

Mental Health Assessment and Help-Seeking Behavior Among College Students: Basis for Mental Health Program in School

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Abstract— Mental health assessment and help-seeking behavior are critical factors in understanding how college students cope with academic, social, and personal challenges. Awareness of mental health status shapes students' responses to stress, while help-seeking behavior reflects their willingness to access support services. This study aimed to assess the mental health status and determine the help-seeking behavior of college students to inform the enhancement of school-based mental health programs. A comparative descriptive quantitative design was employed. The study was conducted at Medina College–Ozamiz, Philippines, involving 307 college students from various programs, including Nursing, Radiologic Technology, Pharmacy, Medical Technology, and Teacher Education. Total enumeration sampling was used, and data were collected via a structured questionnaire consisting of three parts: demographic profile, Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-42), and a Help-Seeking Behavior questionnaire based on the Health Belief Model. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Kruskal–Wallis tests to examine significant differences across demographic groups. Students exhibited moderate levels of depression, severe levels of anxiety, and mild levels of stress. Help-seeking behavior was generally average, with high perceived susceptibility, severity, benefits, and cues to action, but average perceived barriers. No significant differences were observed in mental health status or help-seeking behavior when grouped by sex, year level, or course. Findings indicate prevalent mental health challenges among students, with general awareness of their condition but moderate engagement in help-seeking due to certain barriers. These results underscore the need for comprehensive and accessible mental health interventions in higher education institutions.

Keywords— mental health, depression, anxiety, stress, help-seeking behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Mental health assessment plays an important role in the lives of college students, as it influences how they understand their emotional experiences and respond to academic, social, and personal pressures. Students differ in how they interpret their thoughts and feelings, and this awareness shapes the way they handle stressful situations on campus. Alongside this, help-seeking behavior becomes a significant factor because it reflects how students choose to deal with the mental or emotional concerns they experience. Some students openly reach out for support, while others prefer to keep their struggles to themselves due to personal beliefs or comfort levels. These two variables reveal how students manage their mental well-being in their daily interactions, routines, and challenges in school. By looking into mental health assessment and help-

seeking behavior, it becomes clearer how students navigate their inner experiences and the ways they cope with the demands of college life.

In recent empirical studies, mental health assessment is typically measured through standardised screening tools (e.g., DASS, PHQ-9), which are reported to assess a broad spectrum of distress that relates to student functioning and learning (Zhang et al., 2024), and is suggested to be relevant to describing students' mental health. In addition to measurement research, literature on help-seeking behavior has classified the behaviors and desire of students who perceive mental health needs, indicating that help-seeking is a series of behaviors determined by attitudes, perceived discrimination and internalized stigma; recent surveys and reviews have also found that rates of formal help-seeking vary, but psychological predictors of help-

seeking attitudes are consistent (Zhao et al., 2025). Experimental and cross-sectional studies also provide insights into the mechanisms involved in the relationship between the two variables: psychological constructs, including self-stigma and core self-evaluation, and students' ability to recognize and appraise their symptoms (assessment) influence how assessment relates to actual help-seeking choices (Chen et al., 2025). These recent studies conceptualize mental health assessment as the measurement and self-perception of mental health (which has been demonstrated to co-vary repeatedly); and help-seeking behavior as a multi-faceted response (intentions, attitudes, and actions) to self-perception of mental health, both of which are important variables for the practice and research of mental health on campus.

The guidance counselor, guidance advocate, and selected students from Medina College were interviewed and observed, and it was clear that while many students are aware and know when they need to seek formal help due to feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or troubled, few do so. The guidance counselor commented that only a handful of students with psychological issues would come to the Guidance Office to meet with the guidance counselor, and the majority would keep their issues to themselves and only talk to friends. This pattern suggests that students' self-awareness of their mental health does not always translate into seeking assistance, suggesting a lack of connection between recognizing mental health challenges and taking steps to address them. Students included discomfort in approaching professionals, fear of being judged, and doubt regarding confidentiality as other reasons that lead to not reaching out. The observations highlight a context of misunderstanding related to mental health experiences and the impact they may or may not have on students' willingness to seek help.

