



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Commerce

COGNITIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research report addresses the rising concerns about mental health problems among University students. Measurements to increase completion rates as well as reducing the number of long-term students are more likely to be effective when students are in an optional state of wellbeing. Most of the students emphasised the importance of the acknowledgement of mental health problems and therefore suggested to educate young children in reflecting on their mental wellbeing and to educate university students more extensively about mental health and mental health services. It is recommended to develop protocols for student counsellors and to improve the guidance of students during their education in University. A few recommendations were formulated for general practitioners in particular, such as improving the communication with the vulnerable students with mental health problems and adopting follow ups to check on treatment compliance. This study showed an insignificant role of the Internet in seeking professional help for mental health complaints, as none of the participating students felt encouraged by information on the Internet. Additionally, a minority of the students reported that they had used the Internet for seeking information about their complaints prior to seeking professional help. Students recommended improving the guidance of students during periods with high levels of stress.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health issue among University students is a major growing health concern. Research conducted in recent years has established that cases of students diagnosed with mental health issues are on the rise. A study conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) found out that one in four students in the India suffers from a mental related health issue. In the India, University counsellors have reported increased cases of students dealing with mental related issues. A survey conducted by NUS in 2016 established that 75% of the students suffered from a mental health issues (Winrow, 2019). There are also increased cases of University students dropping out of school because of being overwhelmed by mental health issues. Mental health status of a University students is of utmost importance because it plays a critical role in shaping the education life. In India about 15,000 first year students reported dealing with mental health issues (Burns, 2019). The figures are a sharp contrast to about 3000 students in 2008 that were diagnosed with mental health issues. Surveys conducted by different companies have also established that females are more likely to report a mental health issue than males.

Review of Literature

1. Emara et al (1971) in Cairo studied chronic manganese poisoning in the workers of the dry battery industry. An environmental study revealed a high concentration of manganese dust at the main working area. The study showed some association with prevalence and the rapidity of effect on workers according to their occupation with the concentration of manganese dust in air.

2. A review of rheumatism in industry was done by Anderson (1971) in London. Sickness absence and premature retirement can be shown to result directly from rheumatic complaints, especially rheumatoid arthritis and disc-disease; furthermore, there seems to be a general agreement that sickness absence is more marked in heavy manual occupations in light ones. Evidence supporting the view that the occupational factors are related to the aetiology of some chronic rheumatic diseases is fairly strong. Chronic tenosynovitis, bursitis, osteo-arthritis, and to a lesser extent, disc-disease are among those in which such a relationship can be demonstrated.

3. Valic et al (1971) did a comparative study at respiratory function in female non-smoking cotton jute workers. Cotton workers had a significantly higher prevalence of dyspnoea

than jute workers. Among cotton workers 28.3% were found to have characteristic symptoms of byssinosis, whereas none was found among jute workers.

4. A study on nail damage in spray operators exposed to paraquat was conducted in Trinidad by Hearn and Kein (1971), they found nail damage in 55 workers, in a group of 269 spray operators due to contamination by diluted paraquat. It is emphasized that although the degree of contamination was usually gross. It is nonetheless important to recognize that the diluted material can cause nail damage. The commonest lesion was transverse white bands of discolouration and loss of nail surface, transverse ridging, gross deformity of the nail plates and loss of nails occurred.

5. Ghawabi (1978) studied the environment and the health of a working population exposed simultaneously to jute and hemp. Classical symptoms of byssinosis were not present but 7% workers complained of a typical tightness of chest. The prevalence of chronic bronchitis among the exposed workers was statistically significant, in comparison with controls. Effects of dust concentrations, age and duration of exposure on the prevalence of chronic bronchitis were studied. A closer analysis of the pulmonary function data showed that smokers and those with bronchitis have greater reductions in forced expiratory volumes at the end of the work shift than do other workers.

