

Investigating the Impact of Psychological Distress on College Students

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Abstract: *The primary purpose of this study is to gain knowledge about psychological issues that arise in students, especially while they are pursuing their academic goals and learning in an academic setting. The main psychological issues that affect students include anxiety, stress, sadness, and pressure. One of the main reasons of psychological issues among students is experiencing failures in their academic career. Other factors include learning difficulties, a lack of learning resources, negative family environments, and so on. When College students encounter these issues, it is crucial that they receive assistance in finding answers to their challenges. It is crucial that they implement the policies and initiatives in an acceptable way after receiving direction. In this study work, the causes of psychological difficulties, coping mechanisms for psychological problems, and recommendations have been the primary considerations.*

Keywords: College Students, Academic Learning, Psychological Problems, Mental Health, Solutions and Strategies

1.Introduction

Mental health awareness activities are an important element of improving mental health because they help our community understand the impact on and important relationship to academics, workplace and personal success. Raising mental health awareness is a contributing factor to a healthy, supportive and inclusive campus environment because it acknowledges the relevancy and importance of mental health, continues to educate members of our community and reinforces the role we all play and encourages us to support one another. Mental illnesses and psychological suffering are conditions that arise out of a complex mix of psychological, social, and biological influences that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functions.

It is important to build campus capacity to recognize indicators of concern, not only for students in distress, but for those at risk to help prevent the student from reaching distress. Increasing this capacity should not only be targeted to faculty and staff but also to students, so they know how to recognize indicators for themselves and for their peers. College can be a stressful time. Feelings of guilt, hopelessness and despair can build when students don't take steps to cope with stressors. Suicide is defined as the act of deliberately taking one's own life, and it is the second leading cause of death among college students. (1)

Higher Education and Stress:

Higher education is a stressful period in student's life which they need to cope with due to various reasons like living

away from the families, heavy syllabus, and inefficiency in higher education programs.[2] A mentally fit student can initiate proper social relationships, enthusiastic to learn with ambition to implement his/her plans in the future. Students are at a crucial stage of development as they are more subjected to experience mental illnesses.[3] College is an important venue when one learns not only academics skills, emotional maturity but also social etiquettes. College years are said to be very crucial developmental years because of the transition from childhood to adulthood. College years is considered a very important step in an individual life yet it brings many stress, challenges and issues including physical maturation, new meaning to self, autonomy from the family, sense of independence and expanding social interactions. This new changing environment needs a great deal of demands ranging from learning of new academic and communication skills, personal adjustment related to goal orientations and career and interpersonal relationships.[4]

Psychological problems can significantly impact college students in various ways, affecting their academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. Here's a detailed look at how these issues can manifest and what can be done to address them.

1. Academic Performance

Cognitive Functioning: Psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, or ADHD can impair concentration, memory, and cognitive processing. This can lead to difficulties in keeping up with coursework, attending lectures, or completing assignments.

Motivation and Engagement: Depression and other mood disorders can reduce motivation and engagement, leading to procrastination, missed deadlines, and lower academic achievement.

Test Performance: Anxiety, especially test anxiety, can negatively impact exam performance, making it harder for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills effectively.

2. Social Interactions:

Relationships: Psychological issues can strain relationships with peers, professors, and family members. For instance, social anxiety might make it challenging for students to participate in group activities or make new friends.

Isolation: Students experiencing depression or anxiety might withdraw from social activities, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Communication: Issues such as low self-esteem or panic attacks can affect how students communicate, potentially leading to misunderstandings and difficulties in forming or maintaining friendships.

3. Emotional Well-being:

Stress Management: College life is inherently stressful, and psychological problems can exacerbate this stress. Students might struggle with balancing academics, social life, and personal responsibilities, which can lead to burnout.

Self-Esteem: Mental health issues can impact self-esteem and self-worth, contributing to a negative self-image and increased vulnerability to further psychological problems.

Coping Strategies: Students might develop unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse or disordered eating, in response to their psychological struggles.

4. Physical Health:

Sleep Patterns: Anxiety, depression, and other psychological problems can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to insomnia or excessive sleeping, which in turn can affect physical health and academic performance.

Nutrition and Exercise: Stress and mental health issues might also influence eating habits and exercise routines, potentially leading to poor nutrition or a sedentary lifestyle.

Addressing the Impact

Campus Resources: Many colleges offer counselling services, mental health workshops, and stress management programs. Accessing these resources can provide students with support and coping strategies.

Peer Support: Encouraging a supportive social network and fostering open discussions about mental health can help reduce stigma and provide emotional support.

Academic Accommodations: Institutions may offer accommodations for students struggling with mental health issues, such as extended deadlines, modified exam formats, or additional tutoring.

