This research study conducted a qualitative study on current undergraduate part-time or full-time students on why there is a need for an improvement in the counseling services provided by college campuses. The research question was “What are the perspectives of college students on their own mental health as well as awareness on college campuses and the services provided? What ways can college counseling services improve for the well-being of their students?” The purpose of the research study was to explore the students’ perspective of their mental health and how they treat it during challenging times. And to explore the different ways a college campus may improve their counseling services and make them known to the students that they are openly available to all. One-on-one interviews with 7 current undergraduate students were conducted. The interviews consisted of 10 open-ended questions that require in-depth responses. The results found that many students are unaware of the counseling services provided to them on campus, and the barriers to college counseling services are lack of awareness and limited service/programs available. Is there a need for advocacy for better services/programs offered, as well as a need for better advertisement to the counseling centers. The study holds significance to the social work profession by promoting mental health services provided on campuses to ensure the well-being of college students. The implications of the results allowed an understanding of college students' perspectives on mental health issues, which may lead to further research on how to achieve methods to improve the mental health services provided by college counseling centers.

### Methods and Materials

- The research study conducted used a qualitative research study method.
- The participants were able to discuss various issues regarding mental health in college campuses through their own experiences.
- An exploratory research design was also used when conducting to explore mental health awareness in college students and the possible ways to promote help and improvement through college counseling services.
- Research on the following topic is limited and an exploratory research design allowed more knowledge to emerge and help guide future research in this area.
- Each participant had a different response and the interview questions, which allowed a variety of possible solutions to improve college counseling services.

### Sample

- Individuals were at between the age of 18 and 22 years old and were currently enrolled as part-time or full-time students in an undergraduate college or university in the United States.
- They were all mixed in ages, gender (6 female and 1 male), and ethnicity, and they attend college in either a large or small campus.
- Two participants were South Asian, two were Middle Eastern, one was Hispanic, and two were Caucasian.

### Findings

- Mental Health
  - **Mental Health**
  - **P2** stated, “When it comes to college, my mental health is drained because I feel exhausted, I feel like I am always something to do. I feel like once I finish an assignment there’s always something else, I never end.”
  - **P1** stated, “I am the only one that balances work and a social life, in time management. The negative effects of lack of sleep, loss of appetite, feeling overwhelmed, panic attacks, anxiety, stress, and self-doubt.”
  - Experiences of strains on happiness, and relationships with friends and family. Hard to get their mind off school when and they do go out and put school assignments to the side, they often feel guilty for doing so and they do not want to fall behind for wanting time that can be used towards assignments.

- **Physical Health**
  - **Lack of self-care, lack of sleep; feeling more tired and unmotivated than usual, lack of exercise, and eat unhealthy meals.**
  - Time management is a big factor in the following issue; most participants stated there is not enough time in the day to take care of themselves, and complete school assignments all together. It is one or the other.
  - “My sleep schedule is very on and off its not set because I sleep late and wake up early. I stay up late at night to complete assignments and have to break from everything because that seems to be the only time, I can catch my breath” (P2).

- **Coping mechanisms**
  - Included relying on support groups, taking breaks, exercising, religion, nature, journaling, being around people, listening to music, and watching television.
  - Participants expressed the importance of thinking positive and learning to take a break when needed is important, but at times it is challenging to do because there will always be a sense of guilt.

### Limitations

- **Lack of Awareness**
  - Fear of seeking help from counselors because they did not want their family or friends to find out; do not want to seem weak.
  - There is limited outreach about the programs, and there is an inaccessibility of information; the other participants stated similar reasons.
  - Few to no emails or any advertisements for counseling services on campus; and many do not know where the counseling center is located, and if it is there or the other.

- **Limited Services/Programs**
  - Need to better advertise available services; P1 stated, “have a representative from the counseling center speak to students each semester so they are aware where the center is and what services are available to them; this can happen remotely or in person.”
  - P4 suggests college has a counseling center, and maybe have a survey of what they [the students] would like to be offered to them.

### Discussion

- Provide an understanding of college students’ perspectives on mental health issues, and that many students are unaware of counseling services offered at their college.
- Need to promote the mental health services provided on campuses through better advocacy strategies.
- This study found that need for more services and methods to help with the stigma surrounding mental health, and the need for improvement in outreach methods besides through emails that most likely become ignored or in the students’ junk mail.
- The social work practice can promote giving a group of students and listen to what they believe is necessary to successfully bring awareness to mental health on college campuses.
- As well as what are the ways college counseling services can improve or what needs to be implemented for a positive impact on the students.
- Different departments on campus can work together to promote the need of mental health awareness throughout the college; one way to do so could be the social work department working closely with the counseling center to meet the needs of the students and the transversal ways to incorporate the other departments to work hand in hand with one another.
- Future researchers may want to further explore the gaps in mental health awareness on college campuses.
  - Exploring what are the best ways to receive input from students to help colleges address the issue of mental health awareness on campuses.
  - How to decrease the number of students experiencing mental health issues and how to make a positive change in the community.
  - Researching the best methods when selecting their sample group to avoid any biases from occurring during the research process.

### References