

Perceived Organisational Support, Attitude Toward Help-Seeking, and Intention to Seek Mental Health Counselling Support among Employees in Guangzhou, China

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ABSTRACT

Mental health concerns in the workplace have received increasing attention, yet employees may remain hesitant to seek formal support even when mental health support services are available. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Organisational Support Theory, this study examines the relationship between perceived organisational support (POS), attitude toward help-seeking, and employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support. Data were collected from 384 full-time employees in Guangzhou, China, using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive analysis was conducted using SPSS, while the measurement and structural models were assessed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results showed that POS had a significant positive effect on attitude toward help-seeking ($\beta = 0.419$, $p < 0.001$) and intention to seek mental health counselling support ($\beta = 0.173$, $p < 0.001$). Attitude toward help-seeking had the strongest direct effect on intention ($\beta = 0.554$, $p < 0.001$) and partially mediated the relationship between POS and intention (indirect effect = 0.232, $p < 0.001$). The proposed model explained 41.7% of the variance in employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support. These findings suggest that supportive organisational environments may strengthen employees' help-seeking intention by fostering more favourable attitudes toward professional mental health support. The study provides practical implications for organisations seeking to improve the effectiveness and utilisation of workplace mental health support services.

Keywords: Attitude Toward Help-Seeking; Intention to Seek Mental Health Counselling Support; Perceived Organisational Support; Mediation Analysis; Workplace Mental Health; Guangzhou.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health has become an increasingly important concern in contemporary workplaces, as employees face growing psychological demands arising from rapid organisational change, intensified workloads, and heightened performance expectations. Work-related stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion can affect not only individual well-being, but also organisational outcomes such as productivity, absenteeism, and employee retention. These concerns suggest that mental health should be addressed as a workplace issue rather than solely as an individual matter (World Health Organization, 2022).

In response to these challenges, many organisations have introduced mental health support services, including counselling services, employee assistance programmes, and awareness initiatives. However, the availability of such services does not necessarily mean that employees will use them when experiencing psychological distress, as the effectiveness of employee mental health programmes depends partly on employees' preferences, perceived accessibility, and willingness to use available support (Sevov et al., 2025). Employees' decisions to seek support may be shaped by how they perceive their workplace environment and whether they view help-seeking as acceptable, useful, and safe (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2023). This gap between service availability and employees' willingness to seek support highlights the need to examine the organisational and psychological factors that influence employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support.

1.1 Workplace Mental Health and Help-Seeking Challenges

Workplace mental health challenges are increasingly recognised as an important concern in fast-paced and competitive employment contexts. Prolonged exposure to work stressors, such as high job demands, long working hours, and job insecurity, may contribute to psychological strain and emotional exhaustion among employees. These pressures can accumulate over time and reduce employees' ability to cope effectively with workplace demands (Harvey et al., 2022).

Despite growing attention to workplace mental health, many employees remain hesitant to seek formal support. Help-seeking for mental health concerns is often more sensitive than help-seeking for physical health problems because psychological distress may be associated with stigma, weakness, or reduced competence. In organisational settings, employees may also worry that disclosing mental health difficulties could affect how they are viewed by supervisors or colleagues, as stigma, psychological safety, and perceived organisational response can shape employees' disclosure and help-seeking decisions (Poddar & Chhajer, 2024). As a result, even when mental health support services are available, employees may choose to manage their distress privately rather than seek professional assistance.

These barriers help explain why workplace mental health support services may remain underutilised. Concerns about stigma, confidentiality, career consequences, and workplace judgement can weaken employees' willingness to seek support. Therefore, understanding employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support requires attention not only to the availability of services, but also to the organisational and psychological factors that shape help-seeking decisions (OECD, 2023).

1.2 Perceived Organisational Support in the Workplace Context

Within this context, perceived organisational support (POS) provides an important organisational perspective for understanding employees' mental health help-seeking decisions. POS refers to employees' perception that their organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Caesens et al., 2020). When employees perceive strong organisational support, they may feel more confident that their psychological needs will be taken seriously and that seeking support will not lead to unfair treatment or negative workplace consequences (Caesens et al., 2020).

