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Barriers for Seeking Psychological Help for Mental Health Disorders: A sample of Undergraduate Students in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Stigma associated with mental illness is identified as a potential barrier for seeking psychological help for mental health disorders. The purpose of this study is to assess the perceived barriers and supporting factors and to find out the strategies to promote the help seeking behavior among university students. 16 in-depth interviews were conducted with students and students' counselors from three state universities in Sri Lanka. Already developed and tested three questionnaires on help seeking behavior were used to develop guidelines. Barriers, supporting factors and strategies to promote counseling services were investigated. According to the findings, the most significant barrier for seeking counseling services is mental illness stigma. Males have a greater level of mental illness stigma than female. The rest of barriers are reluctance to share their problems with counselors, self-dependency, lack of trust on counselors, and lack of awareness about services availability. Most significant supporting factors are availability of free counseling services, proximity, and easy access to the counseling service. The strategies for promoting counseling services are promoting mental health education among students; making easy access to counselors; and developing a good relationship between students and counselors.

Keywords: Help seeking, Help seeking barriers, Counseling, Psychological difficulties.

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Introduction

Mental health disorders facing by university students are significant. Around 32% of university students have some sort of mental health difficulties (Eisenberg, Hunt, Speer, & Zivin, 2011). Increased help seeking behavior among college students are important because higher onset of mental disorders is during the college period (Kessler et al., 2005). The university students are more vulnerable for having mental health problems. Ryan et al., (2010) stated that student population is the highest risk group for having mental health problems. According to Kessler et al. (2005), 15 to 24 age group is the most psychological disorders presented age group. And they have stated that when disturb the education by mental disorders of the students their future life chances may negatively affected. In Sri Lanka, education is considered as a main ladder for future life chances. Bewick et al., (2008) stated that 29 per cent students are in a clinically significant level of psychological distress and 8 per cent are in moderate to higher level.

Even though, there is a higher risk for having mental health problems and higher level of prevailing mental health difficulties during the period of studying in Universities, literature reveals that students hesitant to seek counseling for their mental health related difficulties (Jorm, Korten, Jacomb, Christensen, Rogers, & Pollitt, 1997). Counseling have been described as “potentially difficult, embarrassing, and overall risky enterprise . . . fear and avoidance in some individuals” (Kushner & Sher, 1989). However, when the untreated duration is longer, it associates with worsen results (Dell’Osso , Glick , Baldwin , & Altamura , 2013). Therefore, it is essential to understand the barriers of university students for seeking counseling.

There are 15 universities and 18 other higher educational institutions in Sri Lanka. There is an 81,153 undergraduate population in Universities and 3,378 in other higher educational institutions. There are 14,983 student population in Open University of Sri Lanka². Most of students come from rural areas to urban for their higher education in the age of adolescence. Most of them stay out of their home for the first time in their lives. On the other hand, once they leave their parents they need to survive by themselves in an unfamiliar environment (in urban setting) facing challengers such as financial, adopting to the new environment, and facing for exam pressure. While they face such number of challengers in their adolescence, literature shows that this is the most vulnerable age cohort for having mental health problems in life spam (Zubrick, et al., 1995; Kosky & Hardy, 1992). Adolescence is the transitional period for biological and psychological changers (Viner, et al., 2012).

Barriers for Seeking Counseling Services

Social stigma associated with mental health problems is one of the main barriers for providing mental health services (Pescosolido B., 2013; Lucas & Phelan , 2012; Sartorius, 2007). Corrigan (2005), found that higher level of stigmatization attitudes associate with lower level of help seeking behavior.

² <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/pocket%20book/chap13.pdf> accessed on 27.03.2016

Theoretical Frame Work

This study mainly focuses on the predictors of the intention to seeking psychological help for mental health problems based on the TPB. The contributions of the concepts of the TPB are likely to be adaptable across different cultures (Hagger, et al., 2007). Many studies have done to identify key barriers for help seeking (Tanskanen, et al., 2011; Kessler, Burglund, Bruce, Koch, Laska, & Leaf, 2001). A number of factors have been identified as influencing these constructs of TPB, precisely for university students. In this study stigma, factors such as gender, living background, and subject areas that they study will be measured in relation to help seeking for mental health problems.

