



The Attitudes of Georgian Youth towards Mental Health

Natalia Mchedlishvili¹

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Accepted: October 3, 2025

Approved: December 15, 2025

Keywords:

Youth Mental Health, University Students, Attitudes, Health and Well-Being, Qualitative Study, Georgia.

ABSTRACT

Mental health problems are widespread among youth worldwide, including in Georgia. This qualitative study explored how Georgian university students (aged 18–24) define mental health, what supports their well-being, and which factors hinder it. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews with 25 participants from multiple Georgian universities, data were analyzed through thematic analysis.

The research revealed that Georgian youth describe mental health as including a feeling of peace and well-being. In their opinion, hindering factors for mental health include psychological trauma, the loss of a loved one, and social and economic factors. On the other hand, contributing factors for maintaining good mental health include physical activity, positive communication with others (friends and loved ones), listening to music, and traveling.

Research participants noted that the use of drugs and psychotropic substances has a mostly negative impact on mental health. They also emphasized that moderate use of the Internet and social networks is necessary for maintaining mental health. The findings underline the need for improved, accessible mental health services and prevention programs targeting Georgian youth.

© 2025. Natalia Mchedlishvili.

¹ Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani University, Georgia. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1983-1184>

Introduction

Mental health issues have become a significant global concern among young people. Research shows that a substantial proportion of college students experience mental health challenges, with around 25% of university students affected (American College Health Association, 2013). Yet, despite the prevalence of psychological distress, many students remain reluctant to seek support from campus counseling services (Eisenberg *et al.*, 2012).

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and to contribute to their communities (World Health Organization, 2022). It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships, and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right, and it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development (World Health Organization, 2022).

Enjoying good mental health means we are better able to connect, function, cope and thrive. Mental health exists on a complex continuum, with experiences ranging from an optimal state of well-being to debilitating states of great suffering and emotional pain. People with mental health conditions are more likely to experience lower levels of mental well-being, but this is not always or necessarily the case (World Health Organization, 2022).

The aim of this research is to address the following questions: How do Georgian youth

define mental health? What factors hinder them from maintaining good mental health? And what factors support Georgian youth in preserving their mental well-being?

1. Literature Review

According to a UNICEF report, young people aged 18-24 in Georgia are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues, mirroring global trends (UNICEF, 2023).

Key findings indicate that:

- 89% of students consider mental health a significant problem among their peers, with 68% viewing it as a very important issue;
- 62% of students know someone they believe needs professional mental health help;
- 33% of students aged 18-24 have experienced suicidal ideation, with higher rates among females (37%) than males (28%);
- 44% of students in this age group have never discussed their mental health feelings and experiences with anyone (UNICEF, 2023).

The mental health of U.S. college students has been a topic of research for decades. Research has consistently shown that poor mental health is a significant issue affecting students nationwide (American College Health Association, 2013). Anxiety and depression are prevalent concerns, with many students struggling to cope with these conditions (Eisenberg *et al.*, 2012). According to Levin *et al.* (2018), nearly 50% of college students meet the criteria for a diagnosable psychiatric disorder, with anxiety and depression be-

ing the most common mental health issues. Anxiety is a complex phenomenon, encompassing self-perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors in response to external stimuli (Chin-Newman & Shaw, 2013). College students often experience anxiety in response to unfamiliar or uncomfortable environments, such as transitioning from high school to college, where they may feel uncertain about their relationships with peers and professors (Chin-Newman & Shaw, 2013). This anxiety can be particularly challenging for students navigating significant life changes.

Depression is a prevalent mental health concern affecting many U.S. college students. Research suggests that a substantial number of students experience depression, which can be triggered by various situations and circumstances (Eisenberg *et al.*, 2012). This serious mental health issue can lead to feelings of isolation from family, peers, and academic life (Read *et al.*, 2006). Some students may avoid unfamiliar situations, such as taking certain courses, due to fear or low confidence. For instance, students may struggle with math anxiety, feeling uncertain about how to succeed in mathematical courses, which can exacerbate feelings of depression (Quan-Lorey, 2017).

One factor contributing to the persistence of stigma is the perception of mental health as an illness. Labels such as "illness" and "disease" contribute to public feelings of prejudice, fear, and a desire for distance from individuals assigned these labels (Read *et al.*, 2006). The medicalization of mental health issues can perpetuate stigma and narrow ideas about mental healing in an ableist society (Schrader *et al.*, 2013). Ableism and

medicalization may contribute to societal prejudice, internalized stigma, and limited understanding of mental healing (Schrader *et al.*, 2013).

