

## Professional Psychological Help-Seeking in a Global and Indonesian Overview: A Bibliometric Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Research on the search for professional psychological help has gained increasing attention in recent years. However, comprehensive analyses of trends and thematic developments within this field remain limited. **Objective:** This study aims to conduct a bibliometric analysis of the scientific literature on seeking professional psychological help and to map the research landscape. **Methods:** Researchers performed a bibliometric data analysis using VOSviewer, based on data retrieved from the Scopus database between 2015 and 2024. This analysis involved creating visual maps based on the co-occurrence of keywords and thematic clustering. **Results:** A total of 1,522 documents were identified, with a significant increase in publications in 2024. PLOS ONE emerged as the journal with the highest number of publications. The United States contributed the largest number of publications. **Conclusion:** Network analysis revealed seven major research clusters, highlighting interconnected themes across studies. Emerging areas for future research include mental health professionals, psychological help-seeking behavior, help-seeking intentions, and service utilization. Additionally, key influencing variables such as mental health literacy, peer support, and self-stigma were identified as potential focal points for further investigation. These findings provide a comprehensive overview of the field and offer valuable insights for advancing research and practice in professional psychological help-seeking.

**Keywords:** Bibliometrics Analysis, Help-Seeking Behavior, Mental Health, Professional Psychological Help-Seeking, VOSviewer

### INTRODUCTION

The definition of seeking professional psychological help was introduced by Fischer & Turner (1970) as an individual's perspective or view regarding obtaining psychological assistance from mental health professionals. Sources of professional mental health help include psychologists, general practitioners, psychiatrists, and mental health nurses. The mental health issues addressed by these professionals encompass stress, anxiety, depression, substance dependence (including drugs and alcohol), and other psychological problems. The assistance provided by mental health professionals includes information about mental illnesses, medication, psychotherapy, counseling, and various other services (Rickwood, Thomas, and Bradford, 2012).

Investigating the issue of seeking professional help is crucial due to the gap between the high prevalence of mental disorders and the relatively low interest in or utilization of professional mental health services. According to World Health Organization data from 2019, an estimated 970 million people worldwide experience mental disorders, with anxiety and depression being the most common. The prevalence of mental disorders among the population aged 15 years and older increased by 4.2% compared to previous years (WHO, 2022). Despite this high prevalence, the number of individuals seeking mental health care remains low. For example, 58.4% of university students are at risk of common mental disorders, such as somatic symptoms, thoughts of self-harm, substance abuse, and alcohol use. However, the majority (83.8%) seek help from informal sources, 21.6% do not

seek any help, and only 16.2% seek formal professional assistance (Gebreegziabher, Girma, and Tesfaye, 2019). The American College Health Association reports that only 24% of college students with depression attend therapy. Additionally, people with mental health problems account for 63% of deaths by suicide, yet only 7% sought professional help before their deaths (Liu et al., 2017). When experiencing emotional difficulties, both women and men are more likely to seek help from trusted individuals within their community (64.0%) than to access formal health services (36.0%) (Umubyeyi et al., 2016).

This data is supported by the results of the Survei Kesehatan Indonesia (SKI) 2023, which found that 2% of the population aged 15 years and older experienced mental health problems, out of a total of 630,827 individuals. Among them, about 1.4% were indicated to have depression, with the highest percentage in the 15-24 age group. However, of the population aged 15 years and older indicated to have depression, only 12.7% underwent treatment (Badan Kebijakan Pembangunan Kesehatan, 2023).

People are often reluctant to seek professional help because they assume that the problems they experience are natural, not severe, simple, or temporary. As a result, they tend to have confidence in solving their problems independently and may develop a negative attitude towards seeking professional assistance (Samlan, Shetty, and McWhirter, 2021; Whitwer, Wilson and Hammer, 2023; Qiu et al., 2024). Many individuals prefer to seek help by asking for advice and emotional support from close friends, considering formal assistance unnecessary (Natalie et al., 2023). Research by Kaligis et al. (2021) shows that 70.5% of students seek help from friends, and 88.3% try to solve their problems on their own.

Some individuals find temporary relief from non-professional help, but such approaches are often less effective in addressing underlying issues (Merzbach and Bina, 2022). Non-professional help also lacks a structured, evidence-based approach (Burnette et al., 2021; Sharp et al., 2024). When individuals attempt to solve their problems without professional guidance, some may lack adaptive coping strategies, causing them to become stuck in harmful coping mechanisms such as self-

harm or suicidal thoughts (Kaligis et al., 2021). This can lead to ongoing mental health disorders (Pedrelli et al., 2015).

