



Exploring the Knowledge and Awareness of Mental Health among Graduate Students



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Abstract

Mental wellness awareness is a crucial component to succeed in studies and help university students have a healthy lifestyle. The present study evaluated the extent of Mental Health Literacy and factors influencing Mental Health Literacy of 310 students (undergraduate and postgraduate) of Islamia University of Bahawalpur. Random sampling was used to ensure the diversity of respondents for data collection, and SPSS software was used for data analysis to analyze data that were collected from a 35-item questionnaire. It was found that quite many students rejected the typical erroneous conceptions, especially those based on fixed socioeconomic or demographic characteristics, concerning mental disorder. The study highlighted the necessary factors influencing students' mental health, thereby emphasizing the need for social support systems and easy access to mental health practitioners. Creating an inclusive environment for students and providing targeted mental health interventions are crucial for the success of mental health services within the university context. This research provides empirical insights to guide policy formulation and institutional practices aimed at cultivating mentally healthy campuses. A broader future investigation across Punjab province is recommended.

Key Words

Mental Health Knowledge, Mental Health Awareness, Graduate Students

Introduction

The problem with mental health differs in severity across people; it is an ever-rising issue for many students pursuing higher education degrees (Macaskill, 2013). Mental health is multifaceted and consists of how people feel in their bodies; their thoughts, emotions, and even behaviours assist in stress control and help maintain effective relationships as well as smart decisions, which overall creates a capacity to function. It also puts students in a position where they are capable of dealing with the stress that comes with daily activities, remaining strong in tough situations, and forming bonds with other individuals. In a bid to attend higher education, students are likely to experience overwhelming academic requirements, look for a job, and depend on social support, which will concurrently affect their level of wellness.

Many aspects of a person can be adversely affected due to mental wellness concerns. Split personality disorder, Manic-depressive illness, melancholy, and apprehension are some examples of mental issues that may manifest. Due to a variety of reasons, such as stress and depressive symptoms, an increasing number of students

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attending university are beginning to grapple with anxiety and other mental wellness challenges (Mohammad et al., 2021). In terms of the preparedness of students to enter professional life and professional training and experience, it is important to consider that students tend to overcome psychological, intellectual, and social hurdles associated with university education (Kulsoom & Afsar, 2015; Mamun et al., 2022; Haq et al., 2018). For the most part, even the majority of undergraduates need a fair degree of psychosocial and mental changes to set up their individual lives away from their parents (Alim et al., 2017).

In many cases, however, not only in Pakistan, but also elsewhere, there has been, and there is still a phenomenon of psychological morbidity, one of which is anxiety and depression impacting students in institutions of higher learning (Bayram & Bilgel, 2008). Studies have pointed out that from the age of 12 to 25 years of age, 70% to 75% of the youth suffer from various mental health problems (Uddin et al., 2019). Adolescent studies reveal that having a higher understanding of mental challenges among youth has generated a higher sense of compassion and understanding towards the affected individuals (Naylor et al., 2009). But almost all past studies indeed tend to claim that the attitudes of the widespread population towards people with mental illness have not fundamentally changed over the past several decades (Angermeyer & Dietrich, 2006; Hansson et al., 2013). It could possibly be attributed to a lack of understanding of mental health or educational awareness in this regard.

Of interest, Abolfotouh's study found that there was a relatively poor literacy level of mental health among the adult population of Saudi Arabia (Abolfotouh et al., 2019), while in another similar study, the Indonesian university students were able to score a percentage of understanding that is relatively high, of 50.23% (Puspitasari et al., 2020). Ironically, another research revealed that future healthcare professionals, especially within their preclinical age, experienced significant gaps in terms of knowledge and the construct of mental wellness (Aruna et al., 2016). Lack of knowledge and public misconceptions that accompany lack of knowledge are two of the many contributing factors that affect mental illness (Andrews & Henderson, 2000).

