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Determinants of Mental Health Outcome Among East Tennessee State University (ETSU) College



Students



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Background

Mental health remains a critical subject affecting students' academic performance among college students (Wyatt et al., 2017). Mental health refers to a person's ability to communicate with others (World Health Organization, 2005). The incidence and severity of mental health issues are increasing among college students, and such issues pose a threat to health and academic performance. Previous research focused on college students' specific status, for instance, freshman year, and how mental health influences their academic performance (Chemers et al., 2001).

There is scanty research that explains how certain variables provide understanding regarding outcomes that impact mental health among college students. These outcomes remain underexplored regarding influencing students' educational performances and experience (Pachucki et al., 2015). There is an emphasis on students' mental health as a public health concern globally (Stallmann, 2008; Storrie et al., 2010). Studies found that mental distress has an impact on academic self-efficacy and poor study progress, yet underlying mechanisms are not fully understood resulting in delayed academic success (Eisenberg et al., 2009).

Objective

The study's primary purpose is to examine determinants of mental health and their related academic impact on East Tennessee State University (ETSU) college students, emphasizing gender, domestic, and international students.

Methodology

The study used an online survey to assess students' mental health and wellness. The survey was conducted with 2,354 East Tennessee State University (ETSU) students. Responses from college students about mental health and academics from the State of the University Survey 2022 were examined on questions related to self-reported depression symptoms. The study asked questions about whether participants had experienced signs displaying mental health problems on campus, and the types of conditions that raised concerns measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

Participants were asked to identify conditions that appeared to signal mental health issues. To detect mental health issues, participants mentioned a variety of conditions, including stress, anxiety, trouble sleeping, feeling discouraged, lonely, and also feeling hopeful about the future. Survey responses with single-selection, multiple-selection, and Likert scales were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests.

Analysis

Table 1. Self-reported mental health indicators among ETSU students.

Mental health outcomes	Sex Categories - Most of the time (5-7 days)			P values
	Male	Female	χ^2	
Felt Lonely	7.9%	8.9%	15.152 ^a	.002
Felt Discouraged	7.5%	10.3%	25.510 ^a	.001
Troubled sleeping	12.8%	18.0%	29.552 ^a	.001
Nervous, anxious, edge	15.6%	26.0%	71.897 ^a	.001
Felt rarely hopeful	36.0%	36.5%	8.227 ^a	.042

*P < .05, **P < .01, ***P < .001

Results

A chi-square test of significance was run to determine differences in 5 dimensions of self-reported mental health. Variations in mental health outcomes were found by classification of college students by gender status. There was a significant difference between males and females regarding mental health outcomes as reported by gender status, $\chi^2(3, N = 2,354) = 25.51, p < 0.05$.

All the five self-reported indicators were statistically significant. Results indicate that generally speaking, females reported mental health outcomes more frequently than their male counterparts across all the indicators.

Conclusion and recommendation

Findings indicate that one's mental health status is very critical to promoting academic performance and strategies to prevent mental health issues or negative academic effects; which have implications on students' academic experience and programs.

The findings are essential to inform policies and recommend suggestions to improve students' mental health outcomes and academic excellence among college students. Future research is suggested to ascertain other outcomes or conditions that might account for a higher variation in mental health outcomes among females as compared to their male counterparts.

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