

# Status of Psychological Counselling for Women from a Gender Perspective

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**Abstract.** This paper reviews the state of counseling among female university students from a particular angle—namely, gender. A review of previous data allows the current situation of high psychopathology rates among female university students and the diverse reasons for this to be clearly presented. According to this study, investigating this component of counselling offers a more focused viewpoint, which in some ways can aid in the more targeted provision of mental health maintenance services. It also means that the level of counselling can be improved to some extent and the psychological quality of the society can be improved in a good way. Nonetheless, gender is a socially sensitive perspective that is frequently studied. The breadth and depth of public discussion may be affected. In turn, this research could also contribute to a deeper understanding of this area of the field, extending the direction of the research and enabling a more comprehensive exploration of the topic of counselling.

**Keywords:** Mental health; Counselling; Female; College students.

## 1. Introduction

Mental health has become a hot topic in today's society as the pace of life increases and self-awareness grows. WHO has found that 970 million people are suffering from mental disorders in the year 2019 according to a survey? In other words, 1 out of every 8 people in the world have mental problems [1]. Among these, college students had a marginally higher frequency of mental illness than any other group. Over 60% of college students between 2013 and 2021 fit the description for at least one mental health issue [2]. This may be due to the fact that emerging adulthood is a challenging and painful life stage for many young people. The life transitions and various stresses that occur during this stage such as financial pressures, academic pressures, etc. can be difficulties that they are unable to cope well with, which can turn into mental illness. On the other side, the availability of mental health information may have contributed to the rise in the reporting of mental illness and the willingness to seek out psychological aid services. Furthermore, a study indicates that views around asking for help are influenced by gender on their own. Women were considerably more likely to recognize when someone needed professional help than men were, and they also tended to have more positive attitudes toward receiving it [3]. Risk factors for women may include disparities in social roles and duties between the sexes, cultural norms that promote women's expressiveness, socioeconomic position, and a lack of social support and education. That may also be one of the causes of the fact that the mental health of twice as many females as male university students is compromised [4]. Nonetheless, they would rather receive psychological help in private than through counseling. Given this circumstance, research on the current status of mental health counseling from a gender perspective for female college students is very desirable. Understanding the gender differences in mental health issues among these students and developing counseling procedures that are more considerate of women's needs are essential to improving the mental health of female college students. The development of this area of research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of mental health issues and provides theoretical and practical guidance for the provision of more effective counselling services.

Through a thorough analysis of the body of prior research, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate the state of psychological counselling for female university students today from a gender viewpoint. This paper will discuss the impact of counselling on female college students in higher

education and the responses to contemporary challenges. The project intends to help female college students receive better mental health support. The quality of counselling services provided to women would also benefit from it.

## **2. Current situation of counselling and mental health of college student**

The World Health Organization defines mental health as 'a state of well-being in which an individual is aware of his or her own abilities, is able to cope with the normal stresses of life, is able to work productively, and is able to contribute to his or her community' [5]. In other words, mental health for college students is influenced by their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Specifically, mentally healthy college students are more inclined to think in a positive way about the difficulties or challenges they face, such as interpersonal relationships and economic management. The way university students perceive their degree of well-being also has a big impact on how they behave. College students are highly motivated to participate in social and academic activities when they are happy. As a result, preserving mental health is essential for managing stress, enhancing happiness, and achieving academic success in college. However, college students may encounter a number of obstacles and difficulties in preserving their mental health. Age, family dynamics, race, and self-perception are a few examples. For instance, in the case of body image, a comprehensive study comprising students from seven universities examined the depressed symptoms of students who expressed a great deal of concern about their appearance. The results showed a positive correlation between the degree of body image anxiety and the likelihood of developing depression [6]. This is because when they feel shame or anxiety about their shape, they may seek out expensive procedures to change their appearance in an attempt to alleviate the negative feelings. However, the alleviation process itself raises the possibility of anxiety, eating disorders, depression, and low self-esteem [7, 8]. These types of studies are countless and have brought more attention to ways to maintain mental health.

