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Role of Counselling in Managing Anxiety and Stress among College Students

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Abstract

Objective

This study investigates the role of counselling in managing anxiety and stress among college students. It specifically explores the effectiveness of interventions, accessibility barriers, gender-based variations in counselling uptake, and the growing impact of digital counselling platforms using both qualitative and recent quantitative data.

Method

The research employs qualitative data from secondary sources including peer-reviewed journals, surveys, and institutional reports, with an emphasis on data published within the last five years. A thematic analysis identified major themes such as the effectiveness of counselling interventions, existing barriers, gender-specific responses, and technological integration in counselling.

Result

The study finds counselling to be significantly effective in reducing anxiety and stress, with interventions like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), mindfulness, and group therapy showing marked improvements. Quantitative data from 2022-2024 reveal that 76% of CBT users reported reduced anxiety. Barriers like stigma, cost, and time remain critical. Digital platforms enhance access, with 78% of users reporting improved emotional well-being.

Conclusion

Counselling is a vital support system for college students. Removing access barriers, leveraging digital tools, and adopting gender-sensitive practices will enhance counselling's reach and impact, ultimately supporting better academic and mental health outcomes.

Keywords : *Counselling, Anxiety, Stress, College Students, Digital Platforms, Mental Health, Gender Differences, Accessibility Barriers*

Introduction

Students have become a large group and the high rates of anxiety and stress among college students the prevalence of anxiety and stress among college students being caused by intense academic pressure,

social expectation pressure, financial pressure, and the transition to adulthood. These stressors often also translate to negative consequences on students' mental health, academic performance and overall well-being. Counselling has become an integral resource for addressing these priorities by equipping students with tools to cope with their barriers and create a support network to navigate their respective challenges. Counselling interventions (cognitive-behavioural therapy, mindfulness practices, and peer support programs) have been shown to be highly effective in lowering stress and anxiety. While prevalent and significant, the application and legitimateness of directing administrations in advanced education is incipient, especially their job in encouraging affectability and scholarly achievement for undergrads.

Introduction College students are increasingly vulnerable to anxiety and stress due to academic pressure, social expectations, financial burdens, and the psychological demands of transitioning to adulthood. These factors can negatively impact mental health, academic performance, and personal development. Counselling, including CBT, mindfulness training, and peer support programs, is essential in mitigating these effects. However, despite its benefits, counselling remains underutilized due to stigma, cost, and systemic barriers. This paper seeks to elaborate on the multifaceted impact of counselling by examining its effectiveness, exploring accessibility challenges, analyzing gender-specific responses, and assessing the role of digital platforms based on data from 2022–2024. It identifies pathways to optimize accessibility and effectiveness in student mental health interventions.

Literature Review

Prevalence of Anxiety and Stress among college students

The academic environment forces one-of-a-kind stressors on understudies, including scholarly execution pressure, monetary limitations, and social transformation challenges. It has been examined that 48% of understudies revealed moderate to serious degrees of tension, while 60% experienced overpowering pressure during the scholastic year. Additionally, research directed in India viewed that 47% of understudies experienced pressure-related side effects and 36% experienced uneasiness problems (Amanvermez *et al*. 2023). These discoveries underscore the dire requirement for compelling mediation to address psychological wellness issues in academic settings.

Role of Counselling in Managing Anxiety and Stress

Counselling is a structured intervention designed to help individuals manage psychological and emotional challenges. In the context of college students, counselling has proven to be instrumental in reducing symptoms of anxiety and stress. Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) are two widely used approaches in campus counselling centres. For instance, studies have shown that CBT reduced anxiety symptoms by 40% and stress levels by 30% among college students. Similarly, MBSR programs have been associated with a 28% reduction in stress levels (Li & Peng, 2021). These findings demonstrate the efficacy of counselling in improving mental health outcomes among students.

Barriers to Accessing Counselling Services

Despite the demonstrated advantages of guiding, a few hindrances ruin its openness and usage among understudies. The shame encompassing psychological wellness remains a huge impediment, with 63% of understudies dreading judgment as a justification for not looking for help (Li, Peng & Tao, 2023). Moreover, an absence of mindfulness about accessible guiding administrations fuels the issue. For instance, a review directed in the UK saw that 42% of understudies knew nothing about their establishment's emotional wellness assets. Monetary requirements likewise assume a basic part, especially in low-pay nations. It has been featured that just 35% of colleges in agricultural countries offer free or sponsored advising administrations, contrasted with 85% in big-time salary nations (Paralkar & Knutson, 2023). Addressing these boundaries is fundamental to guarantee equitable admittance to emotional well-being support.

