

Mental Health Challenges among Students: Stress, Anxiety and Depression

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Abstract

Mental health problems among students have become a major public health concern worldwide. Increasing academic demands, competitive environments, family expectations, social pressures, and technological influences have contributed to rising levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among students. These psychological challenges negatively affect students' academic performance, emotional stability, social relationships, and overall quality of life. The present article aims to examine the prevalence, causes, and consequences of stress, anxiety, and depression among students and to highlight the importance of timely intervention and support systems. The study is based on secondary data collected from books, research articles, reports, and scholarly journals. Findings indicate that academic pressure, financial difficulties, peer relationships, and uncertainty regarding future careers are among the major factors responsible for mental health problems in student populations. The article emphasizes the need for mental health awareness, counseling services, stress management programs, and supportive educational environments to promote psychological well-being and enhance students' academic and personal development. Addressing these challenges is essential for fostering healthy, productive, and resilient individuals.

Keywords

Mental Health, Students, Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Academic Pressure, Psychological Well-being, Counseling, Coping Strategies.

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Introduction

Mental health is an essential component of overall health and well-being, influencing how individuals think, feel, and behave in their daily lives. In recent years, mental health issues among students have emerged as a growing concern across the world. Students face numerous academic, social, emotional, and financial pressures that can adversely affect their psychological well-being. The increasing demands of education, competition for academic success, family expectations, peer influence, and uncertainties regarding future careers have contributed to higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among students.

Stress is a natural response to challenging situations; however, excessive and prolonged stress can negatively affect physical and mental health. Anxiety is characterized by persistent feelings of worry, fear, and nervousness, while depression is associated with sadness, loss of interest, feelings of hopelessness, and reduced motivation. If left unaddressed, these mental health problems can impair concentration, academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and overall quality of life.

The rapid advancement of technology and the widespread use of social media have further influenced students' mental health. Excessive screen time, cyberbullying, social comparison, and information overload have increased emotional distress among young people. Moreover, factors such as financial difficulties, family conflicts, lack of social support, and adjustment problems contribute significantly to psychological problems among students.

Educational institutions play a crucial role in promoting mental well-being by providing counseling services, mental health awareness programs, and supportive learning environments. Early identification and timely intervention are essential to prevent the long-term consequences of stress, anxiety, and depression. Therefore, understanding the nature, causes, and impact of these mental health challenges is necessary for developing effective strategies to support students and promote their holistic development.

This article examines the major mental health challenges faced by students, with particular emphasis on stress, anxiety, and depression, and highlights the importance of preventive measures and support systems for enhancing students' psychological well-being and academic success.

Statement of the Problem

Mental health problems among students have become increasingly prevalent and represent a serious challenge to educational institutions and society as a whole.

Rising academic pressure, intense competition, social expectations, financial constraints, family-related issues, and the influence of digital technology have contributed to growing levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among students. These psychological difficulties adversely affect students' emotional well-being, academic achievement, interpersonal relationships, and overall quality of life.

Despite the increasing awareness of mental health issues, many students do not receive adequate psychological support due to stigma, lack of awareness, limited access to counseling services, and reluctance to seek professional help. Untreated stress, anxiety, and depression can lead to poor academic performance, reduced self-esteem, social isolation, absenteeism, and other negative outcomes that hinder students' personal and educational development.

Therefore, there is a need to examine the nature and extent of mental health challenges among students, identify the major factors contributing to stress, anxiety, and depression, and explore effective measures for promoting mental well-being. Understanding these issues is essential for developing appropriate interventions and creating supportive educational environments that foster healthy and successful student lives.

Aims and Objectives Aim

The primary aim of this study is to examine the mental health challenges faced by students, particularly stress, anxiety, and depression, and to explore their causes, effects, and possible measures for promoting psychological well-being.