Mental health oppression is a phenomenon documented by Holley, Stromwall, and Tavassoli (2015) within the context of social work education. Through the process of socialization, individuals with mental illness may internalize oppression by assimilating cultural norms that stigmatize mental illness, such as avoiding those labeled as "crazy," accepting stereotypes that depict people with mental illness as incompetent, and believing myths that portray recovery as impossible. Furthermore, the inadequacy of accommodations in higher education, despite the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, can exacerbate this issue. As a result of internalized oppression, individuals with mental illness may develop a diminished sense of self-worth, experience shame, perceive jokes about mental illness as justified, and even participate in discrimination against others with mental illnesses, thereby colluding with their oppressors (Holley *et al.*, 2015).

Depression can lead some students to engage in harmful habits and addictions, including excessive drinking. Research indicates that a significant proportion of students struggle with serious drinking-related problems, with over 45% participating in binge drinking and 20% experiencing an alcohol-use disorder (Levin *et al.*, 2018). Alcohol is often readily available at social gatherings, and some students may turn to it as a coping mechanism for their mental health issues. For some, drinking serves as a temporary

escape from depression, allowing them to conceal their struggles from others (Levin *et al.*, 2018). This highlights the need for institutions to provide support and resources for students dealing with addiction, addressing the underlying issues that contribute to substance abuse.

Depression has been shown to result in the development of unhealthy eating habits, including eating disorders, among college students (Lewis & Huynh, 2017). These disorders can emerge at any point during a student's academic career, and are often linked to intense anxiety and depression. Research suggests that students may use food as a coping mechanism for their mental health issues, seeing them conforming to their social environment in an attempt to manage their emotions (Stephens & Wilke, 2016). Additionally, negative life experiences, such as academic failures, job loss, or relationship problems, can also trigger eating disorders (Kass *et al.*, 2017). This highlights the need for students to seek healthy coping mechanisms and support for their mental health, rather than resorting to maladaptive behaviors.

Despite the availability of mental health resources, many students experiencing mental health concerns fail to seek help, highlighting the need to understand the underlying barriers (Jennings *et al.*, 2017). Research has identified several factors that contribute to this issue, including stigma associated with seeking help, negative attitudes towards treatment, and practical obstacles, such as limited time and financial resources (Jennings *et al.*, 2017). The stigma surrounding mental health problems is particularly significant,

with two distinct types: self-stigma and perceived stigma (Levin *et al.*, 2018). Self-stigma refers to the lack of understanding or acknowledgment of the severity of one's mental health condition, leading some students to exacerbate their symptoms as they worsen. This highlights the importance of providing support and education to help students understand the critical nature of mental illnesses, and the benefits of seeking treatment.

According to the World Health Organization (2022), people stop seeking help for mental health due to the following factors:

- Poor quality of services;
- Low levels of health literacy in mental health;
- Inaccessible or unaffordable mental health services;
- Stigma and discrimination.

Research by Shea *et al.* (2019) highlights the significance of students' attitudes towards seeking mental health support. The study suggests that negative perceptions of mental health counseling may stem from students' limited understanding and recognition of mental health issues. Some students may be uncertain about the causes of their mental health problems, or the appropriate course of action, leading to a negative attitude towards seeking help (Shea *et al.*, 2019). This attitude can create a barrier, preventing students from accessing mental health services and receiving the support they need.

Several factors can hinder students from accessing mental health services, with a notable barrier being a lack of time, making it challenging for students to schedule treatment (Ennis *et al.*, 2019). The demands of

academic life, combined with the need to balance independence and financial responsibilities, can be overwhelming. Many students have to work to support themselves, forcing them to prioritize work, academics, and then mental health needs. Some college students do not have financial support from their families, and, unfortunately, this often means that students are unable to align their schedules with the available hours of mental health services, further limiting their access to support (Nguyen-Feng *et al.*, 2017).

Although students may seek institutional resources and peer support, they often struggle to locate mental health resources on campus. The transition to adulthood can be particularly challenging, with many students facing significant difficulties (Jorgensen *et al.*, 2018). Research has shown that a substantial number of college students experience mental health issues, with over 60% reporting overwhelming anxiety and 38% experiencing depression during their undergraduate studies (Drouin *et al.*, 2018).