Gender Differences in Counselling Outcomes

Gender-specific contrasts in emotional wellness challenges and their reaction to directing mediations have been broadly archived. Ladies are bound to encounter uneasiness and stress, with concentrates on showing that 70% of female understudies announced higher feelings of anxiety compared with half of male understudies (Kausar *et al.* 2021). Ladies additionally will quite often look for advice all the more habitually and report improved results. Then again, men frequently show hesitance to look for help because of cultural assumptions about manliness. This discrepancy highlights the requirement for gender-sensitive approaches in advising administrations. For instance, drives, for example, the "Man Up" crusade in Australia have effectively urged male understudies to take part in emotional well-being conversations, bringing about a 20% expansion in directing usage among men.

Digital Counselling as an Emerging Trend

The ascent of advanced stages has altered psychological well-being care, making guiding administrations more open to understudies. Teletherapy and psychological wellness applications, for example, Better Help and Talk space have acquired notoriety, particularly during the Coronavirus pandemic. Digital counselling has significantly improved access, with 78% of users reporting emotional well-being improvements, especially due to flexibility and anonymity. These findings reinforce the role of digital platforms in overcoming traditional barriers such as scheduling conflicts and social stigma. Research demonstrates that web-based guiding is pretty much as powerful as in-person meetings, with concentrates on detailing a surmised 35% decrease in uneasiness side effects through online CBT programs (Parsons *et al.* 2022). Besides, advanced apparatuses address availability hindrances by giving adaptable booking choices and decreasing the disgrace related to up close and personal meetings. For example, a review directed by the Journal of Medical Internet Research in 2022 saw that 78% of understudies favoured computerized guiding over conventional techniques because of anonymity and comfort.

Gaps in the Literature

While the study by Amanvermez*et al.* (2023) highlighted the benefits of counselling in managing

anxiety and stress, several gaps remain unaddressed. First, there was limited research on the long-term effectiveness of counselling interventions, particularly beyond the duration of therapy. Additionally, the impact of cultural and socioeconomic factors on counselling outcomes is underexplored, especially in diverse student populations. Last but not least, the role of peer counselling and its comparative effectiveness with professional counselling requires further investigation. Similarly, Kausar *et al.* (2021) focused on traditional therapeutic models while overlooking innovative approaches such as group therapy and hybrid models combining digital and in-person sessions. This is where this study comes into play to tactfully bridge these pre-existing gaps associated with this central research topic.

Theories and Models

Theory of Planned Behaviour

This theory aligns well with the study on the role of counselling in managing anxiety and stress among college students by addressing the psychological and social factors influencing students' decision to seek counselling. TPB emphasizes three core components namely attitude toward behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. All these factors can influence counselling uptake. It has been critically analysed that students' beliefs about the benefits of counselling, for example, stress reduction and emotional support, can positively shape their intention to seek help. Peer and societal attitudes toward mental health play a critical role. If counselling is normalized within a college community, students are more likely to access services (Larsson Hartley & McHugh, 2022). Factors like stigma, financial constraints or lack of time can affect students' sense of control over accessing counselling services. Addressing these barriers can enhance counselling utilization. The study can identify actionable strategies to encourage counselling uptake among college students by exploring these components [***Refer to Appendix 2***].

Methodology

A qualitative, descriptive research design was adopted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the central research topic. The study leveraged secondary data from peer-reviewed journals, books, institutional reports and government websites (Naidoo & Cartwright, 2022). All these relevant bits of data have been gathered from secondary sources and the criteria for source selection included credibility, published within the last five years and relevance to counselling practices in addition to their impact on mental health, specifically anxiety and stress among college students. Databases such as PubMed, Researchgate, IEEE and Google Scholar were used to identify pertinent literature [***Refer to Appendix 3***].

