frequency (n)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Yes</i>	45	69.2
<i>No</i>	20	30.8
<i>Total</i>	65	100.0

Table 4.14 indicates that the majority of the respondents perceived distance as a significant barrier to accessing government mental health services. Out of the 65 respondents, 45 (69.2%) reported that government mental health services are difficult to access due to distance, whereas 20 respondents (30.8%) did not share this view. The findings suggest that geographical accessibility is a major challenge affecting the utilization of government mental health services among social work students.

The high proportion of respondents identifying distance as a barrier implies that the location of mental health facilities, travel time, and transportation-related difficulties may discourage students from seeking timely professional support. This highlights the need to improve the geographical reach of government mental health services through decentralized service delivery, community-based mental health centres, outreach programmes, and institution-based mental health initiatives. Addressing these accessibility challenges could enhance service utilization and promote equitable access to mental health care among students.

Figure 4.13 Compatibility of timings of the available services with class/fieldwork schedules (N=65)

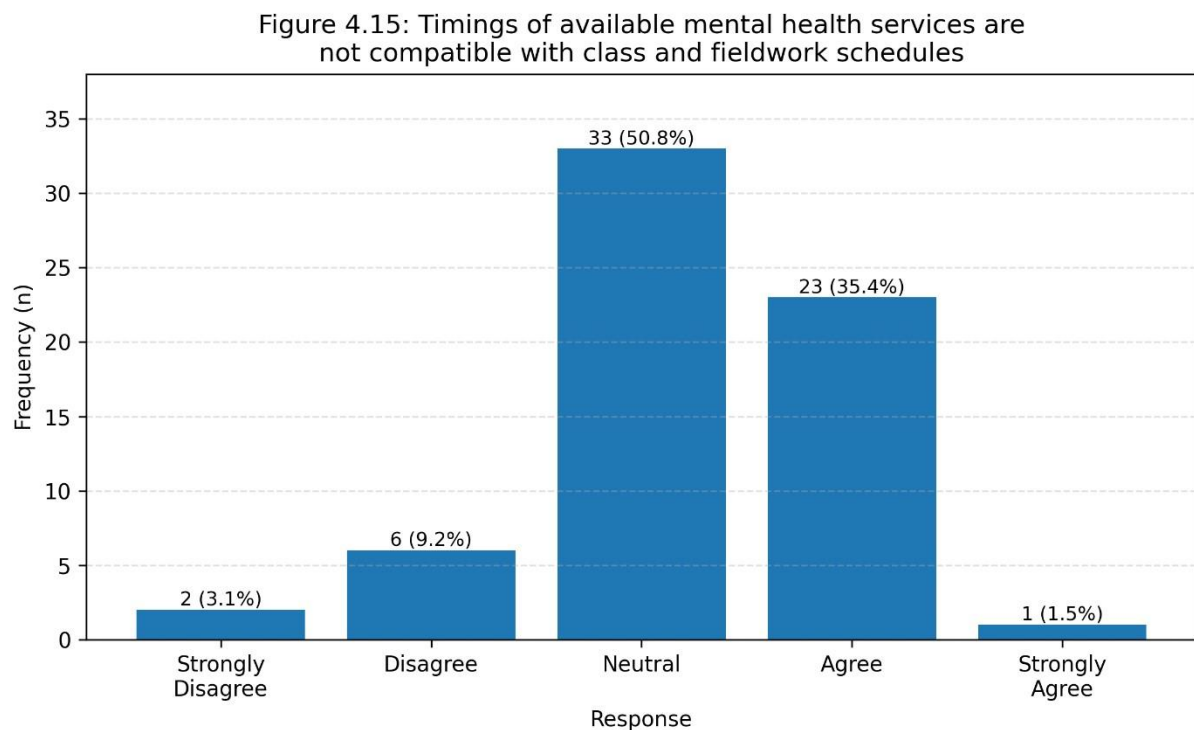


Figure 4.13 indicates that a majority of the respondents remained neutral regarding whether the timings of available mental health services are incompatible with their class and fieldwork schedules. Out of the 65 respondents, 33 (50.8%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, suggesting uncertainty or limited experience in accessing such services. Meanwhile, 23 respondents (35.4%) agreed and 1 respondent (1.5%) strongly agreed, accounting for a total of 36.9% who perceived service timings as incompatible with their academic and fieldwork commitments. In contrast, 6 respondents (9.2%) disagreed and 2 respondents (3.1%) strongly disagreed, representing 12.3% who did not consider service timings to be a barrier.