The benefits of consulting mental health professionals include increased resilience to stress, improved psychological well-being, and a reduction in self-harming behaviors (Whitlock, Prussien, and Pietrusza, 2015; Fischbein and Bonfine, 2019). Additionally, Kivlighan et al. (2021) noted that students showed a decrease in psychological stress after receiving counseling, which subsequently led to an increase in their GPA. Conversely, mental health deteriorates when individuals experience problems but do not receive appropriate treatment (Fischbein and Bonfine, 2019).

While there has been extensive research on general help-seeking behavior, studies specifically focused on professional help-seeking remain limited. The Australian mental health organization Beyond Blue commissioned Rickwood to conduct a rapid review of help-seeking in the context of mental health. However, based on the findings of Rickwood, Thomas, and Bradford (2012), there is still no consensus on the definition of help-seeking behavior within the mental health context. This lack of agreement has delayed the development of standardized definitions and measurement instruments for researching help-seeking behavior.

Bibliometric analysis was employed in this study to identify, group, and classify article elements, including keywords, index terms, authors, collaborators, and citations (Nicolaisen, 2010; Barragán Martín et al., 2021). This analysis also enables the identification of the most productive authors, countries, institutions, and journals within the field. Moreover, bibliometric analysis facilitates tracing research trends, examining collaboration patterns among authors, and creating visual maps of the scientific publication landscape (Pan et al., 2018; Dinić and Jevremov, 2021).

Bibliometric analysis provides insights into scientific productivity, identifies research trends, visualizes specific scientific studies, determines key directions and future research prospects, and maps research developments (Zyoud et al., 2018). This approach can enhance communication among researchers, facilitate knowledge exchange, support the information search process, and

contribute significantly to the formulation of scientific policy, research management, and future study planning (Pan *et al.*, 2018; Nuryana, Murshidi, and Rahman, 2021).

Researchers often use the Scopus database because it is considered to offer broader and more comprehensive data coverage, especially in the social sciences, compared to Web of Science (WoS) (Harzing and Alakangas, 2016). Scopus also has advantages over other international databases, including its reputation as the world's largest abstract and citation database, its coverage across various fields and markets, user-friendly search functionality, independent review processes, and the provision of accurate search results (Zheping *et al.*, 2025).

A bibliometric study on the search for help was conducted by Aris & Othman (2022). However, this study focused on help-seeking behavior in general, encompassing both formal and informal avenues, rather than specifically on professional help-seeking. Additionally, it was not limited to articles published within a particular timeframe. The analysis also concentrated on employees and work environments in Malaysia. Researchers attempted to identify studies on bibliometric analysis of help-seeking in Indonesia; however, as of this study, no such research has been found.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the main themes emerging from publications on professional psychological help-seeking, propose directions for future research, analyze research trends, and provide an overview of relevant articles. The focus is on examining trends in research publications on seeking professional help both worldwide and in Indonesia from 2015 to 2024. The analysis includes indicators such as keywords, citation counts, publication volume, countries, most-cited journals, author productivity, research areas, co-authorship networks, current research topics, and prevalent themes. To achieve these objectives, this study addresses the following questions: (1) What is the current state of research on professional psychological help-seeking?; (2) What are the main thematic domains within this field?; and (3) What are the key findings from existing research on professional psychological help-seeking?