Organisational support is reflected not only in formal policies, but also in everyday workplace practices, such as leadership behaviour, communication about well-being, and the consistency between organisational values and actual treatment of employees. In relation to mental health, a supportive organisational environment may reduce uncertainty and encourage employees to view counselling support as a legitimate and acceptable resource. Conversely, when organisational support is perceived as weak or inconsistent, employees may be more reluctant to disclose distress or seek professional assistance.

Therefore, POS is relevant to this study because it links the workplace environment with employees' attitudes toward help-seeking and their intention to seek mental health counselling support.

1.3 Attitude Toward Help-Seeking and Employees' Intention

While perceived organisational support provides an important workplace condition, employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support is also shaped by their own evaluation of help-seeking. Attitude toward help-seeking refers to the extent to which employees view seeking professional support as useful, acceptable, and appropriate when facing mental health concerns. Employees who hold favourable attitudes toward help-seeking are more likely to consider counselling support as a constructive option rather than as a sign of weakness.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) provides a useful basis for understanding this relationship. According to TPB, attitude is a key determinant of behavioural intention, as individuals are more likely to intend to perform a behaviour when they evaluate that behaviour positively (Ajzen, 1991). In the workplace mental health context, this suggests that employees who perceive professional support as beneficial and legitimate are more likely to develop stronger intention to seek mental health counselling support when needed.

Attitudes toward help-seeking may also be influenced by organisational cues. When employees perceive that their organisation supports well-being and treats mental health concerns seriously, they may develop more positive attitudes toward seeking help. In contrast, workplace environments that implicitly discourage vulnerability may weaken favourable attitudes, even when formal support services are available. This study therefore considers attitude toward help-seeking as a key mechanism linking perceived organisational support and intention to seek mental health counselling support.

1.4 Research Focus and Context

Building on the above discussion, this study examines how perceived organisational support influences employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support through attitude toward help-seeking. The study focuses on full-time employees in Guangzhou, China, where competitive

employment conditions and work-related stress provide a relevant context for examining mental health help-seeking intention (Lu et al., 2022).

Specifically, this study investigates whether employees who perceive stronger organisational support are more likely to develop favourable attitudes toward seeking professional mental health support, and whether these attitudes further strengthen their intention to seek counselling support when needed. By focusing on this organisational and attitudinal pathway, the study aims to contribute to a clearer understanding of how workplace conditions shape employees' mental health help-seeking decisions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the literature on perceived organisational support, attitude toward help-seeking, and intention to seek mental health counselling support. It then integrates these constructs to develop the hypotheses and conceptual framework of the study.

2.1 Perceived Organisational Support in Workplace Mental Health

Perceived organisational support (POS) refers to employees' belief that their organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Caesens et al., 2020). In workplace mental health research, POS is particularly relevant because employees' willingness to consider professional support is often influenced by how safe, fair, and supportive they perceive their organisation to be. When employees believe that their organisation takes well-being seriously, they may feel more confident that seeking mental health counselling support will not lead to unfair judgement or negative workplace consequences.

Organisational support is reflected not only through formal policies and mental health programmes, but also through everyday workplace practices, including leadership behaviour, communication about well-being, and the consistency between organisational values and actual treatment of employees. A supportive work environment may reduce uncertainty and perceived risk surrounding help-seeking, especially in contexts where mental health concerns remain sensitive or potentially stigmatised. Prior research also suggests that POS contributes to trust and psychological security, both of which may shape employees' responses to mental health-related initiatives (Caesens et al., 2020; Harvey et al., 2022). Recent meta-analytic evidence further indicates that employees' benefit experiences are associated with perceived organisational support, employee attitudes, and well-being (Hong et al., 2024).

In this study, POS is positioned as an organisational factor that may shape employees' attitude toward help-seeking. Employees who perceive stronger organisational support are more likely to interpret mental health counselling support as legitimate, acceptable, and consistent with organisational concern for employee well-being. Therefore, POS provides an important basis for understanding how workplace conditions may influence employees' psychological evaluation of help-seeking.

