

## **Abstract**

The lifetime prevalence of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), as reported for South Africa, is 9.7%. However, significant cultural differences occur in the clinical presentation of MDD which are connected to notions of religion, social principles and norms of relationships. With this in mind, this study explores the extent to which Hindu community members' knowledge of MDD, their beliefs about the aetiology of MDD and their attitudes towards people with MDD impacted their perceptions on the care and management of MDD as well as their help seeking behaviours. The study also explored the extent to which Hindu religious identity mediates or moderates the relationship between aetiology, knowledge and attitudes towards MDD and the care and management of MDD and help seeking behaviour. A questionnaire consisting of a demographics section, a religious identity scale, a MDD knowledge, attitudes and practices scale and the attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help scale was completed by a convenience sample of 264 Hindus from Johannesburg and surrounding areas. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analyses. Participants in this study had a moderate religious identity and generally positive attitudes towards MDD. This sample believed that stress was the main cause of MDD and that talking to their friends, family and their general practitioner would be the most beneficial in terms of care and management of MDD. Participants also had positive attitudes towards seeking professional help. Two multiple regression analyses were conducted with the attitudes towards professional help seeking as well as all the care and management factors as the dependent variables and religious identity, knowledge of MDD, attitudes towards MDD and all four aetiological factors of MDD as the independent variables. These analyses yielded varying results. Following these analyses, religious identity was explored as both a potential mediator and moderator variable between attitudes towards MDD and help seeking behaviours. These results are discussed within the broader debates on depression and its manifestation across cultures.

**Keywords:** help seeking behaviours; Hindu community; Major Depressive Disorder (MDD); religious identity, South Africa