Short Communication

A Study to Assess the Level of Depression Among College Students, Sir Issac Newton College of Nursing, Pappakovil, Nagapattinam.

[1] J. Matharasi, [2] Sabitha. M, [2] Sagunthala, [2] Sangavi. G, [2] Senthamil selvi. S,

[2] Sivaranjani. A, [2] Sivasangari. K, [2] Sneka. R

[1] Lecturer department of child health Nursing, Sir Issac Newton College of Nursing, Nagapattinam

[2] B.Sc (Nursing), Sir Issac Newton College of Nursing, Nagapattinam.

Correspondence:

Mrs. J. Matharasi, Ms. Sabitha. M, Ms. Sagunthala, Ms. Sangavi. G, Ms. Senthamil selvi. S, Ms. Sivaranjani. A, Ms.Sivasangari.K, Ms. Sneka. R

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Depression among college students has emerged as a significant public health concern, particularly in the context of a rapidly changing educational and social environment.

Aim: The main aim of the study to assess depression levels among nursing students.

Methodology: A purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 students who met the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for participation were: final-year nursing students, those who had consented to participate, and students who had a basic understanding of menopause. Students who were not in their final year, lacked sufficient knowledge regarding menopause, or did not give their consent were excluded.

Results: The study revealed that the majority of students, 49 (81.7%), exhibited a moderate level of depression, while 11 (18.3%) students showed a mild level of depression.

Conclusion: The study concluded that the majority of nursing students experienced a moderate level of depression. These findings highlight a concerning trend in student mental health, indicating a need for timely support and intervention.

Keywords: Awareness, Public, Prevention, Tobacco.

INTRODUCTION

Depression among college students has emerged as a significant public health concern, particularly in the context of a rapidly changing educational and social environment. Research indicates that the prevalence of depressive symptoms among college students is alarmingly high, often exacerbated by various stressors associated with academic life and social expectations. Research shows that the prevalence of mild to severe depressive symptoms among Chinese college students ranges from 13.25% to as high as 79.90% (Yao et al., 2024), reflecting a significant mental health crisis within this demographic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the mental health of students has been substantially threatened due to various factors, including increased academic pressure and social isolation. A study revealed that 44% of college students in the United States experienced heightened levels of depressive thoughts, with 8% contemplating suicide during this period, which is notably higher than the 3%-7% typically reported pre-pandemic (Son et al., 2020). This exacerbation has been influenced by students' perceptions of threats posed by the pandemic, compounded by fear and anxiety over academic performance and job prospects post-graduation (Arbués et al., 2020).

Additionally, there is a notable association between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the prevalence of depressive symptoms in college students. Those exposed to multiple and severe ACEs tend to exhibit higher incidences of depression as they transition into adulthood and face the demands of college life (Yin et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2020). The cumulative effect of these experiences appears to be critical, as students manage academic pressures alongside personal histories that may predispose them to mental health challenges.

The psychological impacts of the pandemic have also been mirrored in systematic reviews that show an overall prevalence of depressive symptoms of approximately 33% among college students, with specific studies indicating rates as high as 37% during the height of the pandemic (Li et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023). Factors influencing these rates include lifestyle choices, social support networks, and socioeconomic status, which collectively play a significant role in the mental well-being of students (Li et al., 2021; Cheng et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the mental health landscape for college students is continually evolving, with the necessity for intervention strategies becoming increasingly urgent. Current research underscores the importance of identifying effective support systems and mental health resources to mitigate the adverse effects observed among students, especially those suffering from food insecurity and other stressors that exacerbate mental health issues (Martinez et al., 2018).

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative, evaluative approach with a descriptive research design was employed. Using non-probability convenience sampling, 60 female students who met the inclusion criteria and were present during data collection were selected. Data were gathered through a self-administered questionnaire. Content validity was ensured through expert review and necessary revisions. Institutional permission and informed consent were obtained prior to data collection, which took approximately 30 minutes per participant. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) to assess depression levels among participants.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the distribution of demographic variables among the 60 nursing students who participated in the study. The majority of students (63.3%) were aged between 18–19 years, followed by 28.3% in the 20–21 years age group. Only 6.7% were between 17–18 years, and a minimal 1.7% were in the 21–22 years range. All participants were female, accounting for 100% of the sample. In terms of religion, the majority identified as Hindu (96.6%), while a small proportion were Christian (1.7%). All students were in their second year of study (100%) and reported having a private support system (100%). Regarding age at admission, most students (88.3%) were admitted at 18–19 years, while 11.7% were admitted at 19–20 years. A near-even split was observed for past history of depression, with 46.7% reporting a history of depression and 53.3% indicating no such history.

