



## Masculinity And the Dynamics of Emotional Expression and Help-Seeking Among Adults

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### Abstract:

**Aim:** This study aimed to explore how masculinity, emotional expression, and help-seeking behaviour are related among adult men. **Introduction:** Drawing from sociocultural perspectives, the study looks at how expectations around being "masculine" may influence whether men seek psychological help and how openly they express their emotions. **Method:** A quantitative cross-sectional design was used. A total of 110 men aged 20 to 40 years were selected through purposive convenience sampling. Data were collected using standardised self-report tools, including the General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ), Emotional Expressivity Scale (EES), and Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory–22 (CMNI-22). Statistical analysis was carried out using Jamovi, applying descriptive statistics along with Pearson's  $r$  and Spearman's  $\rho$  correlations. **Results:** The findings showed no statistically significant relationships between masculinity, emotional expressivity, and help-seeking behaviour. However, a small positive trend was observed between emotional expression and help-seeking, though it was not significant. **Discussion:** These results suggest masculinity may not always prevent men from expressing emotions or seeking help in today's rapidly changing social contexts.

**Keywords:** adult males, gender norms, emotional expressivity, help-seeking behaviour, masculinity, and mental health

### Introduction

Masculinity shapes much more than outward behaviour, appearance, or social roles—it also plays an important role in how individuals experience, understand, and express their emotions. It can influence whether a person feels comfortable seeking help during emotional or psychological distress. On one hand, masculinity can be a source of strength, encouraging responsibility, resilience, and a clear sense of identity. On the other hand, when it is tied to rigid expectations, it may discourage emotional openness, making vulnerability feel uncomfortable and help-seeking appear as a sign of weakness. This tension highlights the need to better understand how masculinity affects emotional expression and mental health behaviours, especially among adults.

Researchers increasingly view masculinity not as a fixed trait, but as something shaped by culture, context, and everyday experiences. It is expressed through behaviours that are learned and reinforced over time. From this perspective, seeking help is not purely an individual decision—it is also influenced by social expectations and the fear of being judged for not fitting traditional roles. This makes it important to consider the broader social environment when studying help-seeking behaviour.

Traditional masculine values such as independence, emotional control, and avoidance of weakness have been shown to affect how individuals deal with distress. Research suggests that reluctance to seek help is not simply a personal choice, but is shaped by socialisation, identity, and situational factors. Men who strongly follow these norms may struggle more with expressing emotions and may be less likely to access mental health services.

Studies have also found that strict adherence to these norms is linked with higher self-stigma, reduced emotional awareness, and alternative ways of expressing distress, such as anger or physical complaints. Self-stigma, in particular, plays a key role—individuals may begin to see help-seeking negatively and view it as a threat to their self-image, which can delay or prevent them from getting support.

At the same time, masculinity is not one-dimensional. It continues to evolve and can differ based on age, culture, and personal experiences. Many individuals today are redefining what it means to be masculine, creating space for emotional openness and support-seeking in ways that still align with their identity.

From a practical point of view, reducing barriers to help-seeking requires both personal and social change. Encouraging the idea that asking for help is a strength, not a weakness, can challenge harmful stereotypes. Making mental health support more accessible, confidential, and relatable—through workplaces, peer groups, or digital platforms—can also make a difference. Approaches that respect autonomy while gradually encouraging emotional expression may further improve engagement.

In this context, the present study aims to explore the relationship between masculinity, emotional expressivity, and help-seeking behaviour among adults, with the goal of contributing to more inclusive and effective mental health practices.

#### Aims and Objectives

1. To understand how help-seeking behaviour, emotional expression, and masculinity are generally connected among adults.
2. To explore how strongly following masculine norms may influence the way adults express their emotions.
3. To examine how adherence to masculine expectations relates to individuals' willingness to seek help, particularly when facing emotional or psychological challenges.
4. To study the relationship between emotional expression and help-seeking behaviour, especially in situations involving stress or emotional distress.

#### Methodology

The present study followed a quantitative, cross-sectional design to explore the relationship between help-seeking behaviour, emotional expressivity, and masculinity among adult males. A total of 110 participants, aged between 20 and 40 years, were selected using purposive convenience sampling. Data were collected through standardised self-report questionnaires, which were administered in both online and offline formats to ensure better reach and participation. Ethical considerations were carefully followed, with informed consent obtained from all participants and confidentiality maintained throughout the process. The collected data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical

methods. Correlation analysis was specifically used to examine the relationships between the key variables, allowing for a clear and systematic understanding of the patterns within the data.