Objectives

1. To study the concept and significance of mental health among students.
2. To identify the major causes of stress, anxiety, and depression in student populations.
3. To examine the impact of mental health problems on students' academic performance and overall well-being.
4. To analyze the role of academic, social, familial, and technological factors in influencing students' mental health.
5. To assess the consequences of prolonged stress, anxiety, and depression on students' emotional and social development.
6. To explore the importance of counseling, support systems, and mental health awareness programs in educational institutions.
7. To suggest effective coping strategies and preventive measures for promoting positive mental health among students.
8. To emphasize the need for creating a supportive and healthy educational environment for the holistic development of students.

Review of Literature

The issue of mental health among students has received increasing attention from researchers and educators across the world. Numerous studies have highlighted the growing prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression among student populations and their adverse effects on academic achievement and overall well-being.

Hans Selye (1956), in his theory of stress, explained that stress is a natural physiological and psychological response to environmental demands. He emphasized that excessive stress can negatively affect an individual's health and performance.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) developed the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which suggested that stress results from the interaction between individuals and their environment. According to the model, effective coping strategies play a crucial role in managing stress and maintaining mental well-being.

Beck (1976), through the Cognitive Theory of Depression, argued that negative thought patterns and cognitive distortions contribute significantly to the development of depression and emotional disturbances. His work provided the foundation for cognitive behavioral approaches in mental health treatment.

World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) reported that mental health conditions are among the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents and young adults. The organization emphasized that anxiety and depressive disorders are common mental health concerns affecting students worldwide.

American College Health Association (2021) found that academic pressure, financial problems, social isolation, and uncertainty about future careers are major contributors to stress and anxiety among college students. The study also highlighted the importance of counseling services and mental health support programs.

Hunt and Eisenberg (2010) examined mental health problems among university students and observed that depression and anxiety are highly prevalent among young adults. Their findings revealed that stigma and lack of awareness often prevent students from seeking professional help.

Auerbach et al. (2018) conducted an international survey among university students and reported high rates of mental disorders, particularly anxiety and depression. The study stressed the need for early identification and preventive interventions in educational settings.

Deb et al. (2015) studied stress among Indian high school students and found that academic expectations from parents and teachers, competition, and examination pressure significantly contributed to psychological distress and anxiety among adolescents.

Bayram and Bilgel (2008) investigated depression, anxiety, and stress among university students and concluded that mental health problems negatively affect students' academic performance, social relationships, and quality of life.

The reviewed literature indicates that stress, anxiety, and depression are widespread mental health challenges among students. Academic demands, social factors, family expectations, and inadequate support systems are major contributing factors. Previous studies consistently emphasize the importance of early intervention, counseling services, mental health awareness, and supportive educational environments to promote psychological well-being among students.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach to examine the mental health challenges faced by students, with particular emphasis on stress, anxiety, and depression. The study is primarily based on secondary sources of data and aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the causes, effects, and possible interventions related to these psychological problems.

1. Research Design: The study employs a descriptive research design to analyze the prevalence and impact of stress, anxiety, and depression among students. This design facilitates a systematic understanding of the factors influencing students' mental health and the measures required for promoting psychological well-being.

2. Nature of the Study: The study is qualitative and exploratory in nature. It focuses on reviewing existing knowledge and identifying significant themes related to student mental health challenges.

3. Sources of Data: The research is based entirely on secondary data collected from various reliable sources, including:

- Books and textbooks on psychology and mental health.
- Research articles published in national and international journals.
- Reports and publications of organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNESCO.
- Government documents and educational reports.
- Online databases and scholarly sources related to stress, anxiety, depression, and student well-being.

4. Method of Data Collection: Relevant information was collected through an extensive review of literature from books, journal articles, reports, and electronic resources. The collected data were carefully examined and organized according to the objectives of the study.

5. Method of Data Analysis: The collected information was analyzed using descriptive and content analysis methods. Different studies and reports were compared and interpreted to identify common causes, consequences, and preventive measures associated with stress, anxiety, and depression among students.

6. Scope of the Study: The study focuses on the mental health challenges experienced by students in educational settings and examines the influence of academic, social, familial, and technological factors on their psychological well-being.

7. Limitations of the Study

- The study is based exclusively on secondary data and does not involve primary data collection.
- The findings are dependent on the accuracy and reliability of the reviewed literature.
- Variations in cultural, social, and educational contexts may influence the generalizability of the findings.