2.2 Attitude Toward Help-Seeking in Organisational Contexts

Attitude toward help-seeking refers to employees' evaluation of seeking professional mental health support when they experience psychological distress. In workplace settings, this attitude reflects whether employees perceive help-seeking as useful, acceptable, and appropriate within their organisational environment. Broader help-seeking research suggests that favourable attitudes are

associated with stronger willingness to access professional support, whereas negative attitudes may discourage help-seeking even when support services are available (Zhang et al., 2022).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour provides a useful explanation for the role of attitude in shaping behavioural intention. According to Ajzen (1991), individuals are more likely to intend to perform a behaviour when they evaluate that behaviour positively. In the context of workplace mental health, this suggests that employees who view professional support as beneficial and legitimate are more likely to develop stronger intention to seek mental health counselling support.

In organisational contexts, attitudes toward help-seeking may be shaped by workplace norms, perceived stigma, and expectations surrounding competence and resilience. Employees may be reluctant to seek support if they believe that doing so could be interpreted as weakness or affect how they are perceived by supervisors and colleagues. Evidence from help-seeking research suggests that stigma may weaken individuals' willingness to seek support, particularly when mental health concerns are socially sensitive (Sum et al., 2024). Conversely, when the workplace environment normalises mental health discussions and frames professional support as acceptable, employees may develop more positive attitudes toward help-seeking. Therefore, attitude toward help-seeking is positioned in this study as a key psychological factor influencing intention to seek mental health counselling support.

2.3 Employees' Intention to Seek Mental Health Counselling Support

Intention to seek mental health counselling support represents employees' readiness or willingness to use professional support when they experience mental health concerns. In workplace mental health research, intention is an important outcome because actual service utilisation may be delayed or constrained by stigma, confidentiality concerns, workplace norms, or uncertainty about available support. Therefore, examining intention provides insight into employees' psychological preparedness to seek help before actual behaviour occurs (OECD, 2023).

Within the Theory of Planned Behaviour, behavioural intention is regarded as the most immediate predictor of behaviour and is shaped by individuals' attitudes and contextual evaluations (Ajzen, 1991). In this study, intention to seek mental health counselling support reflects the extent to which employees are willing to consider, plan, or attempt to seek professional assistance when needed. Employees with stronger help-seeking intention are more likely to view counselling support as a realistic and acceptable option for addressing psychological distress.

In organisational settings, help-seeking intention is influenced not only by personal beliefs but also by workplace conditions. Evidence from workplace help-seeking research also suggests that employees' intention to seek support is shaped by their attitudes toward available support, perceived acceptability of help sources, and engagement with workplace mental health strategies (Duncan et al., 2024). Similarly, workplaces characterised by trust, confidentiality, and perceived support may strengthen employees' readiness to seek help, while unsupportive environments may suppress intention despite the presence of formal mental health support services (World Health Organization, 2022). This study therefore examines intention to seek mental health counselling support as the key outcome shaped by perceived organisational support and attitude toward help-seeking.

2.4 Integrating Organisational Support, Attitude, and Help-Seeking Intention

Although perceived organisational support, attitude toward help-seeking, and intention to seek mental health counselling support have been examined in related research, fewer studies have

considered how these constructs operate together within a single explanatory pathway. Organisational Support Theory suggests that employees form general beliefs about whether their organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being, which may influence their workplace-related attitudes and behavioural responses (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Caesens et al., 2020). In the context of workplace mental health, organisational support may therefore influence employees not only by providing resources, but also by shaping how they evaluate the acceptability, usefulness, and safety of seeking professional support.

From this perspective, perceived organisational support may strengthen employees' positive attitudes toward help-seeking by reducing uncertainty, perceived stigma, and concerns about negative workplace consequences. Recent literature also suggests that organisational factors may influence help-seeking intention indirectly by shaping employees' cognitive and evaluative processes rather than determining behaviour outright (Li et al., 2023). When employees believe that their organisation values their well-being and treats mental health concerns seriously, they may be more likely to view counselling support as a legitimate and constructive option. These favourable attitudes, in turn, are expected to strengthen employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support when needed, which is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour's emphasis on attitude as a predictor of behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991).