A recent study conducted in Australia underscores the imperative for augmented investment in prevention research that targets a broad spectrum of social determinants and health behaviors, as well as their intersecting effects on youth mental health (Ross *et al.*, 2025). The study's findings highlight the need for governmental intervention to address the economic drivers of mental health, enhance timely access to subsidized mental health support services, and optimize the capacity of educational institutions to promote student well-being and mental health (Ross *et al.*, 2025).

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach to examine the mental health experiences of Georgian youth. Through in-depth interviews, I explored participants' subjective perceptions and understandings of mental health. This approach enabled a detailed examination of how mental health is defined, experienced, and navigated by young people in Georgia, capturing the complexities and nuances of their experiences.

To facilitate an in-depth discussion on mental health issues among respondents, I employed a qualitative research method – specifically, through semi-structured in-depth interviews. I developed an interview guide tailored for Georgian youth, which addressed topics such as the definition of mental health, factors that hinder mental well-being, and factors that support it. As part of this study, students aged 18–24 from various faculties and universities across Georgia were interviewed. The use of qualitative methods allowed participants to freely express their thoughts and respond to questions in their own words, providing rich, detailed insights into their experiences and perceptions of mental health (Barker *et al.*, 2002). These methods enabled the uncovering of diverse perspectives and opinions shaped by individual experiences (Alderfer & Sood, 2016) and subjective worldviews (Willig, 2008).

The data collection process involved conducting semi-structured interviews with a sample of Georgian youth. The interviews were carried out by me, Natalia Mchedlishvili, and my student, Ekaterine Mazmishvili,

who was a peer of the respondents and in her fourth year of studying psychology at Sulkhani-Saba University. A total of 25 interviews were conducted with respondents, comprising 13 female participants and 12 male participants. The participants were students aged 18-24, and were recruited from a diverse range of universities in Georgia (10 institutions in total).

The research design consisted of a two-phase approach, commencing with a pilot study involving five semi-structured interviews with students from Ilia State University and Sulkhani-Saba University. Following the pilot phase, the interview guide was refined and finalized. Subsequently, an additional 20 interviews were conducted with students from the aforementioned universities, as well as with students from Tbilisi State University and the Caucasus University in Tbilisi. The participants represented various faculties, among them Social Sciences, Business Administration, International Relations, Mathematics and Computer Science, Natural Sciences, Law, and Humanities. The sample included participants from various stages of their academic programs, ranging from first-year Bachelor's students to final-year Master's students. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select participants. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face in a private room at the university, or via Zoom (www.zoom.us), and were audio-recorded for subsequent data analysis. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was conducted in Georgian.

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, resulting in de-

tailed transcripts of each conversation. A thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the data, using an inductive approach to explore participants' views and attitudes in depth. Through a systematic and rigorous review of the transcripts, codes and overarching themes were developed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. The data analysis was structured around the three core research questions, with each question examined within three thematic categories: Definition of Mental Health, Hindering Factors, and Facilitating Factors. This analytical approach enabled a comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of participants' narratives, facilitating the identification of key patterns, recurrent themes, and underlying meanings across the dataset.

In the subsequent stage of the research, thematic analysis served as the primary methodological framework, being fully aligned with the overall research objectives. Thematic analysis is a widely used method in qualitative research which allows for the identification of key patterns and themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach involves a systematic search for themes that are essential for describing a phenomenon and establishing connections to broader social issues (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a fundamental method for qualitative research, and they proposed a six-phase framework for conducting it, which was applied in this study. Notably, thematic analysis is a flexible method that can accommodate various epistemological positions, as it does not presuppose a specific theoretical

framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach allows researchers to explore how individuals assign meanings to their experiences, and how these meanings are shaped by the broader social context (Priya & Dalal, 2016). By employing thematic analysis, this study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives, and to identify the underlying themes and patterns that emerged from the data.

3. Results

The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that mental health is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various aspects of an individual's internal state, including their mental, emotional, and psychological well-being. The Georgian youth participants noted that mental health influences their feelings, thoughts, and social interactions. The analysis also identified several key hindering factors that can negatively impact mental health, including difficulties in relationships, low socio-economic status and/or limited financial resources, substance abuse and addiction, traumatic experiences, and excessive social media consumption. Conversely, the participants highlighted several facilitating factors that can promote good mental health, such as engaging in everyday activities like socializing with friends and loved ones, listening to music, physical activity, watching movies, and reading books. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of exploring new activities, such as developing new hobbies, cultivating positive thinking, daydreaming, and traveling. Furthermore, the participants underlined the

significance of timely access to mental health services, their ease of accessibility, and the provision of high-quality mental health services in maintaining good mental health.