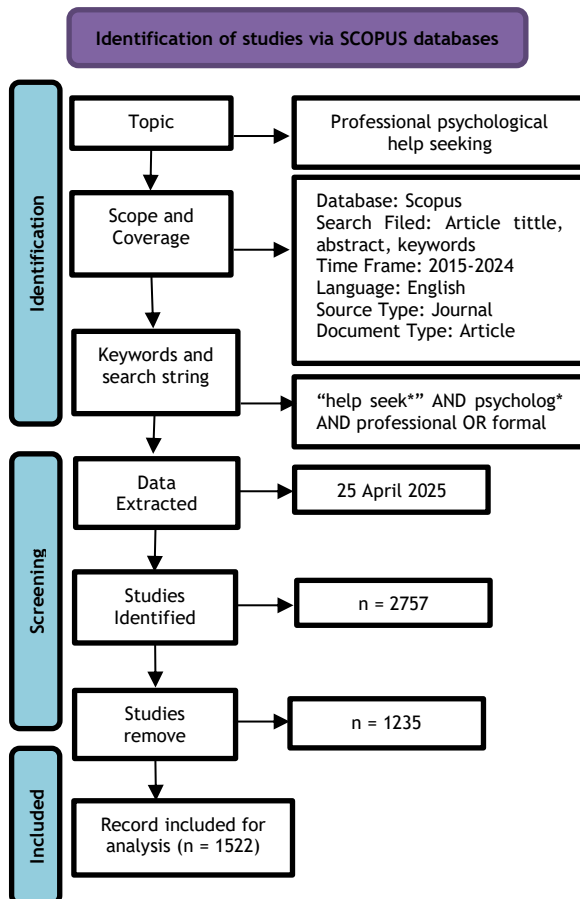
## METHODS

The method employed in this research is bibliometric analysis, following the guidelines of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flowchart (Page *et al.*, 2021). The study has been registered with the Open Science Framework (10.17605/OSF.IO/TYV42). The bibliometric analysis involves the systematic collection of relevant scientific publications, with the aim of ensuring a comprehensive dataset through careful criteria and stages of data collection. A combination of relevant keywords was used to retrieve scientific literature based on the research focus (Kumar, Singh, and Chohan, 2021). The keywords, selected using Boolean logic—"help seek\*" AND psycholog\* AND (professional OR formal)—were used in a search on the Scopus database, conducted on April 25, 2025. This research specifically focuses on publications within the Scopus database. The search criteria included: 1) focus on seeking professional psychological help; 2) English-language journal articles; 3) articles that have completed the publication process; and 4) publications from 2015 to 2024. This timeframe was chosen to capture trends in professional psychological help-seeking research over the past decade. The exclusion criteria were: 1) studies not focusing on seeking professional psychological help; 2) articles not in English; 3) articles not published in journals; 4) articles still in press or not yet fully published; and 5) publications prior to 2015. Following these criteria, the final sample comprised 1,522 documents (see Figure 1).

Researchers analyzed the most productive authors, countries with the highest number of publications, and the most frequently cited journals using the results menu in Scopus, then downloaded the data to review research development patterns. For visualization and analysis of research trends, the article data were exported in CSV format and processed using VOSviewer software version 1.6.20 (Eck and Waltman, 2023), based on author keywords. Co-occurrence mapping utilized full counting and normalization of association strength to accurately represent relationships between entities. The analysis focused on fields such as co-authorship and keyword co-occurrence,

with a minimum occurrence threshold of 5 for co-authorship and 8 for co-occurrence. Since only author keywords were analyzed, stop word removal was not applied. The following summarizes the stages of article selection in the bibliometric analysis:

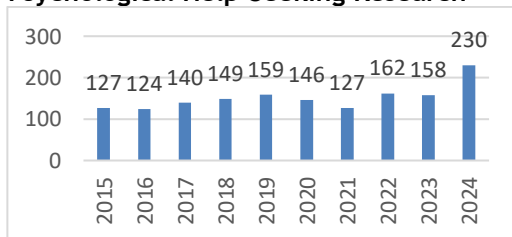
**Figure 1.** Article Search Flow and Results using PRISMA 2020 (Page *et al.*, 2021).



**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Scopus identified 1,522 articles, which were analyzed using research type and trend indicators. The following are the results of the bibliometric analysis on professional psychological help-seeking:

**The Development of Professional Psychological Help-Seeking Research**



**Figure 2.** Worldwide Research Trends of Professional Psychological Help Seeking (2015-2024)

In recent years, there has been a growing trend in publications on professional psychological help-seeking, with an increase in the number of publications worldwide (Figure 2). From 2015 to 2023, there was a gradual but steady rise in publication numbers. In 2024, this trend continued, with the number of scientific publications related to seeking professional psychological help reaching 230, marking a significant increase. The largest jump occurred between 2023 and 2024, which may be associated with a heightened need for professional psychological assistance in 2024.

**Journal of the Essence of Seeking Professional Psychological Help**

The top 10 peer-reviewed journals that have published the most articles on professional psychological help-seeking over the past decade (2015-2024) are crucial for disseminating research findings and advancing knowledge in this field. PLOS ONE published the highest number of articles related to seeking professional psychological help, totaling 59 publications.