Accordingly, this study proposes that attitude toward help-seeking functions as an important psychological mechanism linking perceived organisational support and intention to seek mental health counselling support. This integrative view is also consistent with contemporary workplace mental health discussions that emphasise the importance of both organisational conditions and employees' willingness to access available support (OECD, 2023). Based on the theoretical framework and literature reviewed, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Perceived Organisational Support (POS) has a significant positive effect on Attitude Toward Help-Seeking (ATT).

H2: Attitude Toward Help-Seeking (ATT) has a significant positive effect on Intention to Seek Mental Health Counselling Support (INT).

H3: Perceived Organisational Support (POS) has a significant positive direct effect on Intention to Seek Mental Health Counselling Support (INT).

H4: Attitude Toward Help-Seeking (ATT) mediates the relationship between Perceived Organisational Support (POS) and Intention to Seek Mental Health Counselling Support (INT).

The proposed conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

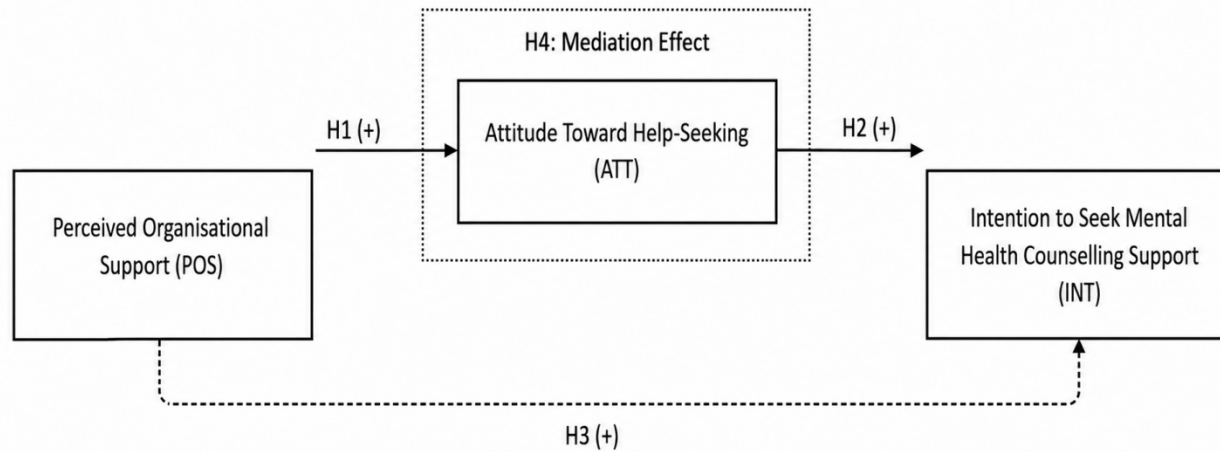


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This section describes the research design, study context, data collection procedure, measurement of constructs, data analysis strategy, and ethical considerations adopted in this study.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between perceived organisational support and employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support in the workplace, with attitude toward help-seeking positioned as a mediating mechanism. A quantitative design was appropriate because the study aimed to test hypothesised relationships among latent constructs using survey data. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed to assess the measurement and structural models, as this approach is suitable for examining mediation relationships and prediction-oriented behavioural models (Hair et al., 2022).

3.2 Study Context and Participants

The study was conducted in Guangzhou, China, a major urban and economic centre with a diverse employment environment. The target respondents were full-time employees working in organisations located in Guangzhou. This context is relevant because workplace stress, organisational support, and attitudes toward mental health help-seeking are particularly important in competitive urban employment settings.

The final analysis was based on 384 valid responses from full-time employees aged 18 years and above. Respondents were selected using a non-probability purposive sampling approach, supported by convenience-based online recruitment. To ensure relevance to the workplace mental health context, the study focused on employees who were currently working in Guangzhou. Individuals who were not employed or did not meet the screening criteria were excluded from the final dataset.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through an online self-administered questionnaire hosted on Wenjuanxing, a widely used online survey platform in China. The survey link was distributed through online channels, including WeChat, to reach eligible full-time employees in Guangzhou. Before answering the questionnaire, respondents were informed of the study purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses.