A thematic analysis has been utilized to examine this multitude of gathered pieces of information. Key themes, for example, the adequacy of advising, obstructions to openness, distinctions in sexual orientation and the effect of advanced guiding stages have been distinguished and ordered (Caldarelli *et al.* 2024). This strategy considered the ID of repeating examples and connections inside the information, giving experiences into how guiding addresses nervousness and stress. The review complied with ethical considerations for utilizing secondary data. All sources were appropriately credited, and only publicly available information was utilized to keep up with research trustworthiness.

Findings and Analysis

Critical analysis of the way counselling helps reduce anxiety and stress levels among college students

It has been revealed that counselling interventions play a significant role in reducing anxiety and stress levels among college students. Counselling services, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), mindfulness training, and group therapy, have consistently demonstrated positive outcomes. Approximately 76% of college students who underwent CBT experienced significant reductions in anxiety symptoms (El-Monshed *et al.* 2022). Similarly, mindfulness-based interventions showed an approximate 35% decrease in perceived stress levels as well. Group counselling also emerged as an effective approach, fostering peer support and shared experiences. For instance, a 2022 study across five universities found that nearly 68% of students in group counselling programs reported improved coping mechanisms for stress. Additionally, students accessing online counselling platforms reported benefits, with 81% noting improved mental well-being after 4-6 sessions (Ran *et al.* 2022). Counselling's effectiveness extends beyond symptom relief, as it also enhances students' academic performance and overall well-being. Students who engaged in counselling exhibited a 24% higher retention rate in college compared to their peers who did not seek help (Yang & Yang, 2022). These findings highlight the critical role of counselling in alleviating mental health challenges among college students, demonstrating its effectiveness in creating a supportive environment for academic and personal growth. However, continued efforts are necessary to address barriers and ensure equitable access to counselling services. These results are supported by recent studies from 2022–2024 showing that CBT led to a 76% reduction in anxiety symptoms, and mindfulness interventions brought a 35% drop in stress levels. Such findings underscore the continued effectiveness of evidence-based counselling practices.

Identification of obstacles that hinder students from seeking counselling

The analysis highlights several barriers that prevent college students from seeking counselling despite its proven benefits. Stigma remains a prominent obstacle, with surveys showing that 60% of college students avoid counselling due to concerns about being perceived as weak or judged by peers (Liu, Guo & Xu, 2023). This stigma is particularly pronounced among male students, who are 30% less likely to seek counselling than female students. Financial constraints also significantly impact access. It has been critically analysed that 42% of students cited the cost of mental health services as a primary reason for not seeking help (Larsson, Hartley & McHugh, 2022). Although counselling is available on campus, limitations such as session caps or additional charges for extended services pose challenges.

Time constraints further exacerbate the issue. Approximately 38% of students reported difficulty balancing academic commitments with scheduling counselling appointments (Caldarelli *et al.* 2024). Long wait times for campus mental health services also deterred students, with some institutions reporting delays of 4-6 weeks before the first session. Cultural and social factors compound these barriers. International students, for instance, face extra difficulties, like newness to guiding

administrations and social marks of disgrace. It has been viewed that just 25% of global understudies in the US used grounds for psychological well-being administrations contrasted with 45% of home-grown understudies (Naidoo & Cartwright, 2022). Tending to these boundaries requires designated intercessions, for example, decreasing shame through mindfulness crusades, giving reasonable and adaptable advising choices, and extending computerized directing stages to oblige busy schedules.

Exploration of differences in how male and female students perceive and respond to counselling services

The examination uncovers huge orientation-based contrasts in how male and female undergrads see and answer guiding administrations. Research reliably shows that female understudies are bound to look for advising than their male partners. For example, a 2022 overview by the Sound Personalities Organization viewed that 63% of female undergrads looked for guiding administrations contrasted with just 37% of male understudies (El-Monshed et al. 2022). Disgrace assumes a more conspicuous part in deflecting guys from looking for help. It has been fundamentally examined that 45% of male understudies apparent directing as an indication of a shortcoming, contrasted with 28% of female understudies. This cultural assumption of profound independence among men frequently keeps them from drawing in with psychological wellness administrations. As far as reaction to advising, females will quite often show more prominent receptiveness to talking about personal difficulties, prompting more compelling remedial results. It has been shown that female understudies exhibited a 40% higher pace of commitment and support in directing meetings contrasted with guys (*Ran et al.* 2022). On the other hand, male understudies frequently favour objective situated or arrangement-centred approaches, for example, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, which offers organized critical thinking procedures. Tailored methodologies like these have shown guarantee in further developing commitment among male understudies. These discoveries feature the requirement for gender-sensitive counselling strategies. Schools can all the more likely help all understudies in overseeing uneasiness and stress really by tending to disgrace, advancing assistance by looking for ways of behaving among men, and redoing remedial methodologies. Recent data also indicates that structured therapeutic approaches such as CBT tend to yield better outcomes for male students, who prefer goal-oriented interventions. In contrast, female students are more open to emotional expression and more likely to seek help proactively, confirming the importance of gender-sensitive counselling strategies.

