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Does Marital Status Effect How Gender Role Conflict and Perceived Social Support Influence Men’s Intentions to Seek Help from a Variety of Helpers?

Abstract:
This study explored whether past experiences such as divorce alters how gender role conflict and social support influence men’s help seeking intentions. Improved health outcomes including lower depression and mortality could be achieved by effective early intervention and facilitation of earlier help seeking by men with mental health issues.

These improved outcomes have far reaching effects not only on the man himself, but also on his family, the community and mental health professionals. One hundred and thirteen adult men ($M = 49.35$ years; $SD = 11.15$ years) from Victoria were recruited opportunistically through friends and family and completed self report questionnaires.

The findings supported the prediction that gender role conflict will differ depending on the marital status of the participant as the divorced and not remarried group reported significantly higher gender role conflict in contrast to the other groups of men. Help seeking from different types of help providers were also analysed and significant differences were found between groups for most types of potential helpers, except for Teacher, Psychiatrist and Nurse.

Overall the married and ‘divorced and not remarried’ groups consistently reported the highest help seeking towards each potential helper. The exception to this was with Psychotherapist where the divorced and remarried and divorced and not remarried groups reported higher help seeking than the married group. Overall men who reported higher perceived social support had poorer attitudes towards help seeking, however the findings did not support the prediction that perceived social support differs depending on marital status as no significant differences were found between groups. Overall gender role conflict had a significant negative relationship with potential help seeking for the divorced and not remarried group, but not for the divorced and remarried group. Targeting specific groups of men with appropriate counselling and information services may facilitate earlier intervention which has the potential to improve the health outcomes of men from these groups.