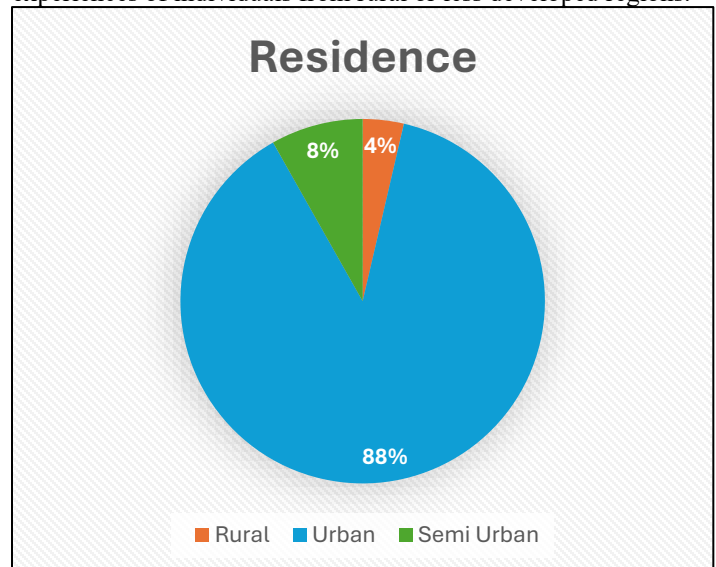
#### Tools Used

1. **Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory–22 (CMNI-22):** This 22-item scale measures how strongly individuals identify with traditional masculine norms such as emotional control, independence, dominance, and risk-taking. Responses are recorded on a Likert scale, and the tool has shown acceptable reliability and validity across studies.
2. **Emotional Expressivity Scale (EES):** This 17-item measure assesses how openly individuals express their emotions in everyday life. It uses a Likert scale format and has been found to have strong internal consistency and good validity.
3. **General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ):** This scale evaluates a person's likelihood of seeking help from both formal and informal sources. It follows a Likert-type format and demonstrates reliable and valid measurement of help-seeking intentions.

#### Demographic Details

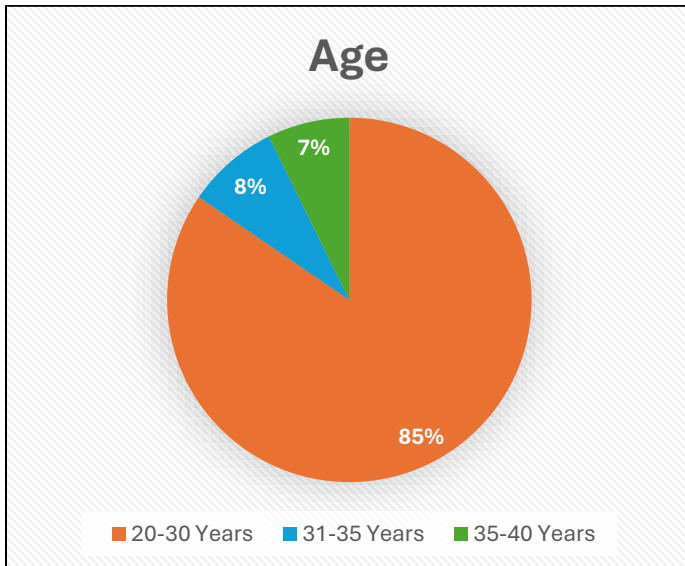
**Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Residence**

A large majority of the participants (88%) belonged to metropolitan areas, indicating that the sample was largely urban in nature. In comparison, only 8% of the participants came from semi-urban backgrounds, while just 4% were from rural areas. This distribution suggests that the findings of the study are more reflective of urban populations and may not fully capture the experiences of individuals from rural or less developed regions.



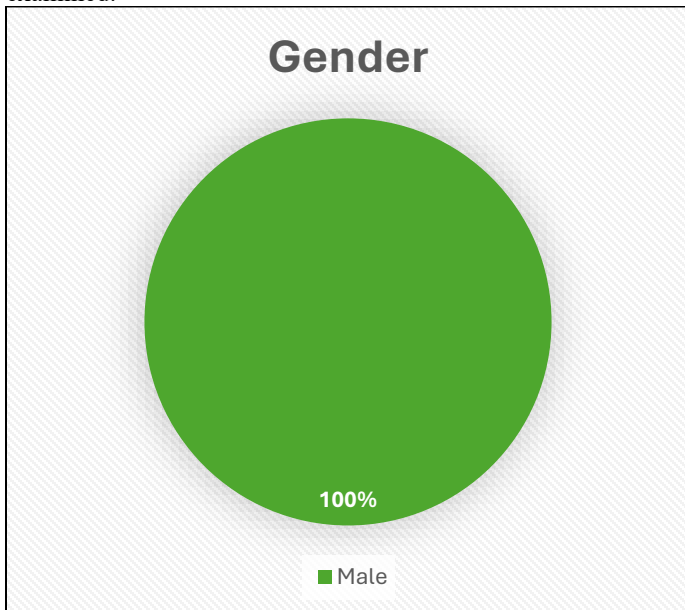
**Table 2: Distribution of Participants by Age**