According to the literature review, individuals consider many factors when they seek psychological help, mainly practical barriers to seeking help and fears about becoming a target for stigma and discrimination (Barney, Griffiths, Christensen, & Jorm, 2009; Tanskanen, et al., 2011; Kessler, Burglund, Bruce, Koch, Laska, & Leaf, 2001). Fear of stigmatization, lack of knowledge about psychological help process, lack of money, not believing the practitioner, and feeling that the practitioner does not have cultural knowledge are main barriers for preventing from seeking psychological help (Sanders-Thompson et al., 2004). Feelings of shame influence on help seeking negatively (Tang, Sevigny, Mao, Jiang, & Cai, 2007; Harris, Collinson, & das Nair, 2012; Uebelacker, et al., 2012). Perceptions of over use of medicine to control mental health problem and fears about stigmatized reactions from health professionals can also be barriers to help seeking (Pettigrew, Donovan, Pescud, Boldy, & Newton, 2010; Tanskanen, et al., 2011).

Guillver et al. (2010) published a literature review on help seeking barriers, reviewing 15 qualitative and 7 quantitative studies. The purpose of this review was to identify young people's experiences of help seeking for depression. The key barriers identified were stigmatizing attitudes towards mental health consumers and embarrassment, poor mental health literacy, self-dependence, lack of trust on help sources and hopelessness. Stigmatizing attitudes is the most frequently reported barrier to seeking psychological help. Public and self-stigmatizing attitudes create an embarrassment, which hinder identifying the problem and help seeking. Young people are unable to identify and differentiate the normal level of difficulties and the beyond the threshold of stress, which they need to seek for help. Even though young people are aware of their problem they changed their definition of what is 'normal' to avoid seeking help. The next factor avoid seeking help is that preference to trust on themselves, rather than seeking outside help for their problems. Young people think that seeking help from outside is seen as an indicator for their weakness or incapability to deal with their problems that they face. Lack of trust on potential source of help is one of other main barriers for seeking help among young people. According to Kakhnovets (2011), Trust on counselors has more positive attitudes towards seeking and receiving psychological help (Kakhnovets, 2011; Koydemir, Erel, Yumurtacı, & Şahin, 2010).

According to Stefl & Prosperi, (1985) there are six main barriers; accessibility, affordability, availability, and acceptability of psychological services and decision making and help seeking behaviors. Barriers relating to accessibility may include transportation. Affordability barriers may include time and cost. Availability may include

knowing about the services exist and how to find them. Acceptability may include fears to go to get the services (Stefl & Prospero, 1985). Emotional and practical issues also will be discussed as barriers for psychological help seeking for mental health problems. Unwillingness to talk about private things with strangers and cost time may discuss (Mohr, et al., 2006). The most frequently cited barriers to seeking mental health services include time, cost, and insurance coverage (Dearing, et al., 2005; Givens & Tjia, 2002; McCarthy, Pfohl, & Bruno, 2010; Watson, 2006; Dearing, Maddux, & Tangney, 2005). Literature review has recognized several factors, which affect people's attitudes toward professional psychological help seeking for mental health problems. Stigma and attitudes related to mental illness are main obstructions to overcome the mental illness related problem in the country (De Silva & De Silva, 2001; Fernando, 2010; Samarasekare, Matthew, & Siribaddana, 2012).

Altogether, there are a many factors, which influence people for their decision to seek psychological help. However, most of the factors are related to stigmatization, fear of 'losing face' (Yakunina & Weigold, 2011). Stigma is not just only a problem but also influence for help seeking decisions.

Research aims and objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore the barriers and supporting factors for seeking counseling services for psychological difficulties and to find out the ways that how to promote the help seeking behavior among university students. The study will help to reduce the barriers and develop effective counseling service among university students.

Method

Participants

Students from three state universities in Sri Lanka were selected as participants for this study. A non-probability, convenience sampling method was employed to select the universities and students as participants for the study. 12 in depth interviews were conducted with students including four in depth interviews from each university. Apart from the in depth interviews with students, in was conducted interviews with four student counselors as key informants from all university. Subjects that they follow were considered when the participants were recruited. Mainly, it was divided in to two categories as students who follow psychology as a subject and students who do not follow psychology as a subject. 6 male and 6 female students ranging from 21 to 25 years of age were selected. Only one student was married. Living background was coincided when participants were selected. There are three main segments in the country namely urban, rural and estates in terms of socio-economic and cultural differences. Number of participants for each sector was assigned considering the population in each sector. Therefore, five participants from rural, four participants from urban, and three participants from estate were recruited as participants.