The findings suggest that although a considerable proportion of students believe that the operating hours of mental health services do not align with their academic and fieldwork schedules, the predominance of neutral responses indicates that many students may be uncertain or have had limited interaction with these services. Nevertheless, the relatively higher proportion of respondents reporting incompatibility in service timings highlights the need for institutions and mental health service providers to offer more flexible counselling hours, such as after-class appointments, weekend services, or online consultations. Such measures could improve accessibility and encourage greater utilization of mental health services among social work students.

Table 4.15 Perception of Coordination Between Colleges and External Mental Health Referral Services (N = 65)

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	43	66.2
No	22	33.8
Total	65	100.0

Table 4.15 reveals that a majority of the respondents (66.2%, $n = 43$) believed that there is **limited coordination between colleges and external mental health referral services**, whereas 33.8% ($n = 22$) did not share this perception. The findings suggest that many social work students perceive a gap in the linkage between educational institutions and external mental health care providers.

The high proportion of respondents identifying limited coordination indicates that students may experience difficulties in being referred to appropriate mental health services outside their institutions or may perceive a lack of collaboration between colleges and specialized mental health agencies. Such gaps can hinder continuity of care and delay access to professional support for students requiring advanced mental health interventions. The findings emphasize the need for educational institutions to establish stronger referral networks, formal partnerships, and collaborative mechanisms with external mental health service providers to ensure timely, accessible, and comprehensive mental health care for students.

Figure 4.14 Influence of privacy in counselling settings in seeking help .(N= 65)

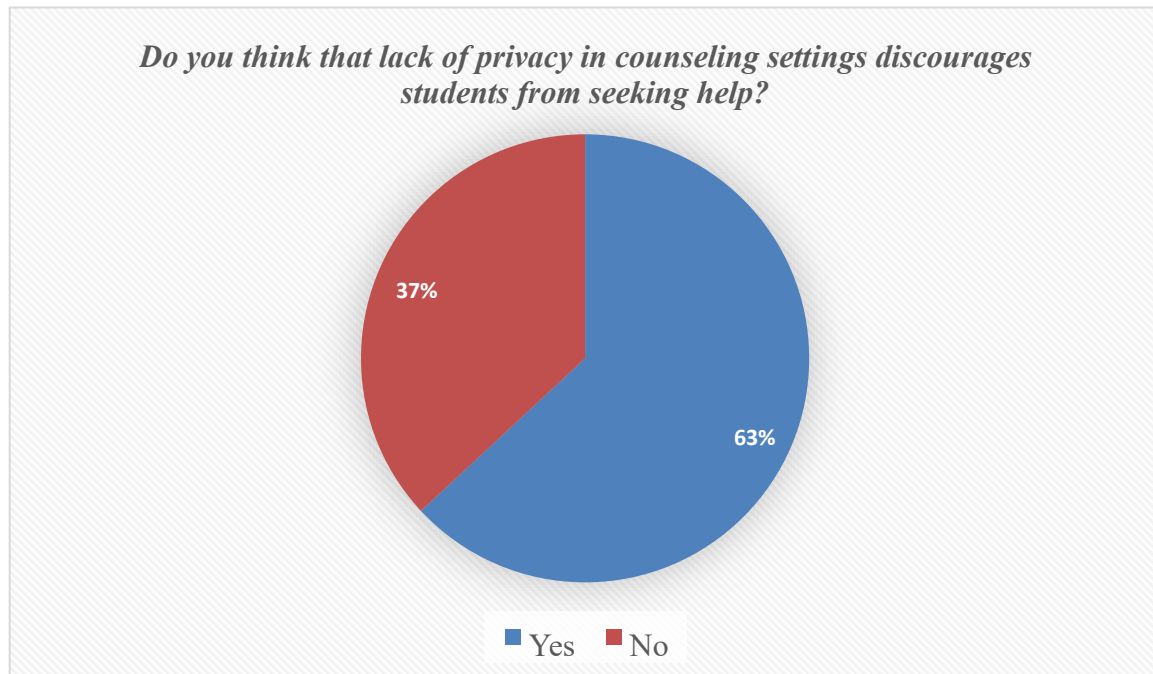


Figure 4.14 illustrates the respondents' perceptions of whether a lack of privacy in counselling settings discourages students from seeking professional help. The findings reveal that a majority of the respondents (**63%**) believed that inadequate privacy in counselling settings acts as a barrier to help-seeking, while **37%** did not share this opinion.

The predominance of respondents who answered 'Yes' indicates that privacy and confidentiality are important factors influencing students' willingness to access mental health services.

Concerns about being seen by peers, fear of disclosure of personal information, and apprehension about social judgment may discourage students from seeking counselling when adequate privacy is not ensured. These findings highlight the importance of providing confidential and secure counselling environments within educational institutions. Strengthening privacy measures, ensuring discreet access to counselling services, and reinforcing confidentiality policies may help reduce students' hesitation and encourage greater utilization of mental health support services.

