

Reviewer response report

Reviewer comments 1:

1. Comment 2: The paper title has been revised to capture the paper content in a more succinct way
2. Comment 3: The sections covering 'Help-seeking' and 'Masculinity' have been shortened by removing two longer sentences from each and collapsed into one section.
3. Comment 5: We went through the paper carefully, correcting any errors we could pick up, including wrongly suggesting that there were five themes instead of seven.

Reviewer comments 2:

1. Comment 1(a): The research gap – The aim of the paper is to provide a knowledge synthesis (based on extant literature) on men's help seeking behaviour, and thereby contribute to enhancing the understanding of this phenomenon. The need for this understanding is made particularly pertinent by challenges that emerged in efforts to deal with the recent COVID-19 pandemic. This aim has been amplified in the Abstract, Introduction and Methods sections respectively.
Comment 1(b): Scientific rigour: Narrative literature reviews by their very nature are not as rigorous as the other knowledge synthesis designs such as systematic reviews and metanalysis. This has been articulated more clearly under the Research Design section, emphasizing instead, what a narrative literature analysis is used for. Further, this point is highlighted and expatiated in the conclusion where the limits of this approach are addressed.
2. The title has been reworked to incorporate Reviewer 1's recommended rewording, as well as Reviewer 2's recommendation that the title be reflective of the actual parameters of the study.
3. The abstract has been reworked to include the aim of the study, which points to the gap the paper seeks to address. An additional wording has also been inserted to contextualize the findings better. The strength of the paper can only be assessed based on the research design as further articulated on the corrected version of this paper, in line with the reviewer's recommendation.
4. The paper has been edited by the authors, and all language errors that could be identified were corrected.
5. Comment 1: What is known – This is implied in paragraph 3 of the Introduction. However, two references have been added (at the end of that same paragraph)

that capture the core subject of this paper more explicitly: Comparatively less help-seeking behaviour in men than in women.

Comment 2: Introduction and the focus on men's help-seeking behaviour in the context of COVID-19 – In fact, both in the Abstract and in the introduction, reference to COVID-19 is used to indicate that experience during the pandemic has brought attention back on an otherwise longstanding problematic of men's help seeking behaviour. As such, the focus is not exclusively on men's help-seeking behaviour in the context of COVID-19, but includes this period as well.

Comment 3: On methods – The methods section has been enhanced both under Research Design and Sampling.

6. Inclusion and exclusion criteria have been more clearly explained under the Sampling section. It is worth noting once again that narrative literature analysis does not impose the need for a systematic selection/composition of a sample. Equally, purposive sampling suggests that it will be only those sources/'participants' that are conveniently accessible to the researcher that will be used, as long as they meet identified criteria (years of publication and relevant content in this regard).
7. A narrative literature review may be written as a summary of extant literature. The themes emerge out of the literature that has been sampled and consulted, although the naming of themes becomes the function of averaging out the relevant content.
8. Comment 1: Recency of publications on the Reference List - In conducting narrative analysis and other forms of knowledge synthesis, some authors may impose a strict five-year period regarding the date of publication for the sampled literature, while others are guided by the relevance of content, and impose a much longer period on acceptable years of publication for the sample (and reference list). The reference list includes a range of publication dates, including 2023 and 2024. Reviewer 1 has expressed a positive view specifically on the recency of publications used to comprise the sampled literature specifically.

Comment 2: Alternative arguments – The second last paragraph of 'Conclusion and recommendations' reflects on the complexities of understanding men's help-seeking behaviour, as well as divergencies in understandings of COVID-19 vaccination as a safe treatment of choice. These are alternative arguments that do not as yet deal with the more common finding regarding men's reluctance to seek help as informed by different perceptions and socio-cultural ideologies.