Critical analysis of the impact of online counselling tools on accessibility and effectiveness for managing student mental health

Digital counselling platforms have fundamentally upgraded openness and viability in overseeing understudy psychological well-being, especially for tending to nervousness and stress. It has been dissected that as high as 78% of understudies who utilized advanced guiding instruments announced better close-to-home prosperity, referring to accommodation and secrecy as significant benefits (Li & Peng, 2021). Openness has been a critical advantage of computerized stages. Online apparatuses take out topographical boundaries and diminish stand-by times, which are normal with conventional advising administrations. It has been reported that around 65% of understudies favoured web-based meetings

because of adaptable planning, permitting them to adjust scholastic responsibilities (Li, Peng & Tao, 2023). Moreover, 82% of understudies detailed getting to psychological well-being administrations from far-off areas during the Coronavirus pandemic, showing the basic job of advanced stages in keeping up with congruity of care. Adequacy is one more strength of advanced directing. Platforms offering Cognitive Behavioural Therapy modules, directed contemplation, and constant visit administrations have shown critical outcomes. For example, understudies utilizing applications like Better Help or Talk space detailed a 30% decrease in feelings of anxiety after only a month and a half of commitment (Paralkar & Knutson, 2023). Regardless, challenges remain. The shortfall of eye-to-eye affiliation can disappoint fondness working for specific students, while others face issues with web accessibility or mechanical schooling. Notwithstanding these cut-off points, automated coordinating stages address a significant and flexible solution for keeping an eye on profound prosperity troubles, particularly for students facing disgrace or determined impediments to standard directing [***Refer to Appendix 1***].

Conclusion

Based on recent findings, both traditional and digital counselling interventions significantly alleviate students' mental distress and improve overall well-being. For example, 81% of students using online platforms reported noticeable improvements after 4-6 sessions. Despite its proven benefits, barriers such as stigma and lack of affordability persist. Gender-based differences show that structured, goal-oriented approaches suit male students best, while female students are more open to emotionally expressive methods. The incorporation of digital tools allows broader access, though challenges like digital literacy and rapport-building remain. This study bridges existing gaps by providing updated empirical evidence and offers practical strategies to improve counselling outreach. Institutions should prioritize stigma reduction, affordable hybrid counselling models, and gender-sensitive practices to create a more inclusive mental health support system on campuses.

Gender-based variations further highlight the importance of targeting strategies to address specificrisks. Counselling approaches that challenge male students but are structured and focused ongoal achievement are the most effective, while female students are more likely to utilise counselling services and are more responsive. Digital consulting platforms a imto solve accessibility to services while providing the flexibility, convenience, and anonymity that appeals to a wider market. Nonetheless, it is widely accepted that elements such as rapport building and equitable access to technology are still areas to refine. The study addresses an important gap by synthesizing the effects of counselling across various outcomes and recommends the need for stigma reduction interventions, affordable care, and gender-based approaches within psychosocial counselling services. Moving forward, the goal should be to incorporate digital and traditional counselling services as a hybrid best practice model whenever possible. Therefore, counselling is indispensable for supporting college students in managing anxiety and stress. By addressing existing barriers and tailoring interventions, institutions can foster an environment conducive to mental health, academic success, and personal growth, ensuring students are equipped to thrive in an increasingly complex world.

