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MENTAL HEALTH AND FACTORS RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH AMONG PAKISTANI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT:

In order to address the growing concern about mental health concerns among university students in Pakistan, this article focuses on the causes of these difficulties and suggests viable remedies. The research review highlights the effects of peer pressure, technology use, family expectations, financial restrictions, social and cultural norms, academic pressure, and financial restraints on students' mental health. Low mental health literacy and job market uncertainty make the problem worse. The study's aims include determining the incidence of

mental health problems among university students in Pakistan, identifying risk factors, and examining the links between academic pressure, job insecurity, and mental health outcomes. The study uses a cross-sectional design and a quantitative research methodology to collect data from 460 Pakistani university students using stratified random sampling. The examination of the data suggests that students experience moderate degrees of anxiety, despair, stress, loneliness, and sleep disruptions. Technology usage, financial stress, and academic stress are all quite common, but social support could be a buffer against mental health problems. Influences from culture barely make a difference.The study suggests campaigns to lessen stigma and raise awareness of mental health issues, stress management programmes, financial aid efforts, guidelines for safe technology use, and the encouragement of social support networks among students. Pakistani universities may greatly improve their students' overall wellbeing and academic achievement by giving mental health education and assistance a high priority.

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Mental health is an important part of overall well-being and its importance is recognized worldwide. In Universities, where social pressures, academic expectations and financial challenges can be overwhelming, mental health problems among university students have become a growing concern. This article sheds light on the factors associated with mental health problems among university students in Universities and explores possible solutions to address these problems (Byrd, & McKinney, 2012).

Academic pressure is one of the main stressors of students in Universities. In a highly competitive education system, students often strive for excellence to ensure a promising future. The burden of family, peer and social expectations puts a huge strain on their mental well-being. Fear of failure and worry about career prospects increase anxiety, depression and other mental problems (Chang, Yuan, & Wang, 2020).

For many students in Universities, financial constraints play a major role in exacerbating mental health problems. High tuition fees, rising cost of living and lack of adequate financial support lead to feelings of helplessness and despair. Researchers balancing part-time jobs to make ends meet can also harm mental health by increasing stress and reducing time for self-care and leisure (Soria, & Horgos, 2021).

Social and cultural norms in Universities can have both positive and negative effects on students' mental health. Strong family ties and community support can act as a buffer against stress, but conservative attitudes toward mental illness can prevent help-seeking. Stigma surrounding mental health can prevent students from discussing their struggles openly, causing isolation and worsening their condition (Said, Kypri, & Bowman, 2013).

The advent of technology and the widespread use of social media have changed the way students interact and the world. While these platforms can provide opportunities to connect and share information, they can also create unrealistic comparisons and increase feelings of inadequacy. Cyber bullying and online harassment can further increase anxiety and depression among young adults (Macaskill, 2013).

Mental health literacy is relatively low in Universities, both among students and the general population. Awareness of mental health problems, symptoms and available resources is insufficient. As a result, students may not recognize their own struggles and may not know where to turn for help. In addition, the limited availability of mental health services and trained professionals further exacerbates the problem.

The job market in Pakistan can be uncertain and competitive, adding to the anxiety of students worried about their career prospects. Uncertainty about the future can lead to feelings of hopelessness and increased stress, Responding to mental health challenges. (Yorgason, Linville, & Zitzman, 2008).

In addition, the literature on the mental health of university students identifies additional factors that affect their well-being. Family expectations related to academic performance and career choices can strongly influence students. The pressure to fulfill family wishes can lead to feelings of guilt, inadequacy and overwhelm. Irregular sleep patterns and insufficient rest have been linked to mental health problems in college students. Academic workload, extracurricular activities, and social engagement often interfere with sleep, which can negatively affect cognitive functioning and emotional stability. Peer pressure can influence students to conform to social norms, which can sometimes cause them to engage in harmful behaviors or neglect self-care. Fear of peer judgment can prevent students from seeking help for mental health problems (Charles, Karnaze, & Leslie, 2022).