In circumstances where knowledge about mental wellness is limited, these concerns are often not considered public health priorities in under-resourced communities. Surprisingly, in these regions, the issues of mental health are more stigmatized than in economically developed countries (Bass et al., 2012). It is troubling to note the upward trend of mental health challenges within this student population. More attention has been drawn to university students' mental health (Bayram & Bilgel, 2008), yet these concerns go unattended with time, giving the impression that they are nonexistent.

Focusing on mental health and social awareness so that individuals can take part in society in a more active manner is very important. On the contrary, numerous research studies done regarding mental health underscore the necessity of dealing with this issue and raising knowledge about mental health among the pupils of universities through mass outreach programs and media (Abolfotouh et al., 2019; Aruna et al., 2016). This, in turn, broadens societal perceptions of mental health and helps to destigmatize it, enabling undergraduate students to feel comfortable seeking support and assistance.

Our research identified a knowledge gap in existing studies on mental health awareness among the student population of Islamia University of Bahawalpur. The study intends to bridge this gap by evaluating the level of mental health awareness and knowledge among students of Islamia University of Bahawalpur. District. It also explores the socio-demographic factors influencing these dimensions. Furthermore, this study investigates the influence of mental health awareness and knowledge on graduate students in the Bahawalpur region, filling a notable research gap.

Thus, the present research helps understand the aspects that influence students regarding their mental health, as well as assess the impact of mental health awareness on the students' behaviors and outlook in their academic and personal lives.

The Current Study

This study seeks to investigate the current levels of mental health comprehension and consciousness among undergraduate students enrolled in Islamia University of Bahawalpur. The key objectives of this investigation include:

1. To identify the factors that affect the mental health of students at the graduate level at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur.
2. To recognize the level of mental health knowledge and awareness among graduate-level students
3. To propose recommendations aimed at enhancing the understanding and promotion of mental health awareness among graduate students enrolled at universities.

Methods

Research population, Source of data collection, Study sample size

A survey was conducted among graduate students at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB) and other regional institutions to assess their mental health knowledge and understanding. The survey centered on students' awareness of some mental health concepts, their perceptions of mental health problems, and the availability of mental health resources on campus. The students of The Islamia University of Bahawalpur were sampled to collect quantitative data. The researcher has made visits to all departments of the university and used a structured questionnaire as an instrument in this research.

Three hundred and ten graduate students (male and female) of different disciplines (such as social sciences, sciences, and arts) were used as the sample. The questionnaire consisted of quantitative questions designed to evaluate general mental health knowledge and specific mental health knowledge on common disorders (including depression, anxiety, and stress).

Instrument

We designed a three-part questionnaire to collect demographic information, mental health literacy, and mental health functioning problems of student learners of the University of Bahawalpur. The baseline characteristics, shown in the first section, comprise the age and gender (optional) of respondents. The sample includes male and female students from urban and rural areas enrolled in BS, MA, or MS programs across the first to eighth semesters. The respondents' monthly income falls into four categories: 20,000-50,000, 51,000-80,000, 81,000-1 lac, and above 1 lac. Additionally, the source of expenses includes personal income, family income, or both, and the school of discipline encompasses Art and Science.

The second part of the study contained twenty-three questions concerning mental health knowledge among the current students of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, and twelve questions in the learning part three of the questionnaire related to mental health literacy among university students. The instrument's reliability was assessed by an expert panel comprising 10 field professionals, 8 teachers, and 2 psychometric specialists.

Adopting a set of instruments, our research used a combination of questionnaires containing twenty-four items aimed at ascertaining the degree of knowledge of mental health of the respondents, together with twelve items aimed at determining the level of mental health awareness of the respondents. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient value for all items exceeded 0.7. To facilitate understanding, Urdu translations of the questionnaire were also provided. The participants responded to the statement by using the 5-point Likert scale statistics (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree).

Outcome variables

In this study, each item in the knowledge and awareness sections was measured on a five-point Likert scale, where higher scores reflect greater mental health knowledge. The outcome variables include the level of mental health

knowledge, students' attitudes toward mental health, and their willingness to seek professional help. These outcomes are influenced by several explanatory variables.