Mental health is a growing concern for college students in recent years because of the rising rates of mental illness related to stress, anxiety and depression, which can have a significant impact on student's academic performance, social relations and overall physical health. In view of the importance of these concerns, this study is designed to evaluate the extent

to which the students are mentally healthy, their attitudes regarding the need for help, and their willingness to seek help if needed. The study aims to evaluate the students' mental health status on the sub-variables of depression, anxiety and stress, as well as the variables that affect their willingness to seek mental health services such as perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, and cues to action. Additionally, it explores if there are differences in mental health status and help-seeking across demographic groups (sex, year level and course). The study aims to offer evidence-based insights and suggestions for the creation of specialized mental health initiatives aimed at increasing awareness, minimizing barriers to mental health services, and enhancing the general mental health of students within the college environment.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a comparative descriptive quantitative research design to determine the levels of mental health and help-seeking behavior among college students according to sex, year level, and course. It used statistical methods to identify significant differences between demographic groups in terms of depression, anxiety, stress, and help-seeking factors, including perceived susceptibility, severity, benefits, barriers, and cues for seeking help. The descriptive approach allowed the researchers to assess the students' current mental health conditions and help-seeking patterns without intervention, providing a basis for developing student-centered counseling interventions and appropriate mental health programs.

Research Setting

The study was conducted at Medina College–Ozamiz, a private, non-sectarian higher education institution in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, Philippines. Established in 1963 by Dr. Rico Macan Medina, Sr. and Dr. Beatriz Crisostomo Medina, the institution evolved from the former Medina School of Midwifery into a full-fledged college offering various programs in health sciences, engineering, criminology, arts and sciences, management, and accountancy. The college also provided clinical exposure through its affiliated

tertiary hospital. It primarily served students from Filipino families with limited financial resources by providing accessible and affordable higher education. The institution was considered an appropriate setting for the study because its diverse college student population may experience academic, financial, and personal stressors that could influence their mental health and help-seeking behavior.

Research Respondents

The study involved 400 college students from various programs at Medina College–Ozamiz, including Medical Technology, Pharmacy, College of Teacher Education, Arts and Sciences, and Nursing, representing different year levels. Total enumeration sampling was used, inviting all eligible students to participate. Participants were officially enrolled students aged 18 and above who could understand English or Filipino and provided informed consent, while students on leave or those who declined participation were excluded. Of the 400 students, 307 completed the questionnaire, resulting in a 76.8% response rate. Non-participation was mainly due to academic or clinical responsibilities, inactive enrollment or dropping out, and incomplete responses. The 307 valid responses provided sufficient data for statistical analysis.

Research Instrument

The study used a three-part research instrument to collect data on the respondents' demographic profile, mental health, and help-seeking behavior. Part I gathered demographic information such as sex, year level, and course, which was analyzed using frequency and percentage.

Part II utilized the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-42) by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) to assess depression, anxiety, and stress using a 4-point scale, with scores classified from normal to extremely severe.

Part III consisted of a researcher-made Help-Seeking Behavior Questionnaire based on the Health Belief Model, measuring perceived susceptibility, severity, benefits, barriers, and cues to action through a 5-point Likert scale. The three-part instrument provided quantitative data for assessing students' mental health

and help-seeking tendencies and for determining differences across demographic groups.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedure was conducted systematically and ethically, beginning with securing permission from the Medina College–Ozamiz administration and coordinating with the Guidance Office to identify the target respondents. The researcher explained the study's purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent to the students. The questionnaires, consisting of the DASS-42 and researcher-made Help-Seeking Behavior Questionnaire, were administered through Google Forms, with the researcher and trained assistants available to clarify instructions while ensuring independent responses. Completed responses were electronically collected, checked for completeness, coded, organized, and securely handled for research purposes. Finally, the researcher expressed appreciation to the respondents and college administration, and the collected data were prepared for statistical analysis to determine the students' mental health status and help-seeking behavior.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles to protect the rights, privacy, dignity, and well-being of all respondents, particularly through informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and protection from harm. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and use of data and were assured that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw without consequences. Respondents' identities were protected through coding, secure data handling, and reporting of findings in aggregate form.

