

Prevalence of stress and anxiety among college students

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Mental health among university students represents an important and growing public health concern for which epidemiological data are needed. High prevalence of depression and anxiety among college students, with levels of overall psychological distress, peer pressure and workload consistently higher than in the general population and age-matched peers by the later years of training.

Objective: This study is to assess the prevalence of stress and anxiety among college students

Materials and methods: A questionnaire based survey contains set of 25 universal questions for stress and anxiety, sent through survey planet to various college students

Reason: In today's population youngsters are also more prone to stress and anxiety due to the competitiveness of the world. Identification of this silent psychological distress is important to improve the quality of life in these individuals.

Keywords: stress, anxiety, undergraduate, college students.

INTRODUCTION:

Higher education is a stressful period in students life which they need to cope with due to various reasons as living away from the families, a heavy syllabus and inefficiency in higher education programs.[1] A mentally fit student can initiate proper social relationships, enthusiastic to learn with ambition to implement his/her plans in the future. Students are at a crucial stage of development as they are more subjected to experience mental illnesses. Depression and anxiety are common, serious and debilitating mental health problems and are afflicting adolescents and student population to a large extent. The adverse effect of psychological distress among students reduces their self-esteem which might cause many problems at both personal and professional levels leading to college dropout, impaired ability to work effectively, poor academic, disturbed relationship and suicide.[1] Medical education is highly challenging and often places heavy demands on the mental resources of its students; stretching their psychological distress and making them vulnerable to high levels of negative affective states. Compared to other education; medical education is evidenced by high prevalence of stress. Several studies have revealed that the incidence of stress and stress related illness such as anxiety and depression among the medical profession are increasing day by day. Educational process exerts an inadvertent negative effect on student's mental health with a high frequency of depression, anxiety and stress among medical students. The three main stressors identified are examinations, work and financial responsibilities. Several other factors such as curriculum, traumatic events related to patients, ethical dilemmas also make them vulnerable to depression. Gender, lack of family support, are also one of the risk factors. Students exposed to work overload in a competitive environment with constant pressure of assessment brings various changes in their daily habits such as lack of sleep, irregular diet, substance abuse.[2] Stress may give rise to feelings of fear, incompetence, uselessness, anger, and guilt and has been associated with both psychological and physical disorders.[3] This study was undertaken to rule out the main reasons for stress among the college students studying in the colleges of Chennai in the following courses-Engineering, Medicine, Dentistry, Law and MBA. The general characteristics of a person in distress are: being over-aroused; tense or unable to relax; touchy, easily upset or irritable; easily startled or fidgety, and demonstrating intolerance of any interruption or delay.[4] Stress can also be associated with the number of examinations and the monetary status and surroundings of the students.[5] The main strategies, according to the study published by Allan K.H.Pau et al (2003) have been used to help stressed students, i.e., decreasing the number of stressors and increasing the ability to cope with stress. One strategy includes several components, such as reducing fear of failure and workload pressure due to examinations and requirements. Another strategy includes coping techniques, such as deep breathing exercises and reflective regulation of emotions. Although positive effects have been reported for most of the programs, these have mainly been evaluated using subjective self-report measures. There is a need for more research to identify the most effective stress management program. [6] Undergraduate medical education comprises strenuous study and training for 5-6 years. The curricular objectives are dynamic due to expanding knowledge and evolving therapies. During this period, medical students should acquire adequate professional knowledge, skill, and attitudes in order to prepare themselves to deal with life-long professional challenges independently. However, the demands of the learning and training might adversely affect the student's physical and mental health. It has been

reported that medical students consequently suffer from depression, anxiety, and stress.[7] Depression, anxiety and stress levels in the community are considered as important indicators for mental health. Failure to detect and address to these emotional disorders will unfortunately lead to increased psychological morbidity with undesirable impacts all through their professions and lives.[8] As college students are subjected to various stressors such as academic, social or time management problems, it is necessary for the educators and mental health providers to have interventions to reduce anxiety and improve the quality of mental health education. Studies have noted depression among college students as a risk factor for impaired scholastic performance. Studies report that stress related disorders are under diagnosed which can lead to higher chance of psychiatric disorders which will have serious effects on their careers and social life.[9]

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

College based cross sectional study consists group of undergraduate students- BDS, MBBS, MBA, LAW, ENGINEERING and it included students of age group 18-25 years. A questionnaire based survey contains set of 25 universal questions for stress and anxiety, sent through survey planet to various college students and around 100 responses were collected.