Research Design

Qualitative research methodology was employed to study the barriers for seeking counseling services and ways of promoting seeking counseling services for psychological difficulties among university students. Data were collected through in depth interviews using semi-structured questionnaire. Apart from the in depth interviews with students, student counselors were interviewed as key informants.

Measures

Based on the literature, it was developed guideline questions considering the counseling seeking barriers and strategies for promoting counseling services among university students. Already developed and tested three questionnaires on help seeking behavior were used to develop guidelines for the present study. They are: the General Help Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ-V: Wilson, Rickwood, Bushnell, Caputi, & Thomas, 2011), the Actual Help Seeking Questionnaire (AHSQ: Deane & David, 1996), and Mental Health Service Utilization Questions (MHSUQ) developed by Stefl & Prosperi (1985). The GHSQ-V helps to understand the intention of students for seeking help whereas the AHSQ helps to understand the actual help seeking behavior. The MHSUQ helps to determine the barriers for seeking psychological services. Apart from that it was asked their ideas that how to promote the counseling service among students. Guideline questions were mainly open ended and participants were given a chance to express their ideas freely. Even though, there was set guidelines it was just guidelines and participants were allowed to talk freely. In was conducted pilot study before the actual interviews. The guidelines were revised based on the pilot testing outcomes. Firstly, it was collected demographic information and they were asked to brief about themselves. After that, it was started the main in depth interviews.

Data Collection Process

It took the permission from required authorities before conduct the study. Consent of respondents also was taken before each in depth interviews. All respondents participated in this study were entirely on voluntary basis. They were explained the purpose of this study. It was explained the importance of being participated such studies and how they contribute for national health policy development by participating in such study. All the interviews were recorded with the consent of participants. Before go to the semi-structured guidelines, their demographic data were collected and they were asked to give a brief introduction about themselves. Recorded interviews were written with a help of research assistant and it was double checked with written version and recordings.

Data Analysis

All the data were categorized in to three main themes; supporting factors for seeking counseling services, barriers for counseling seeking and strategies for promoting counseling revises among students and eight sub themes. After that, data were analyzed based on the guidelines given by Miles & Huberman (1994). The reliability test was done as explained by Miles & Huberman (1994). According to the test 90% reliability of data

was found. The explanatory analysis method was used to explain the data.

The triangulation method was done to validate the results of the study. The investigator triangulation, data triangulation and methodological triangulation were conducted to validate the findings of the study. The researcher transcribed the recorded data with help of a trained research assistant. Then, other expert on the subject did the rechecking of the transcriptions. It was done to eliminate the researcher's bias and the validation of the findings. The highlighted important points were double checked and coded independently by each, the researcher and the other expert on the subject for validation of the findings. Finally, researcher met the research assistants and the experts on the subject and discussed the selected themes and divided data into themes with the agreement of all.

This research explored three main themes and sub themes under them. The main themes were barriers for counseling seeking, supporting factors for seeking counseling services, and strategies for promoting counseling services among students. Eleven sub themes came out under three main themes.

Barriers for seeking counseling services

The first main theme is barriers for seeking counseling services. There are 5 sub themes under the main theme of barriers for seeking counseling services. These are: (1) stigma (2) Reluctance to share problems (3) Self dependency (4) Lack of trust on counselors (5) Lack of awareness about services availability

Social stigma

According to the findings, the most significant barrier for seeking counseling services is social stigma. 8 participants out of 10 reported that having a mental illness is a shame in the society. Participants reported, "when we go to counselors, others think that we are mad". Therefore, stigma plays a big mediating role in terms of preventing individuals from seeking counseling services. All the quotations given by the participants are not given here because some of quotations are quite similar. Hence, some of quotations given by participants are presented as follows;

"if it happened to me, I would be worried because my parents would think that I am a crazy girl"

"students and teachers may label me as a mad person..... how can I go back to university again"

"when I am at home with my family members, I do not feel any uncomfortable. I think they do not recognize that I have psychological difficulties. But when I am with my friends, I find difficulties, because they take me as a joke for them"

"if I go to student counselor's office, definitely my friends would get to know it. Our counselor's office is in a public place. Always, students are there reading newspapers. No one can go to the counselor's office without not knowing others. So, when they knew that I went there, they will joke me". "Nowadays, students face lot of problems, may be

financial or exam pressure or any other difficulties. Even we finish our degree with many difficulties, do we get a good job. No. Therefore, we all are under pressure and we need counseling. But can we go to meet a counselor. If we go, it will create another problem. Others may think that we are mad”.