The researcher also ensured that the questions posed minimal risk and respected participants' emotional well-being when discussing mental health concerns. Furthermore, honesty, transparency, proper citation, and responsible reporting were maintained throughout the research process in accordance with ethical standards for studies involving human participants.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Frequency and

percentage were used to describe the respondents' demographic profiles and the distribution of DASS-42 severity levels for depression, anxiety, and stress. Mean and standard deviation were used to determine the overall levels and variability of mental health and help-seeking behavior. The Likert scale was used to assign verbal interpretations to the mean scores of help-seeking behavior, while the DASS-42 severity

classification was used to interpret depression, anxiety, and stress as normal, mild, moderate, severe, or extremely severe. Finally, the Kruskal–Wallis test was employed to determine whether significant differences existed in mental health and help-seeking behavior across demographic groups, with a p-value below 0.05 considered statistically significant.

III. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Students	
	f	%
Sex		
Female	207	67.4
Male	78	7.2
LGBTQIA+	22	25.4
Total	307	100
Year Level		
First Year	91	29.6
Second Year	96	31.3
Third Year	93	30.3
Fourth Year	27	8.8
Total	307	100
Course		
BPA	27	8.8
BS&D & BEED	22	7.2
BSMLS	106	34.5
BSN	76	24.8
BSPharm	45	14.7
BSRT	31	10.1
Total	307	100

The study analyzed 307 respondents, with the majority being female (67.4%) and enrolled in health-related programs, particularly BSMLS, BSN, and BSPharm. First- to third-year students were fairly represented, while fourth-year students comprised only 8.8% of the sample.

This uneven distribution suggests that the findings may more strongly reflect the experiences of female and health-science students, limiting generalization to other gender groups, courses, and year levels. The concentration of health-related students may also

influence mental health outcomes because of academic, laboratory, and clinical demands.

This interpretation is supported by recent research showing substantial levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among university students, with depression and stress symptoms reported at approximately 35.4% and 40.2%, respectively (Roy et al., 2025). Therefore, mental health and help-seeking findings should be interpreted according to sex, course, and year level, rather than treating the student population as homogeneous.

Table 2. Level of Mental Health Status Among College Students

Components	Mean	Interpretation
Depression	15.9	Moderate
Anxiety	16.0	Severe
Stress	17.4	Mild

The mean scores for depression (15.9), anxiety (16.0) and stress (17.4) were interpreted as Moderate, Severe, and Mild, respectively, and presented in Table 4.4 for the 307 college students. Overall, the level of stress is moderate, of anxiety severe, and of stress low, indicating that the stress level might be controllable for most people, but the level of anxiety is very high, and the level of depression is fairly high. This pairing suggests a significant mental health problem among students, highlighting the need for institutional support to mental health and prevention.

A closer examination of each component: The mean depression score was moderate indicating that many students may have had depression symptoms that could impact mood, motivation, and functioning; the mean anxiety score was severe, suggesting that anxiety was widespread and intense, which could impact concentration, performance and social functioning; the mean stress was mild, indicating that stress was present, but not as serious as anxiety or depression, although a significant minority may have been higher on the distribution seen in the above tables. These are the average (mean) scores for each mental health problem, and together they indicate a complicated mental health profile, with anxiety being the most serious mental health problem, followed by depression, and then stress prevention. This study's findings were congruent with those found in recent literature with other international studies of university