3.1 Theme 1: Defining Mental Health

During the interviews, participants engaged in in-depth discussions about the concept of mental health, and provided their personal definitions and interpretations. The participants stated that mental health is perceived as an emotional and psychological state that encompasses feelings of well-being, the ability to cope with everyday difficulties and triggers, and the capacity to be productive, fruitful, and engaged in public life. These components were identified as essential elements in defining the meaning of mental health, highlighting the participants' nuanced understanding of this complex concept. The participants' perspectives on mental health underscored the importance of emotional and psychological well-being, as well as the ability to navigate life's challenges and contribute to society in a meaningful way.

"In my opinion, mental health refers to a person's emotional, psychological and social well-being, and expresses a state in which a person feels good. A mentally healthy person realizes that he or she has the ability to cope with the normal difficulties and stresses in life, and to be productive and involved in social life." – Participant 17 (female, 21 years old)

Some participants highlighted the significance of mental health in individuals' lives, emphasizing its role in facilitating healthy relationships, achieving life goals, and effectively coping with life's challenges. According

to these participants, good mental health is seen as a crucial factor in enabling individuals to navigate life's demands and pursue their objectives successfully.

"A person also realizes that they can cope with the difficulties of life, of which there are many around us. Anxiety, depression, stress are mental health problems, but people are called human beings because they have the ability to cope with these problems." – Participant 5 (male, 19 years old)

3.2 Theme 2: Hindering Factors for Mental Health

The participants identified several factors that can have a detrimental impact on mental health, which they considered to be hindering factors. These factors include psychological trauma, loss of a loved one, socio-economic challenges, substance abuse/addiction, and excessive social media use. The participants emphasized the significant role of social factors in shaping mental health, highlighting the importance of a supportive social environment for personal well-being. They noted that problems in social life, including challenges in interpersonal interactions and in managing social status, can contribute to mental health difficulties. In the context of their age group, the youth stressed the importance of interpersonal relationships, which are often shaped by their active involvement in various social activities during their university years. The participants' experiences and perspectives underscored the interconnectedness of social life and mental health, particularly during this critical developmental stage.

"Social factors are also important, as that is the environment which I have to live in. If I have to be in an environment which radically differs from my values and views, it is clear that this will create discomfort. And if the chances of correcting it are small, it is clear that this will affect (my) mental health." – Participant 14 (female, 22 years old)

The participants further elaborated on the concept of social status, defining it as an individual's position or standing within a particular social group or community. They noted that social status can vary across different contexts and environments, and that a change of environment, such as moving to a new city for university studies, can lead to a perceived loss of social status. Specifically, students who had a high social status in their native environment may struggle to establish a similar status in a new and unfamiliar setting, potentially leading to mental health issues. This highlights the challenges that individuals may face when navigating different social environments, and the potential impact on their mental well-being.

"In my opinion, low social status or its change also affects the mental health of young people. Sometimes, when you become a student, you go to a big city to continue your studies. You have to live in a different environment, you have to regain your social status – it is quite a stressful process and it also affects a person's mental health." – Participant 22 (male, 19 years old)

In addition to social factors, the participants also highlighted the significant role of economic factors in influencing mental health. They identified low income or pov-

erty as a potential barrier to mental well-being, suggesting that an individual's ability to secure basic living conditions is a crucial determinant of their overall quality of life and mental health. According to the participants, economic stability is essential for maintaining good mental health, and financial difficulties can have a profound impact on an individual's well-being.

"Social and economic factors have a big influence on mental health. A person's quality of life is significantly determined by the extent to which they can satisfy their basic, essential needs. This includes nutrition, health, and self-care. If you don't have a stable economic situation, this directly affects a person's psyche. If you don't have the opportunity to purchase important and necessary things, you obviously start to get nervous, which is followed by depression." – Participant 4 (female, 22 years old)

The participants held ambivalent views regarding the use of drugs as a coping mechanism for stress and negative emotions. While some participants believed that the moderate use of so-called "recreational drugs" could potentially have a beneficial effect on mental health, the majority of participants considered drug use to be a significant hindering factor for mental well-being. According to most participants, the risks associated with drug use outweigh any potential benefits, and they claimed that it can ultimately exacerbate mental health issues rather than alleviate them.

