

How to Cite:

Praveen, B., Kumari, M., Fatima, A., Arora, S., Yadav, M., & Sharma, J. (2022). Evaluation of perceived stress among medical students during online education. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S4), 3280–3286. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS4.9166>

Evaluation of perceived stress among medical students during online education

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Abstract---Purpose: COVID-19 is a newly discovered contagious coronavirus that was first appeared in Wuhan, China in 2019 that affected entire mankind globally and was declared pandemic by WHO (World Health Organization). This pandemic outbreak can have psychological health consequences worldwide due to enforced adaptation in lifestyle and education, so this study evaluated the perceived stress level among medical students during online education due to COVID-19 outbreak. Methods: Through an online survey, a cross-sectional study was undertaken using self-reported data from students from multiple universities in Delhi, NCR, India (n = 578). A PSS (Perceived stress scale) questionnaire was developed and sent to the respondents through WhatsApp, emails etc. and data was analysed through descriptive statistics. Result: Out of 578 responses 49% were male and 51% were female. Majority of students shows moderate levels of stress (81%) while 10% students registered high levels and rest 9% were having low stress levels. Students that registered majority of moderate levels of stress were between 20-22 years of age. Conclusion: It is clear that this pandemic had elicited a strong and varied response from students and for that mental health

issues should be considered across multiple domains and in all age groups groups and populations. Students, as well as general public, requires stress management during COVID-19 pandemic. Student's stress levels during distant learning could be reduced by incorporating online counselling and stress management programmes.

Keywords---perceived, outbreak, education, stress, students.

Introduction

A sudden invasion of COVID-19 globally has not only creating fatality but also leading to intolerable psychological pressure in the students as well as other groups. (1) At the Start of December 2019, China closely observed serial of pneumonia alike symptoms in patients in the city of Wuhan, of Hubei region.[2] The appearance of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) that causes the extremely contagious disease and nerve-wracking situation for the entire humanity known as coronavirus disease (COVID-19) , is a newly discovered infectious coronavirus that spreads from one person to another through droplets and was first discovered in Wuhan, china at the end of December 2019 , which in less than three months spread throughout the globe. [3]

World health organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) a health emergency in January 2020 and declared it a pandemic in March 2020.[4] The World Health Organization and international mental health organizations have both warned that the present COVID-19 disease will lead to a significant increase in stress-related disorders and mental health difficulties around the world. This abrupt, widespread epidemic is linked to a variety of psychological distresses and has the characteristics of mental health problems.[1] Fear, uncertainty, loneliness as well as stress, anxiety and sadness have been recorded in general public worldwide following the emergence of COVID-19 disease, it has been claimed. As a result of this dire situation, targets were set to limit the transmission, early detection, dissemination of critical information about the disease, infection prevention etc., to attain these goals many countries enforced the state of lockdown.[4]

The Corona virus has an impact on every part of our lives including economy and education. In several countries, efforts to restrict the transmission of the COVID - 19 virus among children and adults have resulted in the widespread shutdown of schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions. As of March 25, 150 countries had shutdown schools and educational institutions across the country, affecting more than 80% of the global student population. Schools and institutions have been closed across the country, since mid- march 2020. The closure of schools, colleges and universities created a stressful situation for educational administration with extremely restricted choices. [4]

Within days, all universities, including medical schools, had switched to online study. [6] In India's educational system, online classes were a relatively new style of instruction that had not previously been a part of regular classes. [7] Distance

learning has also been linked to stress, which has been linked to academic, economical, and social challenges. Students may find it difficult to cope with the online mode. This comprises a student's capacity to cope with technology, adequate home resources for on-line learning, and a stable internet connection. [5] Professors and students also confronted a slew of logistical, technical, financial, and social issues.[8]