Unwillingness to share Problems

The second sub theme that came out from the study under the barriers for seeking counseling services is unwillingness to share their problems with others. Participants feel that having psychological difficulties are private matters. Therefore, they think that it is not good and not necessary to tell other. One participant mentioned that he could tell it to their parents but not to others. He said, “my parents can understand me. They do not think that I am a mad person. But I do not want to tell others, they will definitely demoralize me saying that I am a mad person”. Seven participants out of ten reported that they do not want to share their problems with others. Some of their quotations are gives as follows;

“You know Sir, if I tell my problem, students, and teachers may label me as a mad person. Why should I tell them?. I do not want to tell this anyone. If I go to counselor and tell my problem, somehow others may get to know it. Therefore, I do not want to tell this anyone”.

“do you tell your everything to others?. No. Especially if we tell our personal things such as mental problems, it will create big problems. So, I do not want to expose my problems to anyone”.

Self-confidences

The third sub theme that came out from the study under the theme of barriers for seeking counseling services is having self-confidence to solve their problems by themselves. The significant finding under this sub theme is that more male participants talked about their confidence on solving their problems by themselves than female participants. Six participants out of ten reported about their confidence to solve the mental health difficulties. Four participants out of six those who talked about self-confidence are male. It indicates that the more male depend on themselves and do not seek counseling services for their mental health difficulties than female participants. Some of quotations given by participants are as follows;

“I can handle my problems by myself, I don’t need any help from anyone”

“having mental health related difficulties in the university life are normal. We should be able handle them. It is a part of university life”

“I do not have any problem that I can not manage. We are university students. I can manage any problem. I am the one who know my problems well. How can outsider help me to solve my problems”

Lack of trust on Counseling Services

The fourth sub theme that came out from the study under the main theme of barriers for seeking counseling services is lack of trust on counseling service. Under this sub theme, participants reported negative beliefs towards counselors as well as counseling services. Four participants out of ten stated that they do not have trust whether the counseling could solve their problems. Some of quotations given by participants are as follows;

“they (counselors) can not solve our mental problems. They can give solutions only for other problems such as finding a hostel, making student identity cards, bursary etc.”.

This because students think that students’ counselor office is mainly for supporting students’ welfare, not for providing counseling service for mental health difficulties. The counselor is normally attached to the students’ counselor office. Therefore, students think that this office mainly for students welfare except mental health counseling.

“our economic teacher is the counselor. She is not a professional counselor. She cannot solve my mental problems. She can only teach economics. I know she has close relationships with some of my friends in the class. She may tell all my problems to my friends”

In most of occasions, teacher himself or herself acts as a counselor in universities. Students do not trust that they have ability to treat their mental health problems properly. Students think that teachers are not trained to solve mental health problems of others. They are trained only to teach subjects.

“our counseling office is in the main student counselor office. Many students come to main students’ counselor office for their hostel problems and other related problems. There is a place to read newspapers in the main students’ counselor office. Always, students are there reading newspapers. mental health counseling office is in the main students’ counselor office”.

Lack of awareness about service availability

The fifth sub theme that came out from the study under the main theme of barriers for seeking counseling services is lack of awareness about service availability. Two participants out of ten reported that they do not know exactly where to go to meet a counselor and how to meet them.

The quotations given by participants are as follows;

“I have heard that there is a mental health counselor in the main students’ counselor office, but so far I have not seen. Two three times I went to office to meet him, but as I did not know the exact person, I could not find. I cannot ask my friends too, then they will get to know that I have a mental problem”.

“I do not know. I do not know whether we have free mental health counseling service in the university. I know there are in outside, but I do not have money to go to those places”

Supporting factors for seeking counseling services

The second main theme that came out from the study is supporting factors for seeking counseling services. There are 3 sub themes under this main theme of supporting factors for seeking counseling services. They are: 1) receiving free counseling service, 2) proximity to the counseling service, 3) Trust on counselors and counseling services.