"The use of various 'recreational drugs' can help a person relax and have fun, which has a positive effect on their psyche. On the other hand, excessive dosage or excessive

frequency of use will clearly have a negative effect on a person's health." – Participant 8 (female, 20 years old)

Traumatic experiences were also identified as a major factor impeding mental health. According to the participants, traumatic experiences can have a profound impact on an individual's mental well-being. Trauma can be defined as any severe intensity event that causes psychological traumatization. The participants emphasized the importance of acknowledging the role of traumatic experiences in shaping mental health outcomes. Some participants even shared their personal experiences of trauma, highlighting the lasting effects it had on their mental health and well-being. This sharing of personal experiences underscored the complex and deeply impactful nature of traumatic experiences on individuals' lives.

"Traumatic experience works in direct proportion to mental health. To take my example, the loss of a loved one caused severe psychological trauma, which followed me for a long time, and initially completely interfered with my daily life." – Participant 15 (female, 19 years old)

The study participants also explored the impact of social media on mental health, noting that social networks can have both positive and negative effects on an individual's psychological well-being. They emphasized that excessive social media use can lead to addiction, which may have detrimental consequences for mental health. According to the participants, the addictive nature of social media can negatively impact mental health outcomes, highlighting the need for responsible and moderate use of such platforms.

"I think that dependence on the Internet and social networks is quite harmful to mental health. However, it depends on the frequency of use and the content." – Participant 16 (male, 22 years old)

3.3 Theme 3: Facilitating Factors for Mental Health

The research participants identified various factors that contribute to facilitating mental health, including daily activities and tools that can be utilized to promote mental well-being. According to the participants, everyday activities, such as socializing with friends and loved ones, listening to music, engaging in physical activity, watching movies, and reading books, can help maintain good mental health. These activities were seen as beneficial because they occupy the mind with positive content, thereby reducing stress levels, and making negative emotions more manageable. The participants' perspectives suggest that engaging in enjoyable and fulfilling activities can play a crucial role in maintaining mental health, mitigating the negative effects of stress and emotional discomfort.

"I find it helpful to communicate with people, have fun, relax, and take walks. I can do some crafts. The main thing is to relax my attention, and then, with a relaxed mind, I am better able to find ways to solve problems." – Participant (female, 22 years old)

The participants also identified that new activities can contribute to maintaining a healthy mental state, such as exploring new hobbies, cultivating positive thinking, day-dreaming, and traveling. According to the participants, engaging in new activities can

facilitate a shift in perspective, enabling individuals to reframe problems and conflicts in a more positive light. This, in turn, can lead to increased positive emotions, a more optimistic outlook on the future, and a reduced impact of negative events on mental well-being. By introducing new experiences and activities into their lives, individuals can potentially develop a more resilient and adaptive approach to coping with challenges.

"Education and any new activity that puts a person in a working state has a positive impact on a person's mental health." – Participant 25 (male, 23 years old)

The participants emphasized the importance of timely access to mental health services, affordability, and the quality of care provided. However, they noted that mental health services are not readily accessible to Georgian youth. Although some universities offer student counseling centers, the demand for services exceeds the available resources, resulting in unmet needs. Furthermore, private mental health services are often expensive and inaccessible to many Georgian students, particularly those outside of Tbilisi. Accessing appropriate mental health services in other cities and regions can be even more challenging, highlighting a significant gap in mental health care for young people.

"In my opinion, the state should regulate the education system, plan various developmental activities, and develop preventive programs so that young people with mental health issues are interested in applying to the appropriate structures. All of this should be accessible." – Participant 13 (male, 20 years old)

The barriers to accessing mental health services often prevent young people from receiving timely support. Enhancing the accessibility and quality of services would serve as a maintaining factor, enabling young individuals to seek professional help when needed, and facilitating their recovery from mental health challenges. By improving mental health services, young people would be more likely to receive the support they need to navigate difficulties and achieve better mental health outcomes.

“When I had mental health difficulties, I wanted to see an appropriate specialist – a psychologist, a psychotherapist, but I couldn’t find any easily available services. What I did find was very expensive for me.” – Participant 11 (male, 21 years old)

3.4 Summary

In summary, Georgian youth consider mental health to be crucial for overall functioning and well-being. They emphasize the importance of accessible and high-quality mental health services as a key factor in maintaining good mental health. This highlights the need for improved mental health support systems that address the needs of youth in Georgia.