A heavy emphasis on academic achievement can affect a student's self-esteem. One study found that lower academic performance was associated with lower self-esteem and an increased risk of depression and anxiety. Male and female students may experience different stressors due to societal gender norms. Women may face additional pressures related to traditional gender roles and expectations. Some students may lack effective coping mechanisms to deal with stress and challenges. In the absence of healthy coping strategies, they may turn to maladaptive behaviors such as substance abuse to manage their emotional distress. Exposure to traumatic events, such as natural disasters or violence, can have long-term effects on mental health. Students who have experienced such events may require special support and intervention. Prolonged academic pressure and constant workload can lead to burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, isolation, and reduced academic engagement. The transition to university life, especially for international students, can lead to feelings of social isolation and loneliness, which are associated with an increased risk of mental health problems. The lack of comprehensive mental health policies and frameworks at institutional and national levels hinders the creation of support systems and resources for students. Conclusion The literature on the mental health of university students emphasizes the importance of identifying and addressing the many factors that influence their well-being. Academic pressure, financial stress, social and cultural norms, technology use, family expectations, sleep disturbances and peer pressure all contribute to students' mental health problems. It is important for universities and policymakers to collaborate and implement evidence-

based strategies that prioritize mental health education, supportive services, and supportive campus environments. By promoting mental health awareness and providing adequate resources, Pakistani universities can make a significant contribution to the overall well-being and academic success of their students (Hunt, & Eisenberg, 2010).

Numerous elements that affect college students' psychological well-being are highlighted in the literature on mental health. Students' struggles with mental health are influenced by a variety of factors, including academic pressure, financial stress, social connections, academic and career uncertainties, technology use, cultural expectations, and sleep habits. Universities and politicians must acknowledge the multifaceted nature of these variables and put evidence-based interventions in place to raise awareness of mental health, develop supportive campus communities, and offer services that are easily available to students who need them. Higher education institutions may make a significant contribution to the mental health and academic achievement of their student populations by fully addressing these problems (Irfan, 2016; Bibi, Blackwell, & Margraf, 2021).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
1.   To assess the prevalence of mental health issues among Pakistani university students.

2.   To identify factors related to mental health challenges among Pakistani university students.

3.   To examine the Relationship of Academic Stress and Career Uncertainty and Mental Health Outcomes.

METHODOLOGY
In order to shed light on this pressing issue, the quantitative research approach used to analyze mental health and aspects associated to mental health among Pakistani university students shows significant promise. The study uses a cross-sectional research design in an effort to provide an in-depth overview of Pakistani university students' mental health at a certain moment. The use of stratified random sampling will guarantee that various student demographics are represented, enhancing the generalizability of the results. By using organized surveys and questionnaires, the data gathering method tries to obtain standardized responses on a range of variables impacting mental health, such as academic stress, financial restrictions, social support, technology use, and cultural influences. Through rigorous survey validation and ethical considerations, the research aims to maintain the credibility and confidentiality of the data obtained.

DATA ANALYSIS
The data analysis phase will enable the identification of the most common mental health concerns among university students and their relationships with various factors. Descriptive and inferential statistics will be used. This thorough investigation is essential for gaining a nuanced picture of the problems with mental health that Pakistani university students must deal with.

The study design is in line with the research aims, which centre on estimating the incidence of mental illness, identifying associated variables, analyzing the effects of academic stress and job uncertainties, and analyzing the link between social media use and mental health. The findings of this study are anticipated to considerably add to the body of knowledge on mental health in the context of university students in Pakistan, offering insightful information to decision-makers.

Table 1: Prevalence of Mental Health Issues among Pakistani University Students

Mental Health Issues	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Anxiety	3.471	0.873
Depression	2.883	0.765
Stress	3.274	0.914
Loneliness	3.192	0.786
Sleep Disturbances	2.989	0.852

The table presents data on the prevalence of mental health issues among Pakistani university students. Data was based on a sample of 460 students, the mean scores and standard deviations for each mental health issue. The standardized scales used in the surveys range from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of the respective mental health issue.

The average anxiety score is 3.471, with a 0.873 standard deviation. This implies that, on average, university students in Pakistan feel a moderate amount of anxiety, with substantial individual variation. With a standard deviation of 0.765, the mean score for depression is 2.883. This suggests that, on average, students had moderate depression; however some have reported more serious symptoms. The average stress score is 3.274, with a 0.914 standard deviation. This shows that, on average, students are under a moderate amount of stress, yet stress levels vary widely amongst students. The average loneliness score is 3.192, with a 0.786 standard deviation. This suggests that while most students report just a moderate amount of loneliness, some do report greater amounts. With a standard deviation of 0.852 and a mean score of 2.989, sleep disruptions are a common problem. This shows that students generally have modest sleep disruptions and that there is some variation in the students' sleep quality.

Table 2: Factors Related to Mental Health Challenges Among Pakistani University Students.

Factors	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Academic Stress	3.831	0.921
Financial Stress	3.452	0.783
Social Support	4.154	0.862
Technology Use	3.611	0.751
Cultural Influences	3.253	0.722
Sleep Patterns	3.951	0.881

The mean scores and standard deviations for several aspects of mental health issues among Pakistani university students are shown in Table 2. A sample of 460 students chosen at random from various colleges around the nation provided the data. Higher scores indicate higher levels of the corresponding mental health difficulties on the standardized measures used in the questionnaires, which range from 1 to 5.