The age distribution of the participants indicates that a large majority belonged to the 20–30 years age group (85%). In comparison, a much smaller proportion fell within the 31–35 years group (8%) and the 35–40 years group (7%). This shows that the sample was mainly made up of younger adults, with relatively limited representation from individuals in the higher age brackets within the selected range.



**Table 3: Distribution of Participants by Gender**

All participants in the study were male (100%), as the research was specifically designed to explore masculinity and its related aspects among adult men. Keeping the sample limited to men helped maintain consistency with the study's focus and allowed for a more relevant and meaningful understanding of the variables being examined.

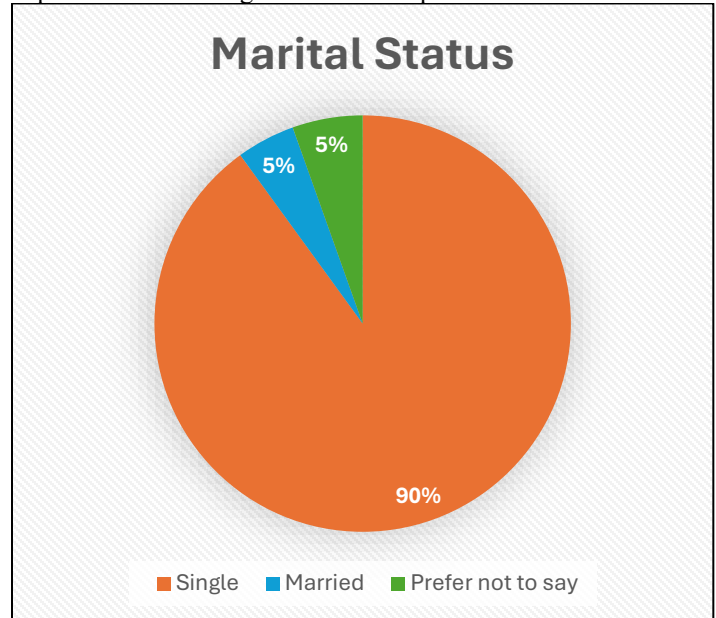


**Table 1: Correlation between Masculinity and Emotional Expressivity**

		MASCULINITY	EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIVITY	HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR
MASCULINITY	Pearson's r	—	.	
	df	—	108	
	p-value	—	.	
	Spearman's rho	—	.	
	df	—	108	
	p-value	—	.	
EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIVITY	N	—	110	
	Pearson's r	-0.027	—	
	df	108	—	
	p-value	0.776	—	

**Table 4: Distribution of Participants by Marital Status**

In terms of marital status, most of the participants were single, making up 90% of the sample. Only 5% were married, while another 5% preferred not to disclose their marital status. This shows that the sample was largely composed of unmarried individuals, which may have influenced patterns of emotional expression and willingness to seek help.



#### Statistical Analysis

Jamovi software was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics were first calculated to provide a clear overview of the sample and the main study variables. To examine the relationships between masculinity, emotional expressivity, and help-seeking behaviour, Pearson's product-moment correlation was applied to assess linear associations. In addition, Spearman's rank-order correlation was used as a non-parametric alternative to support the findings. The level of statistical significance was set at  $p < .05$ . With a total sample size of 110 participants, correlation coefficients, p-values, and degrees of freedom ( $df = 108$ ) were calculated for each variable.

#### Results

This section presents the findings obtained from the statistical analysis, focusing on the relationships between masculinity, emotional expressivity, and help-seeking behaviour, using both Pearson's and Spearman's correlation methods.