4. Discussion

The definition of mental health offered by the Georgian youth interviewed over the course of this study aligns with that of the World Health Organization (2022), emphasizing the internal state – particularly thoughts and feelings – along with social interactions

and difficulties in relationships. In particular, the World Health Organization defines mental health as “a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community” (World Health Organization, 2022). This definition aligns with the participants’ descriptions of mental health as a multifaceted concept that encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Georgian youth perceive mental health as a very critical part of their lives.

The participants underlined socioeconomic factors that are important to maintain good mental health. Some researchers also show that socioeconomic disadvantage is a key determinant of mental health outcomes across the course of life (Allen *et al.*, 2014; Kivimäki *et al.*, 2020; Link & Phelan, 1995), with strong socioeconomic gradients observed in both high-income countries (Kivimäki *et al.*, 2020) and low- and middle-income countries (Lund *et al.*, 2010).

This multifaceted construct encompasses various dimensions that are linked to mental health outcomes. Research indicates that educational attainment is associated with the prevalence of mental health disorders (Fryers *et al.*, 2003; Esch *et al.*, 2014), while financial instability and poverty are linked to poor mental health outcomes (Thomson *et al.*, 2022; Guan *et al.*, 2022). Occupational factors, such as job insecurity and unemployment, can also negatively impact mental health (Miller *et al.*, 2020; Kim *et al.*, 2016; Utzet *et al.*, 2020). Poor living conditions and low living standards are similarly associated

with mental health issues (Pourmotabbed *et al.*, 2020; Singh *et al.*, 2019). Structural explanations suggest that social stratification creates unequal access to resources, such as wealth and knowledge, which can help individuals avoid exposure to harmful triggers (Kivimäki *et al.*, 2020).

Higher levels of wealth and income enable access to essential resources, including adequate and safe housing (Singh *et al.*, 2019), sufficient food security (Pourmotabbed *et al.*, 2020), and effective health care. Income losses have a greater impact on mental health than income gains (Thomson *et al.*, 2022). Income volatility, perceived job insecurity, and debt are linked to worsening mental health (Guan *et al.*, 2022; Rohde *et al.*, 2016).

The relationship between socioeconomic disadvantage and mental health is likely bi-directional, with poor mental health impacting earnings and contributing to financial stress (Lund & Cois, 2018). Recognizing the bi-directional and cyclical relationship between socioeconomic disadvantage and mental health is crucial for developing prevention strategies that interrupt the intergenerational transmission of environmental risks for mental disorders (World Health Organization, 2022).

Holt-Lunstad *et al.* (2015) discuss the importance of social relationships and social support for mental health. The participants' emphasis on everyday activities, like socializing with friends and loved ones, listening to music, and physical activity, is consistent with this literature.

The participants' emphasis of the importance of timely access to mental health services, ease of accessibility, and quality of care

is consistent with the World Health Organization's (2022) discussion of the importance of mental health care infrastructure. Furthermore, some findings of this study align with research conducted among young people in Australia (Ross *et al.*, 2025), as both studies emphasize the importance of developing preventive programs and ensuring state-provided access to mental health services.

These connections demonstrate that the results of this research provide a solid foundation for further discussion and practical implications.

Conclusion

Overall, the study demonstrated that Georgian youth perceive mental health issues as both important and urgent, aligning with definitions presented in the existing literature on mental health.

The findings led to several key conclusions:

First, mental health challenges are prevalent among Georgian youth, who perceive psychological well-being as a central component of their overall quality of life and social functioning.

Second, the study offers valuable insights into the nuanced ways in which young people conceptualize, experience, and sustain mental health, revealing a complex interplay between hindering and facilitating factors.

The findings underscore the importance of accessible and high-quality mental health services, as well as the need for holistic approaches to mental health support that prioritize self-care, social support, and everyday activities.

Ultimately, this research underscores the urgent need for policy initiatives that enhance the accessibility, affordability, and quality of mental health services for young people in Georgia. Preventive programs, mental health education, and peer support initiatives at universities could foster better coping mechanisms and reduce stigma.