The data used in this article were drawn from a broader survey dataset collected for the author's doctoral research. After data screening, 384 valid responses were retained for analysis. Responses were screened to remove cases that did not meet the inclusion criteria, incomplete responses, and responses showing insufficient engagement, such as straight-lining or invalid response patterns. This screening process helped ensure that the retained data were suitable for subsequent statistical analysis.

Given the sensitive nature of mental health-related questions, several procedural remedies were adopted to reduce response bias and common method bias. Respondents were assured that their participation was anonymous and voluntary, and that the data would be used only for academic purposes. Clear instructions were provided at the beginning of the questionnaire to reduce ambiguity and encourage honest responses.

3.4 Measurement of Key Constructs

The questionnaire consisted of two main sections. Section A collected demographic information, including gender, age, education level, job role, position, industry, and organisation size. Section B measured the key constructs examined in this article: perceived organisational support, attitude toward help-seeking, and intention to seek mental health counselling support. The measurement items were adapted from established scales. The English items were translated into Chinese and checked to ensure semantic clarity and consistency with the workplace context. Unless otherwise stated, items were measured using a seven-point response scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of the construct.

3.4.1 Perceived Organisational Support (POS)

Perceived organisational support was measured using ten items adapted from the Survey of Perceived Organisational Support developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986). The scale assesses employees' perceptions of the extent to which their organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Higher scores indicate stronger perceived organisational support.

3.4.2 Attitude Toward Help-Seeking (ATT)

Attitude toward help-seeking was measured using nine items adapted from the Mental Help Seeking Attitudes Scale developed by Hammer et al. (2018). The scale captures employees' evaluations of seeking professional mental health support when experiencing mental health concerns. Higher scores indicate a more favourable attitude toward help-seeking.

3.4.3 Intention to Seek Mental Health Counselling Support (INT)

Intention to seek mental health counselling support was measured using three items adapted from the Mental Help Seeking Intention Scale, for which psychometric evidence was provided by Hammer and Spiker (2018). The items assess the extent to which employees intend, try, or plan to

seek professional support if they experience a mental health concern. Higher scores indicate stronger intention to seek mental health counselling support.

3.5 Data Analysis Strategy

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0 and SmartPLS 4.0. SPSS was used to generate descriptive statistics and examine the demographic profile of respondents. Harman's single-factor test was also conducted to assess the potential presence of common method bias.

SmartPLS 4.0 was used to assess the measurement and structural models following established PLS-SEM procedures (Hair et al., 2022). The measurement model was evaluated through indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and discriminant validity. The structural model was then assessed using path coefficients, coefficient of determination, collinearity diagnostics, and bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The mediating role of attitude toward help-seeking in the relationship between perceived organisational support and intention to seek mental health counselling support was examined through the specific indirect effect.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed due to the sensitivity of mental health-related topics. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw at any point before submitting the questionnaire. No personally identifiable information was collected. All responses were treated confidentially and used only for academic research purposes. Electronic informed consent was obtained before respondents proceeded with the questionnaire.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings of the study. It first summarises the demographic profile of the respondents, followed by the measurement model assessment, structural model results, and discussion of the main findings.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The final analysis was based on 384 valid responses from full-time employees working in Guangzhou, China. The sample showed a relatively balanced gender distribution, with female respondents accounting for 50.26% and male respondents accounting for 47.66%. In terms of age, the largest group of respondents was aged between 31 and 35 years, followed by those aged between 26 and 30 years. Most respondents held either an associate degree/diploma or a bachelor's degree. The sample also covered different job roles and industries, with sales and marketing forming the largest job-role group and the service industry representing the largest industry category. In terms of organisational size, the largest proportion of respondents worked in organisations with 50–300 employees.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed following PLS-SEM guidelines to examine the reliability and validity of the three constructs included in this study: Perceived Organisational Support (POS), Attitude Toward Help-Seeking (ATT), and Intention to Seek Mental Health Counselling Support

(INT) (Hair et al., 2022). The assessment focused on indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Harman's single-factor test was conducted to assess the potential influence of common method bias. The first factor explained 40.713% of the total variance, which was below the 50% threshold, suggesting that common method bias was unlikely to substantially threaten the interpretation of the results.