Answer **all** the questions but just tick one box that applies to you, either yes or no. Answer yes, *even if only part of a question applies to you*. Take your time, but please be completely honest with your answers:

		Yes	No
1	I frequently bring work home at night		
2	Not enough hours in the day to do all the things that I must do		
3	I deny or ignore problems in the hope that they will go away		
4	I do the jobs myself to ensure they are done properly		
5	I underestimate how long it takes to do things		
6	I feel that there are too many deadlines in my work / life that are difficult to meet		
7	My self confidence / self esteem is lower than I would like it to be		
8	I frequently have guilty feelings if I relax and do nothing		
9	I find myself thinking about problems even when I am supposed to be relaxing		
10	I feel fatigued or tired even when I wake after an adequate sleep		
11	I often nod or finish other peoples sentences for them when they speak slowly		
12	I have a tendency to eat, talk, walk and drive quickly		
13	My appetite has changed, have either a desire to binge or have a loss of appetite / may skip meals		
14	I feel irritated or angry if the car or traffic in front seems to be going too slowly/ I become very frustrated at having to wait in a queue		
15	If something or someone really annoys me I will bottle up my feelings		
16	When I play sport or games, I really try to win whoever I play		
17	I experience mood swings, difficulty making decisions, concentration and memory is impaired		
18	I find fault and criticize others rather than praising, even if it is deserved		
19	I seem to be listening even though I am preoccupied with my own thoughts		
20	My sex drive is lower, can experience changes to menstrual cycle		
21	I find myself grinding my teeth		
22	Increase in muscular aches and pains especially in the neck, head, lower back, shoulders		
23	I am unable to perform tasks as well as I used to, my judgment is clouded or not as good as it was		
24	I find I have a greater dependency on alcohol, caffeine, nicotine or drugs		
25	I find that I don't have time for many interests / hobbies outside of work		
A yes answer score = 1 (one), and a no answer score = 0 (zero).		TOTALS	

RESULT:

Chart 1:I do the jobs myself to ensure they are done properly

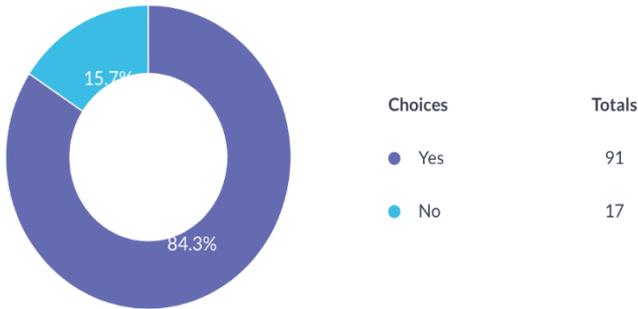


Chart 2:I frequently have guilty feelings if I relax and do nothing

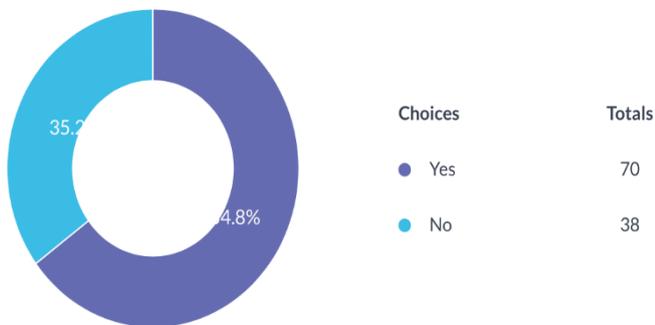


Chart3:My self confidence/ self esteem is lowery than I would like it to be

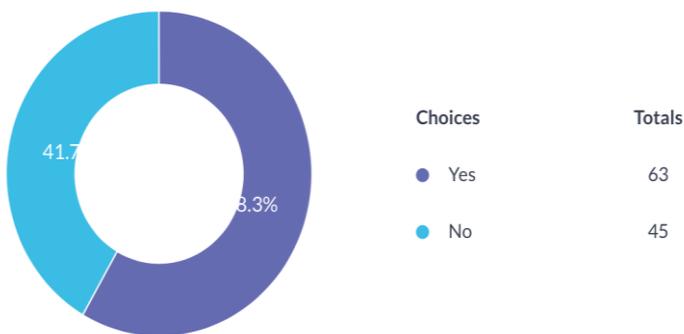


Chart 4: I would find myself thinking about problems even when I am supposed to be relaxing

