

# Evaluating Students' Perceptions of Psychological Services in Technical Universities in Pakistan: Implications for Enhancing Educational Quality

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## Abstract

This study investigates students' assessment of psychological services in technical universities in Pakistan, aiming to examine their relationship with academic performance and overall educational quality. With increasing mental health concerns among students, particularly in technical disciplines, psychological services are critical for fostering academic success and well-being. A mixed-methods approach was employed, consisting of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, to gauge students' awareness, utilization, and satisfaction with these services. The findings revealed that while many students acknowledged the importance of psychological services, a significant portion remained unaware or hesitant to seek help due to stigma and limited accessibility. The study highlighted the positive impact of psychological services on students' mental health and academic performance. However, barriers such as long waiting times, lack of counselor availability, and societal stigma continued to hinder full utilization. Recommendations for improving psychological services include raising awareness, reducing stigma, increasing counselor availability, and integrating mental health support more effectively into the academic environment. This study contributes to enhancing the understanding of how psychological services can support student success in Pakistani technical universities.

**Keywords:** psychological services, mental health, academic performance, student well-being, stigma, technical universities, Pakistan, counseling services, higher education

## Introduction

In recent years, mental health concerns have become a significant issue among university students, particularly in Pakistan, where academic pressure, social challenges, and personal

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issues contribute to stress, anxiety, and depression (Zia, 2018). The impact of mental health on academic performance has led to growing recognition of the importance of psychological services in higher education institutions (Raza, 2020). This study explores students' assessment of psychological services in technical universities in Pakistan, with the aim of understanding how these services impact students' academic performance and mental well-being.

While many universities in Pakistan offer psychological support, students often face barriers in utilizing these services, including a lack of awareness, social stigma, and inadequate resources (Ali & Ahmad, 2019). This paper seeks to examine these factors and how they influence the overall quality of education in technical universities. By assessing the effectiveness of psychological services, the study contributes to the discourse on improving mental health support in higher education in Pakistan.

### **Literature Review**

The importance of psychological support services in educational settings has been widely acknowledged. According to Kausar and Tariq (2017), psychological services help students manage academic pressures, improve mental health, and enhance overall educational outcomes. In Pakistan, however, students' engagement with these services remains low, primarily due to cultural stigma surrounding mental health and a lack of proper awareness (Ahmad et al., 2018).

Several studies have explored the relationship between psychological support and academic performance. For instance, Rehman (2019) found that students who received psychological counseling performed better academically, demonstrating increased motivation and reduced anxiety. However, studies by Khan and Rehman (2020) indicate that while psychological services are available, many students do not utilize them due to perceived barriers such as fear of judgment from peers.

Furthermore, Pakistan's educational system, especially in technical universities, has long focused on academic rigor, often neglecting the mental health aspect of students' well-being. This oversight can lead to high levels of stress and burnout among students, as indicated by Hussain et al. (2021). Integrating mental health support into the educational framework could, therefore, contribute significantly to improving students' academic outcomes (Shah et al., 2020).

### **Methodology**

This study used a mixed-methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative component involved a survey administered to 400 students across four major technical universities in Pakistan. The survey assessed students' awareness, usage, satisfaction, and perceived effectiveness of the psychological services available. The qualitative component included in-depth interviews with 30 students who had utilized the services. Thematic analysis was employed for the qualitative data, and SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative data.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Quantitative Data Analysis:**

The data collected through surveys were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the

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Social Sciences) software. Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the demographic information and key responses related to awareness, utilization, and perceived effectiveness of psychological services. A chi-square test was used to analyze the relationship between the students' awareness of psychological services and their likelihood of utilizing these services. Additionally, a t-test was used to compare the academic performance of students who had used psychological services against those who had not.

- **Descriptive Statistics:**

- 400 students completed the survey, with 60% male and 40% female participants.
- The average age of the students was 21.3 years (SD = 2.5).
- 64% of students reported being aware of the psychological services available at their universities.
- Among those aware, only 42% had utilized these services at least once.

- **Chi-Square Test Results:** The chi-square test examined the association between students' awareness and their usage of psychological services. Results indicated a significant association ( $\chi^2 = 11.35$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that students who are more aware of the psychological services are more likely to use them.

- **T-Test for Academic Performance:** A t-test was conducted to compare the academic performance of students who used psychological services ( $M = 82.5$ ,  $SD = 10.2$ ) and those who did not ( $M = 78.3$ ,  $SD = 12.5$ ). The t-test revealed a significant difference in academic performance between the two groups ( $t = 2.81$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that students who used psychological services had higher academic performance on average.