4.4 Conclusion

The findings of the present study provide a comprehensive understanding of the mental health help-seeking intentions of postgraduate social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District. The demographic profile indicates that the respondents were predominantly young adults between 18 and 24 years of age, with a higher representation of female students and secondyear Master of Social Work students. Since all respondents were enrolled as full-time students, the findings

primarily reflect the experiences of individuals who are actively engaged in academic coursework, field practicum, and other professional training activities. The study revealed that academic workload and fieldwork responsibilities constitute significant sources of stress for many social work students. More than half of the respondents reported that academic workload negatively affects their mental health, while a considerable proportion acknowledged that balancing academic assignments and fieldwork responsibilities is emotionally exhausting. Although many respondents believed they were capable of managing their emotional and psychological well-being, the findings indicate that maintaining an appropriate academic-life balance remains a challenge and influences the help-seeking intentions of several students.

With regard to barriers to professional help-seeking, the study presents encouraging findings. Most respondents did not perceive fear of negative judgement from mental health professionals, fear of being labelled as mentally ill, or negative perceptions from classmates as significant obstacles to seeking professional psychological support. The majority also expressed confidence in their ability to recognize when professional help is required, believed that professional counselling could effectively help manage stress, and reported receiving encouragement from their families to seek mental health support. These findings suggest that social work students generally possess positive attitudes towards mental health care and professional help-seeking.

The findings further demonstrate that respondents were more likely to seek support from close friends and professional mental health practitioners than from faculty members, family members, religious leaders, or online mental health services. Most respondents reported using constructive coping strategies and problem-solving approaches to manage stress; however, avoidance-based coping behaviours were also commonly reported, indicating that some students continue to rely on less adaptive methods when experiencing emotional distress.

The overwhelming majority acknowledged that their social work education has positively influenced their attitudes towards mental health services, highlighting the important role of professional education in promoting mental health awareness and help-seeking behaviour.

The study also examined students' perceptions of the existing mental health support systems in Thiruvananthapuram District. Although respondents generally expressed confidence in the confidentiality maintained by mental health professionals, many remained neutral regarding the accessibility of institutional mental health services and the student-friendliness of mental health services available within the district. More than half of the respondents perceived their college counselling services as inadequate, suggesting that improvements are required in the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of institutional mental health support. Finally, the study identified

several challenges affecting the utilization of mental health services among social work students. The cost of private mental health services was widely perceived as a significant financial barrier, while distance to government mental health facilities emerged as another major obstacle. Respondents also identified limited coordination between colleges and external referral services, incompatibility between service timings and academic schedules, and inadequate privacy in counselling settings as important factors that discourage help-seeking. These findings indicate that, despite generally positive attitudes towards professional mental health care, several structural, institutional, and accessibility-related barriers continue to influence students' willingness and ability to access appropriate psychological support. The study concludes that postgraduate social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District demonstrate favourable help-seeking intentions and positive perceptions towards professional mental health services. However, academic pressures, financial constraints, accessibility issues, and institutional limitations continue to influence their help-seeking behaviour. Addressing these challenges through strengthened institutional counselling services, improved referral mechanisms, affordable mental health care, flexible service delivery, and enhanced awareness initiatives may contribute to promoting timely help-seeking and improving the psychological well-being of social work students.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The present study entitled “*Mental Health - Help-Seeking Intentions among Social Work Students in Thiruvananthapuram District*” was undertaken to understand the help-seeking intentions, barriers, perceptions regarding mental health support systems, and challenges experienced by postgraduate social work students. The study also examined the influence of academic and fieldwork stress on students’ mental health and explored their attitudes towards professional mental health services. Data were collected from sixty-five postgraduate social work students through structured questionnaires and interview schedules. The findings obtained from the analysis are presented and discussed in this chapter, followed by suggestions and conclusions drawn from the study.

5.2 Findings and Discussions.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents provide an important context for understanding the findings of the present study. A total of 65 postgraduate social work students from selected colleges in Thiruvananthapuram District participated in the study. The demographic profile comprised variables including age, gender, current academic year, and mode of enrolment, which offer valuable insights into the composition of the study population and facilitate a comprehensive interpretation of the findings related to mental health and helpseeking intentions. The findings indicate that the study predominantly represents young adult postgraduate students, with 54 respondents (83.1%) belonging to the 18–24 years age group, 10 respondents (15.4%) belonging to the 25–34 years age group, and only 1 respondent (1.5%) aged 35 years or above. This distribution demonstrates that the study largely reflects the experiences and perceptions of students in the stage of emerging adulthood, a developmental period characterized by increasing academic demands, professional identity formation, emotional development, and career preparation. Since this phase is often associated with heightened psychological vulnerability as well as greater independence, the predominance of respondents within this age group provides an appropriate context for examining mental health concerns and help-seeking intentions among postgraduate social work students. With respect to gender, the sample was predominantly female. Of the 65 respondents, 51 (78.5%) were female, 13 (20.0%) were male, and 1 respondent (1.5%) preferred not to disclose their gender. This distribution reflects the higher enrolment of women in postgraduate social work programmes and indicates that the findings primarily represent the perspectives of female social work students.