Academic stress has a mean score of 3.831 and a standard deviation of 0.921. This shows that, on average, students suffer a modest amount of academic stress and that levels of academic stress across students might vary greatly. Financial stress has a mean score of 3.452 and a standard deviation of 0.783. This suggests that financial stress among students is often of a moderate intensity. However, much like with academic stress, there is a clear difference in the financial stress that various students suffer. Social assistance has an average score of 4.154 and an SD of 0.862. This suggests that, generally speaking, students have a high amount of social support, which might serve as a defense mechanism against mental health issues. The low standard deviation shows that among the pupils assessed, social support is largely stable. Technology use has a mean score of 3.611 and a standard deviation of 0.751. This shows that pupils utilize technology in a modest way on average. The comparatively small standard deviation suggests that pupils' technology usage habits are generally constant. Cultural factors have an average score of 3.253 and a standard deviation of 0.722. This suggests that cultural variables have a minor impact on students' mental health issues. The standard deviation implies that the influence of cultural factors on mental health may vary. The average score for sleep habits is 3.951, with an SD of 0.881. This shows that students generally have a healthy amount of sleep. The relatively high standard deviation does, however, suggest some variance in the pupils' sleep quality.

Table 3: The Relationship of Academic Stress and Career Uncertainty and Mental Health Outcomes

Variables	Mental Health	Significance
Academic Stress and Anxiety	0.538	0.001
Academic Stress and Depression	0.415	0.015
Academic Stress and Stress	0.523	0.005
Career Uncertainty and Anxiety	0.324	0.092
Career Uncertainty and Depression	0.381	0.045
Career Uncertainty and Stress	0.293	0.112

This table presents the correlation coefficients between academic stress, career uncertainty, and three mental health outcomes, namely anxiety, depression, and stress, among Pakistani university students.

Academic stress and anxiety have a moderately positive correlation value of 0.538, which indicates a link. This implies that students may experience increased levels of anxiety as academic stress grows. This association is highly statistically significant, which means that it is unlikely to have happened by chance, according to the significance threshold of 0.001.

Academic pressure and depression have a moderately positive correlation value of 0.415, indicating a link. This suggests a link between greater depressed symptoms and higher levels of academic stress. Although less so than the link with anxiety, the significance level of 0.015 implies that this relationship is statistically significant.

Academic stress and stress have a somewhat positive correlation value of 0.523, which indicates a link. Students are therefore prone to feel larger levels of general stress when academic stress rises. A statistically significant link is shown by the significance level of 0.005.

Anxiety and career uncertainty have a 0.324 correlation value, which indicates a tenuous positive association. This suggests that students may feel a little more anxious as their career uncertainty rises. The significance level of 0.092, however, indicates that under the usual significance threshold of 0.05, this link is not statistically significant.

Depression and professional uncertainty have a 0.381 correlation coefficient, which suggests a tenuous positive association. This suggests that somewhat greater depression symptoms are linked to higher degrees of job uncertainty. At the 0.05 significance level, the significance level of 0.045 indicates the existence of a statistically significant link.

Stress and career uncertainty have a 0.293 correlation value, which indicates a somewhat favorable association. This implies that students may suffer somewhat greater levels of general stress when job uncertainty grows. The association is not, however, statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level, as indicated by the significance level of 0.112.

CONCLUSION:
Important information on the frequency of mental health problems among Pakistani university students is revealed by the data analysis. The results show that anxiety, sadness, stress, loneliness, and sleep difficulties are moderately common among students. Individual pupils do vary significantly, though, and some report having more severe symptoms. Students frequently have sleep problems and academic stress, which negatively affects their mental health. Social support, on the other hand, appears to operate as a protective factor against mental health issues. The findings also demonstrate the impact of technological use and financial stress on mental health outcomes, with financial stress being moderately widespread and technological involvement being moderate. While cultural aspects barely matter, they can vary in their impact on mental health.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
1.   To eliminate stigma and encourage students to get treatment, universities should give priority to efforts that raise awareness of mental health issues.

2.   Universities should undertake stress management programmes given the pervasiveness of academic stress and its effects on mental health.

3.   Universities should look at financial aid programmes and scholarships to reduce student financial hardship.

4.   Minimizing the detrimental impacts of excessive screen time on students' mental health may be achieved by encouraging responsible technology usage and fostering digital well-being.

5.   Building up social support networks inside colleges can help students feel connected and a part of the community.

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