Explanatory Variables

The socioeconomic factors in this study, which included gender, age, name (optional), location (urban and rural), kind of university, academic year, program, monthly income, sources of income of the participants, and school of discipline, were determined by reviewing the literature. By examining these relationships, the study aims to identify the key factors that shape mental health awareness and behaviours among graduate students in Islamia University of Bahawalpur.

Statistical Analysis

The study was carried out through the distribution of questionnaires, the responses of which were analyzed and processed using the SPSS program to reach conclusions and suggestions. In the frequency distributions, tabulations, and analysis, all the scored questionnaires were analyzed using 3 indicators, namely: Percentages, Frequency, and Mean score. For the purposes of this research, a five-point Likert scale was developed for surveying the responses of the participants in order to make a comprehensive assessment.

Result

Demographic characteristics

Table 1 displays the average knowledge question scores for the participants' various demographic groups. A total of 310 respondents completed the questionnaire, and their demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1. The demographic structure of the sample population of three hundred ten students indicated equal gender proportions between 50% male and 50% female. A greater percentage of the respondents, 58%, reported being from the urban areas. A significant proportion of the respondents, 91.29%, belonged to the BS program, with a higher proportion of them being in the third year of the BS program, 26.12%, while the lowest percentage was first-year MA, 1.61%. A vast majority of the respondents, 71.29%, were able to pay for their expenses through family support; 7.41% of students were able to do so through their earnings, and the remaining 21.29% combined both methods. The data also revealed that applied science was the most represented discipline, accounting for 55.16% of participants. Also, most of the students, 54.19%, fell in the age bracket of 21–25, and the monthly income of 66.12% of respondents was between 20,000 and 50,000 (Table 1).

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Attributes

Demographic traits	N (%)
Gender	310
Male	155 (50)
Female	155 (50)
Location	
Rural	130 (41.93)
Urban	180 (58)
Age	
16-20	109 (35.16)
21-24	168 (54.19)
25-28	24 (7.74)
Above 29	9 (2.90)
School of Discipline	
Science	171 (55.16)
Art	139 (44.83)

Demographic traits	N (%)
Program	
BS	283 (91.29)
MA	5 (1.61)
MS	22 (7.09)
Academic Year	
BS 1 st	23 (7.41)
BS 2 nd	37 (11.91)
BS 3 rd	81 (26.12)
BS 4 th	26 (8.38)
BS 5 th	15 (4.83)
BS 6 th	56 (18.06)
BS 7 th	17 (5.48)
BS 8 th	28 (9.03)
MA 1 st	5 (1.61)
MS 1 st	9 (2.90)
MS 3 rd	6 (1.93)
MS 4 th	7 (2.25)
Monthly Income	
20000-50000	205 (66.12)
51000-80000	75 (24.19)
81000-1lac	22 (7.09)
1 lac-above	8 (2.58)
Source of Expense	
Personal	23 (7.41)
Family	221 (71.29)
Both family & Personal	66 (21.29)

This display presents the Standard Deviation for each item, accompanied by aggregated percentages of agreement and disagreement, categorized as 'Agree', 'Strongly Agree', 'Strongly Disagree', and 'Disagree.

Table 2

Sr:	Items Description	Mean	Standard Deviation	% of SD & D (score= 4,5)	% of A & SA (score= 4,5)
1	Mental Illness Can Be Inherited	3.86	.873	10.4	77.4
2	No Cure for Most Mental Illnesses.	2.93	1.164	45.5	34.9
3	ADHD & Low Confidence: Psychological Challenges.	3.95	.839	6.8	80
4	OCD: A Psychological Disorder.	3.97	.808	5.1	78.3
5	Loss of Interest: A Key Symptom of Depression.	4.10	.887	8.1	86.1
6	Anxiety Disorder: Fear, Panic, and Avoidance.	4.12	.871	5.2	86.4
7	That's incorrect: Mental illnesses do affect thoughts, feelings, and actions.	3.02	1.506	44.5	47.1
8	That's incorrect: Mental disorders affect people from all backgrounds.	2.59	1.325	52.8	30.3
9	Brain issues or injuries can trigger mental disorders.	3.86	.834	6.5	77.1
10	Severe mental health issues can pose a safety risk to others.	3.84	1.078	13.6	71.6
11	Substance abuse can lead to mental disorders.	4.26	.934	5.8	84.6