Nevertheless, the inclusion of male respondents contributes to a broader understanding of help-seeking intentions across genders within the selected study population.

The academic profile of the respondents further demonstrates representation from different stages of postgraduate social work education. The majority of the participants, 41 respondents (63.1%), belonged to the second-year MSW (2024–2026 batch), while 24 respondents (36.9%) were enrolled in the first-year MSW (2025–2027 batch). The higher proportion of second-year students suggests that a considerable number of respondents had relatively greater exposure to academic coursework, field practicum, and professional training. Such experiences are likely to influence their understanding of mental health, coping strategies, and attitudes towards seeking professional psychological support. At the same time, the inclusion of first-year students enabled the study to capture perceptions from individuals at different stages of professional education, thereby enhancing the comprehensiveness of the findings. The findings also reveal that all 65 respondents (100%) were enrolled as full-time Master of Social Work students, while none were pursuing their studies through part-time or distance education modes. This indicates that the study exclusively represents students who are continuously engaged in classroom learning, fieldwork, seminars, assignments, and other academic activities integral to professional social work education. Consequently, the findings are particularly relevant to understanding the mental health experiences and help-seeking intentions of full-time postgraduate social work students who are actively involved in both academic and field-based professional training. Overall, the socio-demographic profile demonstrates that the study predominantly represents young, full-time postgraduate social work students, with a greater proportion of female respondents and second-year students. The demographic composition provides an appropriate foundation for examining the mental health and help-seeking intentions of postgraduate social work students in Thiruvananthapuram District, as it reflects a population actively engaged in professional education and field practice. These characteristics also provide an essential context for interpreting the subsequent findings related to academic life balance, perceived barriers to help-seeking, perceptions of mental health support systems, and challenges associated with accessing mental health services.

The findings of the study indicate that social work students experience a range of academic and professional demands that influence their mental health and help-seeking intentions. As postgraduate social work education combines rigorous academic coursework with extensive field practicum, students are required to manage multiple responsibilities simultaneously. The analysis suggests that while respondents generally demonstrate awareness of healthy coping strategies, several academic and personal factors continue to influence their willingness and ability to seek

professional mental health support. A notable finding of the study is that the majority of respondents reported employing adaptive coping mechanisms to manage academic and fieldwork-related stress. Eighty per cent (80.0%) of the respondents indicated that they use problem-solving strategies, such as planning and time management, to cope with academic and fieldwork stress, whereas 20.0% reported that they do not adopt such approaches. This finding suggests that most social work students attempt to manage stress through constructive and solution-oriented methods rather than relying solely on emotional responses. The professional training received through social work education may contribute to the development of these adaptive coping skills, enabling students to organise their responsibilities more effectively and respond positively to academic challenges. However, the findings also reveal that adaptive coping strategies coexist with avoidance-oriented behaviours. Although many respondents reported practising effective stress management techniques, 49.2% either agreed or strongly agreed that they often resort to avoidance strategies, including excessive sleeping, prolonged social media use, or procrastination when feeling overwhelmed. In comparison, 23.1% remained neutral, while only 12.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. These findings indicate that despite possessing knowledge regarding positive coping mechanisms, a substantial proportion of students continue to engage in behaviours that may provide temporary emotional relief but do not effectively address the underlying sources of stress. This pattern suggests that academic pressure and emotionally demanding fieldwork experiences may occasionally exceed students' coping capacities, leading them to rely on avoidant responses.

The study further demonstrates that academic commitments themselves may constitute barriers to professional help-seeking. Regarding the compatibility of mental health service timings with students' academic and fieldwork schedules, 50.8% of respondents remained neutral, 36.9% agreed that service timings were incompatible with their schedules, and only 12.3% disagreed. The predominance of neutral responses suggests limited awareness or utilisation of available mental health services, while the considerable proportion reporting scheduling incompatibility indicates that academic obligations and field practicum may restrict opportunities to access professional support. The demanding nature of social work education, characterised by classroom learning, field placements, assignments, and community engagement, may therefore reduce students' ability to seek timely psychological assistance.