In this study, we focused specifically on medical students. These students routinely encounter substantial emotional stress.[9] "Stress is a complex, multidimensional negative emotion" defined by [8,9] defined stress is directly relates to features of psychology such as relaxation, broadening, reframing and creativity. [10] COVID-19 had thrown a wrench in the medical school's routine as well as the rest of the community and world. For medical students, the COVID-19 pandemic had created an inconvenient paradox [11] In terms of both, academics and emotional component of the students, medical education is the most demanding of all other professional degrees. Anxiety was discovered in one out of every three medical students worldwide, which was higher than the general population [9]. Previous studies demonstrated that student's depression was a problem at all stages of medical education. Results from several studies revealed that depressive symptoms among medical trainees may harm the long-term health of physicians as well as the quality of care delivered by academic medical centres.[8] Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, medical schools faced numerous challenges, including the transition from face-to-face lectures to online courses, the impact on assessments and evaluation programmes, travel restrictions for students travelling long distances, social restrictions, personal financial impairment due to pandemic time, and mental health impact[12].

High levels of stress can have a psychological and negative impact on their educational approach, reducing their ability to concentrate and making them unaware of learning activities.[12] Previous studies revealed that disease outbreaks impacted person's psychological health and well-being. It was found that females and youngsters between ages of 16 and 24 years exhibited higher risk of developing psychological stress.[13] So, this study aimed to evaluate the perceived stress level among medical students during online education due to COVID-19 outbreak.

Methods

Procedure

The present study was a cross-sectional, observational study including students from various Universities of Delhi, NCR, India. A sample of 585 students were recruited for the study. On the basis of inclusion and exclusion criteria, 578 respondents were included, rest of them were not according to the criteria of the study. This research comprised both male and female between the ages of 17 and 26. This was a self-reported study that took place entirely online. Using Google forms, we created an online Perceived Stress Scale questionnaire. Prior to the questionnaire, the participant was asked to sign a consent form via WhatsApp, emails and other social media channels. The subjects were encouraged and informed about the study when the link was distributed. That link sent me to the

study's information and permission form automatically. Individual's must first accept the survey and then fill out demographic information before answering a series of questions.

Sheldon Cohen developed a Perceived Stress Scale in 1983 as a stress evaluation tool. The questionnaire included ten questions. The questions were supposed to be rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 0-13 representing low stress, 14-26 shows moderate stress and 27-40 indicates high stress.[10] Descriptive statistics have been used in the study to analyse the findings. Mean, standard deviation and proportions have been used to estimate the results.

Result

Medical students from several universities of Delhi, NCR, participated in this online self-reported survey. There were total of 578 answers recorded. All students were between 17-26 years of age and were of Indian descent. Students with any form of psychiatric or mental problem were excluded from the study. The students who understands English language were included in the study. The mean age of the participants was 23.45 ± 3.95 years. Males made up 49% of the total subjects, while 51% were females. Out of 578 responses, 81% (467) individuals of overall strength were under moderate stress, in which (229) were males and (239) were females whereas 9% (52) had a low level of stress among which (25) were males and (27) were females while 10% (57) of the participants in which (28) were males and (29) were females were highly stressed.

| | Low Stress | Moderate Stress | High Stress |
|-------|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| TOTAL | (9%)52 | (81%)467 | (10%)57 |