Thus, the methodology adopted in the present study provides a systematic framework for understanding mental health challenges among students and offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, parents, and mental health professionals.

Results and Findings

The analysis of the available literature and secondary data reveals several important findings regarding mental health challenges among students. Stress, anxiety, and depression have emerged as significant concerns affecting students' academic performance, emotional well-being, and social functioning. The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. High Prevalence of Mental Health Problems

The review indicates that a considerable number of students experience symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression during their academic years. These problems have become increasingly common due to the changing educational and social environment.

2. Academic Pressure as a Major Cause

Examination stress, excessive workload, competition, and expectations regarding academic achievement are among the primary factors contributing to psychological distress among students.

3. Influence of Family and Social Factors

Family expectations, peer pressure, relationship problems, financial difficulties, and lack of social support significantly affect students' mental health and increase their vulnerability to anxiety and depression.

4. Impact of Technology and Social Media

Excessive use of digital devices and social media platforms contributes to stress, social comparison, sleep disturbances, and emotional problems among students.

5. Negative Effects on Academic Performance

Mental health problems adversely affect concentration, memory, motivation, and decision-making abilities, leading to poor academic performance and decreased productivity.

6. Emotional and Behavioral Consequences

Students experiencing stress, anxiety, and depression often exhibit low self-esteem, irritability, feelings of hopelessness, social withdrawal, and reduced confidence.

7. Lack of Awareness and Professional Support

Many students are reluctant to seek psychological help because of stigma, inadequate awareness, and limited availability of counseling services in educational institutions.

8. Importance of Early Intervention

The findings suggest that early identification and timely psychological support can significantly reduce the severity of mental health problems and improve students' overall well-being.

9. Role of Educational Institutions

Schools and colleges play a vital role in promoting mental health through counseling facilities, awareness programs, stress management techniques, and supportive learning environments.

10. Need for Holistic Mental Health Promotion

The study highlights the importance of collaborative efforts involving parents, teachers, counselors, and policymakers to create a positive environment that fosters emotional resilience and psychological well-being among students.

The findings indicate that stress, anxiety, and depression are widespread mental health challenges among students. Effective intervention strategies, mental health education, and supportive institutional policies are essential for ensuring students' academic success and overall development.

Discussion

The findings of the present study reveal that stress, anxiety, and depression are among the most common mental health challenges faced by students in contemporary educational settings. Increasing academic demands, competition, family expectations, financial concerns, and social pressures have significantly

contributed to psychological distress among students. The rapid expansion of digital technology and social media has further intensified emotional problems by promoting unhealthy comparisons, excessive screen time, and feelings of isolation.

The review of literature and secondary data indicates that these mental health problems adversely affect students' academic performance, concentration, motivation, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships. Students experiencing prolonged stress and emotional difficulties often suffer from reduced productivity and poor overall well-being. The study also highlights that stigma associated with mental illness and inadequate access to counseling services prevent many students from seeking professional support.

Furthermore, the findings emphasize the importance of early identification, awareness programs, and counseling facilities in educational institutions. Schools and colleges should create supportive and inclusive environments that encourage students to discuss their emotional concerns without fear of discrimination. Parents, teachers, counselors, and policymakers must work together to promote positive mental health and equip students with effective coping mechanisms for managing stress and anxiety.

Conclusion

Mental health is an essential aspect of students' overall development and academic success. The present study concludes that stress, anxiety, and depression have become widespread challenges among students due to various academic, social, familial, and technological factors. These psychological problems have a significant impact on students' emotional well-being, learning abilities, and quality of life.

The study highlights the need for comprehensive mental health support systems, including counseling services, awareness campaigns, stress management programs, and healthy learning environments. Educational institutions should prioritize students' psychological well-being alongside academic achievement. Early intervention, family support, and access to professional mental health services can play a crucial role in preventing severe psychological problems and promoting resilience among students.

Therefore, fostering a positive and supportive educational environment is essential for ensuring the holistic development of students and preparing them to lead healthy, productive, and emotionally balanced lives.

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