The findings collectively suggest that help-seeking behaviour among social work students is influenced by the interaction between personal coping capacities and academic demands. Although the majority of respondents exhibit positive coping practices and demonstrate an understanding of effective stress management, academic workload, fieldwork responsibilities,

and avoidance-oriented behaviours remain important barriers that may delay or discourage professional help-seeking. These findings highlight that possessing mental health knowledge alone does not necessarily ensure timely utilisation of support services. Educational institutions should therefore complement mental health awareness with interventions that promote healthy coping behaviours, strengthen resilience, encourage self-care practices, and provide counselling services that accommodate students' academic and fieldwork schedules. Such measures may enhance students' ability to seek professional support without compromising their educational responsibilities.

Eighty per cent (80.0%) of the respondents indicated that they use problem-solving strategies, such as planning and time management, to cope with academic and fieldwork stress, whereas 20.0% reported that they do not adopt such approaches. This finding suggests that most social work students attempt to manage stress through constructive and solution-oriented methods rather than relying solely on emotional responses. The professional training received through social work education may contribute to the development of these adaptive coping skills, enabling students to organise their responsibilities more effectively and respond positively to academic challenges. However, the findings also reveal that adaptive coping strategies coexist with avoidance-oriented behaviours. Although many respondents reported practising effective stress management techniques, 49.2% either agreed or strongly agreed that they often resort to avoidance strategies, including excessive sleeping, prolonged social media use, or procrastination when feeling overwhelmed. In comparison, 23.1% remained neutral, while only 12.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. These findings indicate that despite possessing knowledge regarding positive coping mechanisms, a substantial proportion of students continue to engage in behaviours that may provide temporary emotional relief but do not effectively address the underlying sources of stress. This pattern suggests that academic pressure and emotionally demanding fieldwork experiences may occasionally exceed students' coping capacities, leading them to rely on avoidant responses.

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The findings indicate that although respondents generally demonstrated positive attitudes towards mental health services and acknowledged the importance of professional psychological support, they expressed varying levels of confidence regarding the accessibility, adequacy, and effectiveness of available support systems. This suggests that positive perceptions towards mental health do not necessarily correspond with equally positive perceptions of the support services available to students. One of the significant findings of the study is that respondents exhibited a favourable attitude towards mental health services as a result of their professional education. A majority of the respondents (84.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that their social work education had helped them develop a positive attitude towards mental health services, while 13.8% remained neutral and only 1.5% disagreed with the statement. This finding indicates that social work education plays a substantial role in enhancing mental health literacy and fostering positive attitudes towards professional psychological support. Through classroom learning, field practicum, and exposure to psychosocial concepts, students appear to have developed a better understanding of the importance of seeking professional assistance when experiencing psychological distress. Despite these positive attitudes, respondents expressed mixed perceptions regarding the accessibility of institutional mental health support services. More than half of the respondents (52.0%) remained neutral when asked whether mental health support services were easily accessible within their colleges. Furthermore, 32.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, whereas only 16.0% agreed or strongly agreed that such services were easily

accessible. The predominance of neutral responses suggests that many students may not have sufficient awareness or direct experience with the available counselling facilities. At the same time, the relatively higher proportion of negative responses indicates that accessibility continues to be perceived as an important concern among social work students.

The adequacy of institutional counselling services also emerged as an important aspect of respondents' perceptions. More than half of the respondents (53.8%) believed that the counselling services available within their institutions were not adequate to meet students' needs, while 46.2% considered the available services to be adequate. Although the difference between the two groups is comparatively small, the findings indicate that a greater proportion of students perceive deficiencies in the existing counselling support provided by their institutions. This perception may reflect concerns related to the availability of trained mental health professionals, the scope of counselling services, accessibility, or the capacity of existing services to adequately address the diverse psychological needs of students.

The findings further reveal considerable uncertainty regarding the quality and nature of mental health services available in Thiruvananthapuram District. A majority of respondents (71.0%) remained neutral when asked whether mental health services in the district are student-friendly and non-judgmental. In contrast, 20.0% expressed positive perceptions, while only 9.0% reported negative perceptions. The predominance of neutral responses may indicate limited utilisation of mental health services or insufficient familiarity with the existing service delivery system. Consequently, many respondents may not have had adequate opportunities to evaluate the quality of available services based on personal experience.

Trust in the confidentiality maintained by mental health professionals also demonstrated a similar pattern. More than half of the respondents (55.4%) remained neutral regarding whether mental health professionals in Thiruvananthapuram maintain confidentiality. Meanwhile, 38.4% agreed or strongly agreed that confidentiality would be maintained, whereas only 6.1% expressed disagreement. These findings suggest that although respondents generally do not exhibit mistrust towards mental health professionals, a substantial proportion remain uncertain regarding confidentiality practices. Since confidentiality constitutes one of the fundamental ethical principles governing professional mental health practice, uncertainty regarding this aspect may influence students' willingness to seek professional support, particularly when discussing sensitive personal concerns.