6. A follow up study was conducted on the incidence of cancer and the mortality in a cohort of 454 male workers producing vinyl chloride and polyvinyl chloride by Anderson et al (1984), the study population was restricted to employees with more than one year's work experience. Twenty three cases of cancer were observed, one case of liver cancer was found. Five cases of lung cancer and four cases of malignant melanoma of the skin were observed. The investigators suggested the possibility of a casual relationship between the exposure to vinyl chloride and the development of cancer.

Mental health issues affecting University students

There are numerous mental health issues that affect University students. Depression is among the prevalent mental health issues among students. A survey conducted by YouGov found that 77% of students with mental issue had depression (Aronin and Smith, 2016). Anxiety is another mental issue facing University students. Anxiety is largely caused by divergent issues like exam fear and experiencing difficulties while studying. University education is quite demanding and may

prove a high energy consuming activity for some students. Students are also expected to attain a certain score to guarantee them a pass in a certain class. Resultantly, some students may become anxious about their performance, which may affect their mental status. Stress among university students is another major mental health issue. Stress among University students is influenced by different factors. The highly demanding University studies are a leading cause of stress among University students. Other causes of stress include examinations, deadlines, managing debts and demand coursework. Other mental health issues facing university students in India include self-harm, suicidal thought, eating disorders, and addiction.

Causes of Mental health issues

There are numerous and divergent student pressures that may cause mental health issues.

They include:

- **Living independently for the first time**

Some University students are compelled to live independently depending on the location of the University they study. Living away from their homes may result in loneliness. Students living alone may feel overwhelmed by responsibilities, which they are expected to do on their own. At times, they may also feel scared. Such situations may lead to mental health issues.

- **Managing an increased workload**

Students are expected to go through a large amount of workload during their University education. Students are expected to bear the amount of workload expected in a University. However, some students find it a tall order, which may make them uncomfortable and unhappy. Failing to manage increased workload can result in poor performance. Such students may fail to complete assignment and fail to meet deadlines set for different academic activities. As a result, such students may develop stress, which affects their mental health status.

- **Additional work responsibilities**

Some students may be engaged in other responsibilities like working on a part-time basis. They may engage in such activities to raise income that will help them to sustain their University education. Balancing between education and part-time job is at times a challenge that may bring mental health issues.

- **Culture shock, language barriers and homesickness**

International students studying in different Universities suffer from culture shock, language barrier and homesickness. These students are compelled to leave their families and countries and embark on education in the Universities. They are compelled to go through a difficult period of learning a new culture feel like strangers. Cultural differences may at times feel strange and difficult to adopt. International students also experience language barrier, which may make it difficult for them to comprehend what the professors are saying. Language barrier may also make it difficult for such students to interact with local students to interact with local students. International students experience homesickness because they are separated from their family and loved ones. Such issues lead to substantial levels of stress, which affect their mental health status.

- **Increased study costs**

The cost of funding University education is on the rise. Resultantly, students are increasing a difficult situation of dealing with the soaring expenses to fund their education. A research conducted among 2000 students by NUS established that a third of them report of having mental health issues because of financial problems (Minsky, 2016). The students started credit cards and payday loans as some of the financial

problems that contributed to mental health issues. Maintenance loans given to students results in increased stress because students are worried about their debts.

- **Increasingly competitive job market**

The job market is getting increasingly competitive. Which results in increased pressure among University students. New grads looking for jobs are compelled to cope with increased competition. Employers have increased the competitiveness of the job market because they are looking for grads that possess hard and STEM skills. Universities are churning out students, who do not have employability skills that can match the fast changing skills that characterize the competitive job market.

Cognitions of Mental health among University Students

The diagnosis is obtained through the presenting symptoms of the individual and may include changes in sleeping or eating habits, inability to cope, confusion or social withdrawal. The prevalence of mental health disorders in University students is growing in size as well as in level of severity, however, due to stigma that accompanies diagnosis and treatment, studies have shown that this population is very hesitant to seek help.