As shown in Table 1, the outer loadings of the measurement items were within an acceptable range. All item loadings exceeded 0.60, indicating adequate indicator reliability. The Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.815 to 0.927, while the composite reliability values ranged from 0.817 to 0.929. These values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, suggesting that the constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.582 to 0.729, all of which were above the recommended threshold of 0.50. These results indicate that the measurement model achieved acceptable convergent validity.

Table 1. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Number of Items	Loading Range	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Perceived Organisational Support (POS)	10	0.738–0.801	0.927	0.929	0.605
Attitude Toward Help-Seeking (ATT)	9	0.689–0.826	0.910	0.912	0.582
Intention to Seek Mental Health Counselling Support (INT)	3	0.829–0.869	0.815	0.817	0.729

Note. AVE = Average Variance Extracted; CR = Composite Reliability.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. As shown in Table 2, the square root of the AVE for each construct was higher than its correlations with other constructs, indicating that the constructs were empirically distinct. In addition, the HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of 0.85, further supporting discriminant validity. Therefore, the measurement model was considered reliable and valid for subsequent structural model assessment.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

Construct	POS	ATT	INT
POS	0.778		
ATT	0.419	0.763	
INT	0.405	0.626	0.854

Note. Diagonal values represent the square root of AVE; off-diagonal values represent inter-construct correlations.

4.3 Structural Model Results

The structural model was assessed after establishing the reliability and validity of the measurement model. Collinearity was first examined using variance inflation factor (VIF) values. The results indicated that the inner VIF values ranged from 1.000 to 1.213, which were below the recommended threshold, suggesting that collinearity was not a concern in the structural model. The coefficient of determination showed that perceived organisational support explained 17.6% of the variance in attitude toward help-seeking ($R^2 = 0.176$), while perceived organisational support and attitude toward help-seeking jointly explained 41.7% of the variance in intention to seek mental health counselling support ($R^2 = 0.417$). Figure 2 presents the structural model results.

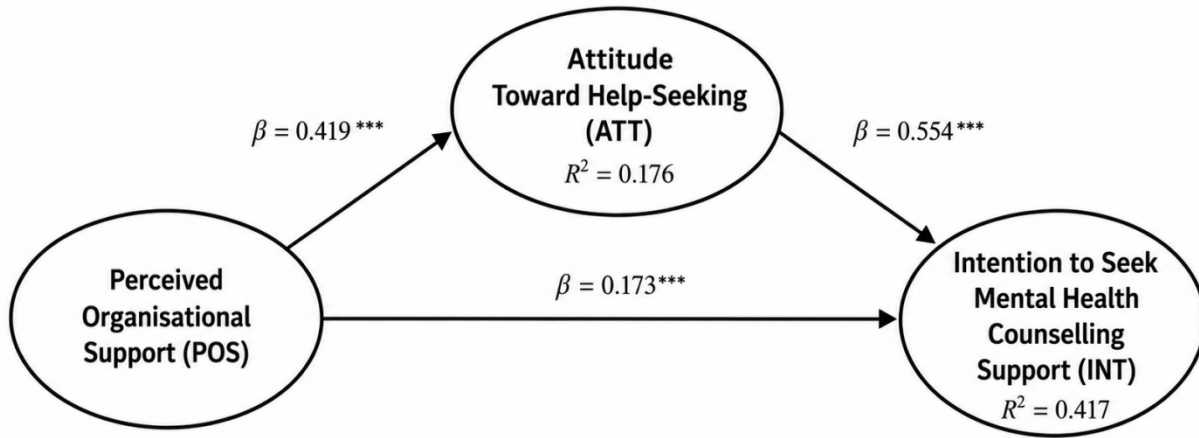


Figure 2. Structural Model Results

The structural path results are presented in Table 3. Perceived organisational support had a significant positive effect on attitude toward help-seeking ($\beta = 0.419$, $t = 10.070$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Attitude toward help-seeking also had a significant positive effect on intention to seek mental health counselling support ($\beta = 0.554$, $t = 14.935$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. In addition, perceived organisational support had a significant positive direct effect on intention to seek mental health counselling support ($\beta = 0.173$, $t = 4.004$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3.