students' mental health patterns. The pooled prevalence rates for mild depression and severe depression were 35.4% and 13.4%, respectively, and were similar to the rates of moderate depression and severe anxiety found in the present sample, whereas the pooled prevalence rates for mild anxiety and severe anxiety were 40.2% and 16.8%, respectively. Pooled prevalence rates of mild depression and severe depression were 35.4% and 13.4%, respectively, and similar to moderate depression and severe anxiety observed in the present sample, while pooled prevalence rates for mild anxiety and severe anxiety were 40.2% and 16.8%, respectively. Likewise, Haruna, Mohammed and Braimah (2025) reported that the psychological stress levels were high, as 48.9% of the first year undergraduates had depressive symptoms; 75% of the students had anxiety symptoms and 73.3% of students had stress-related symptoms in particular sub-populations of students. Han et al. (2025) conducted a cross-sectional study on university students in China and found high levels of anxiety and stress among the participants, highlighting the importance of promoting mental health awareness and providing targeted interventions for students in higher education. Altogether, these findings indicated that the mild depression, severe anxiety and moderate stress experienced in the current study was in line with the trends being seen worldwide, thus reinforcing the need for institutional mental health programmes and interventions.

Table 3. Level of Help-seeking Behavior among College Students

Components	Mean	Interpretation
Perceived Susceptibility	3.45	High
Perceived Severity	3.51	High
Perceived Benefits	3.45	High
Perceived Barriers	2.78	Average
Cues to Action	3.42	High
Average Mean	3.32	Average

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 “Very Low”, 1.81 – 2.60 “Low”, 2.61 – 3.40 “Average”, 3.41 – 4.20 “High” 4.21 – 5.00 “Very High”

Table 3 showed the result with mean scores for students' help-seeking behaviors on five dimensions (perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, and cues to action). The overall mean average was 3.32 which falls in the "Average" range of help-seeking behavior among the respondents. This indicates that students are aware of the need to seek support, but there's a need to work on promoting proactive and consistent use of mental health supports. The implications suggest that interventions and programs are needed which increase the awareness and desire to seek help among all students.

The students perceived that they had a risk of mental health problems (3.45), mental health problems were serious (3.51), that seeking assistance was beneficial (3.45), and that cues to action (3.42) were influential. However, perceived barriers scored at an "Average" level of 2.78, suggesting that barriers to going for help, including accessibility, stigma and information, moderately affected students' willingness to seek help.

The results suggest that interventions need to focus on decreasing perceived obstacles and emphasizing positive reasons to seek help.

The observations are corroborated by recent empirical studies. A 2024 study showed that university students who perceived they had a higher susceptibility and perceived benefits were more likely to engage in help-seeking behaviors, while those who perceived barriers were less likely to engage in help-seeking behaviors (Koutra, Pantelaiou, & Mavrovides, 2024). Likewise, in 2025, a systematic review and meta-analysis showed that cues to action, self-efficacy and perceived severity were significant predictors of help-seeking intentions among college students, underscoring the need to raise awareness and establish structured support systems (International Journal for Mental Health and Capacity Building, 2025). These studies support the present results in that students are overall more inclined to seek help but addressing down barriers are essential.

Table 4. Test of Significant Difference in the Mental Health Assessment in Terms of Depression

Kruskal Wallis Test	P value	Decision
Depression Vs. Sex	0.383	retain the Ho
Depression Vs. Year Level	0.448	retain the Ho
Depression Vs. Course	0.310	retain the Ho

Note: If $p \leq 0.05$, with a significant difference

Table 4 has been given the test of significant difference for college students mental health assessment on depression, based on the factors sex, year level, and course. Overall, the results showed that there were no significant differences in depression scores in relation to these factors. This means that depressive symptoms were experienced in a comparable way for student groups, suggesting that depression was present regardless of gender, grade or academic program. The implication here was that depression seemed to be spread evenly among respondents and not clustered within any one of the demographic categories.

depression scores for boys and girls. The p value for depression and year level (0.448) indicated that there was no significant difference in level of depression among students in each year level. Similarly, the p-value for depression and course (0.310) showed that there was no significant difference between the depression scores across academic programs. The meaning of these findings was that depression scores were not affected by sex, year level or course, meaning that interventions and mental health programs could be implemented across the entire student population, not just specific student groups.