Self-Care Practices: Promoting self-care strategies, such as regular exercise, healthy eating, and mindfulness practices, can help students manage stress and improve overall well-being.

Early Intervention: Identifying and addressing psychological problems early can prevent them from escalating. Regular mental health screenings and promoting awareness about available help are crucial steps in this process.

In summary, psychological problems can have a multifaceted impact on college students, affecting their academic success, social relationships, and overall well-being. By providing adequate resources, support systems, and promoting self-care, colleges can help students navigate these challenges and achieve a more balanced and fulfilling college experience.

The Problems of Mental Health Education for College Students

Poor Adaptability to Environment:

Since the reform and opening up, with the integration of Chinese education with Western developed countries, college students' mental health education has paid more and more attention, but as far as the overall demand is concerned, this improvement is still far from enough. At present, the main forms of mental health education in colleges and universities include offering mental health education courses, conducting psychological consultation, conducting lectures on mental health education, and setting up psychological health education consultation rooms.

Many of these forms cannot be carried out in depth due to the lack of attention and funds in colleges and universities, which make these superficial forms unable to meet the basic requirements of mental health education for college students. Some colleges and universities lack correct understanding and research on the tasks, functions, characteristics, and laws of college students' mental health education under the new situation.

At present, psychological counselling institutions established in colleges and universities have a variety of subordinate relationships, most of which are affiliated with student offices, while some are affiliated with youth league committees, propaganda departments, or school hospitals. College students are in a stage of interpersonal communication with rich self-development, but the current mental health education in colleges and universities lacks the cultivation of student's practical ability.

Mental health education in colleges and universities is mainly implemented in the form of elective courses, lectures, and teacher's lectures i.e. teaching method is single and formal, lacking practicality and effectiveness. In the stage of university education, the content of mental health should be infiltrated into the teaching of various disciplines. However, there are not many requirements for the internal development of modern discipline teaching theory and practice. i.e. teaching of various disciplines takes the cultivation and improvement of student's ability as the central task.

When college students encounter psychological problems in their life or study, they often confide to their relatives or friends around them and seldom think of seeking help from professional psychological counselling institutions in colleges and universities, so it is difficult to fundamentally solve the actual needs of the healthy development of college students' psychology. Compared with mathematics, Chinese, and other professional courses, the development history of mental health education courses is relatively late. In addition, the development of higher education in China is relatively late [5]. Although it has developed rapidly in recent years, it is still far behind the advanced countries, which leads to the lack of professionalism of educators.

College student's mental health education teachers are weak. At present, the full-time mental health education teachers in colleges and universities are weak, which cannot meet the needs of the rapid development of higher education and the increasing psychological needs of students, i.e. lack of professional mental health teachers is also a common problem in colleges and universities.

As far as the reality is concerned, teachers in charge of students' mental health education are often served by counsellors or teachers from other functional departments. Due to the lack of professional knowledge and multiple roles, the corresponding psychological guidance function cannot be well played, which is not conducive to the promotion of mental health education for college students.

Lack of Communication Skills:

Mental health education course is one of the important ways to implement mental health education. At present, although there are many textbooks and books on mental health education for college students, most of them are not practical, and the versions are complicated. From the implementation of the curriculum, some colleges and universities regard mental health education as a course to impart psychological knowledge and teach students psychological concepts, principles, and other psychological knowledge too much, ignoring the cultivation of humanistic spirit and cultural accomplishment.

Mental health education in colleges and universities is a scientific, normative, and operational work, which requires highly professionals, and only those who have undergone systematic and standardized training can be competent. On the whole, however, the professional level of mental health education teams in colleges and universities is uneven, and most teachers rush to work after short-term training, so they

cannot track the students with psychological problems in time.

With the oversupply of college graduates, college student's realistic pressure and self-experience pressure are constantly increasing. As a result, many college students have more psychological confusion, and some people have anxiety, compulsion, and paranoia in their study and life. Mental health education and ideological and political education of college students are unified in terms of working objects, ultimate goals, and teaching methods, while they are essentially different in terms of their respective theories, methods, and operating mechanisms. College student's mental health education should be a systematic educational process.

