

## Hazardous Attitudes: A study identifying mental healthcare avoidance behaviors and attitudes in a collegiate aviation student population

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# HAZARDOUS ATTITUDES: A STUDY IDENTIFYING MENTAL HEALTHCARE AVOIDANCE BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES IN A COLLEGIATE AVIATION STUDENT POPULATION



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## ABSTRACT

Previous research has shown that college students are a population that is prone to mental health issues that can adversely affect their academic success and quality of life (Jennings et al., 2017). College students choosing to study Aerospace have a unique set of stressors in addition to anxiety associated with the college experience.

The current research seeks to identify perceived barriers to mental health service utilization by the collegiate aviation student population. This study seeks to uncover students' perceptions that result in **mental health service avoidance or utilization by this unique population**. By identifying these commonly perceived barriers, the intent is to provide helpful information to aviation education programs to help students better understand the mental health services available.

## OBJECTIVE

The overarching goal of the present research is to identify the healthcare avoidance behaviors of Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) Department of Aerospace students.

The research seeks to explore the relationship between student **attitudes** towards mental health services and actual **utilization** of mental health services among students.

1. What healthcare avoidance behaviors are most prevalent among MTSU Aerospace students?
2. Is there a relationship between **attitudes** and mental health service **avoidance behaviors** among MTSU Aerospace students?
3. Are specific **subgroups** of students at an increased risk of experiencing healthcare avoidance behavior? (ie: ages, military experience, flight ratings, gender, etc.)

## PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Quantitative Data analysis will be completed after survey completion (May 2024). However, the current responses indicate some interesting observations even with such a preliminary dataset. The results of the *Openness to Seeking Treatment in Emotional Problems* show only 25% of respondents would not seek professional help when struggling with personal value (Q11). Nearly the same percentage (23%) feel that their intellectual value is tied to professional help (Q9). Expanding research will seek to determine if any of the demographic groups (represented through the pie charts) are identified in this area. Interestingly, only 7% of students were Undecided on whether seeking professional help (Therapy) would create the feeling of being inadequate.

## METHODOLOGY

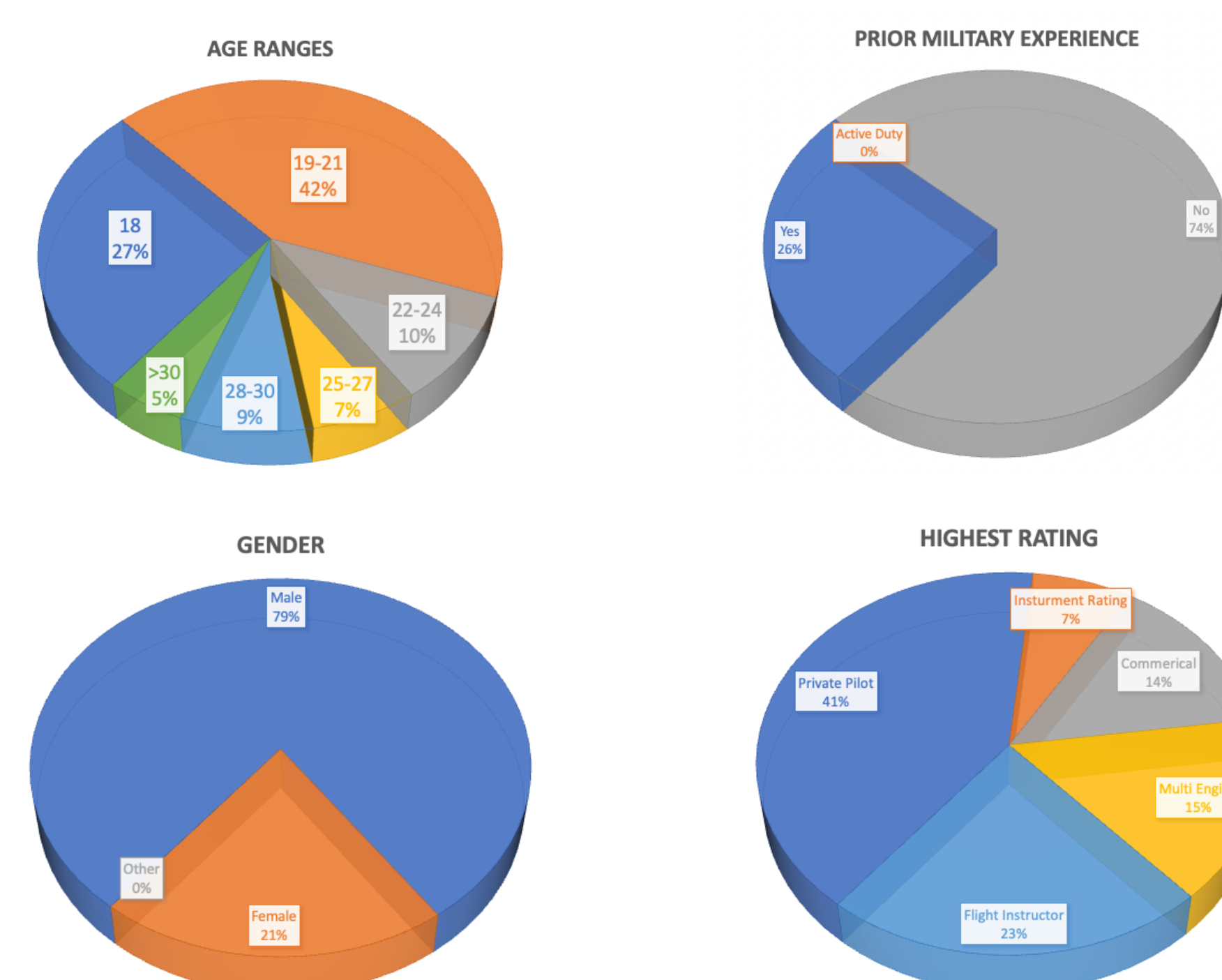
To simplify the project, existing and verified Instruments were used as the survey questions with minor adaptations to the collegiate aviation population sampled.