These journals are part of the first and second quartiles of the SCImago Journal and Country Rank (SJR), indicating that they are considered high-quality sources within their field. Most of the articles were published in journals based in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland (Table 1). These publications can serve as valuable references for future researchers.

**Table 1.** The Top Ten Publications on Professional Psychological Help Seeking (2015-2024)

Journal	Document	SJR (2024)	H-Index	Countries
PLOS ONE	59	0.803	467	United States
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	56	0.919	229	Switzerland
BMJ Open	38	1.016	184	United Kingdom
BMC Psychiatry	36	1.375	151	United Kingdom

Journal	Documents	SJR (2024)	H-Index	Country
Journal of Interpersonal Violence	23	1.426	132	United States
Frontiers in Psychiatry	21	1.192	134	Switzerland
BMC Public Health	19	1.359	211	United Kingdom
Psychiatry Research	18	1.606	187	Ireland
Frontiers in Psychology	16	0.872	212	Switzerland
BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth	16	1.069	122	United Kingdom

**Analysis of Research Area**

The medical field is the primary focus of research on professional psychological help-seeking, followed by psychology, social sciences, nursing, and arts and humanities. This research topic is relevant not only within the medical domain but also relates to other social areas, including human behavior, social life, and education.

**Top Ten Author Countries by Number of Publications**

This data illustrates the global distribution of scholarly efforts on the importance of research into professional psychological help-seeking. The United States leads with the highest number of publications (456), followed by the United Kingdom (280), Australia (249), Canada (112), Germany (78), China (76), Hong Kong (41), the Netherlands (39), Sweden (32), and Ireland (32).

**Most Productive and Influential Countries**

The threshold used is a minimum of five documents, so only countries with at least five publications are included in the analysis. Fifty-six countries meet this threshold, with the United States dominating in the number of publications and collaboration networks. Indonesia has relatively few publications on the topic of professional psychological help-seeking. Specifically, there are seven documents with details from various institutions: Padjadjaran University (n = 1), Gadjah Mada University (n = 2), Airlangga

University (n = 1), a freelance researcher from Yogyakarta (n = 1), Politeknik Ilmu Perumahan (n = 1), and Tanjung Pura University (n = 1). The distribution of publication years in Indonesia starts from 2018 (n=1), 2019 (n=1), 2021 (n=2), 2022 (n=1), and 2023 (n=2).

**Table 2. Publication Overview in Indonesia**

Author /Year	Topic	Key Findings
Kustimah et al., 2023	When do college students seek mental health services?	Types of mental health problems in students that cause them to seek help: moderate and severe depression. Causes of problems include emotional issues, academic difficulties, negative thoughts, and relationship issues.
Pitman et al., 2018	Support needs and experiences of people bereaved by suicide: Qualitative findings from a cross-sectional british study of bereaved young adults	The reason young adults who are grieving the loss of a family member who committed suicide do not seek help is that they are not yet ready to accept support
Nurdiyanto, Wodong and Wulandari, 2023	Analysis on the Attitude Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help	Differences in attitudes toward seeking professional help were found based on gender. However, no differences in attitudes toward seeking professional help were found among ethnic groups (Javanese, Minahasa, Sundanese), age groups, or monthly income groups
Widyatmiko and Surjaningrum, 2022	Predicting the Intention of Seeking Psychological Help among Emerging Adults with Divorced Parents using the Theory of Planned Behavior	Attitudes toward seeking help were found to be the most influential predictor of young people's intention to seek psychological help when their parents divorced, as explained using planned behavior theory



Author /Year	Topic	Key Findings
Saito <i>et al.</i> , 2021	Issues in introducing collaborative learning in South East Asia: A critical discussion	The reasons for students' reluctance to ask for help stem from the structure of the lessons and the negative psychological impact that students experience. Asking for help is often perceived as a sign of weakness or inferiority
Sygit-Kowalkowska, Piotrowski, and Hamzah, 2021	Insomnia among prison officers and its relationship with occupational burnout: The role of coping with stress in polish and indonesian samples	Seeking help was identified as a mediator in the relationship between insomnia and fatigue, as well as between insomnia and distance from work. The more individuals sought help, the lower their levels of insomnia and fatigue
Ligita <i>et al.</i> , 2019	How people living with diabetes in Indonesia learn about their disease: A grounded theory study	People with diabetes go through a multi-stage process in learning about and managing their disease. Personal assessment, cultural norms, and perceived credibility of information sources influence this