Anxiety Disorders

A mental health disorder characterised by feeling of worry, anxiety or fear that are strong enough to interfere with one's daily activities. Examples of anxiety disorders include panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. The presenting anxiety symptoms are present but additional experiences include flashbacks and a heightened level of awareness with distrust. Obsessive compulsive disorder is associated with ritualistic or repetitive acts or thought, obsessions are the constant and repetitive thought and compulsions are the ritualistic and repetitive acts.

Eating Disorders

These disorders do exist and are quite prevalent on University campuses, according to the national eating disorder association. Although the term eating is in the name, eating disorders are about more than food. They are complex mental health conditions that often require the intervention of medical and psychological experts to alter their course. These disorders are described in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental Disorder. Eating disorders are a range of psychological conditions that cause unhealthy eating habits to develop. They might start with an obsession with food, body weight, or body shape.

Personality Disorders

A personality disorder is a type of mental disorder in which you have a rigid and unhealthy pattern of thinking, functioning and behaving. A person with a personality disorder has trouble perceiving and relating to situations and people. These are grouped into three categories. Suspicious, Paranoid personality disorder, Schizoid personality disorder. Personality is the way of thinking, feeling and behaving that makes a person different from other people.

Mood Disorders

A mood disorder is a mental health problem that primarily affects a person's emotional state. It is a disorder in which a person experiences long periods of extreme happiness, extreme sadness or both. It is normal for someone's mood to change, depending on the situation. However, to be diagnosed with a mood disorder, symptoms must be present for several weeks or longer. Mood disorders can cause changes in your behaviour and can affect your ability to deal with routine activities, such as work or school.

Psychotic Disorders

A mental disorder characterised by a disconnection from reality. Psychosis may occur as a result of a psychiatric illness such as schizophrenia. In other instances, it may be caused by a health condition, medication or drug use. Psychotic disorders are a group of serious illness that effect the mind. They make it hard for someone to think clearly, make good judgements, respond emotionally, communicate effectively, understand reality, and behave appropriately. When symptoms are severe, people with psychotic disorders have trouble staying in touch with reality and often are unable to handle daily life. But even severe psychotic disorders usually can be treated.

Bipolar Disorders

A disorder associated with episodes of mood swings ranging from depressive lows to manic highs. The exact cause of bipolar disorder is not known, but a combination of genetics, environment and altered brain structure and chemistry may play a role. Manic episodes may include symptoms such as high energy, reduced need for sleep and loss of touch with reality. Depressive episodes may include symptoms such as low energy, low motivation and loss of interest in daily activities. Mood episodes last days to months at a time and may also be associated with suicidal thoughts.

Clinical Depression

A mental health disorder characterised by persistently depressed mood or loss of interest in activities, causing significant impairment in daily life. Possible causes include a combination of biological, psychological and social sources of distress. Increasingly, research suggests that these factors may cause changes in brain function, including altered activity of certain neural circuits in the brain. The persistent feeling of sadness or loss of interest that characterises major depression can lead to a range of behaviour and physical symptoms. These may include changes in sleep, appetite, energy level, concentration, daily behaviour or self-esteem. Depression can also be associated with thoughts to suicide.

Curbing health mental issues

Besides relying on health authorities to monitor mental health issues among students, Universities need to increase support services that should look after their own students to help them deal with mental health issues. The already established support services that deal with mental health issues are overwhelmed by the increasing number of students affected. A study conducted by IPPR found out that one in four students is using or waiting to use counselling services. In University, the study found out that there was 50% increase demand of mental health services, while the University India there has been an annual increase of 5-6% for the past 10 years in need of the services. Universities need to prioritize mental health issues and channel more resources and effort towards curbing the issues. Additionally, University need to improve students' access to National Health Services (NHS).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, University students are at risk for development of mental health disorders and their indicators. It is evident from the above discussion that mental health issues among University is a major concern that should be taken more seriously given the rising cases of the affected students. Mental health issues stem from different student pressures like living independently for the first time, managing an increased workload, additional work responsibilities, and soaring University cost. Students may experience different mental health issues like depression, stress, anxiety, and eating disorders. Universities need to increase their efforts towards establishing the right support services to handle increasing cases of students experiencing mental health issues.

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