



A Study on Mental Health and Mental Health Help Seeking Attitude among School and College Students of Andaman and Nicobar Islands

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ABSTRACT

Mental health problems such as depression, which is a kind of losing hope from life that can further lead to suicidal attempts, anxiety, behavioural disturbances due to predictions of future threats and stress which cause mental tension, occurs from the demanding situations can stay with a person over an everlasting period for which schools and colleges can be the production hub for these problems. Stigma to mental health acts as a catalyst for this issue and resists a person to seek mental help. A sample of 30 school students & 30 college students was taken Standardized scales were used to measure depression, stress, anxiety & mental health help seeking attitude stigma. The results suggest that the anxiety is significantly positively correlated with depression, stress and depression are significantly positively correlated with each other and stress is significantly positively correlated with anxiety. No significant correlation of mental health stigma with depression, anxiety or stress is seen. The students who are enrolled in schools are facing more intensity of depression and anxiety as compared to college students. Therefore, it can be theorized that, awareness of mental health problems which is often gained in the college level, causes reduction of stigma, which then results in the minimal growth of mental health diseases. It can be suggested that a proper awareness should be given to every educational and social level.

Keywords: Depression, Anxiety, Mental help stigma, School Students, College Students

Introduction

“Mental health is the adjustment of individuals to themselves and the world at large with a maximum of effectiveness and satisfactions, cheerfulness and socially considerate behaviour and the ability of facing and accepting the realities of life” – White House conference, 1930.

As a student, a maximum number of the population face mental health related crisis, such as depression, anxiety and stress and as an effort to overcome from these problems many also go through a mental help seeking attitude stigma which then cause the mild disorders into an extreme one. Depression is a kind of giving up or losing of hope, it generally occurs when a person experiences a series of setbacks and failures which results of themselves concluding that they cannot control or change the event from the information gained with the present situation and thus, they stop trying to make things better (Morgan et al., 2011). Anxiety, can be generally termed as behavioural disturbances and it occurs due to the prediction of future threats, a simple negative emotion such as fear, can give rise to a high intensity of anxiety that later will take the form of an anxiety disorder. Stress, can be defined as the emotional or physical tension, arises from demanding circumstances that causes frustration, anger or nervousness. Stress causes our body to release hormones that makes the brain more alert and causes our muscles to tense, and increases our pulse. A study on the stress level of school students involving 72 countries had been conducted in which about 540,000 students took part from the age group ranging from 15-16 years, results showed that on an average 66% of students reported feeling stressed about poor grades and 59% of the students showed stress about taking a test (Hetrick & Parker, 2019). Another study to manage depression was conducted among a Canadian University's students, where 2,147 students took part, the result showed that greater stress-management and self-efficiency was associated with low depression scores, the result was age independent (Sawatzky et al., 2012). Another study on the mental help seeking stigma among a random 5,555 university students suggested three results including, perceived public stigma was higher than personal stigma, personal stigma was higher in male and stigma was significantly negatively correlated with mental help seeking, such as, meditation and therapy (Downs et al., 2009).

Depression

According to the Pruthi et al. (2018), “Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest. Also called major depressive disorder or clinical depression, it affects how you feel, think and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems.” Chand & Arif (2022) defined depression as, “Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest.”

A study conducted by Motley & Hovey (2009), on the depression, anxiety and student's religiosity showed that the participants who were attending religious services were negatively correlated with anxiety and depression. Another study was conducted to measure the depression level among the final year nursing students, the result showed that among the 88 participants, 69.8% had no depression, some had dysphoria and some was affected with a

moderate depression and 5.7% was severely depressed (Moreira & Furegato, 2013). A similar study was also done in Saudi Arabia among the medical students where the results showed that among 288 male and 105 female students, the depression rate was 44.4% and 66.6% respectively (Inam, 2007)

Anxiety

According to O'Neill & Sorochan (2014) "Anxiety is an uncontrollable, diffuse, unpleasant, and persistent state of negative affect, characterized by apprehensive anticipation regarding unpredictable and unavoidable future danger, and accompanied by physiological symptoms of tension and a constant state of heightened vigilance." Another definition by Foa et al. (2005) states anxiety as, "Anxiety refers to multiple mental and physiological phenomena, including a person's conscious state of worry over a future unwanted event, or fear of an actual situation. Anxiety and fear are closely related."

A research was conducted among second year medicine students (n=262) where researchers studied the anxiety level of the students before 2 exams, the findings showed a different level of anxiety in different subject's exams the result showed a positive correlation between the importance attributed to the exam and the associated anxiety (de Pablo et al., 1990). Another study was conducted among the college students to measure the anxiety, in the study a total number of 246 participants took part, the result showed that, there was no significant interaction effect and no significant effect for gender, the results also showed that the older students were suffering more from anxiety than the younger students (Baloglu, 2002).

Stress

Selye (1936) defined stress as "non-specific responses that be resulted from a variety of different kinds of stimuli." Other definition by Selye (2010) states that "Stress is the nonspecific response of the body to any demand."

A relative exploration was conducted, the study concentrated on the examination of stress intensity between the engineering, medical and the nursing scholars, the results showed that, the nursing scholars wasn't suffering much from stress still, the medical and engineering scholars were enjoying the stress position that needed clinical attention (Behere et al. 2011). Another study showed that due to stress an adding number of children were passing habitual health issues that were also affecting their academic performance, behavioural functioning and their physical well- being (Riccio et al. 2016). Another study between the children and the youth was conducted to check the stress intensity, the results showed that the presence of stress in children than of the grown-ups (Matheny et al. 1993).

Mental Help Seeking Stigma

According to Ahmedani (2011) "Mental health stigma operates in society, is internalized by individuals, and is attributed by health professionals. This ethics-laden issue acts as a barrier to individuals who may seek or engage in treatment services. The dimensions, theory, and epistemology of mental health stigma have several implications for the social work profession."

Stangl et al. (2019) defined Mental help seeking stigma as "Stigma is a well-documented barrier to health seeking behaviour, engagement in care and adherence to treatment across a range of health conditions globally."

A study was done to see the factors that influence mental health stigma among the 57th grade adolescents, the result showed that the adolescents showed a positive mental health attitude who were exposed to mental health services and the knowledge about mental health problems (Chandra & Minkovitz, 2006). Another study was conducted on the association of school climate and mental health stigma among high school students, the results showed that the positive school climate was negatively correlated with stigma (Townsend et al., 2017). A similar study had been conducted to measure the stigma between the young people and the service providers in a school-based environment, in this study 49 young people and 63 service providers took part, the result showed that a greater proportion of young people versus the service providers reported stigma as a barrier for accessing mental health services (Bowers et al., 2012).

Purpose

The purpose is to study school students & college students mental health problems including, depression, anxiety and stress and mental health help seeking attitude.

Hypothesis

There will be a significant positive correlation between anxiety & depression.

There will be a significant positive correlation between anxiety & stress.

There will be no significant relation of mental health seeking stigma with depression, anxiety & stress.

College students will be higher in anxiety, depression, stress & mental health seeking stigma as compared to school students.

Method

Sample

Total 60 participants participated in the research from across the colleges and schools of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, in which 30 were college students and 30 were enrolled in schools. The age group varied from 16-18 years for the most of the school students where the other group i.e. college students have fallen under the age group of 19-25 years.

Measures

- **DASS-21:** Depression, Anxiety & Stress Scale (DASS-21) was proposed by Lovibond & Lovibond (1995), the scale consists a total of 21 items which are further divided as, 7 items for depression, 7 items for anxiety and the remaining 7 items for stress, each item is rated on a 4 point Likert scale containing the dimensions of “Did not apply to me at all”, “Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time”, “Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time” and “Applied to me very much or most of the time”. This scale is used to measure the intensity level of Depression, Anxiety and Stress.
- **MHSAS:** Mental Help Seeking Attitude Scale (MHSAS) (Hammer et al., 2018), the scale includes 9 items in which each is rated on a 7 points Likert scale.

Procedures

Standardized psychological tests were administered to the participants. All the participant’s responses to the questionnaires are recorded with the help of google forms. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of the information that they will provide, to receive their honest responses without any fear.

Analysis of Data

Results:

Table 1: Showing N (number of participants), MEAN and STANDARD DEVIATION

	College Student/ School Student	Depression	Anxiety	Stress	Stigma
N	COLLEGE STUDENT	30	30	30	30
	SCHOOL STUDENT	30	30	30	30
Mean	COLLEGE STUDENT	12.6	10.6	12.0	5.21
	SCHOOL STUDENT	18.0	16.0	16.0	5.15
Standard deviation	COLLEGE STUDENT	8.99	5.59	5.46	1.03
	SCHOOL STUDENT	10.7	9.60	9.53	1.11

TABLE 2 : Showing correlation of all the variables

	Depression	Anxiety	Stress	Stigma
Depression	—			
Anxiety	0.630 ***	—		
Stress	0.763 ***	0.742 ***	—	
Stigma	-0.131	-0.050	-0.133	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

TABLE 3: - T-Statistics of group

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	T-Stats
Depression	COLLEGE STUDENT	30	12.60	13.00	8.99	-2.119
	SCHOOL STUDENT	30	18.00	17.00	10.67	
Anxiety	COLLEGE STUDENT	30	10.60	10.00	5.59	-2.663
	SCHOOL STUDENT	30	16.00	15.00	9.60	
Stress	COLLEGE STUDENT	30	12.00	12.00	5.46	-1.995
	SCHOOL STUDENT	30	16.00	16.00	9.53	
Stigma	COLLEGE STUDENT	30	5.21	4.82	1.03	0.239
	SCHOOL STUDENT	30	5.15	5.33	1.11	

Discussion of the result

The results found out that the anxiety is significantly positively correlated with depression ($r = 0.630$, $p < .001$), similarly stress and depression are also significantly positively correlated with each other ($r = 0.763$, $p < .001$) and stress is significantly positively correlated with anxiety ($r = 0.742$, $p < .001$). However, results also suggest that there is no significant correlation of mental health stigma with depression, anxiety or stress.

Further, the results also show that the school students are higher on depression ($t=2.11$) and anxiety ($t=2.66$) as compared to college students, however no comparison is found between the stress or the stigma level of both the groups.

A study has been conducted among 800 students of the age group 12-18 years from 10 public schools in Amman, according to the findings overall 42.1% and 73.8% of the students were experiencing anxiety and depression (Malak & Khalifeh, 2017). Another study on depression and previous suicide attempts among 2300 Swedish high school student ranging from the age group 16-17 years showed that depression lasting for at least 1 year was the most common type (Olsson & Knorrning, 2007).

Another study on college students about depression and suicide attempts indicated that 53% of the participants responded that they had experienced depression since the beginning of the college and the 9% of the samples considered committing suicide since the same period (Furr et al., 2001).

Conclusion

The current study focused on the intensity of depression, anxiety, stress and the stigma towards seeking of mental help, between the students who are enrolled in colleges and schools, the samples ranged from the age group of 16-18 years and 19-25 years for school and college students respectively. To collect the data, standardized scales, DASS21, containing 21 items for depression, anxiety and stress, and Mental Help Seeking Attitude Scale containing 9 items was used. The result showed some significantly positive correlation between, anxiety and depression, stress and depression and stress and anxiety. Thus, growth or reduction in anyone of this will cause the same effect on the other correlated variable. However, no significant correlation is found between the mental help seeking stigma and depression, anxiety or stress. The result also showed that school students are higher on the intensity of depression and anxiety however no significance comparison between the stress level of both the groups was measured.

The data signifies the importance of low-level stigma towards mental help seeking, as for the school students the stigma level towards mental help seeking was higher than the college students. One reason can be the awareness about the mental health problems which is often received after enrolling in the colleges. Thus, the minor level students should be enlightened about the reality of mental health related problems so that a reduction in the intensity of depression, anxiety or stress can be measured in the students which will eventually become the world's future.

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