Of these, counselling is the most common and effective way. In the NHS definition, 'Counselling is a talking therapy that involves a trained therapist listening to you and helping you find ways to deal with your feelings [9]. 'Using the previously mentioned example of psychological problems caused by self-image concerns, counsellors help them to identify body image issues, using cognitive behavioral therapy to help them understand the concept of a true self-image and examples of the consequences of unhealthy self-esteem development. This helps them to replace negative thoughts with positive ones, i.e., irrational thoughts about their body type. Specifically, the males among them may feel that they are not strong or masculine enough. This is where the counsellor helps them to reduce these negative thoughts by exploring the truth of these thoughts and the benefits and drawbacks of holding on to such beliefs. The way university students perceive their degree of well-being also has a big impact on how they behave. College students are highly motivated to participate in social and academic activities when they are happy. As a result, preserving mental health is essential for managing stress, enhancing happiness, and achieving academic success in college. However, college students may encounter a number of obstacles and difficulties in preserving their mental health. Age, family dynamics, race, and self-perception are a few examples. For instance, in the case of body image, a comprehensive study comprising students from seven universities examined the depressed symptoms of students who expressed a great deal of concern about their appearance. The results showed a positive correlation between the degree of body image anxiety and the likelihood of developing depression. This is one of the reasons why most regular, large hospitals often have a mental illness unit.

### **3. The current state and challenges of mental health among female student in higher education**

Typically, this improvement trend holds true for all age groups. However, when focusing on female college students in higher education, more complex factors will influence this improvement trend. In the current college environment, female college students may face particular issues. For example, socially constructed gender norms, which manifest themselves specifically in schools by demanding higher standards of academic achievement for girls, and the demands of such high standards are more likely to trigger excessive anxiety and stress for girls in a highly stressful educational environment [10]. In addition to this, women's moods can be influenced by physiological factors. Oestrogen, a hormone that is only associated with mood disorders that occur in women. The levels of this female hormone often vary dramatically before and after each menstrual cycle. It can alter the production and action of endorphins, which can affect whether or not a woman feels 'feel good'. In severe cases, it can also interfere with the quality of life of college women, such as relationships or academic growth. On the other hand, college students' mental health can also be impacted by their relationships. Interpersonal relationships and college students' mental health have been shown to positively correlate in certain experiments. This is because friendly relationships can increase college students' sense of security. Maslow's Hierarchy Theory has pointed out that people will pursue mental security after physical security. As a result, loneliness is the most common negative emotion that accompanies students when they do not feel secure enough in their relationships. It is extremely likely that this chronic depression would eventually result in mental disease [11]. For female college students, the combination of multiple physiological and environmental factors leads to unfavorable mental health outcomes. An examination of data spanning the previous seven years indicates that female students are approximately twice as likely as male students to suffer from mental illness. Furthermore, compared to their male counterparts, females experience far higher rates of morbidity increases. According to the study, psychological issues are more common in women. However, a thorough analysis of this data will probably reveal significant skewness. Studies reveal that women are more likely than men to communicate their feelings, own up to their shortcomings, and seek out psychiatric assistance [12]. It would be simpler to recognize or diagnose mental health issues in women if such a phenomenon occurred. However, because of gender stereotypes that may lead them to self-digest unfavorable emotions, men are less likely to receive a mental health diagnosis. This means that men's data are likely to be underestimated and some important conditions underrepresented, leading to inappropriate interventions or treatments.

### **4. Strategies for counselling female students in higher education**

Diversity issues, for example, might have a significant impact on students' motivation to seek out psychiatric assistance and can also alter how counseling tactics are customized. Most of the students prefer female counselors of the reasons for choosing a female counsellor is because in popular perception, women are more empathetic and understand their concerns. Society and culture make them believe that women experience a wider range of complex emotions and are therefore more empathetic and able to deal with problems in more depth. This may be because it is easier for women to talk to counsellors of the same gender. This is because it is easier for them to find some common experiences that will lead to a deeper understanding of their feelings. Then again, women who have experienced domestic violence from a male partner or have been sexually assaulted by a male are also more likely to choose to seek counselling services from a female therapist. This is because their trauma may be triggered by a therapist of the same gender as the perpetrator, causing further stress or harm. Also, cultural, or religious beliefs can influence their gender preference for therapists. As an example, Tzniut in Judaism emphasizes appropriate interaction between men and women and the avoidance of inappropriate physical contact. This may make women of the Jewish faith favor female therapists in safe spaces. Consequently, the school's decision to assemble a predominantly female therapist team makes it easier for female students to talk to their therapists about their privacy

concerns. Because they don't have to worry about others invading their personal space or failing to understand them, they are more inclined to let down their guard and find a better answer.