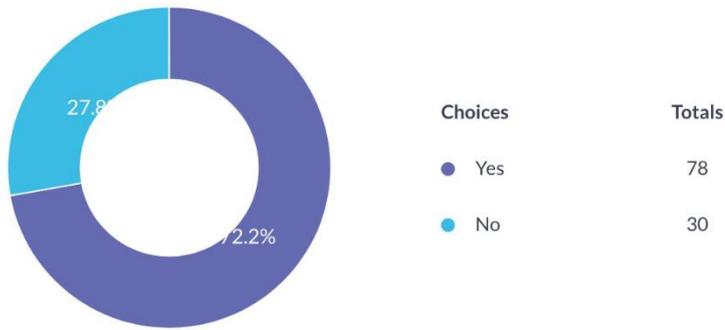


Chart 5: I experience mood swings, difficulty making decisions, concentration memory is impaired

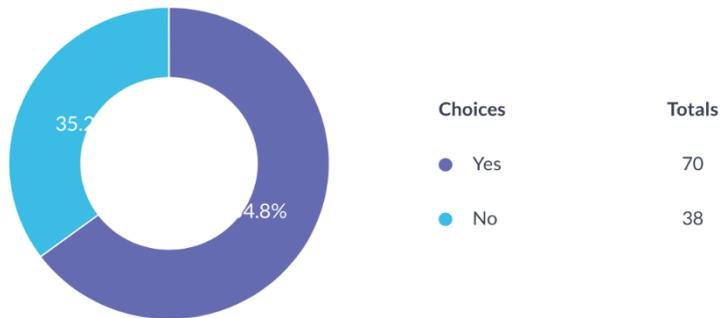
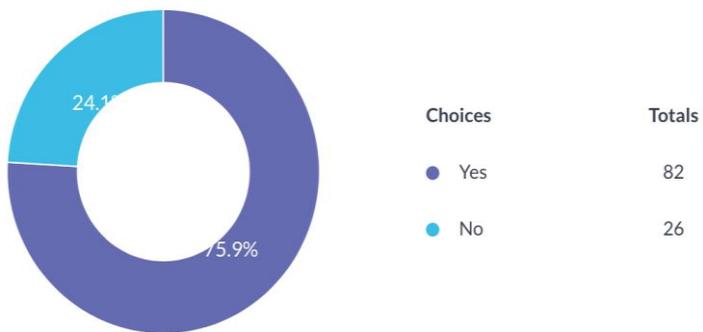


Chart 6: I seem to be listening even though I am preoccupied by my own thoughts



Discussion:

The present study results indicate high degree of depression, anxiety and stress among degree college students. This indicates the growing inability of students to cope up with the workload. It is necessary for students to be in their better psychological health so as to achieve success and for a brighter future. Around 60-80% have told that increased stress levels affect their social life, performance at work, physical problems, mental changes, hormonal changes and new habits such as grinding teeth.

Stress can occur because of variety of factors like lack of social adjustment to the environment, assignments, peer relationship, peer pressure to secure a high marks in exams. The ability to adapt to stress depends on the individual coping strategies. Overexposure to stress can lead to physical, emotional and mental health problems. In another study, it was found that the prevalence of emotional disorders among students was very high. The study reported that there was significant association between emotional disorders and students relationship with their parents, siblings and lecturers, as well as level of pressure prior to exam. It is essential to identify emotional disorders at an early stage so as to offer treatment to those who are affected.[1]Distressed students show decay in humanitarian attitudes and decline in empathy.[2]Anxiety ,depression and insomnia are the important effects of the stress faced by students Its also found that talking with friends,sleeping and spending time on Internet were important stress busters with smoking and listening to songs/watching moviesbeing low key stress busters.[4,5]

A higher prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress could be attributed to the fact that enormous syllabus has to be covered in a limited time period, sudden change in their style of studying, thought of appearing or failing in exams, inadequate time allocated to clinical posting have become the main factors. Furthermore, social stress such as relationship with peer groups, hostel friends, displacement from home and financial problem have also potentially psychologically influence undergraduate students greatly. This study is conducted done to determine the differences in elevated psychological distress with respect to the demographic variables among students. [8]Stress affects students in multiple ways. direct (e.g., psychoneuroimmunological, endocrine) and indirect (health behaviour) pathways through which stress affects physical health, the psychological effects of stress on mental health, and the cognitive effects of stress (e.g., attention, concentration) on academic success.

CONCLUSION:

In today's population youngsters are also more prone to stress and anxiety due to the competitiveness of the world. Identification of this silent psychological distress is important to improve the quality of life in these individuals. Early interventions are the need of the hour to improve the quality of life and reduce the stress among students. Multiple factors like feeling of incompetence, lack of motivation to learn and difficulty of class work might act as sources of the stressors that may precipitate depression, anxiety and stress. We can help the students to overcome their difficulties in their academic life by enhancing the mentor/mentee programs and implement them on regular basis.

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