



Understanding the Relationship Between Mental Health Concerns and Help-Seeking Attitudes and Behaviors Among Engineering Students



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Background

- **Mental health concerns** have been increasing on college campuses^{3, 2}.
- Men, women, and gender minority students experience and respond to mental health distress differently⁶.
- **Engineering students** are less likely to seek help for mental health distress than students in other disciplines¹.



Are they going **undiagnosed**?

Purpose and Hypotheses

Purpose: To describe the level of mental health concerns reported by engineering students and to examine the relationship between mental health distress and students' attitudes and behaviors related to seeking help.

Hypotheses:

- H1:** Female engineering students will report higher levels of mental health distress.
- H2:** Distressed students will report less favorable help-seeking attitudes and intentions compared to non-distressed students.

Participants

- 4,137 undergraduate engineering students from the national Healthy Minds Study Survey².
- 65% male, 33.3% female, 1.1% gender minority (e.g., transgender, nonbinary)
- 64% White, 25.1% Asian American/Asian, 6.1 % Hispanic/Latino/Chicano, 4.6% African/Black, 3.7 % Middle Eastern/Arab/Arab American

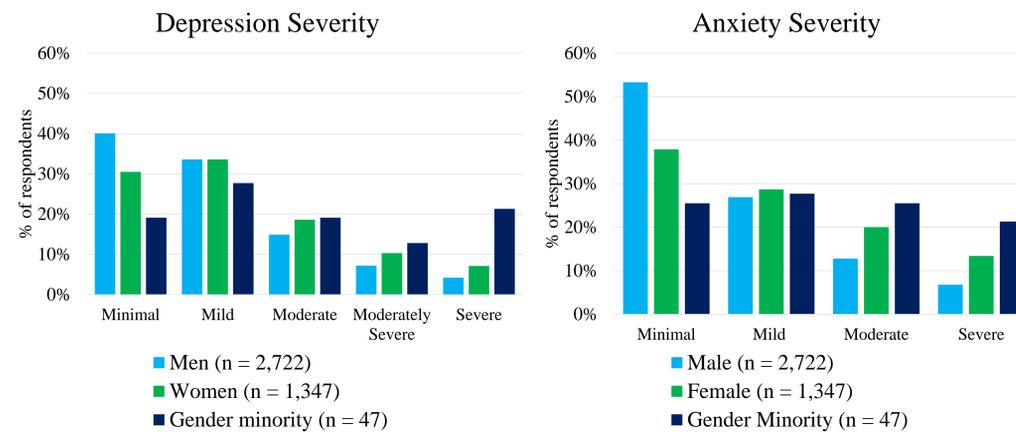
Measures

- **Depression:** Patient Health Questionnaire (9 items)³
- **Anxiety:** General Anxiety Disorder (7 items)⁵
- **Suicidal ideation** in past year (1 item)²
- **Help-seeking** attitudes, intentions, and behavior (9 items)²
- **Distressed students** were those with either moderate to severe levels of depression or anxiety or who had suicidal thoughts.

Results

Overall, **more than 1/3** of all engineering students reported experiencing distress in some form.

- **Women and gender minority students** were more likely to report mental health distress than their male peers.



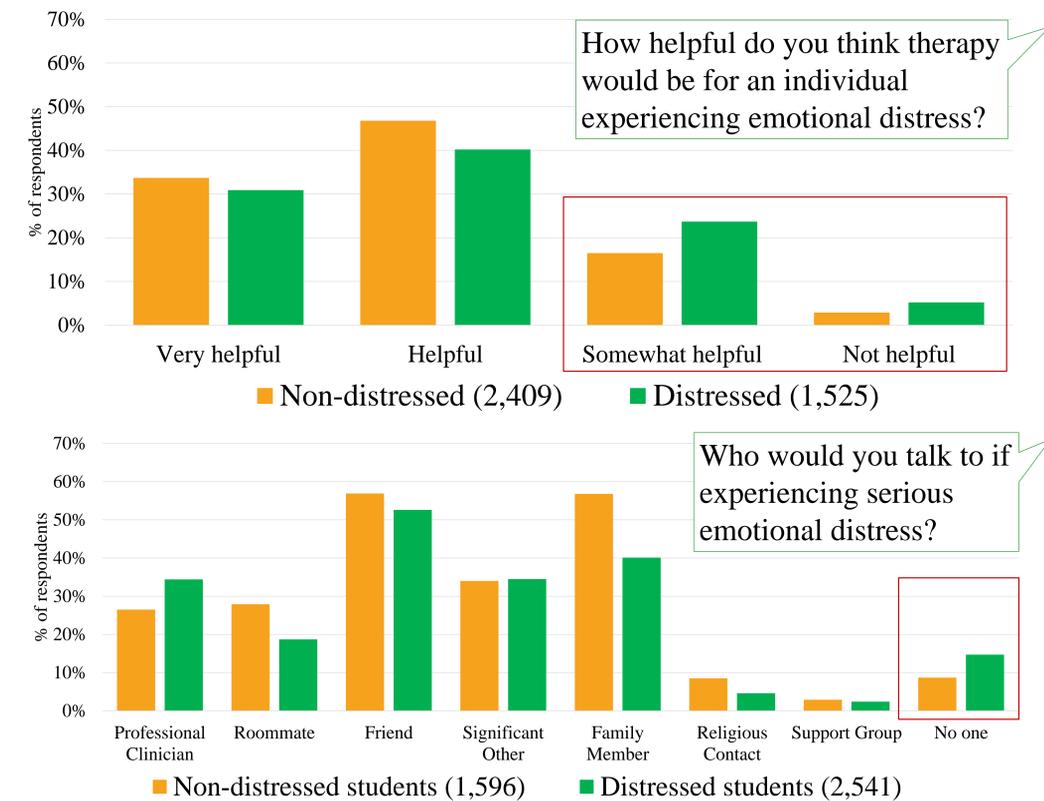
Conclusion

Engineering students, especially female and gender minority students, **are experiencing mental health distress**, but many report that they **would not seek help**.



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Results



Chi square tests of independence indicated a significant relationship between **level of distress** and **help-seeking attitudes and behaviors**:

- Distressed students **were more likely** than non-distressed students to report that **therapy would not be helpful** for an individual experiencing emotional distress.
- Distressed students were **more likely** than non-distressed students to report that they **would seek help from a professional clinician** but were also more likely than non-distressed students to report that they **would not talk to anyone** when experiencing distress.
- Distressed students were **more likely** than non-distressed students to agree **that most people would think less of someone** for receiving mental health treatment.

References

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