

Development and psychometric evaluation of the new scale-based measure of mental health literacy for healthcare students and professionals

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Background and Aims

Mental health literacy (MHL) is an evolving construct with distinct components. To date, there are no published scales assessing MHL of health professionals and students. This study aims to develop a new scale-based measure of MHL in the health professional group, which assesses multiple components of MHL and its psychometric properties.

Methods

The participants were undergraduates from department of medicine and department of public health among 11 universities in Taiwan. The development of the Mental Health Literacy Scale for the Health Professional Group (MHLS-HPG) was done over three key stages: 1) measure development based on the latest definition of MHL, a narrative literature review, and focus group interviews including professionals across the disciplines in healthcare to confirm content validity, 2) pilot testing (n=32), and 3) scale construction, item reduction through item analysis and factor analysis (including exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis), and assessment of internal consistency, convergent validity, concurrent validity and known group validity (n=1294).

Results

Twenty-six items with five factors were generated: obtaining and maintaining positive mental health, recognition of mental illness, reducing mental illness stigma, help-seeking efficacy, and help-seeking attitude. The internal consistency for the total scale was good ($\alpha = 0.81$). The α values for the five subscales ranged from 0.70 (recognition of mental illness) to 0.87 (obtaining and maintaining positive mental health). Higher MHL was associated with lower social distance and better mental health, respectively. Participants having familiarity with mental illness had higher MHL than their counterparts.

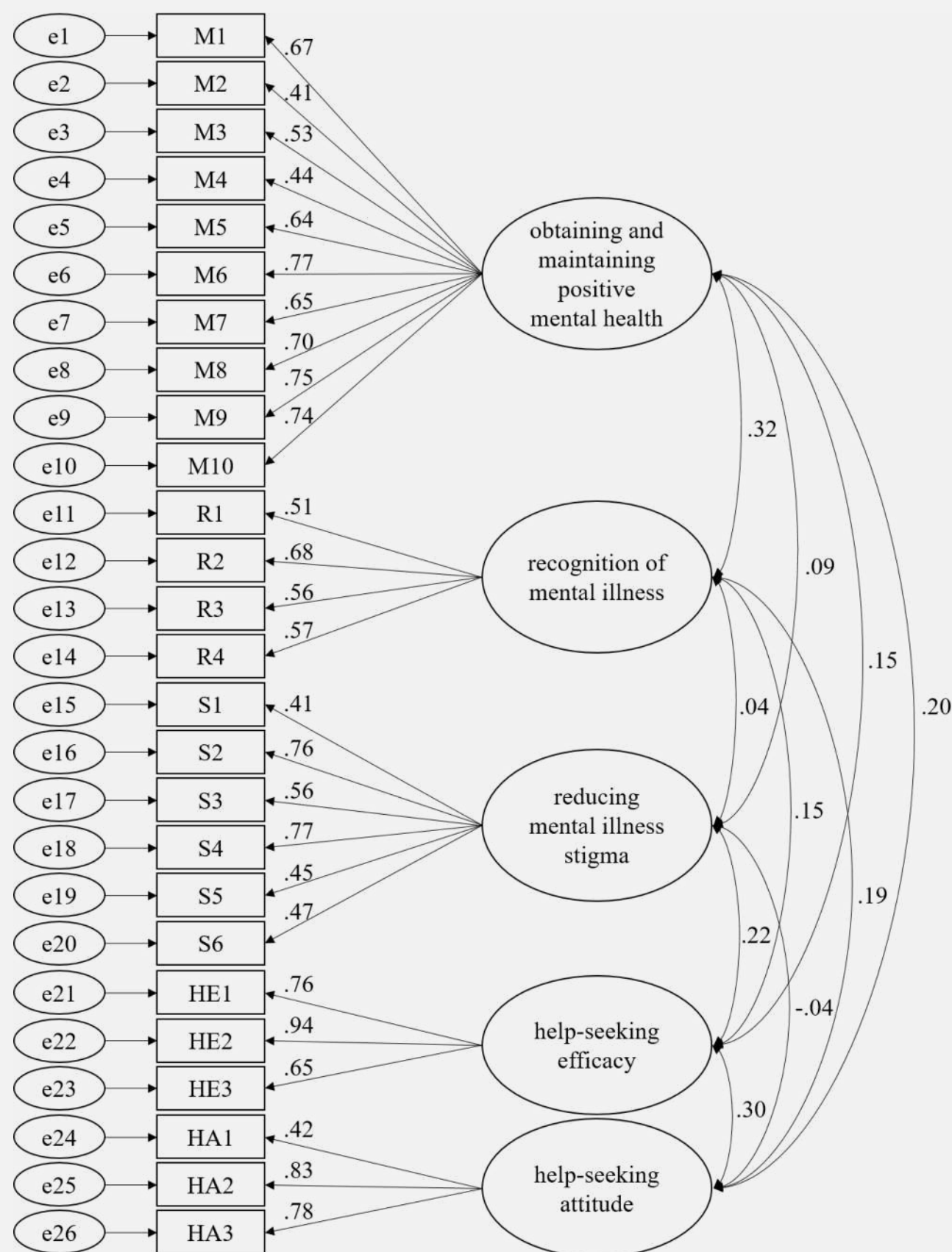


Figure.1. Final model. Note. Model fit: $\chi^2 = 696.88$ ($p < 0.001$), $\chi^2/df = 2.41$, GFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.047, SRMR = 0.049, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91.

Table.1. Internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha Coefficient) for MHLS-PHS.

Scales	No. of Items	Alpha Reliability
MHLS-HPS-M	10	0.87
MHLS-HPS-R	4	0.70
MHLS-HPS-S	6	0.76
MHLS-HPS-HE	3	0.81
MHLS-HPS-HA	3	0.72
MHLS-HPS-Total	26	0.81

Notes: M: obtaining and maintaining positive mental health; R: recognition of mental illness; S: reducing mental illness stigma; HE: help-seeking efficacy; and HA: help-seeking attitude

Conclusions

A valid and reliable five-dimensional instrument of MHL for the health professional group was developed. Our findings have the potential to complement and expand current measures of MHL. This measure can be used in assessing levels of MHL and in determining the impacts of interventions to improve MHL in health professionals and students.