There are three categories of survey items: demographic data, mental health service avoidance behaviors (adapted from Hoffman's Instrument), and the *Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale - Short Form (ATSPPHS-SF)*.

Sample ATSPPH-SF Questions are provided along with preliminary responses along with existing demographic information. **No data analysis has been completed on demographic information at this time.**

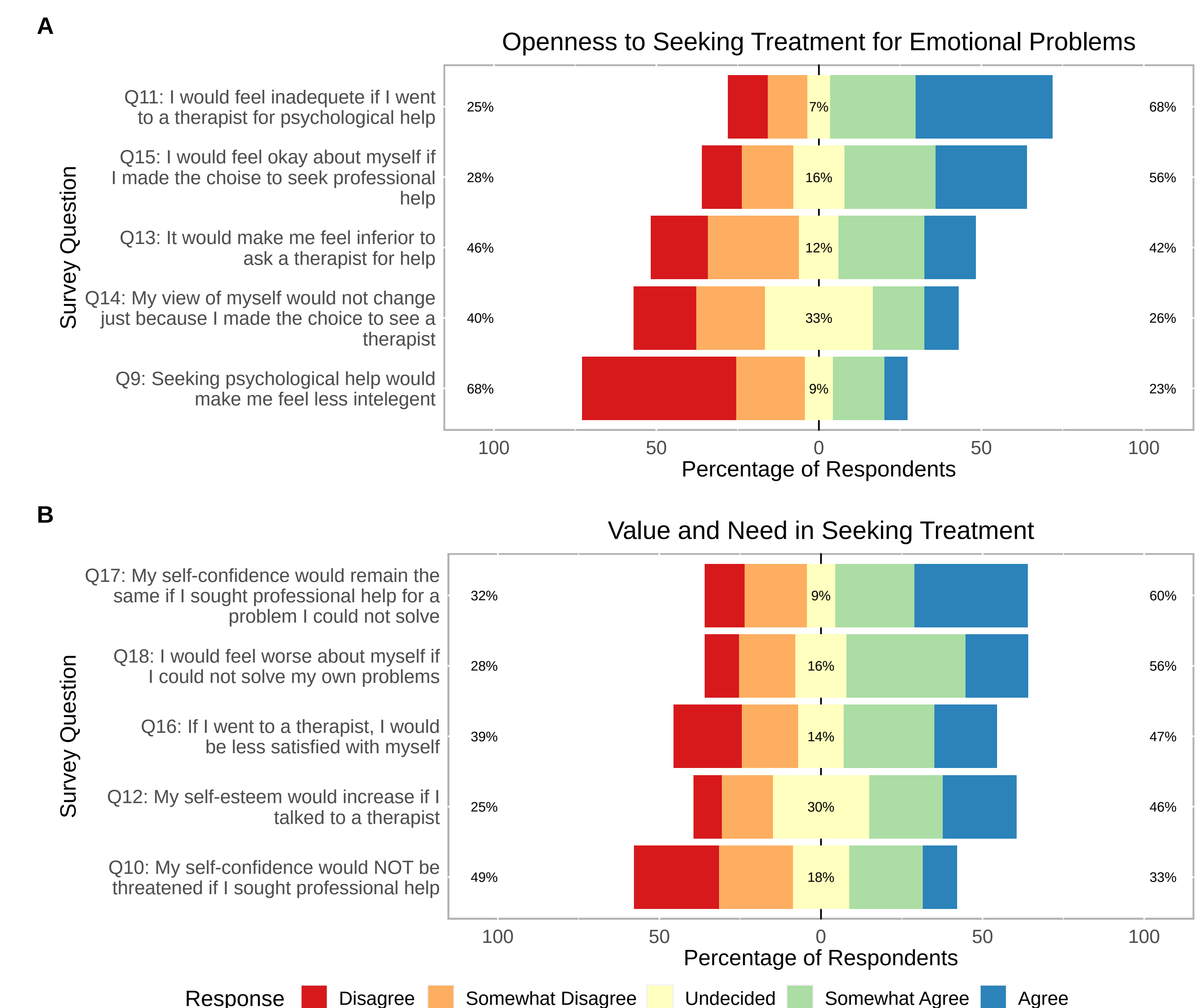
n = 57 responses.

## SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS



*Value and Need in Seeking Treatment* had no dynamic qualitative shifts although a larger percentage (32%) of students were undecided as to how self-esteem might improve if they spoke to a therapist (Q12). In addition to this, respondents to Q14 in the *Openness to Seeking Treatment* questions also were undecided to how personal esteem would change in relation to seeing a therapist.

As an extremely preliminary dataset (less than 1 month of data collection), these conclusions are simply observations of the existing data. As data collection continues, better demographic representations and population sampling will allow for more thorough analysis of students' behaviors and attitudes concerning mental health treatment.



## EXPANDING RESEARCH

After thorough analysis of this research at MTSU is completed, it is hoped that this survey will be expanded to other Aerospace Programs.

It is vital to understand the behaviors and attitudes of Aerospace students across differing universities to get a better idea of their perceptions and behaviors.

Additionally, subgroups (gender, age, experience, and military service) will be analyzed for any groups that indicate potential higher risk than others.

To connect with PI Harley Waters on LinkedIn, scan QR code below:

