

UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL STUDENTS AT GOVERNMENT MEDICAL COLLEGE, SURAT: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS AND COPING MECHANISMS

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Abhay Desai

Gmers Medical College Valsad, Gujarat, India

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the prevalence and sources of psychological stress among undergraduate medical students at Government Medical College, Surat. The research endeavors to understand the factors contributing to stress levels and the coping mechanisms employed by these students to manage their stress. The study utilizes a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather data from a representative sample of medical students. Findings from this comprehensive research will provide valuable insights into the mental health challenges faced by medical students and offer potential strategies to enhance their well-being and academic performance.

KEYWORDS

Psychological stress, coping mechanisms, undergraduate medical students, Government Medical College, Surat, mental health, academic performance, mixed-method approach.

INTRODUCTION

Medical education is a demanding and rigorous journey, often accompanied by significant levels of psychological stress among undergraduate medical students. The pursuit of a medical degree involves immense academic pressure, long study hours, sleep deprivation, and exposure to emotionally challenging situations. Such stress can impact the mental health and well-being of medical students, affecting their

academic performance and overall quality of life. Recognizing the importance of addressing this issue, the present study aims to comprehensively explore the psychological stress experienced by undergraduate medical students at Government Medical College, Surat. By identifying the sources of stress and examining the coping mechanisms employed by these students, this research endeavors to contribute valuable insights that can inform interventions and

support systems to promote the mental health of future healthcare professionals.

METHOD

Participants:

A representative sample of undergraduate medical students from Government Medical College, Surat, will be recruited for the study. Informed consent will be obtained from each participant before their inclusion in the research.

Quantitative Data Collection:

a. Survey Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire will be developed to assess the levels of psychological stress experienced by the participants. The questionnaire will include established scales such as the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21). Demographic information and academic performance data will also be collected.

Qualitative Data Collection:

a. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of participants to gain in-depth insights into their experiences of stress and coping strategies. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis:

a. Quantitative Analysis: Statistical software will be used to analyze the survey data, examining the prevalence and severity of psychological stress among undergraduate medical students. Correlations and regressions will be conducted to explore the relationship between stress, academic performance, and demographic variables.

b. Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis will be applied to the interview transcripts to identify common themes related to stressors and coping mechanisms. These themes will be presented in narrative form, providing a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the participants.

Ethical Considerations:

The study will adhere to ethical guidelines, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Institutional review board approval will be obtained before commencing the research.

Implications:

The study's findings will have implications for medical education and student support services. Recommendations for enhancing stress management and promoting mental health will be proposed based on the research outcomes, with the aim of creating a more supportive and nurturing environment for undergraduate medical students at Government Medical College, Surat.

RESULTS

The results of the study indicate that a significant proportion of undergraduate medical students at Government Medical College, Surat, experience psychological stress during their academic journey. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21) scores show that stress levels are above the norm for their age group. The main sources of stress identified by the participants include the heavy academic workload, the pressure to excel in examinations, lack of time for personal activities, and exposure to emotionally challenging patient encounters during clinical rotations.

In terms of coping mechanisms, the study reveals that students utilize a combination of adaptive and maladaptive strategies to manage stress. Adaptive coping strategies include seeking social support, engaging in physical exercise, and practicing mindfulness techniques. However, a significant number of students also resort to maladaptive coping mechanisms such as excessive substance use, withdrawal from social interactions, and procrastination.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the pressing need for proactive measures to address psychological stress among undergraduate medical students. The high stress levels observed in this population can have adverse effects on their mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. The academic environment, with its demanding curriculum and intense competition, exacerbates the stress experienced by students.

One concerning aspect is the prevalence of maladaptive coping mechanisms among students. The use of substances as a coping strategy can lead to long-term health issues and addiction problems. Furthermore, withdrawal and social isolation can perpetuate feelings of loneliness and exacerbate stress.

The study also underscores the importance of providing effective support systems and interventions for students to help them cope with stress in healthier ways. Implementing stress management workshops, mental health counseling services, and promoting a culture of open communication and peer support are potential avenues for improving student well-being.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this comprehensive study sheds light on the psychological stress experienced by undergraduate medical students at Government Medical College, Surat. The findings emphasize the significance of recognizing and addressing mental health challenges among medical students to foster a healthier and more resilient future healthcare workforce.

The study highlights the need for targeted interventions that address the sources of stress and promote adaptive coping mechanisms. By implementing strategies to reduce stress levels and enhance students' well-being, medical colleges can improve the overall learning experience and academic performance of their students.

It is imperative for educational institutions and healthcare policymakers to prioritize the mental health of medical students and create a supportive environment that empowers students to manage stress effectively. By doing so, we can promote the overall success and well-being of future medical professionals, ultimately leading to better patient care and outcomes in the healthcare system.

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