Study Limitations

A key limitation of this study is that it reflects only the perspectives of Georgian youth, rather than the views of the entire Georgian population on mental health issues. Additionally, the honesty of participants' responses could not be fully controlled. To promote candidness, the in-depth interviews incorporated follow-up questions and, in some cases, the reformulation of primary and supplementary questions. This approach allowed the researcher to assess participants' confidence in their answers and to verify the consistency of the views and attitudes expressed.

References

- Allen, J., Balfour, R., Bell, R., & Marmot, M. (2014). Social determinants of mental health. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 26, 392–407. doi:10.3109/09540261.2014.928270
- Alderfer, M. A., & Sood, E. (2016). Using qualitative methods to improve clinical care in pediatric psychology. *Clinical Practice in Pediatric Psychology*, 4(4), 358–361. doi:10.1037/cpp0000176
- American College Health Association. (2013). *American College Health Association – National College Health Assessment II: Undergraduate Students Reference Group Executive Summary*, Spring 2013. American College Health Association. https://www.acha.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ACHA-NCHA-II_UNDERGRAD_ReferenceGroup_Executive-Summary_Spring2013.pdf
- Barker, C., Pistrang, N., & Elliott, R. (2002). *Research methods in clinical psychology: An introduction for students and practitioners* (2nd ed.). Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Chin-Newman, C. S., & Shaw, S. T. (2013). The anxiety of change: How new transfer students overcome challenges. *Journal of College Admission*, 221, 14–21.
- Daly, J., Kellehear, A., & Gliksman, M. (1997). *The public health researcher: A methodological guide*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Drouin, M., Reining, L., Flanagan, M., & Carpenter, M. (2018). College students in distress: Can social media be a source of social support? *College Student Journal*, 52(4), 494–504.
- Eisenberg, D., Hunt, J., & Speer, N. (2012). Help seeking for mental health on college campuses: Review of evidence and next steps for research and practice. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 20(4), 222–232. doi:10.3109/10673229.2012.715462
- Ennis, E., McLafferty, M., Murray, E., Lapsley, C., & Bjourson, T. (2019). Readiness to change and barriers to treatment seeking in college students with a mental disorder. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 257, 428–434. doi:10.1016/j.jad.2019.07.025
- Esch, P., Bocquet, V., Pull, C., et al. (2014). The downward spiral of mental disorders and educational attainment: A systematic review on early school leaving. *BMC Psychiatry*, 14, 237. doi:10.1186/s12888-014-0237-4
- Fryers, T., Melzer, D., & Jenkins, R. (2003). Social inequalities and the common mental disorders: A systematic review of the evidence. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 38, 229–237. doi:10.1007/s00127-003-0627-2
- Guan, N., Guariglia, A., Moore, P., et al. (2022). Financial stress and depression in adults: A systematic review. *PLoS One*, 17, e0264041. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0264041
- Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., Baker, M., Harris, T., & Stephenson, D. (2015). Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mor-