The significance level for all p-values was greater than 0.05, and thus all the null hypotheses were retained. The p value for depression and sex (0.383) suggested that there was no significant difference between the

The results of the present study were consistent with some but inconsistent with others in recent literature. A study found a high rate of depression and anxiety among university students, but no significant

differences were found across various groups of students, indicating that depression and anxiety were widely felt across all groups (Islam et al., 2020). In another study, the authors noted that among university students, academic uncertainty and career stress in the future were significant contributors to depressive symptoms, more than demographic factors, which

suggests that situational and contextual factors were important influences on students' mental health (Chowdhury et al., 2022). The results supported the implication that depression may be similarly manifested among student populations as was observed in the current results, confirming the results obtained by previous researchers.

Table 5. Test of Significant Difference in the Mental Health Assessment in Terms of Anxiety

Kruskal Wallis Test	P value	Decision
Anxiety Vs. Sex	0.121	retain the Ho
Anxiety Vs. Year Level	0.692	retain the Ho
Anxiety Vs. Course	0.191	retain the Ho

Note: If $p \leq 0.05$, with a significant difference

Table 5 had shown the test of significant difference in mental health assessment of the college students in terms of anxiety for sex, year level and course. The overall findings showed that there were no significant differences in anxiety levels for these demographic factors.

This showed that all groups of students experienced anxiety to the same extent, suggesting that anxiety symptoms were spread evenly throughout respondents by gender, academic level and academic program.

The p-values for all indicators were above the significance threshold of 0.05 and the null hypothesis was accepted for all indicators. The p value of anxiety and sex (0.121) showed that there is no significant difference between male students and female students in terms of anxiety.

The p value for anxiety and year level (0.692) indicated that there was no difference in the anxiety level of students from different year levels.

The p value for anxiety and course (0.191) showed that there was no significant difference between the anxiety scores of students of different academic programs.

These findings implied that sex, year level, and course did not affect students' anxiety levels, indicating that interventions or mental health programmes could be implemented to all students instead of specific groups of students.

Studies conducted in recent years have yielded conflicting results in comparison with the results of the present study which failed to find any demographic differences with regard to anxiety.

A cross-sectional study conducted with college students revealed that overall anxiety was prevalent among the students, however, there were significant differences between the genders with females having higher anxiety scores than males (Alshehri et al., 2023).

In another study that explored the symptom networks of depression, anxiety, and sleep problems, anxiety and depression prevalence was high across stress levels and complex relationships between mental health symptomology and sleep were identified, but not demographic factors, which would influence psychological distress (Han et al., 2025).

Conversely, a longitudinal study to measure stress, anxiety and depression 3 years after the start of the pandemic, identified a significant percentage of students who were still experiencing psychosocial stress, but no consistent patterns in terms of age, gender or year level (Kavvas et al., 2023).

Together, these results indicate that there may be some differences in demography (such as gender) and that, as with depression, there may be a stronger relationship between anxiety and contextual/social or other factors than with simple demographic factors, as many recent studies suggest.

Table 6. Test of Significant Difference in the Mental Health Assessment in Terms of Stress

Kruskal Wallis Test	P value	Decision
Stress Vs. Sex	0.055	retain the Ho
Stress Vs. Year Level	0.460	retain the Ho
Stress Vs. Course	0.302	retain the Ho

Note: If $p \leq 0.05$, with a significant difference

Table 6 showed the test of significant difference of the college students' mental health assessment in terms of stress factors for sex, year level, and course. The general results showed that there were no significant differences between stress levels of the demographic variables. This meant that all student groups had experienced stress in a similar manner, indicating that there was little difference in stress levels between the student groups, in terms of gender, academic year or academic program.

