



A Comprehensive Investigation into Mental Health Challenges Among University Students in Pakistan: Causes and Remedial Approaches

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A total of 300 individuals aged 18 to 27 took part in a survey examining mental health concerns among university students. The research review explores these problems' underlying origins and suggests workable solutions. The impact of peer pressure, technology use, familial expectations, financial restrictions, societal and cultural standards, academic stress, and economic uncertainty on students' mental health is emphasized in particular by the study. Finding out how common mental health issues are among Pakistani university students, identifying risk factors that are linked to these issues, and investigating the complex relationships between academic stress, employment instability, and mental health outcomes are the main goals of the research. Utilizing a quantitative research approach and a cross-sectional design, information was gathered from 300 university students in Pakistan using stratified random sampling. Data analysis indicates that students experience mild anxiety, hopelessness, tension, loneliness, and sleep disturbances.

Key Words: mental health, Cultural Standard, Academic Stress, University Students

Introduction:

Students are a special group of people going through a difficult time in their lives that is full of stressful situations. Higher education presents more difficult coursework, difficult tasks, and projects as the student's advance. Furthermore, living in dorms poses certain challenges that call for efficient coping mechanisms. Teachers now have an obligation to help children learn how to manage these stressors in a way that promotes stable mental health.

Depression is a multifaceted illness that has a significant negative impact on society and impairs social, interpersonal, vocational, and individual functioning. Fear that has been internalized can be imagined or actual, and this is what is known as anxiety. It frequently results from unintentional responses to depressive tendencies, which can intensify into extreme anxiety or panic. In addition to enduring psychological and physical symptoms like trembling hands, parched lips, frequent urination, and restless sleep, anxious students may also have trouble learning and solving problems. Stress is characterized as a danger that jeopardizes our health. When an organism's ability to adapt is not in line with what the environment requires, there are biological and psychological consequences. Previous research on mental health difficulties indicates that students may experience mental health problems because they are expected to be well-prepared for future expectations and for having more obligations in their social and academic lives. These problems vary in incidence and prevalence throughout the world for a variety of reasons. Currently, mental health

problems are recognized as a critical public health concern, contributing to one-third of global disability.

University years are more emotionally and academically demanding than almost any other level of study. Currently, an individual is facing several expectations and hurdles that might potentially lead to a variety of psychological, social, and physical issues[1]. The social and emotional identities of university students are undergoing changes, rendering them more vulnerable to mental health problems. Extensive study has focused on the prevalence of mental health difficulties among university students, revealing that a significant proportion of students globally experience such issues. Studies have also demonstrated an increase in both the number and severity of mental health problems among college students[2]. The phrase "mental health" can have varied definitions and conceptualizations across different cultures, communities, and societies. One understands of mental health and the suitable counseling and intervention methods are contingent upon their perspective of the essence and root causes of mental health problems[3]. College students encounter developmental hurdles, with certain individuals grappling with intricate and enduring problems. University students commonly face mood disorders, maladaptive behaviors, interpersonal difficulties, and a weakened sense of self. University students commonly experience stress, anxiety, eating disorders, depression symptoms, and other psychological challenges, which significantly impact their mental and academic well-being. Reports from university and college counseling centers over the past decade indicate that approximately 33% of university students have a diagnosable psychological condition. Additionally, 25% of incoming college students are experiencing emotional disturbances and require mental health care[4]. These reports highlight a shift in the types of issues students are seeking counseling services for, moving from developmental concerns to more severe psychological problems. Moreover, the research uncovered that female pupils exhibited a higher propensity for displaying symptoms of anxiety disorders and profound melancholy[5].

Researchers assessed 274 countrywide Counseling Centre establishments[6]. Reports from the heads of counseling centers indicate a rise in both the number and intensity of psychiatric problems among students over the last five years. Based on the survey findings, a significant proportion of university students, specifically 85%, have severe psychological issues[7]. The data indicates that 71% of students face difficulties in the learning process, 38% exhibit symptoms of eating disorders, 45% experience challenges related to alcohol consumption, 33% express concerns regarding sexual assault on campus, and 49% engage in drug usage. Overall, around 16% of clients at the counseling center experienced notable psychological problems. Furthermore, a staggering 84% of counseling center directors voiced grave concern on the prevalence of students facing substantial psychological problems[8]. A longitudinal study was undertaken by researchers to determine the duration of mental health difficulties among college students[9]. An examination of several mental health conditions was carried out at two separate points in time, revealing that nearly half of the students experienced at least one mental health condition during both the first assessment and the subsequent evaluation. Furthermore, the data revealed that 60% of university students who experienced mental health concerns initially continued to experience mental health issues after a span of two years. Researchers[10] investigated the correlation between personality traits, mental health disorders, and feelings of isolation among university students in Malaysia. The data indicate a direct relationship between loneliness and mental health problems, as 34.4% of university students reported experiencing mental health concerns[11].