- tality: A meta-analytic review. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(2), 227–237. doi:10.1177/1745691614568352
- Holley, L. C., Stromwall, L. K., & Tavassoli, K. Y. (2015). Teaching note – Oppression of people with mental illnesses: Incorporating content into multiple-issue diversity courses. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 51(2), 398–406. doi:10.1080/10437797.2015.1021934
- Jennings, K. S., Goguen, K. N., Britt, T. W., Jeffers, S. M., & Wilkes, J. R. (2017). The role of personality traits and barriers to mental health treatment seeking among college students. *Practice Innovations*, 2(4), 513–523. doi:10.1037/pri0000065
- Jorgensen, D., Farrell, L. C., Fudge, J. L., & Pritchard, A. (2018). College connectedness: The student perspective. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 18(1), 75–95.
- Kass, A. E., Balantekin, K. N., Fitzsimmons-Craft, E. E., et al. (2017). The economic case for digital interventions for eating disorders among United States college students. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 50(3), 250–258. doi:10.1002/eat.22690
- Kim, T. J., & von dem Knesebeck, O. (2016). Perceived job insecurity, unemployment and depressive symptoms: A systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective observational studies. *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 89, 561–573. doi:10.1007/s00420-015-1103-1
- Kivimäki, M., Batty, G. D., Pentti, J., et al. (2020). Association between socioeconomic status and the development of mental and physical health conditions in adulthood: A multi-cohort study. *Lancet Public Health*, 5, e140–e149. doi:10.1016/S2468-2667(19)30249-7
- Levin, M. E., Stocke, K., Pierce, B., & Levin, C. (2018). Do college students use online self-help? A survey of intentions and use of mental health resources. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 32(3), 181–198. doi:10.1080/87568225.2018.1444805
- Lewis, R. K., & Huynh, M. (2017). Mental health provision, religion, politics, and guns: College students express their concerns. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 20(8), 756–765. doi:10.1080/13674676.2017.1345385
- Link, B. G., & Phelan, J. (1995). Social conditions as fundamental causes of disease. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 35, 80–94. doi:10.2307/2626958
- Lund, C., Breen, A., Flisher, A. J., et al. (2010). Poverty and common mental disorders in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review. *Social Science & Medicine*, 71, 517–528. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.04.027
- Lund, C., & Cois, A. (2018). Simultaneous social causation and social drift: Longitudinal analysis of depression and poverty in South Africa. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 229, 396–402. doi:10.1016/j.jad.2017.12.044
- Miller, K. K., Watson, R., & Eisenberg, M. (2020). The intersection of family acceptance and religion on the mental health of LGBTQ youth. *Annals of LGBTQ Public and Population Health*, 1, 27–42. doi:10.1177/2631831820915637
- Nguyen-Feng, V. N., Greer, C. S., & Frazier, P. (2017). Using online interventions to deliver college student mental health resources: Evidence from randomized clinical trials. *Psychological Services*, 14(4), 481–489. doi:10.1037/ser0000130
- Pourmotabbed, A., Moradi, S., Babaei, A., et al. (2020). Food insecurity and mental health: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Public Health Nutrition*, 23(10), 1778–1790. doi:10.1017/S1368980019004048
- Priya, K. R., & Dalal, A. K. (2016). *Qualitative research on illness, wellbeing and self-growth: Contemporary Indian perspectives*. London, England: Routledge.
- Quan-Lorey, S. (2017). Roots of mathematics anxiety in college students. *Journal of Mathematics Education at Teachers College*, 8(2), 19–30.
- Read, J., Haslam, N., Sayce, L., & Davies, E. (2006). Prejudice and schizophrenia: A review of the ‘mental illness is an illness like any other’ approach. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 114(5), 303–318. doi:10.1111/j.1600-0447.2006.00776.x
- Rohde, N., Tang, K. K., Osberg, L., et al. (2016). The effect of economic insecurity on mental health: Recent evidence from Australian panel data. *Social Science & Medicine*, 151, 250–258. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.01.031
- Ross, K., Houston, J., Barrett, E., Duong, F., Dearle, T., Ravindra, S., & Chapman, C. (2025). The coproduced youth priorities project: Australian youth priorities for mental health and substance use prevention research. *Health Expectations*, 28(3), e70274. doi:10.1111/hex.13237

- Schrader, S., Jones, N., & Shattell, M. (2013). Mad pride: Reflections on sociopolitical identity and mental diversity in the context of culturally competent psychiatric care. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 34(1), 62–64. doi:10.3109/01612840.2012.730624
- Shea, M., Wong, J., Nguyen, K. K., & Gonzalez, P. D. (2019). College students' barriers to seeking mental health counseling: Scale development and psychometric evaluation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 66(5), 626–637. doi:10.1037/cou0000318
- Singh, A., Daniel, L., & Baker, E. (2019). Housing disadvantage and poor mental health: A systematic review. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 57, 262–272. doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2019.03.018
- Stephens, S. G., & Wilke, D. J. (2016). Sexual violence, weight perception, and eating disorder indicators in college females. *Journal of American College Health*, 64(1), 38–47. doi:10.1080/07448481.2015.1062160
- Thomson, R. M., Igelström, E., Purba, A. K., et al. (2022). How do income changes impact on mental health and wellbeing for working-age adults? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet Public Health*, 7, e515–e528. doi:10.1016/S2468-2667(22)00121-3
- UNICEF. (2023). *A study of university students' mental health and their access to mental health services*. UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/georgia/media/8261/file/A%20Study%20of%20University%20Students'%20Mental%20Health%20and%20Their%20Access%20to%20Mental%20Health%20Services.pdf>
- Utzet, M., Valero, E., Mosquera, I., & Martín, U. (2020). Employment precariousness and mental health: Understanding a complex reality – A systematic review. *International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health*, 33(5), 569–598. <https://doi.org/10.13075/ijomeh.1896.01553>
- Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- World Health Organization. (2022). *World mental health report: Transforming mental health for all*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049338>