	<b>Spearman's rho</b>	<b>-0.152</b>	—	
	<b>df</b>	<b>108</b>	—	
	<b>p-value</b>	<b>0.112</b>	—	
	<b>N</b>	<b>110</b>	—	
HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR	<b>Pearson's r</b>	<b>-0.026</b>	<b>0.176</b>	—
	<b>df</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>108</b>	—
	<b>p-value</b>	<b>0.789</b>	<b>0.065</b>	—
	<b>Spearman's rho</b>	<b>-0.118</b>	<b>0.138</b>	—
	<b>df</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>108</b>	—
	<b>p-value</b>	<b>0.221</b>	<b>0.151</b>	—
	<b>N</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>110</b>	—

**Table 1** examines the relationship between masculinity and emotional expressivity among adult males. The findings indicate a very weak and non-significant negative relationship between the two variables ( $r(108) = -.027$ ,  $p = .776$ ). Similarly, the Spearman's rank-order correlation also showed a weak negative association ( $\rho =$

$-.152$ ,  $p = .112$ ). Overall, these results suggest that there is no meaningful or statistically significant relationship between how strongly individuals adhere to masculine norms and how openly they express their emotions within this sample.

**Table 2: Correlation among Masculinity, Emotional Expressivity, and Help-Seeking Behaviour**

		MASCULINITY	EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIVITY
MASCULINITY	<b>Pearson's r</b>	—	.
	<b>df</b>	—	<b>108</b>
	<b>p-value</b>	—	.
	<b>Spearman's rho</b>	—	.
	<b>df</b>	—	<b>108</b>
	<b>p-value</b>	—	.
EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIVITY	<b>Pearson's r</b>	<b>-0.027</b>	—
	<b>df</b>	<b>108</b>	—
	<b>p-value</b>	<b>0.776</b>	—
	<b>Spearman's rho</b>	<b>-0.152</b>	—
	<b>df</b>	<b>108</b>	—
	<b>p-value</b>	<b>0.112</b>	—
	<b>N</b>	<b>110</b>	—

**Table 2** presents the association between help-seeking behaviour, emotional expressivity, and masculinity. The findings show a weak and non-significant relationship between masculinity and help-seeking behaviour, as indicated by both Pearson's correlation ( $r(108) = -.026$ ,  $p = .789$ ) and Spearman's correlation ( $\rho = -.118$ ,  $p = .221$ ). In addition, emotional expressivity showed a slight

positive relationship with help-seeking behaviour; however, this association was also not statistically significant ( $r(108) = .176$ ,  $p = .065$ ;  $\rho = .138$ ,  $p = .151$ ). Overall, none of the relationships among masculinity, emotional expressivity, and help-seeking behaviour reached statistical significance ( $p > .05$ ).

**Table 3: Correlation between Help-Seeking Behaviour and Masculinity**

		HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR	MASCULINITY
HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR	<b>Pearson's r</b>	—	
	<b>df</b>	—	
	<b>p-value</b>	—	
	<b>Spearman's rho</b>	—	
	<b>df</b>	—	
	<b>p-value</b>	—	
MASCULINITY	<b>Pearson's r</b>	<b>-0.026</b>	—
	<b>df</b>	<b>108</b>	—
	<b>p-value</b>	<b>0.789</b>	—
	<b>Spearman's rho</b>	<b>-0.118</b>	—
	<b>df</b>	<b>108</b>	—

	<b>p-value</b>	<b>0.221</b>	—
	<b>N</b>	<b>110</b>	—

**Table 3** This section looks at the relationship between masculinity and help-seeking behaviour among adult males. The results show a weak and non-significant negative association between the two variables ( $r(108) = -.026, p = .789$ ). A similar pattern is seen in the Spearman's rank-order correlation, which also indicates a weak

and non-significant relationship ( $\rho = -.118, p = .221$ ). Overall, these findings suggest that, within this sample, adherence to masculine norms does not have a strong or meaningful influence on individuals' willingness to seek help.

**Table 4: Correlation between Emotional Expressivity and Help-Seeking Behaviour**

		EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIVITY	HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR
EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIVITY	<b>Pearson's r</b>	—	
	<b>df</b>	—	
	<b>p-value</b>	—	
	<b>Spearman's rho</b>	—	
	<b>df</b>	—	
	<b>p-value</b>	—	
HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR	<b>Pearson's r</b>	<b>0.176</b>	—
	<b>df</b>	<b>108</b>	—
	<b>p-value</b>	<b>0.065</b>	—
	<b>Spearman's rho</b>	<b>0.138</b>	—
	<b>df</b>	<b>108</b>	—
	<b>p-value</b>	<b>0.151</b>	—
	<b>N</b>	<b>110</b>	—

**Table 4** This section looks at the relationship between emotional expressivity and help-seeking behaviour. The results show a weak positive relationship between the two variables ( $r(108) = .176, p = .065$ ), although this finding is not statistically significant. A similar pattern was observed in the Spearman's correlation ( $\rho = .138, p = .151$ ), which also indicated a slight positive but non-significant association. Overall, these findings suggest that individuals who express their emotions more openly may show a small tendency to seek help more often, but the relationship is not strong enough to be considered statistically meaningful.

