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Assessment of depression among college students

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Abstract

Background: Depression among university students is extremely prevalent and widespread problem across the country. The present study was conducted to assess depression among college students.

Materials and Methods: 260 college students of both genders were provided with a questionnaire consisted of sociodemographic, economic, social, and environmental variables. The tool was developed after an extensive review of the literature on the topic area. Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) was used to screen the presence and the severity of depressive symptoms.

Results: Work overload was present in 170, childhood emotional abuse was seen in 120, childhood physical abuse in 110 and childhood sexual abuse in 80. The difference was significant ($P < 0.05$). 110 were normal, borderline clinical depression in 50, mild depression in 25, moderate depression in 35 and severe depression in 40 students.

Conclusion: Students had history of childhood emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Most of them had borderline clinical depression.

Keywords: Depression, students, physical

Introduction

Depression among university students is extremely prevalent and widespread problem across the country. Trying to fit in, maintain good grades, plan for the future, and be away from home often causes anxiety for a lot of students. As a reaction to this stress, some students get depressed ^[1]. They find that they cannot get themselves together. They may cry all of the time, skip classes, or isolate themselves without realizing they are depressed. Previous studies reported that depression in university students is noted around the world and the prevalence seems to be increasing ^[2].

Symptoms of depression are quite prevalent. Severe mental illness is typically characterized by sad, nervous, hopeless, or anxious feelings. According to the World Health Organization, depression is now a health issue faced by people worldwide, particularly college students ^[3].

University students are a special segment of the society at a specific developmental milestone that bridges a critical transitory period from adolescence to adulthood. University students are a special group of people that are enduring a critical transitory period in which they are going from adolescence to adulthood and can be one of the most stressful times in a person's life ^[4]. This transitional period embraces a very important process like endocrine surge, emotional turmoil, and identity development which can lead to crises, which include self-doubt, social withdrawal, loneliness, lowered self-esteem ^[5]. University students are challenged by geographic changes, separated from family member, academic stress, alongside financial difficulties urging the student to develop new coping mechanisms. Therefore, University students worldwide are at higher risk to develop mental health disorders particularly to depression and suffer from its impact ^[6]. The present study was conducted to assess depression among college students.

Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted among 260 college students of both genders. All were enrolled after they gave their written consent.

Data such as name, age, gender etc. was recorded. A questionnaire consisted of sociodemographic, economic, social, and environmental variables. The tool was developed after an extensive review of the literature on the topic area. Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) was used to screen the presence and the severity of depressive symptoms.

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The 21-item was scored on a scale of 0–3 in a list of four statements arranged in increasing severity about a particular symptom of depression. The total score ranges from 0 to 63. BDI scores of 14 or higher were categorized as the presence of depression for logistic regression analysis. According to BDI-II: a score of 0 to 4 is (Normal), 5 to 13 is (Borderline clinical depression), 14 to 19 is (Mild depression), 20 to 28 is (Moderate depression), and 29 to 63 is (Severe depression). Results thus obtained were subjected to statistical analysis. P value less than 0.05 was considered significant.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of subjects

Total- 260		
Gender	Males	Females
Number	140	120

Table I shows that out of 260 subjects, males were 140 and females were 120.

Table 2: Assessment of parameters

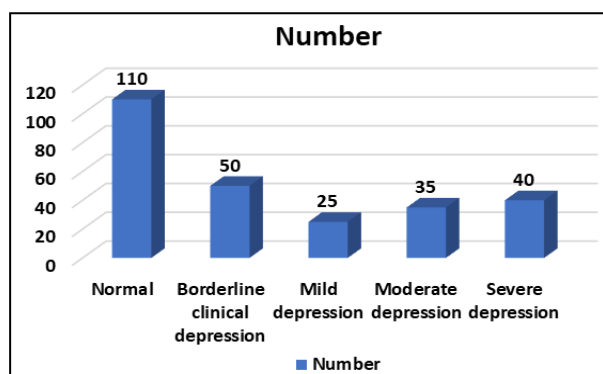
Parameters	Response	Number	P value
Work overload	Yes	170	0.02
	No	90	
Childhood emotional abuse	Yes	120	0.09
	No	140	
Childhood Physical abuse	Yes	110	0.08
	No	150	
Childhood sexual abuse	Yes	80	0.02
	No	180	