Table 3. Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	POS $\rightarrow$ ATT	0.419	10.070	< 0.001	Supported
H2	ATT $\rightarrow$ INT	0.554	14.935	< 0.001	Supported
H3	POS $\rightarrow$ INT	0.173	4.004	< 0.001	Supported

Note. POS = Perceived Organisational Support; ATT = Attitude Toward Help-Seeking; INT = Intention to Seek Mental Health Counselling Support.

The mediating role of attitude toward help-seeking was examined using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. As shown in Table 4, the indirect effect of perceived organisational support on intention to seek mental health counselling support through attitude toward help-seeking was significant (β

= 0.232, $t = 8.003$, $p < 0.001$). The 95% confidence interval [0.177, 0.290] did not include zero, confirming the presence of a significant mediation effect. In addition, the direct effect of perceived organisational support on intention to seek mental health counselling support remained significant ($\beta = 0.173$, $t = 4.004$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the results indicate that attitude toward help-seeking partially mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support and intention to seek mental health counselling support.

Table 4. Mediation Analysis

Effect	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	95% CI	Decision
POS → INT Direct Effect	0.173	4.004	< 0.001	[0.088, 0.257]	Supported
POS → ATT → INT Indirect Effect	0.232	8.003	< 0.001	[0.177, 0.290]	Supported
POS → INT Total Effect	0.405	9.713	< 0.001	[0.317, 0.482]	Supported

Note. CI = confidence interval; POS = Perceived Organisational Support; ATT = Attitude Toward Help-Seeking; INT = Intention to Seek Mental Health Counselling Support.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings support the proposed argument that employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support is shaped by both the organisational environment and their own evaluation of help-seeking. Perceived organisational support was found to have a significant positive effect on attitude toward help-seeking ($\beta = 0.419$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that when employees perceive their organisation as caring about their well-being, they are more likely to evaluate professional mental health support in a favourable way. From the perspective of Organisational Support Theory, a supportive workplace may reduce employees' uncertainty about whether help-seeking will be accepted, treated confidentially, or viewed negatively by others in the organisation (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Caesens et al., 2020).

The strongest relationship in the model was found between attitude toward help-seeking and intention to seek mental health counselling support ($\beta = 0.554$, $p < 0.001$). This result is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which regards attitude as an important predictor of behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991). In the present study, employees who viewed professional mental health support as useful, acceptable, and appropriate were more willing to consider seeking counselling support when needed. This finding also indicates that the presence of organisational support may not be sufficient on its own; employees' personal evaluations of help-seeking remain central to whether support is likely to be used.

Perceived organisational support also showed a significant direct effect on intention to seek mental health counselling support ($\beta = 0.173$, $p < 0.001$), although this effect was weaker than the attitude–intention relationship. This pattern suggests that organisational support can encourage help-seeking intention directly, but its influence is more substantial when it contributes to a more favourable attitude toward professional support. The significant indirect effect further confirms that attitude toward help-seeking partially mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support and intention. In practical terms, supportive policies and resources are more likely to influence employees when they also help reframe counselling support as a legitimate and constructive response to psychological distress.

The model explained 41.7% of the variance in intention to seek mental health counselling support, indicating that perceived organisational support and attitude toward help-seeking provide a meaningful explanation of employees' help-seeking intention in the Guangzhou workplace context. The findings therefore highlight the need for organisations to address both workplace conditions and employees' attitudes when designing mental health initiatives, rather than assuming that the availability of services alone will lead to actual willingness to seek support.