The p values were all higher than the significance level of 0.05 and the null hypothesis was retained for all indicators. The p value of stress and sex was 0.055, which showed that there was no significant difference between the students of male and female gender in terms of stress. The stress level p-value for year level (0.460) was similar indicating no difference in level of stress between academic years. The p-value for stress

and course (0.302) showed no significant difference of stress between academic courses. The results suggested that there were no significant effects of the students' sex, year level or course on their self-reported stress level, indicating that stress interventions for mental health intervention could be used across all student populations.

This is confirmed by recent literature. In the study by Islam et al. (2020), the stress levels of university students were found to be higher during COVID-19 pandemic; no significant differences were reported between different sex or academic levels. Likewise, Chowdhury et al. (2022) noted that stress had a higher correlation with future career worries and academic uncertainty than with demographics. These results suggest that stress is common throughout all students' groups, and the non-significance results obtained from the present study corroborate this.

Table 7. Test of Significant Difference in the Help- Seeking Behavior

Kruskal Wallis Test	P value	Decision
Help- Seeking Behavior Vs. Sex	0.601	retain the Ho
Help- Seeking Behavior Vs. Year Level	0.285	retain the Ho
Help- Seeking Behavior Vs. Course	0.919	retain the Ho

Note: If $p \leq 0.05$, with a significant difference

The Kruskal-Wallis test was done to see whether there were significant differences in the level of help-seeking behaviour among college students based on sex, year level and course, and the results of the test are presented in Table 7. All the p values were greater than the significance level of 0.05 and the null hypothesis was retained. It appears that, on the whole, there was little difference between the help-seeking behavior of students in the various groups studied, with no significant differences related to sex, academic year or program of study. The findings have important implications for the uniformity in students' ways of providing mental health support and the need for

providing support to all students not only in certain sub-groups.

When considering the p-values for each demographic indicator, there was no significant difference in help-seeking by sex ($p = 0.601$), year level ($p = 0.285$) or course ($p = 0.919$). There is no significant difference in p-value from the 0.05 level, suggesting there is no significant difference in the approaches of students seeking help for mental health issues. These results suggest that there were no gender, academic level, or major differences in the pattern of mental health

resource and/or support systems used by students, formal or informal.

These observations have been confirmed by recent research. For instance, a study in 2024, as part of the candidacy framework, revealed that barriers and facilitators to seeking help were similar across gender and student demographics, with institutional culture and perceived accessibility having a more substantial impact than gender or program (BMC Health Services Research, 2024). The results of this study support the results of the current study that mental health programmes should work on enhancing awareness, availability and support mechanisms for all students and not only specific groups of students.

IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the mental health status of college students and find out the help-seeking behavior of college students based on this evaluation, and to provide a basis for improving the mental health program in school. The findings from the data gathered from the 307 respondents are summarized below:

Demographic Profile. The study consisted of 307 college students, with the majority being female (67.4%), followed by LGBTQIA+ (25.4%) and male (7.2%). The second year of study (31.3%) was closely followed by the third year (30.3%), first year (29.6%) and fourth year (8.8%). In terms of course, the largest group were BSMLS students (34.5%), followed by BSN (24.8%), BSPHarm (14.7%), BSRT (10.1%), BPA (8.8%), and BSED & BEED (7.2%).

Mental Health Status Level. The respondents had moderate depression levels with a mean score of 15.9 out of which 33.8% belonged to the moderate category. The anxiety level was rated as severe (mean score 16.0) with the highest percentage of respondents (34.9%) rated as extremely severe. Stress level scores were low, with an average score of 17.4, and almost half of the respondents (45%) were in the normal range. The overall depression level among the students was moderate, severe anxiety and mild stress.