However, at present, most colleges and universities take student's mental health education as a part of ideological education, lacking a complete system [6]. Due to the limitations of mental health educators in learning network technology and loopholes in management, some college students' personal secrets and psychological privacy are not protected. Therefore, mental health education in colleges and universities should give full play to the role and advantages of network mental health education, promote the healthy growth of college students' psychology, make them meet the needs of society, and promote social harmony and stability.^[6]

Teenage and Stress

The period between childhood and adulthood, known as adolescence, lasts from the ages of 12 to 25 and is marked by the maturation of the body and the mind. Therefore, half of instruction occurs during this phase of development. Many psychological issues among the students occur at this period as a result of the physical changes. The primary causes of stress are: physical issues; family; school; relationships; and social factors. Adolescence is a risky stage of life when adolescents struggle with role uncertainty and self-organization. For them, the biggest sources of stress are job exploration, life transitions, interpersonal interactions, relationship issues, and academic exams. Such stress may generally produce psychological, physical, and behavioural difficulties.^[7]

Behaviour and causes of anxiety in college students Mentality

Private college students typically experience anxiety when faced with pressures from their studies, future careers, and daily living. This can cause issues in their daily lives and academic pursuits. This type of anxiety has a significant negative aspect and is characterised by conventional fear psychology. It is induced by an inconsistent learning outcome compared to learning expectations. Furthermore, it is discovered that there is a difference between students at private and public colleges and universities, particularly when it comes to teachers, future employment, postgraduate entrance exams, and other areas. They believe that they will not be able to keep up with public college students.^[8]

Types of psychological disorders

There are lot of psychological disorders are- anxiety/fear, phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, mood disorder/ depression, bipolar disorder/depression/mania, thought disorder/hallucinations, schizophrenia, personality disorder, eating disorders, sleep disorders (insomnia), sexual disorders, gambling addiction, identity disorder (amnesia/dementia), autism spectrum disorders, somatisation disorder and relational disorder.

Related chemicals with psychology and disorders

Usage of a number of drugs has been associated with development of the disorder, including cannabis, cocaine, and amphetamines. Neurotransmitters, also known as chemical messengers, are endogenous chemicals that enable neurotransmission. Neurotransmitters are released from synaptic vesicles. Their more than 100 chemical messengers have been uniquely identified. Otto Loewi is credited with discovering acetylcholine, the first known neurotransmitter. There are mainly seven groups of neurotransmitters- Amino acids: glutamate (excitatory 90%), aspartate, D-serine, aminobutyric acid (GABA) (more than 90%), glycine. Gasotransmitters: nitric oxide (NO), carbon monoxide (CO), hydrogen sulfide (H₂S). Monoamines: dopamine (DA), norepinephrine, epinephrine (adrenaline), histamine, serotonin (SER).

Trace amines: Phenethylamine, N-methylphenethylamine, tyramine, 3-iodothyronamine, octopamine, tryptamine. Peptides: somatostatin, cocaine and amphetamine regulated transcript, opioid peptides, -endorphin. Purines: adenosine triphosphate (ATP), adenosine.

Other Chemicals: Acetylcholine, anandamide. Glutamate is used at the great majority of fast excitatory synapses in the brain and spinal cord. Excitotoxicity has been implicated in certain chronic diseases including ischemic stroke, epilepsy, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, Huntington disease, and Parkinson's disease. GABA is used at the great majority of fast inhibitory synapses in virtually every part of the brain. Many sedatives/tranquilizing drugs act by enhancing the effects of GABA. Dopamine has a number of important functions in the brain. Parkinson's disease has been linked to low levels of dopamine and schizophrenia has been linked to high levels of dopamine. Serotonin controls appetite, sleep, memory, learning, temperature, mood, behaviour, muscle contraction, and function of the cardiovascular and endocrine system. It is speculated to have a role in depression. As students are our next potential leader for the nation so it's very important to solve their psychological problems. After detecting their problems it's easy to solve it through suggestions.^[9]

Psychological Issues ^[10,11,12,13,14]

The inability of an individual to meet their requirements due to a lack of psychological and social compatibility is known as a psychological issue. The primary cause of psychological issues, where people are unable to fulfil their psychological, bodily, and social demands, is their incompatibility with their surroundings and with themselves. Anxiety, psychological tension, apathy, despair, pessimism, sadness, mental excitation, emotions of guilt, jealousy, sensitivity, excessive hate, loss of self-confidence, and dread of the future are among the numerous problems experiencing by the individual.

Types of Psychological Issues:

Anxiety and tension, feelings of deficiency, shame and confusion, lack of self-confidence, feelings of emptiness and loss, fear of submission and insult, fear of criticism, impulses, mood, weakness and determination, irritability, ease of nerve stimulation and emotional sensitivity, constriction, lack of happiness, and lack of responsibility are just a few of the psychological issues that young people face, according to Zahran's extensive research.

Reasons for Mental Health Issues:

Psychological issues have a wide range of causes and contributing variables. It is challenging to pinpoint a single reason for psychological issues; instead, they are typically complex and interconnected, with several elements contributing to the problem.

