

Chapter 8

Understanding Masculinity and Its Influence on Men's Mental Health

Diana McCullough

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7471-0043>
Methodist University, USA

ABSTRACT

Understanding the intricacies of masculinity and its influence on men's mental health is essential for mental health counselors, therapists, psychologists, and social workers specializing in men's mental health. Furthermore, mental health graduate students and researchers will find this chapter valuable as it provides a strong evidence-based foundation for their work. Additionally, professionals in academic and research settings focused on gender studies and mental health will benefit from this comprehensive exploration of men's engagement in therapeutic settings. This chapter aims to equip practitioners with the knowledge and tools necessary to successfully engage male clients, reduce barriers to mental health services, and empower men on their healing and growth journey.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-1459-3.ch008

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In the understanding of mental health, there exists a landscape of intricate nuances that shape our understanding and treatment of individuals. Men, just like women, grapple with their own set of unique challenges, emotions, and vulnerabilities, with more than 1 in 10 of men having experienced some form of depression and less than half of them seek some form of treatment (National Institute Mental Health, [NIMH], 2024). Recent, North American research has indicated that men make up 75% of suicide and 75% of substance use disorder cases, when in Canada alone, there were 3,890 suicides in 2009 (Affleck et al., 2018). Yet, for too long, the narrative surrounding men's mental health has been shrouded in silence and stigmatization. A review of literature has shown us that six million men in the United States are affected by depression every year and they are also more likely to misuse drugs than women (Chatmon, 2020). In this era of enlightenment and progress, it is time to dig deep into the uncharted territory of men's mental health and explore the intricate intersection with traditional masculinity. As researches have so far as to annotate that men this notion of masked depression which is distinct and unrecognized (Affleck et al., 2018). Welcome to a groundbreaking journey through the pages of this chapter, designed with the discerning mind of higher education in focus. Unfortunately, American men have been subjected to a culture where the standards of the "idea" of masculinity" are killing them due to the refusal of seeking professional help.

In the following chapters, we will embark on a multidimensional exploration of men's mental health, guided by the beacon of academic research and thoughtful introspection. The intention is not to generalize or stereotype, but to unravel the complex tapestry that forms the experience of men's mental well-being. We recognize that every individual's journey is unique, and the intersection between masculinity and mental health is a mosaic of personal stories, sociocultural influences, and biological factors. By dissecting this intersection, we hope to shed light on the challenges that men face and, more importantly, provide insights into potential solutions and pathways to their healing.

It is a relationship that has perplexed researchers, clinicians, and society at large for decades. How does the traditional concept of masculinity impact the emotional well-being of men? What societal pressures and expectations contribute to the silent suffering of countless individuals? How can we, as educators and students, contribute to a more inclusive, empathetic, and progressive understanding of men's mental health? We will also explore the development of models that attempt to explain the impact of traditional masculinity on mental health. These models, crafted with meticulous research and critical analysis, serve as our navigational tools through the uncharted waters of men's emotional landscapes. By examining these models and their real-world implications, we aim to equip the next generation of scholars and practitioners with the knowledge and empathy required to address the unique mental health challenges faced by men. It is important to approach this

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