Receiving free counseling services

A sub theme came out from the study under the supporting factors for seeking counseling services is receiving free counseling services. Six participants out of ten reported that having free counseling service is very important. They mentioned that at least few students go for counseling due to providing free counseling services. They stated that many students come from rural areas with financial difficulties. Therefore, if the service is not free the students will not seek help from counselors. A counselor mentioned that many students come for counseling to find out solutions for their financial difficulties. Some of quotations given by participants are as follows;

“Students go for counseling service because they can get it for free”- a student

“if there is no free counseling service, no one go”- a student

“people will get anything as far as it is for free”- a students

“I do not have money to pay for counseling...i can not get counseling service from outside”- a student

“more that 75% students come from rural families. Most of them are having financial difficulties. Once they come to Colombo, they have to cope with financial difficulties while they struggle to adapt to the new environment. As they have come from rural background they face big mental health difficulties when they adapt to the university life. Therefore, university counseling service is the best place for them. This is a free service for them. If they go outside they need to pay a lot of money. However, most of students do not come for counseling, it does not indicate that they do not need” -a counselor.

Proximity to the counseling service

The next sub theme came out from the study under the main theme of supporting factors for seeking counseling services is proximity to the counseling service. Four participants out of ten reported that proximity to the counseling service motivate students to go for counseling. If the service is far away from the university or outside of the university premises, it will discourage students going for counseling service due to lack of money and time constraints. Some of quotations given by participants are as follows;

“we do not have money for traveling, it is good to have in the university premises itself” – a student

“even now, it is very difficult to find a time to go to meet a counselor, good that counseling center is in the university itself” – a student

“we can go anytime to meet the counselor during our off periods” a student

“we have lectures whole day, only few periods are off”- a student

According to the in-depth interviews students are encouraged to seek counseling services due to its proximity. Students reported that they have classes and they do not have much time. Some students stated that they have financial problems; therefore they cannot afford the traveling cost if the service is in outside.

Trust on counselors and counseling services

The next sub theme that came out from the study under the main theme of supporting factors for seeking counseling services is trust on counselors and counseling service. Under this sub theme, participants reported positive beliefs towards counselors as well as counseling services. Six participants out of ten reported that they trust counselors than their close friends or relatives. Respondents stated that sometimes friends or relatives might use their personal things against them when friends or relatives have problems with them. Therefore, respondents believe that counselors are the best people to share their personal issues than others. Some of quotations given by respondents are as follows;

“I trust my parents, by they can support me only for financial difficulties, not for mental health problems. I do not trust my friends; they might use my personal issue against me when they have problems with me in the future. But I trust counselors. They have been trained as counselors. Therefore, they may not tell anything to others” - a student

“I have heard that counselors do not reveal anything to anyone”- a student

“there is a good counseling service in our university” - a student

Strategies for promoting Counseling Services

The third main theme is strategies for promoting counseling services. 3 sub themes came out under the main theme of strategies for promoting counseling services. Those ideas came out through the interviews with students as well as key informant interviews with counselors. These are: 1) promoting mental health education among students; 2) making easy access to counselors; 3) developing a good relationship between students and counselors.

Promoting mental health education among students

A sub theme that came out from the study under the strategies for promoting

counseling services is promoting mental health education among students. One barrier came out from the study is that lack of awareness about mental health related problems. Some of quotations given by participants are as follows;

“we need to familiarize mental health problems with students. Most of them do not even understand that they have help needed mental health problem. They think that all the sort of mental health problems are normal, no need to take counseling. Taking counseling is not a good symbol for the personality”- counselor.

“having mental health related difficulties in the university life are normal. We should be able handle them. It is a part of university life”-a student

“students even do not know who is a counselor and their role. They think that counselor is a doctor. When they come to meet me they call me doctor”

Many countries have commenced educational campaigns to reduce mental illness stigma and promote the mental health and mental health help seeking. The Australian government in 2006 started such program called ‘Beyond blue’³, investing \$1.8 billion for mental health in the country. The program increased the community awareness of mental illness. ‘Beyond blue’ is an anti-stigma movement in Australia mainly focused on depression and anxiety. The program involves in mental health awareness and anti-stigmatization programs such as television advertisements and community exhibitions, forming advocacy groups on behalf of people with mental illness and their families. Therefore, such programs can be initiated focusing on university students to create mental health awareness. Then it will help to reduce stigmatization attitudes and thereby increase the counseling seeking behavior.