Sr.	Items Description	Mean	Standard Deviation	% of SD & D (score= 4,5)	% of A & SA (score= 4,5)
12	Talking through problems can improve mental health.	4.05	.869	6.1	84.8
13	Mental illnesses can't always be avoided.	2.59	1.203	56.8	26.8
14	Mental well-being is integral to both health and illness.	3.87	1.051	11.6	73.3
15	Suicidal thoughts and behaviors are psychological problems.	4.08	.888	7.8	87.8
16	Psychological issues are rare to arise in elderly people.	2.51	1.114	63.9	22.3
17	Mental illness can affect people of any age.	3.53	.997	18.7	60.9
18	Bullying and abuse can trigger psychological issues.	3.92	.966	10.9	81
19	Psychological issues are rare to arise in Middle-aged people.	2.53	1.038	61.6	18.7
20	Mental illness doesn't always mean sadness.	3.58	1.111	21.9	61
21	Depression can cause intense emotional suffering.	3.99	.832	5.1	81.3
22	Enjoyable activities can lift your mood and support mental wellness	4.28	.742	2.5	89.7
23	Family support is crucial for mental health recovery.	4.17	.970	7.5	82
24	Contact with a mentally ill person can cause mental illness.	3.16	1.276	34.5	52
25	Those aware of their psychological issues are prepared to seek expert help.	3.35	1.056	27.1	51.6
26	I'd seek friends' help if I had a mental disorder	3.88	1.001	10.9	76.2
27	I'd turn to family or a psychiatrist if I knew I had a mental disorder.	4.28	.826	4.5	88.1
28	I'd inform parents/teachers and suggest a psychologist if a friend developed a mental disorder.	4.29	.807	3.9	88.4
29	Family should be aware of potential harm from loved ones with mental health issues.	4.02	.845	6.1	82.6
30	Regular contact between patients/family and their psychiatrist is crucial.	4.20	.871	6.1	83.5
31	It's essential for people with epilepsy to inform their loved ones.	4.37	.875	4.2	87.7
32	I'd listen to my friend without judgment if they developed a mental disorder.	3.53	1.271	29.7	58.1
33	Everyone plays a role in preventing suicides among those with mental health issues.	4.17	1.035	9.7	82.6
34	Family members should monitor mentally ill loved ones' medication adherence and psychiatrist visits.	4.09	.867	4.5	78.7
35	I'd offer support to a friend developing a mental disorder.	4.31	.911	6.4	88.1

Among the respondents, 80% agreed that ADHD and low self-confidence are indeed psychological issues, while only 6.8% disagreed. This moderate inclination is reflected in the students' mean score of 3.95. Similarly, 86.1% of students agreed that Depression is characterized by an absence of enthusiasm or delight in most activities,

indicating a strong leaning toward this perception, as shown by the mean score of 4.10. Furthermore, 86.4% of respondents agreed that individuals with anxiety disorders may panic or avoid situations they fear, while 5.2% disagreed. A mean score of 4.12 indicates strong agreement, reflecting a high level of student consensus on this issue.

The majority of students surveyed demonstrated a strong understanding of mental health issues, with high agreement on various aspects of mental health care and support. For instance, 84.6% of students acknowledged the potential for drug and alcohol consumption to cause mental disorders, and 89.7% believed that engaging in enjoyable activities could improve mental health. Similarly, 84.8% agreed that discussing problems with someone is beneficial for mental well-being. In terms of family involvement, 82% believed that family members can support individuals with mental health issues, and 88.1% expressed a willingness to seek family help or professional psychiatric care if they recognized a mental disorder in themselves. Additionally, 88.4% would encourage a friend with a mental disorder to seek professional help, and 82.6% emphasized the importance of family awareness regarding harm caused by individuals with psychological problems.