The following is a summary of them:

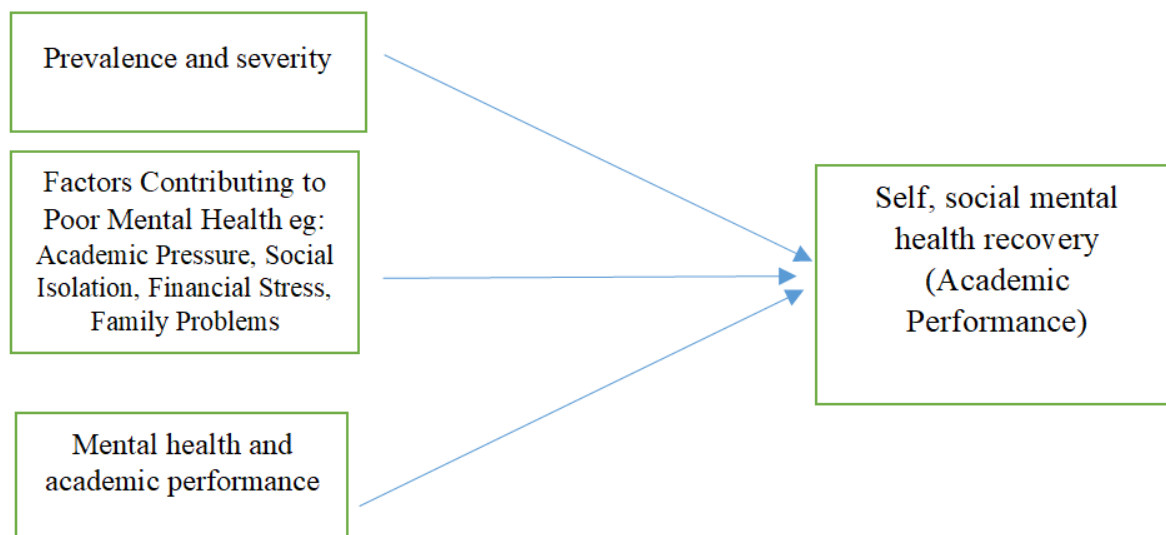
1. Biological Factors: These comprise heredity, illnesses, emotions, gland malfunction, and bodily cell metabolism.

2. Psychological Factors:

There are numerous and interconnected psychological factors, including a lack of self-control, a poor capacity for moral judgement, an exaggerated interpretation of aggression, psychological trauma, an inability to regulate emotions, insecure attachment, and negative emotions like inferiority, guilt, dependence, impulsivity, and the preparation for anxiety and depression.

3. Environmental variables:

They are associated with social and familial variables, such as parental behaviour, family breakdown, poverty, unemployment, crime, war, and a lack of support and direction.

Conceptual Framework^[15]**2. Discussion and Suggestions**

According to the research, the study's conclusions have significant ramifications for both policymakers and institutions of higher learning. Higher education institutions should concentrate on identifying and resolving the causes that contribute to poor mental health since they have a substantial link with self- social, and mental health recovery. This might entail offering mental health services, fostering a climate that is encouraging and inclusive, and encouraging healthy living. HEIs could also think about putting in place mental health education initiatives to raise awareness and lessen the stigma attached to mental health problems.

Additionally, the study discovered a strong favourable correlation between academic achievement and mental health as well as self-, social-, and mental health recovery. This emphasises how crucial it is to help students' mental health because it may improve both their general well-being and academic achievement. Universities should place a high priority on offering easily available and reasonably priced mental health treatments, encouraging stress-relieving pursuits like yoga, meditation, and athletics, and making sure that students are in a nurturing atmosphere where they may flourish.

3. Conclusion

College Student's psychological problems can arise from a variety of factors, including difficulty in understanding academic material, exam stress, unfavourable academic outcomes, financial difficulties, health issues, work pressure, unfavourable working conditions, difficult relationships, discriminatory treatment, and violent or criminal acts. It is imperative that students make sure that these issues do not become obstacles in the way of achieving their intended goals and objectives, when they encounter these circumstances and they negatively impact their psychological well-being.

The College students either work out the answers to these issues on their own or they get help and support from others. These might be community people, educators, psychologists, professional counsellors, or family members. It is essential that they apply the tactics and procedures appropriately while they are receiving help and assistance. College Student's major employment responsibility is to focus on their education. When pupils fail to meet the required academic achievement, a variety of psychological issues arise. As a result, it is critical that they study consistently, finish their projects and assignments on time, and interact with others in a productive manner in order to solve academic issues. As a result, students will be able to successfully alleviate psychological issues and appropriately accomplish their personal and professional goals when they develop knowledge of various coping mechanisms according to their circumstances.

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