Degree of help seeking. Overall, the mean score for the College students was 3.45, signifying that students are very aware of their susceptibility, seek support, and engage in preventive mental health activities. They felt the issues were also serious in their perception with a mean score of 3.51, demonstrating that students are serious about mental health issues and are proactive about responding to them. The mean score for students' perception that they benefited from seeking help was 3.45, indicating that they recognized the benefits of counselling and professional support. Perceived barriers had a mean score of 2.78, indicating some students perceive barriers related to accessibility, judgment, or information. Cues to help were high with a mean score of 3.48 which means that students feel encouraged to seek help from friends, family and school campaigns. In general, students' manifestation of help-seeking behaviour was average with a mean score of 3.32, indicating students' tendency to seek help but having some challenges.

Significant Differences in Mental Health. There were no significant differences in depression, anxiety and stress between respondents in the different demographic subcategories (sex, year level and course) suggesting that the mental health status was broadly similar for these subcategories.

Important differences in help-seeking behaviors. Likewise, there was no significant difference between the students' course, year level and sex regarding their willingness to seek help, meaning these factors did not influence helping behavior.

Conclusions

From the results it can be concluded that the college students will suffer from significant mental health issues, with moderate depression, severe anxiety, and mild stress being the most common. The prevalence of these mental health conditions seems to be the same across year levels, courses and sex, suggesting that mental health problems are common among students. Students are extremely aware of their mental health, and they take it seriously; they recognise the seriousness of mental health issues, the benefits of seeking mental health support and respond when they are cued, e.g. encouraged by other students, family and

school initiatives. The overall pattern of their help-seeking behavior is average, however, indicating that they may face multiple obstacles to fully accessing the help that is available to them, including service accessibility, fear of being judged, and limited information about services. The results highlight the need for a comprehensive mental health program in the school that is proactive, as well as improving awareness and prevention strategies, and tackling mental health barriers to help-seeking. Schools can promote students' mental health by making it easier to get mental health services, offering confidential and supportive counseling, and normalizing mental health care to enhance their psychological outcomes, foster resilience and enhance the overall academic and personal outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made to improve the mental health and help-seeking attitudes of college students and to serve as guidance for mental health promotion work:

College Students. It is important for college students to take an active role in their mental health care and reach out to the mental health services and resources that are accessible, such as campus counseling, peer support groups, and health and wellness initiatives. They should reach out for support immediately when they feel symptoms of depression, anxiety or stress and engage in mental health prevention activities, including self-care, time management, and stress relief, to improve their mental health and academic success.

Guidance Counselors and Student Support Services.

Student support and guidance counselors are advised to create specific interventions for students depending on identified mental health needs and students' help-seeking patterns. Programs need to emphasize how to lower barriers to accessing help, such as addressing stigma, offering accurate information on services available and making them more accessible. Counsellors also need to engage in proactive outreach and awareness campaigns aimed at promoting early

help-seeking and educate people on coping strategies to effectively manage stress, anxiety and depression.

College Administration and Faculty. It is important for college administration and faculty to create a positive college climate by establishing policies and teaching strategies that encourage mental health. This includes training for faculty on identifying signs of psychological distress, adjusting workload or academic expectations when needed, implementation of mentoring programs, and incorporation of mental health into curriculum. These can help increase class participation, student retention, and student achievement.

Researchers and Academicians.

Researchers/academicians are invited to further the study findings by using longitudinal studies, intervention studies or comparative studies between programs or between colleges. This can offer greater insight into the effectiveness of mental health programmes, help-seeking behaviour, as well as the long-term effects of mental health interventions on student well-being and academics.

Policy Makers and Educational Institutions. Policy makers, educational planners and policy makers should draw on the findings in developing and implementing institutional and national mental health policies for the wellbeing of students. Some recommendations are to provide resource for counselling services, embed mental health awareness programs in curricula, and to implement measures that all students can access mental health support in an equitable way.

Community and Society. The community is encouraged to support ways that help young adults remain mentally well. Educating the community and establishing a stigma free environment can build student resilience, enhance social interaction and reduce risk-taking behaviours. A major focus of supporting students' psychological health is to help them become responsible, productive, and socially responsible citizens.

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