



SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER AMONG UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL STUDENTS IN A TERTIARY CARE HOSPITAL, TAMIL NADU – A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

Community Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social phobia or social anxiety disorder is a common psychological condition by fear of being observed and looked over by others. The various impacts of social phobia on medical students like poor academic performance, depression, and behavioral and mental changes need to be studied and therapeutic remedies need to be taken under care by institutions. **Methods:** The study was a cross-sectional study done on 240 medical students selected by stratified random sampling. A predesigned questionnaire on demography and Social phobia Inventory was used to collect data. MS EXCEL was used for data entry and SPSS version 20 was used for data analysis. **Results:** Out of 240 students included, 126 (52.5%) were females and 114 (47.5) were males. The proportion of students who were identified as having mild social phobia was 16 (6.7%), moderate social phobia 179 (74.6%) and severe social phobia 45 (18.8%). A statistically significant difference regarding social phobia grades was observed across various batches of students [p-value <0.05]. **Conclusion:** Overall, the proportion of students with moderate to severe social anxiety was high. This study showed that first-year MBBS students had a higher proportion of severe phobia when compared to final-year students. Supportive social measures must be ensured so that medical students can develop into competent medical graduates.

KEYWORDS

medical students, social anxiety, social phobia inventory

INTRODUCTION

Social phobia or social anxiety disorder is a common psychological condition characterized by fear of being observed by others¹. Lack of self-confidence, fear of rejection, criticism etc., makes people anxious in society. This serious case of anxiety, becomes a disorder known as social anxiety disorder or social phobia². Research studies suggest that there is also an impact of social anxiety disorder on academic performance among medical students. Thus various impacts of social phobia on medical students like poor academic performance, depression, and behavioural and mental changes need to be studied and therapeutic remedies need to be taken under care by institutions. The professional studies like medical profession can be more academically challenging to new students entering the colleges. Various practical skills taught in the colleges can bring anxiety to students, thus various studies have been done to understand the prevalence of Social Anxiety Disorder among undergraduate medical students. Without proper communication skill, students tend to become confused, depressed that in turn affects the psychosocial wellbeing of the student. The prevalence of social anxiety disorder among medical students in southern states of India is insufficiently addressed in the literature. This study has been planned with aim to examine the prevalence of social anxiety disorder among undergraduate medical students of a tertiary care centre in Tamilnadu, India. Understanding the magnitude of problem, measures can be undertaken to enable the medical students become competent medical graduates.

Methods:

The cross sectional study was done among 240 undergraduate medical students in a tertiary care hospital, Sree Mookambika Institute of Medical sciences, Kanyakumari, TamilNadu, South India. The Study Participants were first year MBBS students, second year MBBS students, Third year MBBS students, Final year MBBS students during period of April 2024 to June 2024. The Inclusion criteria were students present on the day of data collection willing to participate in the study. The Exclusion criteria were those with incomplete forms or those on previous psychiatric treatments. Sample Size calculation were Calculated using the formula $Za2pq/d^2$ where p = Prevalence of average performance taken as 30.5%, $P = 30.5$, $q = 100 - p[69.5]$, $d = 20\%$ of p , Sample size ~240, sampling technique: stratified random sampling. The Study Tool used were Pretested, Semi structured Questionnaire in English containing 2 sections. Section A: Socio-demographic details of the study participants. Section B: Details on Social Anxiety Disorder using Social phobia Inventory Questionnaire. The Data collection method used were, Data was

collected after obtaining, informed consent from the study participants. For collecting data, Social Anxiety Inventory (SPIN) will be used which included 17 items and was developed by Connor and et al in 2000. The inventory consists of 3 subscales: fear (6 items), avoidance (7 items) and physiological conditions (4 items) In each item, grading was based on five point scale from never (zero) to too much (4). The score of 20 and more for adults indicates social phobia disorder. The score of less than 20 indicates non-social phobic individual, 21 to 30 shows Mild, 31 to 40 shows average, 41 to 50 shows severe, and more than 50 shows very severe condition. Thus anxiety levels of students can be measured using SPIN questionnaire. The SPIN questionnaire has been used in various research studies for assessing social anxiety.^{1,2,3,4,5,8,10} The Data entry and analysis used were, Data was entered in Microsoft EXCEL and was analyzed using appropriate statistical software. Data will be analyzed using SPSS .20.0 all quantitative variables were analyzed for mean and standard deviation. All qualitative variables were analyzed for proportions. To look for association, The Chi-Square test/t-test was used as test of significance. A p value less than 0.05 or a confidence interval of 95% was considered statistically significant. The results obtained by the above mentioned analysis was furnished at the end of the study.

RESULTS:

Table 1: Socio Demographic Details Of Participants, N = 240

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY%(N)
GENDER	
MALE	47.5(114)
FEMALE	52.5(126)
RELIGION	
HINDU	45.8(110)
CHRISTIAN	44.6(107)
MUSLIM	9.6(23)
EDUCATION OF MOTHER	
BELOW 10 TH	20.8(50)
SSLC	8.8(21)
PREDEGREE /PLUS 2	43.8(105)
POSTDEGREE/DEGREE	26.7(64)
EDUCATION OF FATHER	
BELOW 10 TH	16.2(39)
SSLC	36.7(88)
PREDEGREE /PLUS 2	47.1(113)

Table 2 Grading Of Social Anxiety: Mild Social Anxiety, Moderate Social Anxiety, Severe Social Anxiety (n =240)

	MILD	MODERATE	SEVERE	p. value
Batches				
1 st year	12.7%(8)	50.8%(32)	36.5%(23)	<0.001
2 nd year	6.8%(4)	79.7%(47)	13.6%(8)	
3 rd year	5.2%(3)	81%(47)	13.8%(8)	
Final year	1.7%(1)	88.3%(53)	10%(6)	

Out of 240 students included, 126(52.5%) were females and 114(47.5) were males. The proportion of students who were identified as having mild social phobia was 16(6.7%), moderate social phobia 179(74.6%) and severe social phobia 45(18.8%). There was no statistically significant association in the severity of SAD between different genders and education status of parents.

Thus the study sample consisted of 118 male participants (51.3%) and 112 female participants (48.7%). Statistical analysis revealed no significant gender-based differences in the prevalence of social anxiety disorder (SAD), with a p-value of 0.534. Regarding maternal education, 63 participants (27.4%) had mothers with higher education, while 167 participants (72.6%) had mothers with basic education. The analysis indicated no significant association between the mother's educational level and the presence of SAD, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.384. Concerning paternal education, 110 participants (47.8%) had fathers with higher education, and 120 participants (52.2%) had fathers with basic education. The data analysis showed no significant correlation between the father's educational level and the occurrence of SAD, with a p-value of 0.893.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that first-year MBBS students had a higher proportion of severe phobia when compared to final-year students. Overall, the proportion of medical students with moderate to severe social anxiety was high. The prevalence of social anxiety among medical students is 95.8. There is no statistical relationship between social anxiety and the education of the parents, or gender of the students.

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