

## **Informal Help for Mental Distress in the General Population in Israel**

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Studies in Israel and abroad have demonstrated that most of those in need of mental help do not seek formal help from professionals, but tend to prefer the support of family, friends or neighbors. Applying Anderson's (1975) model, the objective of this study was to assess the association between predisposing variables, enabling conditions and need and help seeking behavior for mental distress.

The data were collected from a representative sample of the adult Israeli population conducted in 1997 among 1,205 respondents with a 81% response rate. The secondary analysis presented was conducted on a sub-sample of respondents who had reported an experience of mental distress. Multivariate analysis revealed that among those reporting severe distress, members of the Clalit or Meuhedet health plans had a higher probability of seeking formal help. Arabs had a lower probability of seeking help from formal agencies and a higher probability of turning to informal sources. The study findings can assist welfare services in responding to the needs of people with mental distress.

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