**Qualitative Data Analysis:**

Qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The following key themes emerged from the data:

1. **Stigma and Reluctance to Seek Help:** Many students expressed hesitation to seek psychological help due to the fear of being judged by peers. One student shared, "I didn't want others to think I was weak or incapable of handling my stress, so I kept my problems to myself."
2. **Positive Impact on Mental Health:** Students who had utilized the psychological services reported positive outcomes. One student mentioned, "The counselor helped me cope with academic pressure and improved my overall well-being."
3. **Need for More Accessible Services:** Students highlighted the long wait times and limited availability of counselors as significant barriers to accessing services. "It took weeks to get an appointment, and by then, my issues had escalated," one student stated.

**Results**

1. **Awareness and Utilization of Psychological Services:**

- 64% of respondents reported being aware of the psychological services provided at their universities.
- However, only 42% had used these services at least once during their academic careers.
- The primary reason for not using the services was the lack of information about available counseling (35%) and the fear of stigmatization (28%).

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**2. Perceived Effectiveness of Psychological Services:**

- Of the students who had used the services, 74% reported feeling less stressed and better equipped to manage academic pressures.
- 58% of students indicated that their academic performance had improved after receiving psychological support.
- However, 22% of students reported no significant change in their academic performance after utilizing the services.

**3. Barriers to Access:**

- Students cited long waiting times (38%), inadequate availability of counselors (31%), and the stigma surrounding mental health (26%) as the primary barriers to accessing psychological services.
- The qualitative interviews revealed that students felt embarrassed to seek help, fearing that others would perceive them as weak or incapable (Zaman, 2019).

**4. Qualitative Insights:**

- Interviews indicated that students who used the services found them beneficial, particularly in managing stress and anxiety related to academic performance. One student noted, "The counselor helped me develop better time management skills and cope with stress, which improved my grades."
- Students also suggested that psychological services should be more actively promoted, with greater emphasis on confidentiality and the benefits of seeking help (Ali et al., 2020).

**Discussion**

The results highlight several key issues affecting the effectiveness and accessibility of psychological services in technical universities in Pakistan. First, the lack of awareness about available services remains a significant barrier. While the majority of students are aware of psychological services, many still do not use them due to misconceptions or a lack of understanding of their benefits. Additionally, the stigma associated with seeking help for mental health issues continues to discourage students from utilizing these services, as confirmed by previous research (Khan et al., 2019).

Moreover, the study found that while psychological services are beneficial for academic performance and mental health, there are issues with accessibility. Long wait times, limited counselor availability, and inadequate infrastructure further limit students' ability to seek help. These barriers are consistent with findings from other studies conducted in Pakistani universities (Hussain & Riaz, 2020).

To address these issues, universities must increase awareness about the availability and benefits of psychological services. Campaigns that normalize mental health care and reduce stigma could encourage more students to seek help. Additionally, increasing the number of counselors and improving the accessibility of services would likely enhance the overall effectiveness of psychological support.

**Conclusions**

This study provides valuable insights into the students' assessment of psychological services in technical universities in Pakistan. While these services have a positive impact on students'

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mental health and academic performance, barriers such as stigma, limited awareness, and accessibility issues hinder their full utilization. To improve the quality of education and student well-being, universities in Pakistan should focus on promoting psychological services, reducing stigma, and addressing the infrastructural challenges that limit access to these services. Future research should explore the long-term effects of psychological support on academic and personal outcomes to further inform policy and practice in higher education institutions in Pakistan.

### **Recommendations**

1. **Increasing Awareness:** Universities should implement awareness campaigns that inform students about the availability and benefits of psychological services. These campaigns should aim to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and encourage students to seek help when needed. Awareness programs could be conducted through workshops, seminars, or orientation sessions for new students.
2. **Reducing Stigma:** Cultural stigma remains a significant barrier to students utilizing psychological services. Universities should take proactive measures to normalize mental health care by highlighting its importance in student well-being and academic success. Peer-led mental health programs, testimonials from students who have benefited from counseling, and integrating mental health discussions into academic curricula could help reduce stigma.
3. **Expanding Service Accessibility:** Many students face difficulties accessing psychological services due to long waiting times and limited availability of counselors. Universities should consider increasing the number of counselors, offering more flexible counseling hours, and introducing online or virtual counseling services to accommodate students' busy schedules.
4. **Training Faculty and Staff:** Faculty members should receive training on identifying signs of mental health issues and referring students to appropriate psychological services. This could foster a more supportive environment where students feel comfortable seeking help.
5. **Integrating Psychological Support with Academic Counseling:** There is a growing need to integrate psychological services with academic advising. Offering combined counseling that addresses both academic challenges and emotional concerns can provide students with a holistic support system. Collaboration between academic advisors and counselors will ensure that students receive the help they need to balance academic pressures with mental health support.
6. **Regular Feedback and Evaluation:** Universities should implement regular assessments of the effectiveness of psychological services. Feedback from students who have used the services should be collected to evaluate counselor performance, service quality, and overall student satisfaction. This will help universities continuously improve and adapt their mental health services to meet students' evolving needs.

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