It can be concluded from Table 2, which provides an overview of publications in Indonesia. Some of the themes studied include the causes of mental health problems that encourage students to seek professional help (Kustimah *et al.*, 2023); barriers to seeking professional help among young adults after experiencing the suicide of a loved one (Pitman *et al.*, 2018); demographic factors underlying attitudes toward seeking professional help (Nurdiyanto, Wodong and Wulandari, 2023); and factors influencing the intention of young adults with divorced parents to seek psychological help, using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) terminology (Widyatmiko and Surjaningrum, 2022). Several studies also

discuss stigma as one of the factors inhibiting the search for professional help (Pitman *et al.*, 2018; Widyatmiko and Surjaningrum, 2022; Kustimah *et al.*, 2023).

The co-authorship networks were divided into seven clusters based on the countries involved in the studies, with the top 10 countries in co-authorship networks related to professional psychological help-seeking. According to the data, the United States has the highest number of citations, with 11,468, and a total link strength of 67,499. This indicates that research from the United States is highly recognized and frequently cited by researchers from various countries. In Cluster 4, Indonesia is grouped with Bangladesh, Brazil, Malaysia, Poland, Portugal, and Thailand.

#### Authors Co-authorship Analysis

In the co-authorship analysis using VOSviewer, 29 clusters were identified. Nine authors formed three interconnected networks among 63 researchers studying professional psychological help-seeking. Tomczyk had the largest cluster, comprising six authors within the network. Chao, Lam, Lo, and Sun ranked second, each with five authors in their respective networks.

#### Topic Area Visualization Using VOSviewer

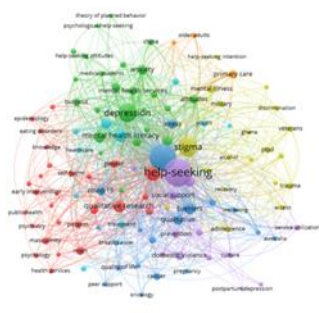
The image displayed using the VOSviewer application, with a minimum of 8 keywords, indicates that these keywords have been used in at least eight different documents. Based on Figure 3, it can be seen that the results from the co-occurrence network analysis are based on keywords that meet this threshold—meaning each keyword appears in at least eight documents. This criterion is met by 115 terms out of a total of 3,252 keywords. These keywords are divided into seven large clusters, which can be reviewed based on differences in visualization, such as the size of the circles, the colors, and the labels that illustrate the relationships between data and keyword frequency. The more frequently a keyword appears, the larger the circle, indicating greater significance. The frequency of occurrence influences the size of each object.

Research related to mental health professionals remains underexplored, with few variables associated with this topic. Therefore, further research is needed to

investigate relationships between variables such as service utilization, self-stigma, peer support, and the Theory of Planned Behavior. The variable of help-seeking behavior is not directly associated with knowledge, mental health professionals, peer support, service utilization, or self-stigma. These gaps highlight potential areas for future research.

Similarly, psychological help-seeking has not been directly linked to mental health literacy, peer support, or self-stigma, representing additional gaps to explore in future studies.

The research themes related to seeking professional psychological help are grouped into seven clusters based on the colors displayed on the visual network: red, green, blue, yellow, purple, turquoise, and orange (Table 3). Each color corresponds to specific characteristics, which can be examined through item analysis in VOSviewer. The most prominent keywords—those that appear most frequently and are linked to many other keywords—include mental health, help-seeking, depression, and stigma.



**Figure 3.** Co-Occurrence Visualization Using Network Visualization through VOSviewer

The less-researched topics were the theory of planned behavior, service utilization, peer support, and distress.

**Table 3.** Seven Clusters Relating to Professional Help Seeking

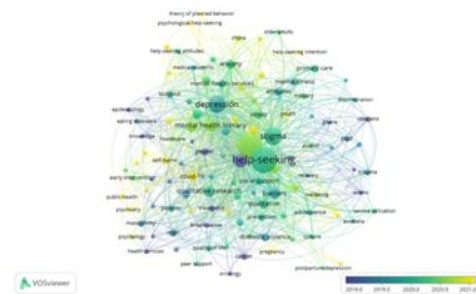
Cluster	Item	Research Focus
1 (red)	20	help seeking, qualitative research, help-seeking behaviour, psychological distress, and men
2 (green)	20	depression, suicide,