Students also showed strong agreement regarding the responsibility to prevent suicide, with 82.6% acknowledging it as a collective duty. A similar percentage believed that patients and their families should maintain regular contact with a psychiatrist, and 87.7% agreed that individuals with epilepsy should inform their families and friends. The survey results indicate a high level of receptivity to mental health concepts, as reflected by consistently high mean scores, such as 4.26 for drug addiction awareness, 4.28 for family support, and 4.37 for epilepsy disclosure. Overall, there was very little disagreement amongst students with these notions, which further reflects the high level of agreement among students when it comes to the importance of mental wellbeing awareness and support.

Discussion

Given the distinct stressors and challenges that graduate students experience while on their academic path, the current study will investigate the importance of their knowledge and awareness of mental health. The stressful experience of being a graduate student, coupled with pressures to perform in one's studies, an uncertain job outlook, financial pressures, and isolation from others, can pose a threat to mental health for these students. It is important to know how much they know about mental health conditions and understand the support available to them, if they are seeking it, in order to provide them with appropriate support and ensure they feel healthy and happy.

In a study of graduate students from a variety of disciplines, lead researchers (Eisenberg et al., 2007) observed an escalating rate of depression and anxiety among them compared to the general population. While mental care treatments are available, many graduate students still fail to use these even with their heightened likelihood, due to stigmatization, confidentiality fears, and time constraints. This underlines that not only mental health knowledge and awareness should be measured in men and women, but they should also be assessed for their mental health seeking barriers.

A more recent study explored the perceptions of mental health and help-seeking among graduate students (Evans et al., 2018). They discovered that although most graduate students understood the importance of mental health, numerous students were unaware of the mental health services provided at the university or in the community. In addition, Mental health stigma remains a significant barrier to access to care and support, with some students stating a concern that they fear seeking help may have an impact on their academic and professional reputations. Interventions aimed at mental healthcare literacy, which could combat stigma and benefit graduate students, are recommended.

University counseling centers and academic institutions have an opportunity to offer a voice for increased awareness of mental health-related issues, readily available resources, and a healthy campus culture. Finally, peer support programs, stress-management and coping strategies workshops, and a graduate student health promotion program designed to alleviate faculty and staff concerns about graduate student mental health and well-being can help to build a positive and supportive university community.

Assessing graduate students' mental health knowledge and awareness is crucial for understanding their unique mental health needs and enhancing their overall well-being. Knowing how institutions might perceive, think about, and attribute obstacles to students reaching out for mental health support can help them design a more effective approach to meet the mental health needs of graduate students and to foster a sound learning environment.

The study's first goal was to identify variables that affect the mental health of graduate students. The study results suggest that the emotional health of graduate students is of importance in the creation of targeted interventions and support systems that meet their needs. Whether it is the challenge of academic workload, work-life balance, social isolation, financial strain, or the character of the graduate school environment itself, several issues are at play that affect the mental health of graduate students.

Graduate students may experience very high levels of academic stress, such as taking very high course loads, doing extensive research, or submitting papers/papers for presentation at conferences. Meeting the various academic targets and attaining high standards is a constant activity that might cause a feeling of stress, anxiety, and burnout (Levecque et al., 2017). It can be a delicate balance for graduate students to get schoolwork and personal home life done. Graduate school can be a lonely place, and this can be particularly true for those who change their location to pursue their studies. Absence of social support networks or opportunities for meaningful social interaction can add to feelings of loneliness and poor mental health outcomes (Evans et al., 2018).

Financial insecurity is a problem for many graduate students because of undercompensation, high tuition, and a lack of funding. The financial pressures of debt, housing costs, and living costs can have a significant influence on the mental health and emotional stress of the individual and can raise the risk of suffering from depression and anxiety (Evans et al., 2018). The competitive environment and the hierarchy in academia may lead to an atmosphere of perfectionism and comparison among graduate students. It is not unusual for people to feel the pressure to excel, a fear of failure, and imposter syndrome, which negatively affects mental health (Levecque et al., 2017).