Secondly, providing support specific to women's health issues is a good way to enhance counselling services. This support includes not only training team members to be aware of women's health issues, but also guiding female students to establish correct and healthy psychological values. This requires the support of society as a whole. The government can increase its investment in mental health to help them recognize the importance of mental health and develop a positive mindset. With such support, schools can offer relevant courses or seminars to help female students build awareness and promote the popularization of mental health. The government can also increase financial support for relevant research programmes. This would not only encourage the development of diverse research topics or projects on such subjects, but also promote the exploration of solutions to mental health problems. In addition, people are using social media for extended periods of time due to the developments in technology in today's world. As people who can significantly influence the users, social media influencers should stop promoting unrealistic beauty standards to prevent the establishment of a perverse sense of aesthetics in the minds of students. To some extent, they can reduce the negative feelings of college women towards their body image. Influencers can also create positive, healthy-minded female role models to encourage and support students.

Finally, it is necessary to create a gender friendly environment. This requires people to drive home the concept of gender equality. People might become more aware of gender bias in their daily lives by having public discussions on gender. Talking about gender equality in public can raise awareness of the issue and encourage tolerance and respect for gender roles. It helps lessen the unfair treatment of various genders to some extent, which lessens the unfairness that female university students experience when faced with gender bias. When the concept of gender equality is popularized, some of the phenomena that affect women's mental health are also reduced. For example, less stringent standards for women's body image will reduce women's anxiety about their appearance, thus reducing the likelihood of negative emotions. In addition, if there were no one around to instil the idea that women are not suited to studying science, women might choose to major in a subject they truly love, alleviating the depression that inevitably comes with the learning process. Or perhaps the elimination of the 'pink tax' that now exists on most commodities could effectively reduce women's financial pressure, especially when most women, as university students, have yet to achieve full financial independence. These inequalities may seem insignificant, but they are all heavy weights on the sick side of the female psyche. They are all things in life that women cannot avoid. This unavoidable pressure obviously has a huge impact on women's life choices. Therefore, the successful establishment of a gender-friendly environment can effectively alleviate the high rate of female morbidity.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper explores the current situation of psychological counselling for female college students from a gender perspective by reviewing previous relevant experiments and studies. Reviewing the material reveals that there is a depressingly high prevalence of mental health issues among modern college students, with women experiencing these issues at a significantly higher rate than men. Physiological issues, gender stereotypes, cultural influences, and other factors are among the contributing factors. These results advance the development of psychological counseling for female college students and provide a greater understanding of the significance of preserving women's mental health. This research methodology does have several drawbacks, though. On the one hand, data collection may be problematic. For example, the previous technology is not enough to support the emergence of more accurate data, or the data may be lost. This affects the accuracy of the study. On the other hand, old information may be influenced by the social culture and outdated theories of the time, reducing the representativeness and reliability of the conclusions. Therefore, the basis of future research should not only be limited to past information, but also establish more relevant scientific

research projects to improve the validity of the research. Based on the data of psychiatric morbidity among college students in today's society, the investment in research on topics related to the maintenance of mental health will only increase.

On top of that, the subject of this research theme is too specific. This makes it difficult to establish a generalization rule. Moreover, the emergence of various genders with the development of the times may also reduce the reliability of this research. In the future, the direction of research should not be limited to biological sex, but the subject may be diverse psychological sex, which will increase the probability that the conclusions will be applicable to people. Not only will the subjects of this field of study change in the future, but the subjects may also become more specific. This is because, based on the data of psychiatric morbidity rates among college students of different genders in today's society, the investment in research on topics related to mental health will only increase. As more attention is paid to gender-diverse mental health conditions, the level of psychological support services in society will increase significantly, and the popularization of mental health education will also be promoted. It will also make it possible for society to be more accepting of some women's mental health issues, reduce mental health stigma and allow women to seek help and support more freely.

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