Cluster	Item	Research Focus
3 (blue)	18	help-seeking behavior, anxiety, and mental health services
4 (yellow)	16	help-seeking, barriers, qualitative, attitudes, and trauma
5 (purple)	13	mental health literacy, intimate partner violence, adolescence
6 (tosca)	7	mental health, social support, stress, covid-19, and prevention
7 (orange)	3	primary care, older adult, prevalence, and epidemiology
		stigma, mental illness, and discrimination

**Visualisasi Overlay Visualization**

Based on Figure 4, the visualization results are derived from the co-occurrence overlay visualization analysis. This data presents the publication year associated with each discussed topic. According to the visualization, the three years most explicitly linked to keywords related to professional psychological assistance are 2019, 2020, and 2021. The most frequently discussed topics for each year are as follows:

1. 2019 (Purple): treatment, health service, knowledge, mental disorder, access
2. 2020 (Green): help-seeking, mental health literacy, depression, social support, mental health service, mental illness, help-seeking attitude
3. 2021 (Yellow): psychological help seeking, theory of planned behavior, help seeking intention, facilitators, university students, and resilience



**Figure 4.** Co-Occurrence Visualization Using Overlay Visualization through VOSviewer

## Discussion

This study aimed to examine the global research landscape related to professional psychological help-seeking from 2015 to 2024. A total of 1,522 articles on professional psychological help-seeking were retrieved from the Scopus database. The percentage of individuals seeking psychological help from mental health professionals is recognized as minimal (Gebreegziabher, Girma and Tesfaye, 2019). However, there has been a growing trend in publications on professional psychological help-seeking in recent years, indicating an increase in research activity worldwide (Figure 2). From 2015 to 2023, the number of publications shows a gradual but steady increase. In 2024, there was a notable rise in scientific publications on this topic, reaching 230 articles, with the most significant increase occurring between 2023 and 2024. This surge is likely related to the heightened public need for professional psychological assistance. Research by Abdel-Hady et al. (2022) and Negash et al. (2020) suggests that the community's demand for professional help in addressing psychological issues is relatively high. Professional psychological help is considered beneficial for improving mental health, preventing NSSI (non-suicidal self-injury) behaviors, and facilitating recovery from symptoms of Common Mental Disorders (CMD) (Whitlock, Prussien, and Pietrusza, 2015; Gebreegziabher, Girma, and Tesfaye, 2019; Caldarelli et al., 2024).

PLOS ONE, managed by the Public Library of Science in the United States, is the leading publisher of articles on professional psychological help-seeking, with 59 publications. This journal holds a Q1 status in the Scopus database and serves as an essential reference for authors seeking the latest developments in this field. PLOS ONE is also the world's most prominent open-access journal (Erfanmanesh, 2019). Covering all categories of science and medicine, it welcomes research from various fields and boasts an international peer review community (Fein, 2013).

The second most prominent journal is the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, with 56 articles. It contributes approximately 15% to the categories of public health, environment, and work in the Scimago Journal and Country Rank,

partly due to its rapid publication process following a brief review (Gorman, 2023).

The United States has the highest number of publications on seeking professional psychological help, with 456 articles, followed by the United Kingdom (280) and Australia (249). Over the decades, the U.S. has become a central hub for psychological research and development, acting as a global leader and shaping the field's trajectory through institutions like the American Psychological Association (APA) (Garrison, DeLeon, and Smedley, 2017). This dominance has arisen because researchers in the United States have been able to produce high-quality research supported by substantial funding (Mehrollahi et al., 2019).

American society, which tends to be individualistic, emphasizes personal autonomy and independence; therefore, individuals often seek professional help when they feel unable to resolve problems on their own. Additionally, in Western countries, students increasingly recognize the benefits of professional mental health services in overcoming psychological difficulties. In contrast, people in many Asian countries tend to prefer informal support systems, believing that psychological problems often stem from psychosocial or spiritual causes (Mojaverian, Hashimoto and Kim, 2013; Jain et al., 2025).

Research on seeking professional help in Indonesia comprises seven documents, including one from Padjadjaran University (Kustimah et al., 2023), two from Gadjah Mada University (Pitman et al., 2018; Nurdiyanto, Wodong, and Wulandari, 2023), one from Airlangga University (Widyatmiko and Surjaningrum, 2022), one freelance researcher from Yogyakarta (Saito et al., 2021), one from Politeknik Ilmu Permasayarakatan (Sygit-Kowalkowska, Piotrowski, and Hamzah, 2021), and one from Tanjung Pura University (Ligita et al., 2019). Consequently, the most productive authors come from Gadjah Mada University. Iskandar et al. (2021) noted that the institutions with the highest number of publications in Indonesia include the University of Indonesia, Airlangga University, Gadjah Mada University, Hasanuddin University, Bandung Institute of Technology, Diponegoro University, IPB University, the University of North

Sumatra, Brawijaya University, and Sebelas Maret University.