Making easy access to Counselors

The next sub theme that came out from the study under the strategies for promoting counseling services is making easy access to counselors. Students should be able to access counselors easily when they need help. However, some of counselors said that as they are busy it is very difficult to find time to meet students for counseling. Some of counselors are teachers. They do counseling during their off periods. However, students have lectures during the off period of teachers. Therefore, even students need to meet counselors, it delay due to this reason, sometimes they give up meeting counselors. Some of quotations given by students and counselors are as follows;

“I am interested on counseling. That is why I do this. This is a voluntary service. Our main responsibility is teaching and doing research. When we have free time we meet students. As we all are busy, it is very difficult to give appointment to students”- a counselor

“teacher has given time slots to meet, but most of the time we have classes during those time period. I do not like to meet counselor at the students’ counselor office. If I go their others get to know that I have a mental problem. But when I go to meet teacher (a

³ <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/> accessed on 29.02.2016

counselor) no one knows why I went to meet her”- a student

It is discovered that students are more willing to meet teachers who work as counselors than the counselors at the students’ counselor office due to fear of knowing others.

Developing a good relationship between students and counselors

The next sub theme that came out from the study under the strategies for promoting counseling services is that developing a good relationship between students and counselors. Three respondents out of ten reported that good relationship between students and counselors needs to develop. Students have a feeling that there is no close relationship between counselors and students. They stated that students should be able to freely access and talk to counselors. Some of quotations given by participants are as follows;

“I am reluctant to meet counselors. i feel that counselors are not familiar” - a student

“if we can easily access to counselors like our friends, many students may visit counselors. Because, I know that many students have problems”- a student

When analyze the entire results of the study, there are three main themes and eleven sub themes under them. Barriers for counseling seeking, supporting factors for counseling seeking and strategies for promoting counseling service are the main themes. Social stigma, reluctance to share problems, self-confidences, lack of trust on counseling services, and lack of awareness about service availability are sub themes came out under the main theme of barriers for counseling seeking. Receiving free counseling services, proximity to the counseling service, and trust on counselors and counseling services are the sub themes came under the main theme of supporting factors for counseling seeking. Promoting mental health education among students, making easy access to counselors, and developing a good relationship between students and counselors are the sub themes came under the main theme of strategies for promoting counseling service.

Discussion and Recommendations

The main objectives of this study are to expose the barriers and supporting factors for seeking counseling services by university students and to find out how to promote counseling services among students. This study employed a convenience sampling method to select three state universities and students. It is recommended to use random sampling methodology to select required universities and students to generalize the finding to the entire university student population in Sri Lanka. However, this study has contributed to the existing body of knowledge of help seeking behavior. This study gives an understanding about help seeking barriers and ways of minimizing such barriers.

Mental health stigma is the main barrier for seeking counseling services by students. Students are reluctant to seek help for their mental health difficulties due to social stigma. It indicates that students with mental difficulties suffer from social stigma as well as the symptoms of mental difficulties. According to Sartorius (2007), mental illness stigma is the main barrier for providing treatments and service for mental health problems. This finding consists with the previous studies (Bathje & Pryor, 2011; Corrigan, 2004; Wright,

Jorm, & Mackinnon , 2011; Rickwood , Deane, Wilson , & Ciarrochi , 2005; Hinshaw, 2007). Therefore, due to fear of social stigma associated with mental illness, students are reluctant to go for counseling.

The second barrier for seeking counseling services that came out from the research is unwillingness to share their problems. This finding consists with Cantazaro (2009). He states that individual's comfort level to tell their personal problems and attitudes towards seeking psychological help predicts the intention to seek psychological help (Cantazaro, 2009). Therefore, giving awareness about counseling process and developing trust on counselors are very significant to promote counseling among students.

Findings recommend to introduce the educational and awareness campaigns on mental health disorders and services. Educational campaigns should be focus on reducing mental illness stigma. It could be done changing the public opinion towards mental health problems, giving proper understanding about mental health. Appropriate distribution and make necessary steps for easy access to the counseling services could be operated to encourage help seeking behavior of university students. Further, psychological educational seminars, talks, and workshops may introduce. Such campaigns will help to reduce the stereotyped negative prejudices on mental health disorders and thereby promote the help seeking behavior. Instead, such campaigns could be introduced through media. Nowadays, new media, such as Internet, television and mobile phones play a big role in the society in terms of changing public attitudes. Therefore, media could be ideal for making influence people and change their negative stereotypes attitudes towards mental health problems and thereby promote the help seeking behavior.

As respondents reported the counseling services should be accessible to all students. It could be done through introducing a hot line (easy access telephone line) to access counselors easily. As students are busy with lectures, it is recommended to introduce flexible time slots to meet councilors which may help to promote effective counseling service among students.

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