Taken together, the findings indicate that respondents generally possess favourable attitudes towards mental health and professional psychological services, reflecting the positive influence of social work

education on mental health awareness. However, uncertainty regarding the accessibility, adequacy, confidentiality, and student-friendliness of existing mental health support systems suggests that positive attitudes alone may not be sufficient to encourage effective utilisation of available services. The findings therefore highlight the importance of strengthening institutional mental health support systems through improved service visibility, greater awareness regarding available counselling facilities, enhanced communication about confidentiality policies, and the provision of accessible, student-centred mental health services. Such measures may contribute to increasing students' confidence in professional support systems and promote more positive help-seeking intentions among social work students.

While the findings indicate that respondents generally possess positive attitudes towards mental health and professional help-seeking, several structural, institutional, and service-related barriers continue to affect their access to and utilization of mental health services. These challenges extend beyond individual willingness to seek help and reflect broader issues related to affordability, accessibility, institutional support, and service delivery. One of the major challenges identified by the respondents was the financial burden associated with accessing private mental health services. The findings reveal that 60.0% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the cost of private mental health services is too high for social work students, while 35.0% remained neutral and only 5.0% disagreed with the statement. The predominance of positive responses indicates that financial constraints constitute a significant obstacle to accessing professional psychological care. As many students depend on family support or have limited personal income, the high cost of private counselling and psychological services may discourage them from seeking timely intervention, even when they recognize the need for professional assistance. Accessibility of government mental health services also emerged as a significant concern. The findings show that 69.2% of the respondents believed that government mental health services are difficult to access because of distance, whereas 30.8% did not perceive distance as a barrier. These findings suggest that geographical accessibility continues to influence students' utilization of public mental health services. Long travel distances, transportation difficulties, and the concentration of specialized mental health facilities in urban locations may reduce opportunities for students to obtain professional support, particularly during periods of academic and fieldwork commitments.

Institutional coordination between educational institutions and external mental health services was identified as another important challenge. The study found that 66.2% of the respondents believed that there is limited coordination between colleges and external referral services, while 33.8% did not share this perception. This finding indicates that respondents perceive gaps in the referral mechanisms through which students requiring specialized mental health care are connected to external service

providers. The absence of well-established referral pathways may delay access to appropriate psychological interventions and reduce the continuity of care for students experiencing mental health difficulties. Strengthening collaborative relationships between educational institutions and external mental health agencies could therefore contribute to more effective and comprehensive support systems for students. Privacy within counselling settings also emerged as a major concern influencing help-seeking intentions. The findings indicate that 63.0% of the respondents believed that a lack of privacy discourages students from seeking professional help, whereas 37.0% did not consider privacy to be a barrier. These findings demonstrate that concerns regarding confidentiality, fear of being recognised by peers, and apprehension about social judgement continue to influence students' willingness to access counselling services. Since counselling often involves the disclosure of sensitive personal experiences, the perception of inadequate privacy may discourage students from seeking professional assistance despite recognising its potential benefits. Although respondents generally demonstrated positive perceptions of mental health services, the findings reveal that several practical barriers continue to affect the utilization of available support systems. Financial limitations, geographical inaccessibility, inadequate institutional referral mechanisms, concerns regarding privacy, and perceived inadequacy of counselling services collectively contribute to reduced access to mental health care among social work students. These challenges suggest that improving help-seeking behaviour requires interventions that extend beyond mental health awareness and focus on strengthening the overall mental health service infrastructure available to students.

The findings further emphasize the need for educational institutions and mental health service providers to adopt a more comprehensive and student-centred approach to mental health care. Enhancing institutional counselling services, establishing effective referral networks with external mental health agencies, improving the geographical accessibility of government mental health services, ensuring affordable psychological care, and maintaining strict standards of confidentiality are essential for creating supportive environments that encourage students to seek professional assistance without hesitation. Addressing these challenges would not only improve access to mental health services but also contribute to the overall psychological wellbeing, academic success, and professional development of future social workers.