Table 2 illustrates that a significant majority (81.7%) of the students experienced a moderate level of depression, while 18.3% showed mild levels. The mean score of depression was 17.68 with a standard deviation of 4.18, indicating that while most students experienced moderate symptoms, there was some variation in individual responses.

Table 3 shows that there is no significant association was found between depression levels and age (χ^2 = 0.34, df = 3, p = 0.95), religion (χ^2 = 0.49, df = 2, p = 0.79), or past history of depression (χ^2 = 2.03, df = 1, p = 0.15). The variables of gender, year of study, and support system were constant and therefore not analyzed for statistical association. Notably, a statistically significant association was observed between age at admission and level of depression (χ^2 = 3.18, df = 1, p = 0.044), suggesting that the age at which students began their course may influence their experience of depressive symptoms.

Table 1: Distribution of demographic variables among students. N= 60

S.NO	DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Age (in year)		
	17-18 yrs	4	6.7
	18-19 yrs	38	63.3
	20-21 yrs	17	28.3
	21-22 yrs	1	1.7
2	Gender		
	Female	60	100
3	Religion		
	Hindu	58	96.6
	Christian	1	1.7
4	Year's of study		
	2nd years	60	100
5	Support system		
	Private	60	100
6	Age at admission		

	18-19 years	53	88.3
	19-20 years	7	11.7
7	Past history of depression		
	Yes	28	46.7
	No	32	53.3

Table 2: Distribution of level of depression among students. N= 60

Knowledge	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Mild	11	18.3
Moderate	49	81.7
Mean $\pm$ SD	17.68 $\pm$ 4.18	

Table 3: Association between the level of depression and selected demographic variables.

S.NO	Demographic Variable	Chi-Square Test Result	Significance
1	Age (in years)	$\chi^2 = 0.34$, df $= 3$, p $= 0.95$	NS
2	Gender	Constant	–
3	Religion	$\chi^2 = 0.49$, df $= 2$, p $= 0.79$	NS
4	Years of Study	Constant	–
5	Support System	Constant	–
6	Age at Admission	$\chi^2 = 3.18$, df $= 1$, p $= 0.044$	**S**
7	Past History of Depression	$\chi^2 = 2.03$, df $= 1$, p $= 0.15$	NS

DISCUSSION

The reported findings indicating that 81.7% of students exhibited moderate depression and 18.3% mild depression, with a mean score of 17.68 ± 4.18, align with a broader understanding of depressive symptoms among college students. Such substantial prevalence rates resonate with findings from various studies on mental health within academic settings.

A systematic review by Rotenstein et al. discusses the prevalence of depressive symptoms among medical students, highlighting that a significant portion of the medical student population experiences moderate to severe depressive symptoms, reflecting the high-stress environment typical of medical education Rotenstein et al. (2016). While this study focuses on medical students, it underscores a trend that is often observed across various educational disciplines.

Further supporting this, Grasdalsmoen et al. found a strong correlation between physical activity levels and mental health, revealing that university students who were less active reported significantly higher levels of depression (Grasdalsmoen et al., 2020). This suggests that students with low engagement in physical

activities might be more vulnerable to depressive symptoms, a factor that may intersect with age differences in student populations.

Moreover, the study by Islam et al. during the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the psychological strain faced by university students, reinforcing the notion that external pressures can intensify depressive symptoms (Islam et al., 2020). The findings demonstrated that the pandemic significantly impacted students' mental health, emphasizing a rise in depression levels under stressful circumstances similar to those affecting the population in the current study.

Additionally, the demographic analysis revealing a significant association between age at admission and depression levels, but not with other factors like religion or past history of depression, suggests that age may play a critical role in different coping mechanisms and stress management strategies among students.

As described by Kim et al., younger students might experience depression differently due to various factors including their developmental stage and life transitions, which could explain the variation in vulnerability related to admission age (Kim et al., 2015).

The findings about depression among college students align with existing literature, which consistently highlights high prevalence rates and various contributing factors. The significant association with age and the lack of correlation with other demographic variables further contribute to our understanding of the mental health landscape in academic settings.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that students had moderate depression. It is understood that the level of depression was moderate. The study also recommended that counselling should be given to the students. College should have counsellor to help out from the depression.53.3% of students moderate, 4.7% of students mild depression. 49(81.7%) had moderate level of depression ad 11(18.3%) had new level of depression.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

No conflicts of Interest.

RECOMMENDATION:

- A similar study can be conducted by using quantity approach.
- A sample study can be replicated among students indifference setting.
- A comparative study can be performed in different department students.

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