The strain can be further heightened by obstacles to access to mental health services and poor academic support for graduate students. Students might avoid receiving mental health services due to cultural or other stigma associated with such issues, and long wait times may discourage students from seeking mental health services when they need them (Evans et al., 2018). The action of factors needs to be comprehensive and multi-layered, including but not limited to institutional policy development, awareness and education, and support programs specific to graduate students.

One of the second purposes of the study was to acknowledge the level of mental health knowledge and awareness among graduate-level students. It is important to assess the mental health knowledge and awareness of graduate-level students, both in relation to their ability to recognize and respond to mental health issues and as a means of identifying possible gaps in mental health support and resources. There are several studies in this area that explore the awareness of graduate students regarding mental health issues, along with what mental health resources are available to them, helping to throw light on the general picture of mental health literacy in graduate students.

Evans et al. (2018) explored mental health literacy among graduate students and determined that many students perceive mental health issues as important, but they aren't necessarily aware of details about mental health disorders, symptomology, or resources. This study identified the importance of campaigns on mental health literacy and encouragement to help-seeking among graduate students. A similar study carried out by Lipson et al. (2019) engaged with graduate and professional students in the USA and evaluated their mental health condition data and the seeking of help behavior.

The results highlighted that although all respondents reported that there was a lot of stress, anxiety, and depression in their lives, many respondents were not aware of any mental health services provided by their universities. The study indicates that there is a lack of students' perceived need for mental health services and knowledge of supporting resources. In addition, Mowbray et al. (2006) examined the attitudes of graduate students with regard to seeking mental health services.

It was found that stigma, perception of barriers to help-seeking, and making help available in a way that might not be known to students, were significant factors that shaped helping behaviours among graduate students. It highlights the need for combating stigma and enhancing access to mental health services to make it possible for more graduate students to access help when it is needed.

Graduate students might be aware of the importance of mental health, but their knowledge and awareness of any particular mental health issues and the resources available to them may differ. Providing mental health literacy, stigma reduction, and increased access to support services are all crucial for ensuring the mental health of graduate students and a supportive learning environment.

The third objective of the study was to get suggestions on 'how to enhance mental health aspects in university graduate students'. These recommendations, therefore, are essential in building an effective learning environment while promoting students' well-being. Based on research and best practices, multiple strategies can take place within the university setting to effectively respond to the mental health needs of graduate students. A number of possible strategies can be undertaken at the university level, based on prior research and best practices. Mental health education should be required for all universities and specifically for graduate students. These programs may be around dealing with stress or coping, recognizing signs of mental health problems, and utilizing available support services (Evans et al., 2018). Conducting workshops, seminars, and providing online resources can help raise awareness and empower pupils to manage their mental wellbeing.

Peer support networks or mentorship in graduate departments can offer excellent social support and give an opportunity to openly talk about mental health. Peer mentors can be a trusted ally and offer guidance, support, and resources for their peers and minimize feelings of isolation and stigma (Evans et al., 2018). There is a need for universities to take priority in increasing accessibility of and availability for mental health services to graduate students. This means increasing the number of counselling centers as well as decreasing the amount of waiting time for counselling appointments, providing some counselling sessions that are available during the evenings or the weekend, as well as providing access to counselling services that can be done remotely through telehealth (Lipson et al., 2019).

Normalise conversations about mental health in education, and ensure that this happens for staff and administrators. Providing safe environments for open dialogue, integrating mental health awareness into curriculum and orientation, and encouraging faculty to express their own experiences with mental health can help destigmatize mental health and foster a supportive culture (Evans et al., 2018). Routine mental health screening and assessment can be done at the university level to identify individuals who may be at risk or require help for

graduate students. These screenings can happen at orientation, a periodic advisor check-in, online, or anywhere else where early intervention is critical and a proper referral is made (Mowbray et al., 2006).