Concurrent alcohol-related issues and depression. The sample comprised 2658 individuals from six separate institutions. The findings suggest that individuals with alcohol

dependence experienced a significant prevalence of severe depression, with a rate of 23.8%. Additionally, there was a notable occurrence of alcohol abuse, with a rate of 17.2%, seen within a two-week period[12].

Performed a comprehensive investigation on the frequency of anxiety, melancholy, and stress levels among a group of 1617 Turkish students[13]. The Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale was employed, utilizing its Turkish translation. Similarly, a research conducted in Ankara investigated the relationship between life satisfaction, anxiety, and depression among university students. The findings unveiled a robust and inverse link between life satisfaction and both anxiety and sadness. Within the sample, 27.1% displayed a severity level of depression that was categorized as "moderate or higher". Furthermore, 41.1% and 27% of the participants exhibited stress and anxiety levels that were categorized as "moderate and above", respectively. Female students displayed a higher level of tension and anxiety in comparison to their male peers[14].

Most pupils facing issues do not receive any type of therapy or counseling. Psychological disorders among university students can result in both immediate and enduring consequences, including diminished work capacity and subpar academic achievement. There is a favorable correlation between mental health difficulties and higher consumption of alcohol and nicotine[15]. The necessity and significance of student counseling are strengthened by the observation that the provision of these services leads to an increase in demand for them over a period of time. There is a growing awareness among individuals about the detrimental impact of mental health difficulties and their potential consequences on student's life.

The issue of mental health concerns among Pakistani university students has been mostly overlooked. Researchers examined the mental well-being of medical students; the study results reveal that 39% of the students experienced indications of low mood, 36% reported anxiety symptoms, and 25% exhibited signs of depression, alongside challenges in their relationships and academic pursuits[16]. A recent study investigated the mental health patterns of 803 university students, revealing four major types of problems: experiencing dysfunction, diminished confidence, inadequate self-regulation, and susceptibility to worry. Evidence suggests that the incidence of mental health problems among college students is increasing and is now being investigated by researchers. These conclusions are corroborated by numerous prevalence investigations. The focus of research has predominantly been on mental health disorders rather than problems in the context of university life. This is because university is a transitional phase where students face various demands and challenges. Consequently, it may not be justifiable to diagnose them with mental disorders due to the fluctuating demands and pressures they experience. Moreover, the frequency of occurrence differs significantly as a result of the utilization of diverse evaluation tools, differing levels of severity criteria, and variable operational interpretations of mental health issues[17].

In Pakistan, there is a dearth of systematic research aimed at assessing the extent and impact of mental health issues experienced by university students, despite the presence of several methodological challenges. It is crucial to conduct a prevalence survey to establish a basis for the ongoing improvement of student counseling services, as supported by a substantial amount of evidence. A considerable proportion of university students experience severe mental health issues that can hinder their capacity to operate effectively.

Objective:

1. To determine how common mental health problems are among college students in Pakistan.
2. To determine the variables associated with mental health issues among college students in Pakistan.

3. To investigate the connection between career uncertainty and academic stress and the consequences for mental health.[18].

Material and Method

The quantitative research technique used to evaluate mental health and related determinants among Pakistani university students shows great promise for addressing the current pressing issue. The study uses a cross-sectional research approach to provide a thorough overview of Pakistani university students' mental health at a particular moment in time. By utilizing a stratified random sample technique, the results can be more broadly applied because a variety of student demographics are included. In order to obtain standardized responses on the many factors influencing mental health such as academic stress, financial restrictions, social support, technology usage, and cultural influences the data collection procedure makes use of organized surveys and questionnaires. By carefully verifying the survey results and adhering to ethical guidelines, the study aims to maintain the validity and privacy of the collected data[19].