5.3 Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are proposed:

- I. Educational institutions should establish well-equipped and student-friendly counselling services capable of addressing the mental health needs of students. Mental health awareness programmes, workshops, and orientation sessions should be conducted regularly to improve awareness regarding available support services.
- II. Specialized interventions addressing fieldwork-related stress should be incorporated into social work education. Institutions should promote self-care practices, stress management programmes, and peer support mechanisms to enhance the emotional wellbeing of students.
- III. Adequate information regarding mental health services should be disseminated through institutional websites, notice boards, and orientation programmes. Efforts should also be made to ensure that mental health services are confidential, accessible, and free from stigma.
- IV. Affordable and subsidized mental health services should be made available for students. Collaboration between educational institutions and mental health professionals should be ensured in order to contribute to the development of comprehensive support systems that cater to students' psychological needs.
- V. University level changes should be made in the curriculum integrating self-care and emotional resilience and encourage students to normalize help-seeking behaviour. Strengthening of the institutional support systems can contribute significantly to improving the mental health and overall well-being of future social workers.

5.4 Conclusion

(American psychological Association, n.d.) defined mental health as a state of mind characterized by emotional well-being, good behavioral adjustment, relative freedom from anxiety and disabling symptoms, and a capacity to establish constructive relationships and cope with the ordinary demands and stresses of life. Help-seeking intentions refer to **a person's willingness to seek professional psychological help** to alleviate psychological distress (Research Review: Help-seeking intentions, behaviors, and barriers in college students – a systematic review and meta-analysis, 2025)

The IBM-HS suggests that the three help-seeking mechanisms of attitude, perceived norm, and personal agency collectively lead to the formation of *intention* (i.e., readiness to exert effort to seek mental health help from a professional; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). In general, people with a more favorable attitude, perceived norm, and personal agency will form a greater intention to seek help. (Hammer, 2024) Mental health help-seeking Intentions among social work students is

influenced by various personal, social, and institutional factors. The study revealed that respondents generally possessed positive attitudes towards seeking professional help and demonstrated adequate awareness regarding mental health concerns.

However, challenges such as academic stress, fieldwork demands, inadequate counselling facilities, lack of awareness regarding available services, and financial barriers continue to influence access to mental health care.

The findings emphasize the need for strengthening mental health support systems within educational institutions and promoting awareness regarding available services. Developing affordable, accessible, and student-friendly interventions can contribute to enhancing the psychological well-being of social work students and preparing them to become competent and emotionally resilient professionals. Because, “psychological stress among university students are common and the mental health of university students is a topic of increasing attention.” (Susan Gair, 2018). Also on the other hand, “Although enhancing resilience in social work trainees presents a challenge to educators, they are nonetheless responsible for developing professionals who are able to cope with the emotional demands of the job.” The paper (Louise, 2012) argues that building resilience in the future workforce should be a key element of social work education. Overall, developing resilience has consequently become an essential component of professional preparation in social work education. Resilience enables students to adapt effectively to stressful situations, regulate emotional responses, recover from setbacks, and sustain their commitment to professional responsibilities. Higher education institutions play a crucial role in fostering resilience by creating supportive learning environments that promote self-awareness, reflective practice, emotional intelligence, and healthy coping strategies. Integrating mental health promotion, stress management programmes, counselling services, and opportunities for reflective learning into social work education can strengthen students' capacity to cope with academic and fieldwork-related challenges. Such initiatives not only enhance students' psychological well-being but also encourage positive help-seeking attitudes, preparing them to become competent, empathetic, and emotionally resilient professionals capable of meeting the complex demands of social work practice. Hence, fostering supportive environments and normalizing help-seeking behaviour are essential for promoting positive mental health among future social workers.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure 1: Research Questionnaire

1. Age Group

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-34

☐ 35+

2. Gender identity

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Prefer not to say

3. What is your current year in the MSW program?

☐ MSW (2024- 2026)

☐ MSW (2025-2027)

4. Enrollment ☐ Full time

☐ Part time

☐ Distance Education

5. “ I am generally able to manage my emotional and psychological wellbeing during the semester.”

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

6. “Despite academic and fieldwork demands, I can function effectively in my daily life.”

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree,

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

7. “My current mental health allows me to contribute positively to my college and community “

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

8. Do you have the mind to seek help when you have serious emotional or mental health problems?

☐ Yes

☐ No

9. How likely are you to seek help from the following sources if you had a serious emotional or mental health problem?”

(Use a 7-point likelihood scale: 1 = Extremely unlikely to 7 = Extremely likely.

9.1.A close friend.