5. CONCLUSION

This section concludes the study by summarising the main findings, outlining the theoretical and practical implications, and acknowledging the limitations of the research. It also suggests directions for future studies on workplace mental health counselling support and employees' help-seeking intention.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined how perceived organisational support relates to employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support through attitude toward help-seeking among full-time employees in Guangzhou, China. Drawing on Organisational Support Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the study positioned perceived organisational support as an organisational condition and attitude toward help-seeking as a psychological mechanism linking workplace support to help-seeking intention (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Ajzen, 1991).

The findings showed that perceived organisational support was positively associated with attitude toward help-seeking and intention to seek mental health counselling support. Attitude toward help-seeking showed the strongest direct effect on intention and partially mediated the relationship between perceived organisational support and intention. The model explained 41.7% of the variance in intention, suggesting that the proposed framework provides a meaningful explanation of employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support in the Guangzhou context.

5.2 Implications

The findings offer implications for both workplace mental health research and organisational practice. Theoretically, the study supports the view that employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support is shaped by both organisational and psychological factors. Perceived organisational support provides an important workplace condition, while attitude toward help-seeking explains how employees interpret and respond to that condition. This supports the value of combining Organisational Support Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour in explaining workplace mental health help-seeking intention.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that organisations should move beyond the formal availability of mental health support services and strengthen organisational-level practices that protect and promote employee mental health (Hammer et al., 2024). Although counselling services, employee assistance programmes, and awareness initiatives are important, employees may remain reluctant to use them if they are uncertain about confidentiality, workplace judgement, or career consequences. This is consistent with international guidance emphasising that workplace mental health requires organisational-level actions, including supportive management practices and reduced psychosocial risks (World Health Organization, 2022).

The results also highlight the importance of attitude-oriented interventions. Organisations should communicate clearly that seeking mental health counselling support is acceptable, confidential, and constructive. Mental health awareness programmes, supervisor training, and internal communication can help reduce stigma and reshape negative perceptions of help-seeking. In this sense, improving perceived organisational support and developing favourable attitudes toward help-seeking should be treated as complementary strategies rather than separate initiatives (OECD, 2023).

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. The study was conducted among full-time employees in Guangzhou, China. Although Guangzhou provides a relevant urban workplace context, the findings may not be fully generalisable to employees in other regions, industries, or organisational settings. Future studies could compare employees across different cities, sectors, or organisational types to examine whether the same relationships are observed in different workplace environments.

The cross-sectional design also limits the ability to make strong causal claims. While the findings support the proposed relationships among perceived organisational support, attitude toward help-seeking, and intention to seek mental health counselling support, they do not confirm how these relationships may develop over time. Longitudinal research would be useful for examining whether perceived organisational support leads to changes in employees' attitudes and subsequent help-seeking intention.

The use of self-reported questionnaire data should also be considered. Although procedural and statistical measures were used to reduce the potential influence of common method bias, this issue cannot be entirely ruled out. Future studies may consider using multi-source data, qualitative interviews, or actual service utilisation indicators where feasible to provide a more comprehensive understanding of workplace mental health help-seeking.

The scope of the model is another limitation. This study focused specifically on perceived organisational support, attitude toward help-seeking, and intention to seek mental health counselling support. Future research could examine additional organisational, social, and cultural factors, such as supervisor support, workplace stigma, mental health literacy, or face-related concerns, to provide a broader explanation of employees' help-seeking decisions.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

This study concludes that employees' intention to seek mental health counselling support is shaped by both workplace conditions and individual psychological evaluations. Perceived organisational support creates an important foundation by signalling that employee well-being is valued, while attitude toward help-seeking explains how employees translate this organisational signal into willingness to consider professional support.

The findings suggest that workplace mental health initiatives should not be limited to the provision of services alone. Organisations also need to build a supportive climate in which seeking counselling support is viewed as acceptable, confidential, and constructive. This is consistent with the broader view that workplace mental health should be addressed through organisational practices as well as individual-level support (World Health Organization, 2022).

In the Guangzhou workplace context, the results highlight that organisational support can encourage help-seeking intention more effectively when it contributes to more favourable attitudes toward professional mental health support. Therefore, organisations seeking to improve the use of mental health support services should pay attention not only to service availability, but also to the workplace meanings and attitudes attached to help-seeking.

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