

Effects of examination stress on the health of college students of Kathua city

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Abstract: Examination stress contributes to various health problems worldwide in college students. Researchers suggest that between 25% and 40% of college students experience examination anxiety. In recent times researchers have encountered increased health problems in college going students in examination environment. These health problems could be physical as well as psychological. This is authenticated in various studies like; in Jaipur medical students experienced peptic ulcers during examination days. A scale named as Hamilton Depression Scale was conducted which also conformed the results. Psycho-social determinants like poor socio-economic status, parental education and type of parenting also contribute to the examination stress and health problems. In this context a test named as P.G.I.H.Q.N-I, PGI Chandigarh was conducted on various college students of district Kathua. After conducting test we found the increased health problems like eating and sleeping problems, increased heart rate, restlessness, excessive sweating, shortness of breath, rapid heartbeat, dry mouth, low self-esteem, and depression. This shows that there is a considerable physical and psychological health problem in college students.

Key words: Depression; examination stress; Hamilton Depression Scale; health problems; restlessness.

1. Introduction

Stress is a common element in the lives of every individual, regardless of race or cultural background (Garrett, 2001). Over the past few decades, there has been significant investigation on the issue of stress and management of stress (Dziegielewska *et al.*, 2004). In addition, college students have been shown to possess a unique set of stressors which can affect their health (Garrett, 2001). Many people experience some degree of stress on a daily basis, and college students are even more likely to face situations and events that require them to make changes and adapt their behaviour.

What is 'STRESS'?

Stress is the term used to describe the physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses to events that are appraised (evaluated or judged) as threatening or challenging. Stress can show itself in many ways. Physical problems include fatigue, sleeping problem, frequent cold, headache, rapid heart beat and even chest pains and Nausea. People under stress may behave differently, too pacing, eating too much, crying a lot, smoking and drinking, more than usual or physically striking out at others by hitting or throwing things emotionally, people under stress experience anxiety, depression and irritability, as well as anger and Frustration. Mental symptoms of stress include problems in concentration, memory and decision making, and people under stress often lose their sense of humour.

Examination stress

Examination stress is a feeling of pressure tension that many college students feel before end coming up to academic examination time. It usually occurs during the revision period before examination and immediately before and during the examination. Many students perceive stress during such academic examination time. Though moderate amount of

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stress is essential for better performance and performance in examination, but extreme stress can be harmful to body and mind.

We know that examination produces stress on the college student and it also contributes to various health problems. Researchers also suggest that 25% to 40% of college students experience examination anxiety. The face value of hypothesis that examination exerts pressure on college students and causes various health problems is quite strong, and in recent researches it is evident that examination environment produces lot of physical and psychological health problem in the college students. This is authenticated in various studies, like in Jaipur, medical students experienced peptic ulcers during examination days. A scale named as Hamilton Depression Scale which is an adaptation of MMPI was conducted and it conformed the results.

Psycho- social determinants

Various psycho social determinants like poor socio-economic status, and parental education and parenting types also contribute to examination stress and their subsequent effects on the health of college students. Examination is an integral part of the curriculum of an educational institution. It include the different and systematic steps like paper- setting, allocation of centres, allotment of Roll numbers, conduct of examination, evaluation and re-evaluation.

Thus, there is a great deal of positivism in the examination system. Examination environment is created in order to test the students in terms of their abilities in their respective subjects. But students perceive the environment threatening and thus experience a great deal of anxiety, which in term produces physical and psychological health problems.

The physical symptoms include eating and sleeping disturbances like loss of Appetite or Binge eating, Insomnia, Hyper-vigilance, stomachache, Nausea, diarrhoea, excessive sweating, shortness of breath, light headedness, fainting rapid heartbeat and dry mouth where as psychological symptoms include low-self-esteem, helplessness, worthlessness, depression, and aggression.

College students may get very sensitive, upset easily by-slight criticism and deliberately

work slowly due the fear of committing mistakes. They may also cry easily, get irritated, lose temper and even think of committing suicide.

In this context, a test named as PGI-Health Questionnaire N-1 (Wig and Verma, 1971) was conducted on the college students of Government Degree College (Boys) Kathua, J&K, India and Government Degree College for Women, Kathua, J&K, India. This test is in the form of self- report questionnaire, consisting of 38 questions. It is further divided in to two parts, Part A and Part B. Part A includes physical health problems and Part B includes psychological health problems. If someone scores more than 10 questions one is deemed as having health problems.

A random sampling method was adopted to collect the data of 400 college students from both the colleges. The mean of population sample G.D.C Kathua is 11 whereas mean of population samples from G.D.C for Women Kathua is 13. The z-scores is 3.03, which shows that there is significant difference between the means of two population samples. The z score of the sample means is 3.03 which is quite above than 1.96. It signifies that the two sample means differ significantly. Thus both the samples of population are independent of each other

Results and discussion

On the basis of the conclusions drawn from the questionnaire, it is found that:-

1. In Government Degree College for women, Kathua J&K, India, 78% of students have physical and psychological problems and 22% of students are moderately healthy.
2. In Government Degree College (Boys), Kathua, J&K, India, 57.5% students are having physical and psychological health problems where as 42.5% of students are moderately healthy.

From the above stated results it is evident that students in Government Degree College for Women, Kathua, are experiencing more health (physical and psychological) problems than the student of Government Degree College (Boys) Kathua, J&K, India.

Suggestions

1. Proper counselling sessions should be conducted in the colleges with the help of Psychology health professionals.
2. Mock-test exercises should be conducted before the final examination, so that the doubts and fears of the students concerning the examination can be minimised to some extent.
3. Alarming cases should be diverted to the psychology and health centres.

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