Data Analysis:

The data analysis stage is essential for identifying common mental health problems among college students and comprehending how these problems relate to different factors. Descriptive and inferential statistics will be utilized to attain a thorough comprehension of the intricacies associated with mental health issues among university students in Pakistan.[20]. The research aims of the study are well-aligned with its design, which centers on measuring the incidence of mental diseases, identifying associated variables, assessing the influence of employment uncertainty and academic stress, and investigating the relationship between social media use and mental health. It is predicted that the projected results will make a substantial contribution to the current body of information regarding mental health in the context of Pakistani university students. Decision-makers will be able to make more informed decisions and consider potential treatments to address mental health issues in this population with the help of this important information[21].

Results and Discussion:

The table 1 gives data on the prevalence of mental health issues among university students in Pakistan. The information is based on a sample of 300 students and shows the standard deviations and mean scores for every individual mental health issue. Standardized scales with scores ranging from 1 to 5 were used in the survey; higher scores indicated heightened levels of the corresponding mental health condition.

Table 1:

Overview of mental health issues faced by university students in Pakistan:

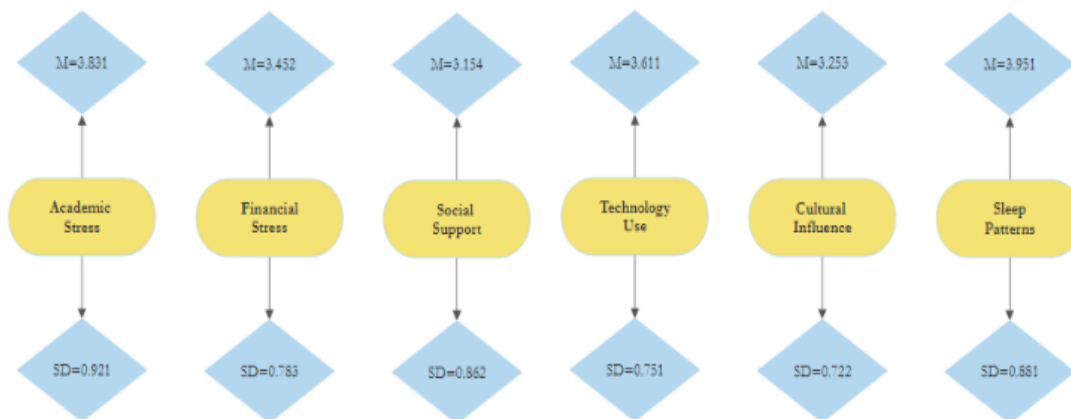
Mental Health Concerns	Mean	SD
Anxiety	3.471	0.873
Depression	2.883	0.765
Stress	3.274	0.914
Loneliness	3.192	0.786
Sleep Disturbances	2.989	0.852

With a standard deviation of 0.873 and an average anxiety score of 3.471, Pakistani university students generally report moderate levels of worry, while there are some noticeable individual variances. The average score for depression among students is 2.883, with a standard deviation of 0.765. This indicates that the majority of students have moderate levels of depression, although some report more severe symptoms. With an average stress score of 3.274 and a standard deviation of 0.914, students generally experience a moderate level of stress, although there are large individual differences in stress levels across students. The average score for loneliness is 3.192, with a standard deviation of 0.786.

This indicates that, although most students report feeling somewhat lonely, others report feeling much more alone. With a mean score of 2.989 and a standard deviation of 0.852 for sleep disturbances, it is clear that this is a frequent problem. This indicates that while various students report varying degrees of sleep disruption, students generally suffer modest sleep disruptions.

Figure 1:

Elements Associated with Mental Health Issues Among University Students in Pakistan.



The mean scores and standard deviations for different aspects of mental health issues among Pakistani university students are shown in Figure 1. The information comes from 300 students who were chosen at random to represent different colleges around the country. Higher scores, which range from 1 to 5, are assigned by the standardized measures used in the surveys to reflect heightened levels of the relevant mental health difficulties.

The data on academic stress indicates that, on average, students experience a moderate level of stress, with significant variation in stress levels among students. The mean score for academic stress is 3.831, with a standard deviation of 0.921. The data on financial stress indicates that there is significant diversity in the level of financial stress experienced by various students, with a mean score of 3.452 and a standard deviation of 0.783 indicating that financial stress is generally of moderate intensity. With a standard deviation of 0.862 and an average score of 4.154 for social support, pupils exhibit a high degree of social support. The low standard deviation points to a stable social support system among the evaluated pupils, which may operate as a buffer against mental health problems.