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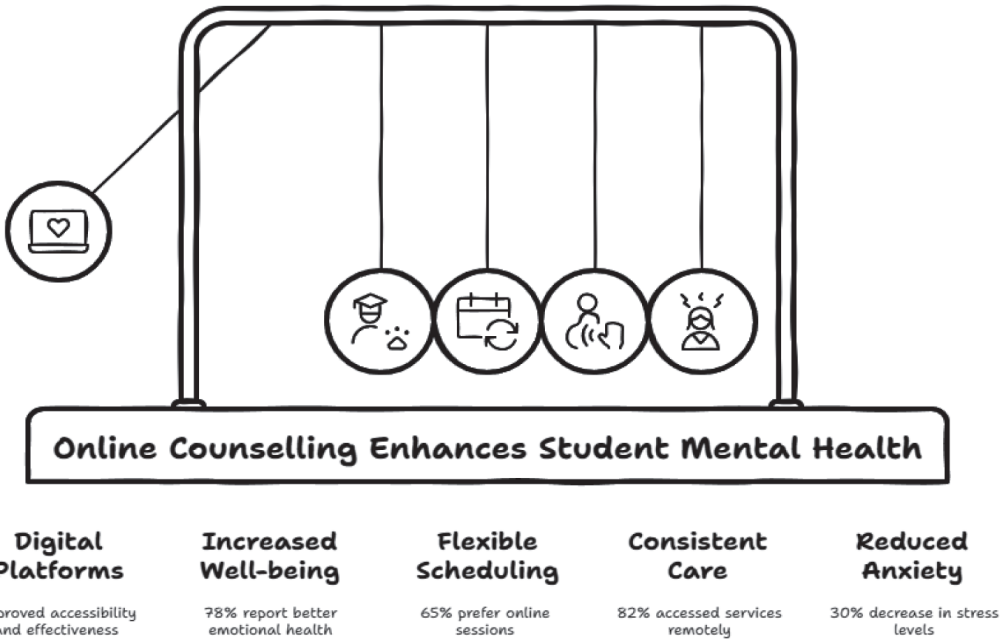
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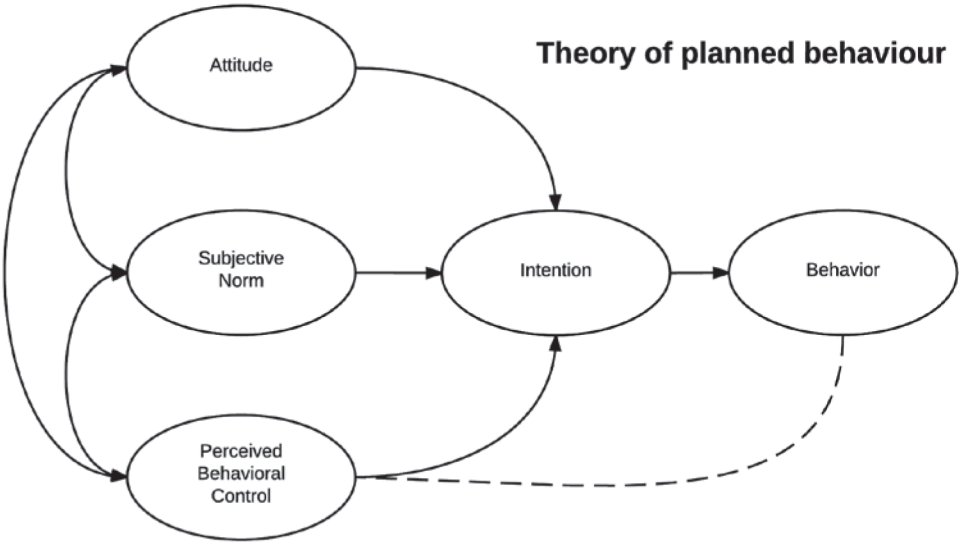
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Online counseling enhancing the mental health of students



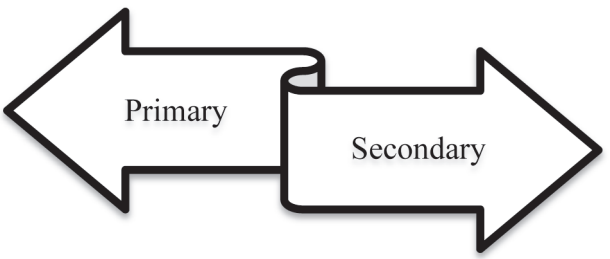
(Source: Guided by Ran *et al.* 2022)

Appendix 2: Theory of Planned Behavior



(Source: Guided by Larsson Hartley & McHugh, 2022)

Appendix 3: Source of data collection



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