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Impact of unauthorized mental health practitioners on client's self-esteem and social interaction anxiety

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Abstract
This study examines the psychological effects of consulting unauthorized mental health practitioners (UMHPs) in India, focusing specifically on self-esteem and social interaction anxiety (SIA). This research aims to explore the relationship between self-esteem and SIA among clients who sought guidance from UMHPs, assess the impact of self-esteem on SIA, and compare the levels of self-esteem and SIA between metropolitan and non-metropolitan clients. The study tested two primary hypotheses: (1) clients who consult unauthorized mental health practitioners experience lower self-esteem and higher levels of social interaction anxiety, and (2) clients from metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas will show significant differences in self-esteem and SIA. A total of 144 participants, all of whom had consulted unauthorized mental health practitioners, were surveyed. Data collection involved Pearson's correlation and linear regression analysis to assess the relationship between self-esteem and SIA, and independent samples t-tests to compare the two groups' self-esteem and SIA scores. The results revealed that self-esteem and SIA were negatively correlated ($r = -0.453$, $p < .001$), confirming that lower self-esteem is associated with higher levels of social interaction anxiety. Additionally, regression analysis showed that self-esteem significantly predicted SIA ($\beta = -1.31$, $p < .001$), explaining 20.5% of the variance in SIA levels. However, no significant differences were found between metropolitan and non-metropolitan clients in either selfesteem or SIA, which led to the rejection of the second hypothesis. This suggests that the psychological impact of UMHPs may be consistent across different geographic contexts

Keywords: Unauthorized mental health practitioners, mental health, self esteem, social anxiety

Introduction
mental health continues to rise in India, so does the demand for good psychologists and therapists [1]. still, a critical issue persists do individualities seeking internal health support truly understand who's good to give them guidance and fruitful insights about themselves. This highlights the ethical responsibility of psychological expert to give accurate, substantiation- grounded care. still, the growing presence of unauthorized mental wellness advisor health (UNMPs) — those lacking honoured qualifications yet offering mind centered guidance — raises significant enterprises.

The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 (MHCA) individual not registered as mental health professionals are considered unqualified to give assessment, diagnosis, therapy &counselling. Despite this, several groups continue to operate outside the law, including self-proclaimed Therapists - individuals calling themselves "therapists" or "counselors" without accredited degrees in psychology or psychiatry. Number of them tutored knowledge from social media, self-study like reading psychological books or watching videos on YouTube limited online. Life Trainers & Motivational Speakers - While offer guidance about enhancement strategies, they lack the formal clinical training required to accurately assess, diagnose and treat mental disorder. Religious & Spiritual Healers - Faith healers, babas, tantriks, exorcists, and energy healers claim to cure internal ailments including those related to mental health, despite lacking scientific backing or clinical training in psychology and psychiatry but through supernatural or spiritual means [2]. Practitioner with no RCI license - falsely presenting themselves as psychologists or psychiatrists without valid enrolment under the State Mental Health Authority (SMHA). Some retain fake degrees or expired licenses. The adding reliance on unauthorized interpreters poses serious pitfalls to individuals struggling with mental health conditions, particularly low self-esteem and social

interaction anxiety, face significant risks when seeking help from unqualified practitioners. These risks can lead to emotional distress, worsened symptoms, and greater difficulty in social interactions. This study seeks to explore the impact of unqualified mental health practitioners (UMHPs, on client's self-esteem and social interaction anxiety while examining the cognitive impulses and legal loopholes that contribute to their wide presence [3].

Research Methodology

Aim: This study in undertaken to investigate the impact of unauthorized mental health practitioner on client's self-esteem and social interaction anxiety in India.

Research Design: In this study, a quantitative research method has been used to examine the correlation between self-esteem and social interaction anxiety among individuals who have consulted unauthorized mental health practitioners.

Sample Size: A total of 144 participants were included in the study. Due to the stigma surrounding consultations with unauthorized mental health practitioners, it was challenging to recruit individuals from this background, leading to a smaller sample size than initially anticipated.

Data Collection Methods: scales used were Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and The Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) by Mattick and Clarke.

Data Analysis: All data was conducted through Jamovi2 software. Firstly, descriptive statistics were analyzed to access the demographic characteristics of the sample. Secondly, to access the impact of the data, independent t-test, Simple linear regression test was conducted and for relationship between data Pearson correlation test was used. Significance was assessed at the $p<.05$ level

Findings

Impact of Self-Esteem on Social Interaction Anxiety

Linear regression analysis revealed that self-esteem significantly and negatively predicted social interaction anxiety among individuals who sought help from unauthorized mental health practitioners ($\beta = -1.31$, $p < .001$). The model explained 20.5% of the variance in social interaction anxiety, indicating that lower self-esteem is associated with higher anxiety in social situations.

Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Social Interaction Anxiety

A moderate, statistically significant negative correlation was found between self-esteem and social interaction anxiety ($r = -0.453$, $p < .001$). This means that individuals with lower self-esteem tend to experience higher levels of social interaction anxiety, highlighting a critical psychological risk associated with seeking guidance from unqualified practitioners.

These findings collectively emphasize that self-esteem is a key factor influencing social interaction anxiety, regardless of the geographical background. Moreover, the use of unauthorized mental health services may fail to address or even exacerbate psychological issues, calling attention to the need for regulated, professional mental health support systems.

Discussion

This study examined the psychological impact of consulting unauthorized mental health practitioners (UMHPs) in India, particularly focusing on self-esteem and social interaction anxiety (SIA). The findings highlight a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and social interaction anxiety among individuals who sought help from UMHPs. Regression analysis revealed that lower self-esteem is associated with higher levels of social anxiety, with self-esteem explaining 20.5% of the variance in SIA. These results support the first hypothesis, indicating that clients of unauthorized practitioners tend to have reduced self-esteem and elevated social anxiety, suggesting harmful psychological effects. Additionally, Pearson correlation analysis confirmed a moderate negative correlation between self-esteem and SIA ($r = -.453$, $p < .001$), reinforcing the consistency and significance of the relationship. The study underscores the need for ethical, evidence-based mental health interventions and raises concern about the psychological risks associated with relying on unqualified mental health providers, especially in regions where access to professional services may be limited.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights the significant psychological consequences of consulting unauthorized mental health practitioners in India, particularly in terms of reduced self-esteem and increased social interaction anxiety. The findings demonstrate a clear and statistically significant negative relationship between self-esteem and social anxiety, suggesting that individuals with lower self-worth who rely on unqualified practitioners may be at greater risk for experiencing heightened levels of anxiety in social settings. These results lend support to the hypothesis that unauthorized mental health services can have detrimental effects on clients' mental well-being. The study emphasizes the urgent need for stricter regulation and awareness around mental health services in India, especially to protect vulnerable populations in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. Promoting access to ethical, evidence-based mental health care is crucial to ensure individuals receive appropriate support. Future research should explore additional psychological outcomes of engaging with UMHPs and advocate for stronger mental health literacy and professional accountability to mitigate the risks posed by unqualified practitioners.

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