With a mean score of 3.611 and a standard deviation of 0.751, the data on technology use indicates that pupils utilize it moderately on average. It can be inferred from the comparatively tiny standard deviation that students' technology usage patterns are largely consistent. With an average score of 3.253 and a standard deviation of 0.722, cultural factors appear to have little bearing on mental health problems among students. The standard deviation shows how cultural influences affect mental health in a variable way. With an average score of 3.951 and a standard variation of 0.881 for sleep patterns, students typically get the recommended amount of sleep. The comparatively high standard deviation, however, points to some variation in the students' evaluated sleep quality.

Table 2:

The Relationship of Academic Stress and Career Uncertainty and Mental Health Outcomes

Variables	Mental Health	Significance
Academic Stress and Anxiety	0.538	0.001

Academic Stress and Depression	0.415	0.015
Academic Stress and Stress	0.523	0.005
Career Uncertainty and Anxiety	0.324	0.092
Career Uncertainty and Depression	0.381	0.045
Career Uncertainty and Stress	0.293	0.112

The association coefficients between academic stress, career uncertainty, and three mental health outcomes stress, anxiety, and depression are shown in this table for university students in Pakistan. In particular, there is a modestly positive correlation ($r = 0.538$) between anxiety and academic stress, indicating a relationship. This suggests that students may experience elevated levels of anxiety as their academic stress increases. Notably, this correlation exceeds the significance threshold of 0.001, demonstrating high statistical significance and a low probability of occurring by chance.

Academic pressure and depression have a somewhat positive correlation (0.415) according to the correlation study, indicating a relationship. This implies that higher levels of academic stress are linked to worsening depressive symptoms. The statistical significance level of 0.015 suggests that this relationship is significant even though the relationship is not as strong as it is with anxiety. A moderately positive result of 0.523 indicates an association between general stress and academic stress. As a result, students may feel more stressed out overall when their academic stress increases. The statistical importance of this link is demonstrated by the significance level of 0.005.

A possible positive link is indicated by the correlation value of 0.324 between anxiety and career uncertainty. This implies that students may feel slightly more anxious as career uncertainty rises. Nonetheless, the significance level of 0.092 suggests that this link is not statistically significant below the standard cutoff of 0.05. Examining the relationship between professional uncertainty and depression reveals a 0.381 correlation coefficient, indicating a modest positive association. This suggests that there is a relationship between somewhat stronger depressive symptoms and higher employment insecurity levels. The result of 0.045 suggests the presence of a statistically significant relationship at the 0.05 significance level.

Ultimately, the correlation coefficient between career uncertainty and stress is 0.293, suggesting a relatively positive relationship. This shows that when faced with career uncertainty, students may suffer somewhat greater levels of overall stress. It is imperative to acknowledge, nonetheless, that the significance level of 0.112 indicates that this link does not reach statistical significance at the 0.05 threshold.

Conclusion:

The data analysis clarifies how common mental health issues are among Pakistani university students. According to the findings, there is a moderate prevalence of anxiety, depression, stress, loneliness, and trouble sleeping among students. There is, however, a great deal of variation among the individual students, with some exhibiting more severe symptoms. Stress related to school and sleep issues are two major issues that have a detrimental effect on kids' mental health.[22]. It's interesting to see that social support shows up as a barrier against mental health problems. Additionally, the study emphasizes how financial stress and technology use affect mental health outcomes.[23]. Financial stress is relatively common, and technological participation is moderately significant. Although cultural factors appear to have little effect on mental health, it is crucial to recognize that their effects can differ. In summary, these results offer significant understanding of the complex variables impacting Pakistani university students' mental health [24].

Recommendations:

A diversified strategy is needed to address mental health issues among college students. Universities must first and foremost give top priority to programs that increase

public awareness of mental health concerns with the goal of eradicating stigma and motivating students to seek treatment without delay. Universities should provide stress management programs to give students coping skills because academic stress is so common and has a negative impact on mental health[25]. Additionally, colleges should aggressively investigate and improve financial aid programs and scholarships to lessen the financial burden on students, as financial pressure is a significant factor impacting mental health. In order to mitigate the detrimental effects of prolonged screen time on mental health, university programs should prioritize the cultivation of responsible technology usage and the promotion of digital well-being. In order to help students, feel connected and supported throughout their academic journey, universities can play a critical role in developing strong social support networks within their student body.

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