



Help-seeking behaviour and the Internet: An investigation among Australian adolescents

Jonathan Nicholas¹, Kylie Oliver¹, Kylie Lee¹ and Matt O'Brien²

1. The Inspire Foundation, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

2. Centre for Adolescent Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of a brief school-based intervention on help-seeking behaviour among Australian adolescents. The aim of the intervention was to encourage adolescents to seek help, focusing on the use of the *Reach Out!* website (www.reachout.com.au) as a help-seeking source. Male and female adolescents were compared. The evaluation involved 243 students from ten government and non-government schools across rural and regional Victoria. They received a presentation that contained information on *Reach Out!*, what to do if they or a friend was going through a tough time, and help-seeking options. Questionnaires assessing help-seeking knowledge, intentions, behaviour, and use of *Reach Out!* to seek help were administered six months following the presentations. The majority of participants, with more females than males, knew where to go for help and who they could talk to. Almost half of the participants had been to the *Reach Out!* website following the presentation, and approximately two-thirds reported that they would use *Reach Out!* to seek help if they were going through a tough time. There were no significant gender differences in visiting *Reach Out!* or in intending to visit it. The results demonstrate that young people in Australia are likely to use the Internet, and especially *Reach Out!*, to seek help when they are going through tough times.

Keywords

help-seeking, internet, adolescents, gender differences, mental health, mental health literacy