Table:- showing stress percentage

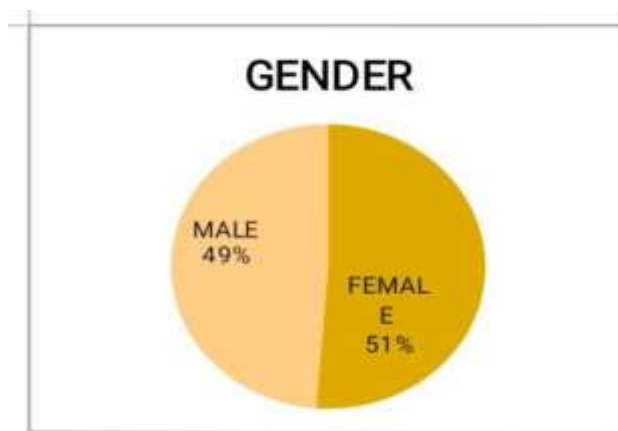


Fig: - Gender Description

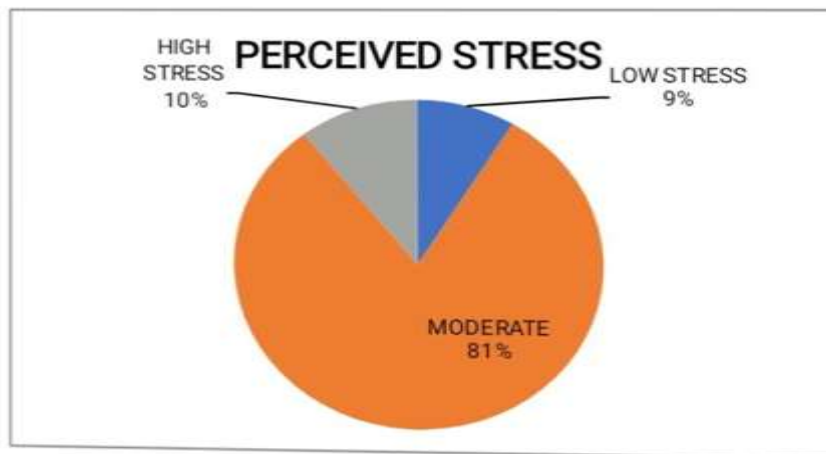


Fig:- Showing Stress Percentage

Discussion

As the WHO had warned, the current coronavirus pandemic is having a negative impact on the psychological state of medical students. Lockdown restrictions and isolation can cause feelings of fear, anxiety, stress and depression. The purpose of this study was to assess medical student's perceptions of stress during online education. In this study we had found that the majority (81%) of medical students reported moderate levels of stress, while 9% reported low levels of stress, which could be related to scholastic, economic or social challenges caused by a lack of social interaction during social distancing. Female students reported slightly higher stress levels than male students, which could be attributable to the fact that female participants made up the majority of the data. Exam results, broad curriculums, parental pressure, separation and fear about the future were all contributors of increased stress.

Because the poll was done during the third wave of COVID-19 disease, the outcomes were unsurprising. India, like many other regions of the world, particularly Europe, has seen a large increase in COVID -19 cases and deaths. In India, the majority of school examinations and higher competitive examinations take held between March and June. According to previous studies, many students in India committed suicide in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in academic loss and examination postponement. In the year 2021, having a peak at this time instils worry in students owing to the uncertainty that numerous exams would be held around this time were delayed for unsure times. Nearly one – third of students stated that online examinations were more stressful while about a quarter of students said that on-campus exams were more stressful. The unfamiliarity and lack of important qualities in the E-exam system may contribute to student's worry, given that this is their first encounter with distant E-exams. Remote -E exams have also been reported to be problematic in previous studies. [13] Several previous researches had reveal that stressed students were more likely to be in their first year of medical school than non-stressed students. Furthermore, a recent survey among medical and dental students at Liaquat College reported that 77 percent of students have negative

perceptions towards e-learning and they did not choose online learning over the face-to-face modality during the lock down situation. 84 percent of these students said there was little interaction between them and their instructors.[14] COVID-19 had not been demonstrated to have a negative effect on university student's mental health in all research. A research carried out in China on undergraduate medical students showed that only few of this group had moderate (2.7%) or severe (0.9%) anxiety (16, 17).

It is critical to provide education, guidance and acknowledgement about disease prevention and dissemination. The medical curriculum was disrupted by COVID-19 but the system is evolving to support our successful medical education, during the critical period of crisis. Colleges/ Universities can supply students with resources, such as counselling, peer advocacy, and assistance. Additionally, those who are experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression should seek professional mental health care.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing death, economic devastation and mental health difficulties. It was evident that this pandemic had elicited a wide range of responses from students, psychiatrists and other allied professionals, and that psychological issues should be considered across different domains and in all age groups and citizens. During the outbreak of the Coronavirus, students like the rest of humanity, had to deal with anxiety and stress. Online stress management programmes are recommended to enhance stress and coping skills, as well as to prevent subsequent mental health difficulties.

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