Training for faculty and staff should include the ability to identify signs of distress in graduate students and how to respond to mental health crises, as well as refer students to resources. A coordinated, supportive response can be implemented for students' mental health needs by educating faculty and staff on the necessary knowledge and skills (Evans et al., 2018). The recommendations made in this report can be used to improve awareness of mental health and mental health services throughout the University of British Columbia among graduate students. Incorporating mental health education, mental health support, and destigmatization of mental health discussions is a priority to help raise the awareness of graduate students that they can take the necessary steps to prioritize their mental health; thereby creating an atmosphere where graduate students feel supported, valued, and empowered to take steps for their mental well-being.

Conclusion

Cultivating an understanding of the value of mental Healthcare Literacy and awareness is essential for graduate students, as without it, they will not excel in their studies. There was a need to undertake an in-depth study of the understanding and recognition of mental healthcare issues among graduate learners at higher education institutions located in the Bahawalpur region. Hence, the current study aims are the following: a) To identify the determinants that influence the mental well-being of postgraduate learners at educational institutions in Bahawalpur city; b) to assess the prevalence and extent of mental wellbeing understanding and recognition among learners pursuing higher education; and c) To recommend and promote strategies that increase awareness and understanding of mental well-being issues among graduate university students.

The investigation's conclusions reveal that a substantial proportion of higher-degree learners at Islamia University of Bahawalpur believe anhedonia is a symptom of depression. They also believe that individuals with panic disorder may experience panic attacks or avoid feared places, as reflected in their mean score exceeding 4.0. Additionally, the majority of students agreed that drug addiction (including heroin, cocaine, and marijuana) and alcohol use can cause mental illnesses and that suicidal and self-injurious thoughts constitute a psychological issue. Consequently, there is a responsibility for everyone to help prevent suicide cases among individuals with psychological problems.

The students concurred that open communication and engaging in enjoyable activities significantly contribute to good mental health. In the event of a friend's mental illness diagnosis, I would approach her, engage in conversation, and encourage her parents or teacher to support her in seeking professional help. The research also reveals that family members can undertake a supportive part in the care of individuals with mental well-being issues by ensuring they adhere to medication regimens and attend scheduled psychiatrist appointments. In the case of an epileptic patient, a professional career should warn family members who may cause harm due to psychological or psychiatric disorders. It is recommended that families or patients talk to their psychiatrist at intervals.

Thus, based on the findings, it can be concluded that most of the graduate students of Islamia University of Bahawalpur have enough knowledge and awareness of mental health issues, as their mean score is more than 4.0 on the test.

Recommendations

Public health education campaigns can be effective in raising awareness about mental health, reducing stigma, and encouraging individuals to seek help when necessary by emphasizing early recognition, help-seeking behaviors,

and myth-busting. Let go of mental well-being outreach plans to educate students and staff about the importance of mental wellness and how to seek help. Offer training for faculty and staff on signs of psychological distress, mental wellness concerns, and burnout that students may demonstrate, and how to provide and refer to them;

Early intervention and prevention are key components for being proactive in mental health and can help minimise the severity and impact of mental health issues. Having teaching and working staff trained in mental health will make them more able to identify and respond to any concerns around mental wellness issues with students. The teacher can be the first line of defense, which is important for early intervention, and is when mental health issues may be first recognized.

Data collection and research about mental health trends should be encouraged by making educational policies that will make effective mental health programs in the institutions. Surveys and studies to understand pupils' mental health needs allow institutions to tailor their support services. Further, policies that mandate mental health education into the mainstream of the curriculum are crucial at a very young age to raise awareness. These policies will help students learn about the importance of mental well-being, how to recognize signs of poor mental well-being in themselves and others, and how to learn coping strategies to address mental well-being.

Mental health education in many developed countries is part of the national curriculum for primary and secondary school students, with curricula on emotional wellbeing or resilience. Establish peer-led support groups where students can share common experiences in a supportive and non-judgmental setting and develop more graduate student associations to offer social networking, peer support, and advocacy among graduate students.

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