Studies on seeking professional psychological help have been conducted in various countries between 2015 and 2024. However, research on this topic in Indonesia began only in 2018 (Pitman *et al.*, 2018). This indicates that Indonesia is currently progressing and showing increased interest in exploring this area. The trend of research on seeking professional psychological help is gaining momentum due to the high number of mental health cases requiring professional treatment and the growing awareness among Indonesians of the benefits of professional help. The results of the *Survei Kesehatan Indonesia (SKI) 2023* revealed that 2% of the population aged 15 years and older, totaling 630,827 people, experienced mental health problems. Additionally, 12.7% of the 8,680 residents diagnosed with depression underwent treatment at a health facility (Badan Kebijakan Pembangunan Kesehatan, 2023).

The VOSviewer application is used to visualize data and generate visualizations of co-occurrence, which can be displayed in three forms: Network Visualization, Overlay Visualization, and Density Visualization. These visualizations resulted in the formation of seven clusters derived from 3,252 keywords, with 115 keywords meeting the threshold. Through VOSviewer, it can be seen that in the context of seeking professional psychological help, several keywords are frequently discussed and strongly related to this topic, including mental health, help-seeking, depression, and stigma. Professional help-seeking is closely associated with societal stigma toward individuals with mental health issues. Similarly, in Indonesia, stigma remains one of the significant barriers preventing people from seeking professional help (Pitman *et al.*, 2018; Widyatmiko and Surjaningrum, 2022; Kustimah *et al.*, 2023).

The trend of increasing research on seeking professional psychological help is also evident in Indonesia and is expected to continue growing in the coming years. The VOSviewer analysis shows that the highest number of publications in Indonesia occurred in 2023, with two articles (Kustimah *et al.*, 2023; Nurdiyanto, Wodong and Wulandari, 2023).

The results of a study conducted Gani dkk. (2023) involving 270 students at a health institution in Indonesia indicate that most students recognize the importance of intervention in addressing mental health problems. The Indonesian government also pays attention to mental health, as demonstrated by the enactment of Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 18 Tahun 2014 on Mental Health and Minister of Education Regulation No. 27 of 2008 on Academic Qualification Standards and Counselor Competencies (Menteri Pendidikan Nasional, 2008; Republik Indonesia, 2014). However, several barriers still exist, including logistical issues such as access, cost, and time (Gani, Kusumawaty and Yunike, 2023), low health literacy among the community (Ayumaruti, Anshari and Martha, 2023), and high levels of stigma experienced by the community (Taufik dkk., 2021), all of which hinder the pursuit of professional psychological help.

Unfortunately, there is still a lack of research from Indonesia published in reputable international journals. This is partly due to Indonesian academics often failing to produce convincing introductions, results, and discussions in their papers (Arsyad *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, limited knowledge of proper title formulation, insufficient research funding, lack of methodological expertise, and language barriers also pose significant obstacles to publishing in reputable international journals (Indrayadi, 2023; Leo, Suryaningsih and Nugraeni, 2024). Therefore, Indonesian researchers need to learn how to craft effective introductions and discussion sections of research articles, particularly in terms of proper referencing (Arsyad *et al.*, 2020). The Indonesian government also needs to provide support to academics in manuscript writing and increase financial assistance for publication efforts.

Stigma remains a key factor inhibiting the utilization of mental health services (Topkaya, 2015; Gulliver *et al.*, 2022; Aryal *et al.*, 2024). Social disapproval has been identified as a research trend that discourages individuals from seeking professional psychological help (Harikrishna *et al.*, 2022). Many people consider seeking psychological help to be socially unacceptable (Choi & Miller, 2018; DeBate *et al.*, 2022). Self-stigma in seeking help often arises from public stigma associated with mental health

issues. Negative perceptions from the external environment are often internalized, leading individuals to avoid or reject professional psychological assistance (Yang et al., 2024). Therefore, efforts to reduce stigma are essential to encourage more people to seek professional help for psychological problems. Untreated psychological disorders can worsen and lead to more serious mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and self-harming behavior (Murali and Avudaiappan, 2024).