☐ Extremely unlikely

☐ Very unlikely (or unlikely)

☐ Somewhat unlikely

☐ Neutral (or neither likely nor unlikely)

☐ Somewhat likely

☐ Very likely (or likely)

☐ Extremely likely

9.2. A family member.

- ☐ Extremely unlikely
- ☐ Very unlikely (or unlikely)
- ☐ Somewhat unlikely
- ☐ Neutral (or neither likely nor unlikely)
- ☐ Somewhat likely
- ☐ Very likely (or likely)
- ☐ Extremely likely

9.3. A MSW faculty member or field supervisor.

- ☐ Extremely unlikely
- ☐ Very unlikely (or unlikely)
- ☐ Somewhat unlikely
- ☐ Neutral (or neither likely nor unlikely)
- ☐ Somewhat likely
- ☐ Very likely (or likely)
- ☐ Extremely likely

9.4. A professional counselor/psychologist/psychiatrist.

- ☐ Extremely unlikely
- ☐ Very unlikely (or unlikely)
- ☐ Somewhat unlikely
- ☐ Neutral (or neither likely nor unlikely)
- ☐ Somewhat likely
- ☐ Very likely (or likely)
- ☐ Extremely likely

9.5. A doctor/general practitioner.

- ☐ Extremely unlikely
- ☐ Very unlikely (or unlikely)

- ☐ Somewhat unlikely
- ☐ Neutral (or neither likely nor unlikely)
- ☐ Somewhat likely
- ☐ Very likely (or likely)
- ☐ Extremely likely

9.6. A religious or spiritual leader.

- ☐ Extremely unlikely
- ☐ Very unlikely (or unlikely)
- ☐ Somewhat unlikely
- ☐ Neutral (or neither likely nor unlikely)
- ☐ Somewhat likely
- ☐ Very likely (or likely)
- ☐ Extremely likely

9.7. An online or tele-mental health service.

- ☐ Extremely unlikely
- ☐ Very unlikely (or unlikely)
- ☐ Somewhat unlikely
- ☐ Neutral (or neither likely nor unlikely)
- ☐ Somewhat likely
- ☐ Very likely (or likely)
- ☐ Extremely likely

10. What is your idea about coping mechanisms?

11. “When I feel stressed, I use constructive strategies such as exercise, relaxation, or hobbies to manage my emotions. “

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree,

- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

12. Do you use problem-solving methods (such as planning and time management) to deal with academic and fieldwork stress?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. "I often use avoidance strategies (such as sleeping more, staying on social media, or procrastinating) when I feel overwhelmed."

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree,
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

14. Do you consider sharing your feelings with someone you trust when you are emotionally distressed?"

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

15. "I rely on religious or spiritual practices to cope with emotional difficulties."

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree,
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

16. Do you think that seeking professional help for mental health is a sign of strength rather than weakness?

- ☐ Yes

☐ No

17. “My social work education has helped me develop a positive attitude toward mental health services.”

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree,

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

18. Does your academic workload in the MSW programme negatively affect your mental health.?

☐ Yes

☐ No

19. ” Fieldwork responsibilities make it difficult to maintain a healthy balance between personal and professional life.”

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree,

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

20. “I often feel that balancing assignments and fieldwork is emotionally exhausting.”

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree,

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

21. Does Difficulty in balancing academic life influence your decision to seek help.?

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree,

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

22. " I worry that mental health professionals will judge me negatively."

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree,

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

23. "I avoid seeking professional help because I fear being labelled as ' mentally ill.' "

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree,

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

24. " I am concerned that my classmates will think negatively of me if I use counseling services."

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree,

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

25. "I have enough knowledge to recognize when I need professional help."

☐ Strongly Disagree

- ☐ Disagree,
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

26. “Does your family encourage you to seek help if you experience difficulties?”

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

27. “I believe talking to a professional would help me manage stress effectively.”

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree,
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

28. “Mental health support services in my college are easily accessible.”

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree,
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

29. . Is the counseling services in your institution adequate to meet the students needs ?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

30. “Mental health services in Trivandrum are student-friendly and non-judgmental in nature”

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree,

- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

31. "I trust that mental health professionals in Trivandrum will maintain confidentiality."

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree,
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

32. "Do you think that the existing services are sensitive to the specific fieldwork stress of social work students?"

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

33. "Information on how to access mental health services is clearly communicated to students by government"

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree,
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

34. "The cost of private mental health services is too high for social work students."

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree,
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

35. Do you think that Government mental health services are difficult to access due to distance ?

☐ Yes

☐ No

36. "If available, the timings of available services are not compatible with class/fieldwork schedules."

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree,

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

37. "Do you think that there is limited coordination between colleges and external referral services?"

☐ Yes

☐ No

38. "Do you think that lack of privacy in counseling settings discourages students from seeking help?"

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐

39. In your opinion do you think help seeking intention is a necessary quality of a social worker? If yes, why?

40. what are your suggestions to improve the institutional framework of university / college to balance both academic and personal life?

41. In your opinion what are the common factors that hinders the help seeking intentions of social work students?