#### Discussion And Interpretation

The present study set out to examine how masculinity, emotional expressivity, and help-seeking behaviour are related among adult males. Interestingly, the findings did not show any statistically significant relationships between these variables. While this may seem unexpected, especially in light of earlier research that often positions masculinity as a barrier to emotional openness and help-seeking, it offers an important opportunity to rethink these assumptions in a more nuanced way.

The results showed no significant relationship between emotional expressivity and masculinity ( $r(108) = -.027, p = .776$ ), which was further supported by the Spearman's correlation ( $\rho = -.152, p = .112$ ). One possible explanation for the lack of a significant relationship between masculinity and emotional expressivity is the changing nature of gender roles in contemporary society. Traditional expectations that encourage men to suppress emotions may no longer hold the same influence, particularly among younger or more socially aware populations. Exposure to conversations around mental health, emotional wellbeing, and gender equality may be allowing individuals to redefine masculinity in ways that are more flexible and emotionally inclusive. As a result, adhering to masculine norms may not

necessarily prevent individuals from expressing their emotions as strongly as it once did.

Similarly, the absence of a meaningful relationship between masculinity and help-seeking behaviour ( $r(108) = -.026, p = .789; \rho = -.118, p = .221$ ) suggests that other factors may play a more important role in influencing whether individuals seek support. Elements such as perceived social support, awareness of mental health services, personal attitudes, and past experiences with help-seeking may have a stronger impact than gender norms alone. It is also possible that the stigma traditionally associated with help-seeking is gradually decreasing, making it easier for individuals to reach out for support regardless of how strongly they identify with masculine ideals.

The slight positive trend observed between emotional expressivity and help-seeking behaviour, although not statistically significant ( $r(108) = .176, p = .065; \rho = .138, p = .151$ ), still provides a meaningful direction for interpretation. It suggests that individuals who are more comfortable expressing their emotions may also be more open to seeking help when needed. This aligns with the idea that emotional awareness and openness can act as facilitators for recognising distress and taking steps to address it. However, the weak strength of this relationship indicates that emotional expressivity alone may not be sufficient to predict help-seeking behaviour, and that other psychological or environmental factors are likely involved.

Another important point to consider is the role of cultural and contextual influences. The way masculinity is understood and expressed can vary widely depending on cultural background, social environment, and individual upbringing. In some contexts, masculine norms may still strongly discourage emotional expression and help-seeking, while in others, these norms may be evolving. The present findings may reflect a context in which

traditional expectations are becoming less rigid, thereby reducing their direct impact on behaviour.

Additionally, the lack of significant findings may also be related to methodological factors such as sample size, sampling technique, or the use of self-report measures. Participants may have responded in socially desirable ways, particularly on topics related to masculinity and emotional expression. The use of a relatively homogeneous sample may have also limited variability, making it harder to detect significant relationships.

Overall, the findings highlight the complexity of the relationship between masculinity, emotional expressivity, and help-seeking behaviour. Rather than operating in a simple, linear manner, these variables appear to be shaped by a range of interacting factors. This suggests the need for future research to adopt a more comprehensive approach, incorporating variables such as self-stigma, cultural norms, social support, and mental health literacy. Longitudinal and qualitative studies may also provide deeper insights into how these relationships develop and change over time.

### Conclusion

The present study examined the relationships between masculinity, emotional expressivity, and help-seeking behaviour among adult males. The findings showed no statistically significant connections between these variables, suggesting that adherence to masculine norms did not strongly influence either emotional expression or the likelihood of seeking help within this sample. A slight positive trend was observed between emotional expressivity and help-seeking behaviour, but this was not statistically significant. These results indicate that the role of masculinity in shaping emotional and behavioural outcomes may be more complex and dependent on context than traditionally assumed. In today's changing social environment, where awareness around mental health is increasing and gender roles are gradually evolving, masculinity may not always act as a barrier to expressing emotions or seeking support. Overall, the study contributes to the growing understanding that masculinity is not a fixed or uniform concept. Instead, it is flexible and influenced by various social and cultural factors. This highlights the importance of looking at masculinity in a more nuanced way when examining mental health behaviours, rather than viewing it as a single, limiting factor.

### Declaration of Competing Interest:

None

### Financial Disclosure:

None

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