

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PERCEIVED SOURCES OF STRESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT PROFESSIONS- A REVIEW REPORT

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ABSTRACT: Stress is defined as the non-specific response of the body by any demand placed upon it as defined by Selye. In the recent years, stress has been shown to manifest as fatigue, tension, dizziness, sleeplessness, tachycardia, gastrointestinal symptoms, irritability, anxiety, and cynicism. Also, a negative association has been reported between stress and academic performance of students from various professions. Stress has injurious effects on students and so it became important to analyze the perceived sources among the students of different professions. It was assumed that medical would be the most stressful profession but it was proved wrong. It is found out that dental students experience most amount of stress followed by the law students, medical students and least by engineering students. The review aims to analyze the prevalence and sources of stress in students among various professional courses. It is necessary to analyze perceived sources of stress among the students of different professions so stress reduction protocol can be implemented as a part of the curriculum in order to provide students with a more student-friendly environment to learn and progress in life.

KEYWORDS: stress, undergraduate, professional course, prevalence, anxiety

INTRODUCTION:

Stress is defined as the non-specific response of the body by any demand placed upon it by Selye. Modern life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations, and demands. For many people, stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life. The stress which is experienced by students has negative association with their academic performance, personal well-being and long-term professional capabilities. It can lead to distress and it can have a negative impact on their cognitive functioning. Undergraduate students need to cope up with the academic and social demands that they may encounter in university studies in their preparation for professional careers. Therefore, the period of undergraduate education is a sensitive period in an individual's life span. The students from various professional courses feel a great amount of pressure in dealing with academic stress and anxiety. This can occur at different time periods during a semester or years in college, during the transition of the students from school to college life and also from an intermediate to a professional academic status. The stress in undergraduate students has many sources, including academics, personal situations, environment, time management, economic circumstances, self-efficacy beliefs, work load, faculty and administration.

Medical education is perceived as being stressful, with negative effects on the health of the students. Previous studies have shown relatively high levels of distress among medical students, such as symptoms of irritability, sleeping difficulties, anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts. Academic factors are viewed as most stressful and social factors as least stressful.

Dentistry has been widely acknowledged as being associated with high levels of stress. Stressors associated with dentistry include managing uncooperative patients, commercial issues, difficulty in practical procedures, lack of time to complete assigned college work and the highly technical and intensive nature of work. The origins of this stress may also lie in the process of dental education.

Lawyers are one of the most vulnerable professions in terms of dealing with stress and experience some of the highest rates of suicide, addiction and depression. Lawyers are reluctant to seek support, in part borne of the stigma associated with the perception that they are "failing to succeed". In turn this leads to increased stress levels and, left unchecked, impacts negatively on health, on family life on academic performance and work achievements."

Engineering students perceived the workload required in the College, the competition among students, the difficulty of the curriculum, allocation of time, perceived quality of faculty instruction and T instruction and the prevalence of curved grading systems as stressful to the point of detracting from the quality of their educational experience.

This study aimed to analyze the differences and the correlates of perceived stress between the undergraduate students from different courses.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Structured electronic research of articles was carried out on Pubmed using the combination of the following keywords: perceive, recognize, causes, stress, sources, dental students, engineering students, law students, engineering students. Electronic search was supplemented by hand searching through the following articles: Journal of dental education, Journal of the associations of the American medical colleges, Journal of clinical and diagnostic research. The inclusion criteria set for this review were: engineering, dental, law and medical students. Exclusion criteria consisted of students from other courses.

The search yielded 150 articles of which only 40% were identified to be confirmed to the predetermined inclusion criteria and the rest 60% were excluded. Out of this 10 articles were again excluded as different key words led to the same publication. Only 30 articles were selected, out which 20 were full-text articles and 10 were included based on abstract only. These 20 articles formed the basis of my review. Out of these 20 articles the extracted were: law students experience greater amount of stress compared to medical students.

DISCUSSION:

The findings of this study demonstrated that there were differences in the way that students from various professional courses perceived stress. The levels of stress varied between the students of different courses. No difference was in the levels of stress among males and females.

Coburn (1975) reported that for medical students academic factors are viewed as most stressful and social factors as least stressful.

Marilyn Heins (1983) reported that unwarranted stress was placed upon law stress and concomitant lack of concern about students by faculty and administration. The author expressed a definite feeling of frustration and hostility about legal education. The educational process placed unnecessary stress on law students. Nancy.J. Snoopa (2003) reported that law students exhibit a higher level of stress and anxiety than do medical students, and that heightened level continues throughout the law school career. More law students than medical students had considered leaving school. Law students were more likely to cite personal, environmental and relationship categories as stressors.

RatnaSaipanish(2003) reported that among medical students about 61.4% students had some degree of stress. 17 students (2.4%) reported high level of stress. Academic problems were found to be the major cause of stress among all students. The most prevalent source of academic stress was test/exam.

Dr. ShashidarAchariya(2003) reported that the perceived sources and factors affecting stress among students in a private dental school in India are : • Fear of facing parents after failure was found to be the most stressful item among the students. • Stress showed an upward trend from the first to the final year with a jump from the second to the third years. • Males suffered from higher stress than females. •Stress for those whose first choice of admission was dentistry was lower than the other groups. •Those students who joined dentistry due to parental pressure tended to show greater stress.

Lisa Schneider (2004) reported that the potential sources of stress identified as most stressful among engineering students shared a common theme of curricular issues. The top six sources of reported high stress are heavy workload in Engineering courses, high level of rigor of Engineering curriculum, large amounts of time required to get assignments done, not getting enough sleep, competition with classmates for grades, inflexibility of engineering curriculum.

S.M Stewart (2009) reported concerns related to medical school environment and curriculum, and whether one has the endurance and ability to be successful were significant correlates with depression and anxiety. Loss of opportunity to maintain social and recreational sourced of gratification correlated with anxiety. Academically less successful students reported somewhat higher levels of depressive ideation and symptomatology.

Mane Abhay .B (2011) has reported that the levels of stress was higher in the dental students, followed by the law students, medical students and lowest in engineering students.

CONCLUSION:

Dental students have reported a higher level of perceived stress, which was significantly higher than that in students from other professional courses. Robert J and et al reported higher stress in the dental students than in the medical students. They were more likely to cite interpersonal relationships and environmental and academic factors than other students, resulting in high levels of perceived stress. The increased levels of stress among the dental students indicated a decrease in their psychological health and well-being, which could impair the student's behavior, diminish their learning, and, ultimately, affect patient care. The ability to cope with stress for dental students is important because stress can lead to worse mental health and cognitive thinking. These findings emphasize the need for greater attention to the psychological well-being of students in various professions around the world. Stress reduction protocol such as yoga can be implemented as a part of the curriculum. These findings should be further explored in longitudinal studies, and maybe helpful in designing intervention and support programmes for vulnerable students.

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