Table II shows that work overload was present in 170, childhood emotional abuse was seen in 120, childhood physical abuse in 110 and childhood sexual abuse in 80. The difference was significant ($P < 0.05$).

Table 3: Assessment of Beck Depression Inventory

Depression	Number	P value
Normal	110	0.02
Borderline clinical depression	50	
Mild depression	25	
Moderate depression	35	
Severe depression	40	

Table III, graph I shows that 110 were normal, borderline clinical depression in 50, mild depression in 25, moderate depression in 35 and severe depression in 40 students. The difference was significant ($P < 0.05$).



Graph 1: Assessment of Beck Depression Inventory

Discussion

Various studies across the globe showed the prevalence of depression among university students varied, as low as 4% and as high as 79.2% [7, 8]. Different American countries had the prevalence of depression range between 33% and 41%. The report on different European countries stated that the prevalence of depression ranges between 6.1% and 34.2%.⁹ The study done in different Asian countries reported that the prevalence of depression ranges between 4% and 79.2%.¹⁰ The present study was conducted to assess depression among college students.

In present study, out of 260 subjects, males were 140 and females were 120. We found that work overload was present in 170, childhood emotional abuse was seen in 120, childhood physical abuse in 110 and childhood sexual abuse in 80. A study by Cui *et al.* [10] observed that the prevalence level of depression was 10 to 85%, with a weighted mean prevalence of 30.6% in case of university students all over the world. Depression prevalence is higher among college students compared to the general populace. This is because the time in university constitutes a special transitory period in terms of social interactions, changing of habitation, and financial circumstances. Also, during this period, the students have to make numerous vital decisions, which amplifies pressure on them. Symptoms of depression disturb the students' tasks in day-to-day life, such as scholarly performance and social functioning. Additionally, the students' activity and productivity may be devastated by depression.

We found that 110 were normal, borderline clinical depression in 50, mild depression in 25, moderate depression in 35 and severe depression in 40 students. Jiang *et al.* [11] in their study a total of 45 studies were conducted on 50,826 participants. The average pooled prevalence of depression was 30.39% (26.38–34.55%). Subgroup analyses showed that 29.45% (22.88–36.48%) were men and 28.65% (23.44–34.16%) were women. Furthermore, 28.10% (22.83–33.70%) were from the northern part and 32.44% (26.67–38.48%) were from the southern. The prevalence of depression was 30.45% (23.96–37.36%) for sample sizes of <500 subjects, 30.99% (25.08–37.23%) for samples with 500 to 1000 people, and 29.54% (33.32–37.33%) in case of samples with >1000 people. Publications between 2000 and 2006 showed a depression prevalence of 8.45% (22.34–35.00%), whereas 30.52% (21.30–40.61%) and 31.79% (27.31–36.45%) were the corresponding values according to publications during 2007 to 2011 and 2012 to 2014.

Sarokhani *et al.* [12] in 35 studies conducted in Iran from 1995 to 2012 with sample size of 9743, prevalence of depression in the university students was estimated to be 33% (95% CI: 32–34). The prevalence of depression among boys was estimated to be 28% (95% CI: 26–30), among girls 23% (95% CI: 22–24), single students 39% (95% CI: 37–41), and married students 20% (95% CI: 17–24). Meta regression model showed that the trend of depression among Iranian students was flat. On the whole, depression is common in university students with no preponderance between males and females and in single students is higher than married ones.

Conclusion

Authors found that students had history of childhood emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Most of them had borderline clinical depression.

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