Seven clusters emerged from the results of the VOSviewer analysis related to the search for professional psychological help, based on the authors' keywords. The first cluster encompasses research on help-seeking behavior, including qualitative studies on help-seeking patterns, psychological distress, and men. The second cluster focuses on mental health issues, such as depression, suicide, help-seeking behavior, anxiety, and mental health services. The third cluster explores the determinants of help-seeking, including barriers, qualitative attitudes, and trauma, with authors investigating factors that influence help-seeking behavior. The fourth cluster centers on mental health literacy, intimate partner violence, and adolescence. The fifth cluster addresses preventive help-seeking factors, including mental health, social support, and prevention efforts. The sixth cluster pertains to the prevalence of primary care utilization, older adults, and epidemiology. Finally, the seventh cluster examines barriers to help-seeking, such as stigma, mental illness, and discrimination, as identified through bibliometric analysis.

This information can guide future research to explore other variables thought to correlate with professional psychological help-seeking, including mental health literacy, social support, peer support, and self-stigma. Additionally, topics requiring further investigation include mental health professionals, psychological help-seeking, help-seeking intentions, and service utilization.

Research on help-seeking behavior appears to be underexplored and has not been directly linked to variables such as knowledge, mental health professionals, and self-stigma. These gaps present opportunities for future research. The process of seeking professional

psychological help cannot be separated from the theory of planned behavior, which posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are key components influencing behavior via intentions (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). While some studies focus on attitudes and intentions, the actual behavior—whether help is sought—is rarely examined. Attitudes and intentions do not necessarily predict actual behavioral change (Bu et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2023).

This study has limitations, primarily because it only considers articles related to professional psychological help-seeking from one database, specifically Scopus. Other relevant articles may exist but were not identified in the search process and thus are not included in this bibliometric analysis. Geographical and linguistic biases are possible since Scopus predominantly indexes high-reputation international journals, resulting in fewer studies from non-Western countries. Moreover, Scopus mainly prioritizes English-language publications (92.46%), which may lead to the exclusion of non-English articles. As a commercial platform, access to Scopus can be limited, especially for researchers in developing countries (Tenant, 2020).

The analysis of the Indonesian context is also constrained by reliance on the Scopus database, which limits the comprehensiveness of the discussion on this topic. Consequently, Indonesia's position within collaboration and citation networks, as visualized by VOSviewer, should be interpreted with these limitations in mind. Future research should incorporate other databases, such as Google Scholar or Dimensions, as well as local repositories like Sinta or Garuda, to achieve a more comprehensive mapping of publications related to this topic in Indonesia.

Future research should expand the range of search terms and broaden the scope of the databases used to enhance the effectiveness of the search. Additionally, conducting a systematic review and meta-analysis of the research content and variables related to seeking professional psychological help is recommended. Several key points identified in this bibliometric analysis can serve as a foundation for further studies, including the main themes featured in publications on help-seeking behavior, as

well as issues and topics that have been rarely explored.

## CONCLUSION

Research on seeking professional psychological help has increased in recent years, with the highest number of publications originating from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. However, bibliometric analysis has revealed very limited research on this topic in Indonesia, with only seven documents published, most of which were authored by researchers from Gadjah Mada University. This highlights the need for future studies exploring the culture and context of Indonesia. Additionally, there is a need to encourage other institutions to publish their research in reputable international journals by providing journal writing support, fostering collaborations with international partners, and ensuring the relevance of their research, thereby maintaining the impact and quality of their publications.

The bibliometric analysis identified several major themes related to seeking professional psychological help, including mental health, help-seeking behavior, depression, and stigma. Variables that may be correlated with this topic include mental health literacy, peer support, and self-stigma. Areas requiring further research include mental health professionals, help-seeking intentions, and service utilization.

Future studies in Indonesia could focus on stigma related to the country's collectivist culture, such as public stigma and self-stigma. Moreover, it is essential to examine mental health literacy across different regions and populations. Structural factors, such as access to essential mental health services, also warrant further investigation, given the limited availability of mental health resources in Indonesia.

This research contributes valuable insights for practitioners and future researchers aiming to develop interventions and expand understanding of help-seeking behavior. Practitioners can utilize these findings to design targeted interventions to increase the utilization of professional psychological help. Future researchers can explore the development, etiology, characteristics, and influencing factors related to help-seeking behavior.

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