

Assessing Undergraduate Students' Awareness and Utilization of University Mental Health Services and Programs for Depression: A Case Study

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Abstract : Depression among young adults is a common health problem and a growing public health concern. Of the young adult population, college students are particularly vulnerable to depression as they find themselves grappling with the stress and anxiety of college life while at the same navigating the demands of separation and independence from familial ties. To deal with the resultant mental health challenges affecting this population, most colleges offer counseling services to their student population. What is not known, however, is the extent to which students are aware of or even utilize such mental health services. Our study set out to assess the level of student awareness and utilization of counseling services and programs at a southeastern public university in the United States. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires given to a convenience sample of 508 undergraduate students voluntarily recruited from 38 classes representing five colleges. Data analysis was done using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Results showed that even though a majority of students were aware of the mental health services offered by the university, an overwhelming majority of these students did not utilize any of these services or participate in any mental health programs offered by the university. Significant gender and racial differences were observed. Reasons for the lack of awareness and utilization of mental health services are explored. Recommendations are made on how to increase student awareness and utilization of mental health services, and the implications of the findings are discussed. The findings of this study help to fill an academic lacuna on this issue and provides an important basis for developing policies to help mitigate the growing problem of depression and attendant mental health problems among undergraduate students.

Keywords : depression, counseling services, undergraduate college students, utilization of mental health services, perceptions and awareness

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