

# Mental health literacy: a cross-cultural approach to knowledge and beliefs about depression, schizophrenia and generalized anxiety disorder

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## Introduction / Theory

- Based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions (indivisualism vs. collectivism)
- Mental Health Literacy (MHL) = Knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders that help recognition, management, prevention
- **Focus on:** Depression, Schizophrenia, Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- **Importance:** Understanding how cultural context shapes mental health beliefs and help-seeking

## Methods

- Participants:**
- USA (N = 100, European Americans)
  - India (N = 108, Indians)
- Measures:**
- Vignettes describing mental health symptoms
- Scale measuring:**
- Recognition
  - Causal beliefs (social vs. biological)
  - Lay help-seeking beliefs (family, friends, religious leaders)
  - Professional help-seeking beliefs (GPs, psychologists, psychiatrists)
  - Collectivism (using validated scale)

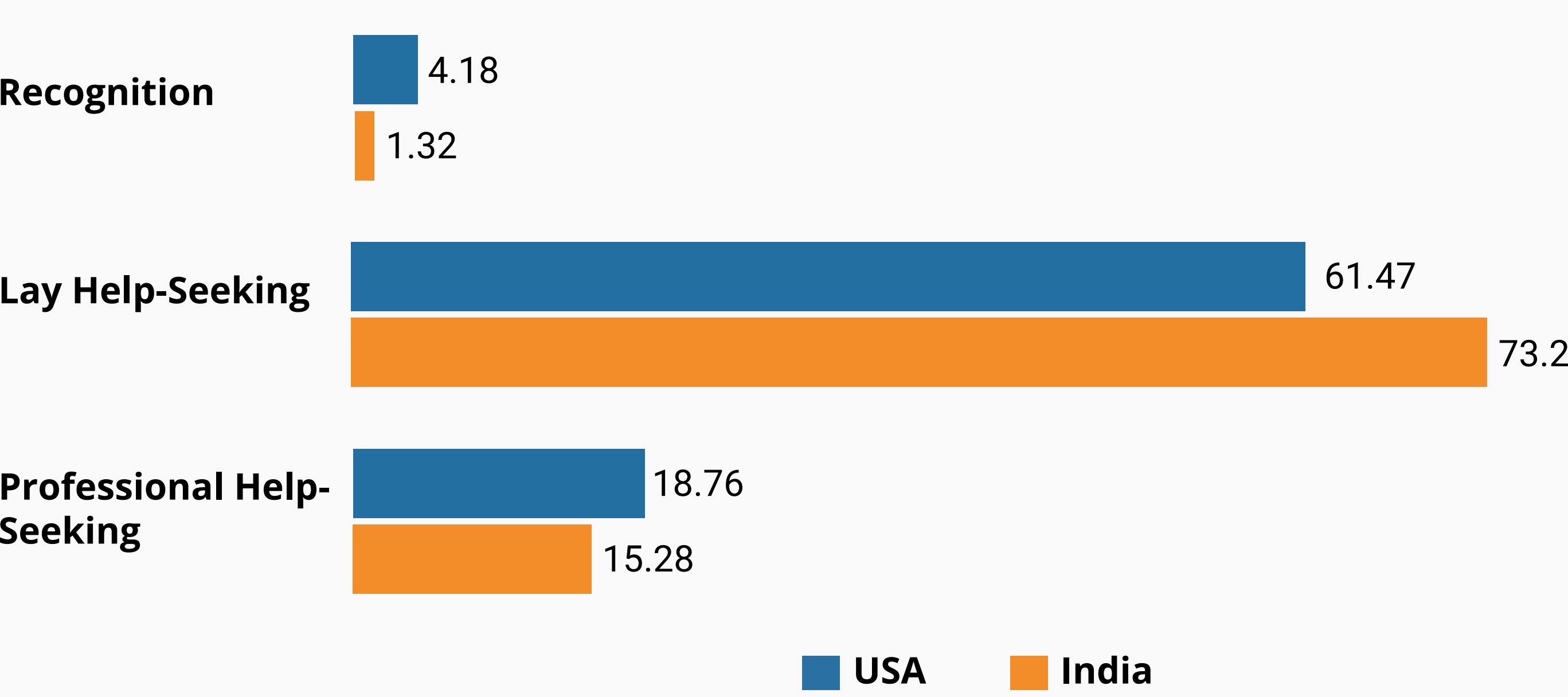
## Research Questions

- How do MHL components differ between individualistic (USA) and collectivistic (India) cultures?
- How does collectivism predict beliefs about causes and help-seeking?

## Key Results

- Recognition**
- USA participants are better at identifying mental disorders than Indian participants
- Causal Beliefs**
- Both cultures emphasized social causes over biological ones
  - Biological causes are less relevant in the Indian sample

## MHL Components by Culture



## Conclusion

This study shows that cultural context significantly shapes mental health literacy. In India, collectivism fosters reliance on lay help, which facilitates eventual professional help-seeking, while in the USA, collectivism mainly reinforces social causal beliefs, with more direct paths to professional services. Recognition of mental disorders emerges as a key factor for positive help-seeking attitudes across both cultures.

### Help-Seeking Beliefs

- India:** Strong reliance on lay help (family, community, religious figures)
- USA:** More direct focus on professional help
- Collectivism effects:**
- In India collectivism predicts lay help-seeking
  - In the USA collectivism predicts stronger social causal beliefs
- Statistical Insights**
- Recognition predicts more positive professional help-seeking
  - In India, lay help-seeking mediates between collectivism and professional help

## Cultural Pathways to Help-Seeking in India



These findings highlight the need for culturally sensitive mental health interventions that strengthen family and community networks in collectivistic societies and improve access to professional services in individualistic ones. By addressing these culturally specific pathways, stigma can be reduced, and access to mental health care can be enhanced globally.

## References (short version)

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