

Prevalence of Anxiety in University Students During the COVID Pandemic -19

Jonida Mustafaraj, University of Elbasan "Aleksandër Xhuvani", Albania

The Barcelona Conference on Education 2022
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (WHO). University students are prone to experience anxiety during their years of study due to academic the student's experiences of insecurity, fear and anxiety. The purpose of this study was to assess the prevalence of anxiety among college students during the COVID-19 pandemic, to assess the risk for mental health problems, and to identify forms of coping and counseling for future anxiety. Quantitative method for data collection was used to conduct the study. Two inventories were used: DASS-21 and Coronavirus Anxiety Rate, in order to view data on stress and depression and specific experiences of the COVID -19 pandemic. The study included 364 students of Physiotherapy, Logopedia and professional master, of the Faculty of Medical Technical Sciences, University of Elbasan "Aleksandër Xhuvani", in January 2021. In the group of selected students, the prevalence of anxiety, depression, the stress and anxiety experienced by COVID -19 was 35.5% of students had high level of anxiety, 30% had moderate level and 30.5% had mild level. From the data 14% of the students included in the study had sought help from a doctor, psychologist or pharmacist for the experienced state of anxiety. The results showed a significant level of anxiety experience experienced by university students. There was also an increase in anxiety experiences when a family member was affected by COVID-19 or other illness. It is recommended to research in future studies other variables such as the impact of gender, the impact on academic performance and to provide various information on ways to relax and manage anxiety.

Keywords: Anxiety, Prevalence, Pandemic, COVID -19, Student

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most individuals infected with the virus will have mild to moderate respiratory disease and will recover without the need for special treatment (WHO).

American Psychological Association APA defines anxiety as a characteristic emotion strengthening the activity of the autonomous system, especially tension, increased heart rate, subjective feelings of tension, concern for physical change (Alan E. Kazdin, PhD, 2009).

University students are prone to experience anxiety during their years of study due to academic overload, results and graduation. The end of the pandemic and the shift from classrooms to online classes added to the uncertainty, fear of the unknown and anxiety of students.

This was a new interactive experience for students and professors alike. The perception and reception of information have become a challenge because of the problems and uncertainties involved. The transition to university is coincident with the peak period of onset of mental illness. The most common symptoms include anxiety and depression.

In this study, at a theoretical level, information is presented on anxiety, the COVID-19 pandemic, the experience of anxiety for university students, and research studies supporting the study.

Literature review

When the pandemic actually arrives, anxiety and fear become even greater. For example, in the early stages of the 2009 swine flu pandemic, 24% of respondents in a U.K. community reported significant anxiety about the pandemic outbreak (Rubin, AmI6t, Page, & Wessely, 2009). In a survey of U.S. college students in the early stages of the same pandemic, most (83%) reported at least some level of fear of contagion (Kanadiya & Sallar, 2011). Some people develop excessive fears of death and disability, while others fear being shunned by others if they become ill (Cheng, Wong, Tsang, & Wong, 2004). Some people may become so anxious that they experience clinically significant levels of distress, avoidance, and functional impairment, such that they require treatment for their emotional disorder (Wheaton et a., 2012).

Stress is the physiological or psychological response to internal or external stressors.

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID -19) is a respiratory infection caused by an emerging coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, first detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. Genetic sequencing of the virus suggests that SARS-CoV-2 is a beta coronavirus closely related to the SARS virus.

Pandemic influenza is one of the greatest health threats currently facing the world (World Health Organization (WHO), 2019). Increasing antimicrobial resistance and the emergence of new, highly pathogenic viral strains have fueled fears of another global infectious disease outbreak (Nerlich & Halliday, 2007).

Host resistance to infection depends on several factors, including immunocompetence and psychological factors that influence how the host copes with or responds to a threat or actual infection. Environmental factors are numerous and multifaceted, including factors that promote or hinder host coping strategies.

The COVID -19 pandemic affected more than 90% of the world's students in the spring of 2020 and triggered an urgent shift to distance learning, which required transition and flexibility. Not knowing when protective measures would end required planning for a possible return to the classroom (Hollweck & Doucet, 2020). Similar measures to those taken during the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic were taken when college semesters were canceled, with schools internationally switching to an online modality in the spring of 2020 (Trilla et al., 2008). With the invention of the Internet and the increasing popularity of online courses, higher education could now continue in a modified form to sustain student learning.

For countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany, and Australia, this meant that they shifted to teaching and learning at a distance, while funding constraints, lack of technology, and limited connectivity meant that HE institutions in countries such as Egypt, Brazil, Albania, and India struggled to adapt (Crawford et al., 2020).

Prevalence of Anxiety in University Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review. This study evaluated the prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms among students from China, France, UK , Saudi Arabia and Albania during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Study from the Chinese University. Subgroup analyses revealed that Chinese middle school students were at a heightened risk of anxiety, while university students were at a heightened risk of depression. Students who lived in higher-risk areas presented severe anxiety and depression, especially during the late period of the COVID-19 epidemic (Yaoyao Zhang, Xiuqin Bao, Jiabin Yan, Hualing Miao, Cheng Guo.Zhang, Bao, Yan, Miao and Guo. 2021).

Study from the French University. A total of 69 054 students completed the survey. The results of this survey study suggest a high prevalence of mental health issues among students who experienced quarantine, underlining the need to reinforce prevention, surveillance, and access to care (Marielle Wathelet, Stéphane Duhem , Guillaume Vaiva , Thierry Baubet, Enguerrand Habran, Emilie Veerapa, Christophe Debien, Sylvie Molenda, Mathilde Horn, Pierre Grandgenèvre ,Charles-Edouard Notredame,Fabien D'Hondt 2020).

Study from the US University.Among the 2031 participants. The proportion of respondents showing depression, anxiety, and/or suicidal thoughts is alarming. Respondents reported academic-, health-, and lifestyle-related concerns caused by the pandemic. Given the unexpected length and severity of the outbreak, these concerns need to be further understood and addressed (Xiaomei Wang, Sudeep Hegde, Changwon Son, Bruce Keller, Alec Smith, Farzan Sasangohar-2020).

Study from the Saudi Arabia University.The study included 936 university students. Symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress were common among Saudi university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Psychological counseling and support should be provided to university students in Saudi Arabia (Zeinab Mohammed, Ahmed Arafa, El-Sayed Atlam, Nader El-Qerafi, Momen El-Shazly, Omar Al-Hazazi, Ashraf Ewis.2020).

Methodology

The aim is to demonstrate the prevalence of anxiety, stress, and depression among students at the University of Technical Medicine.

Object

- This study aims to analyze anxiety, stress, and depression prevalence in men and women.
- This study compares the bachelor's degrees in speech therapy and physiotherapy.
- This study compares the professional master in speech therapy and physiotherapy.
- We are analyzing the data collected during bachelor's and professional master's degrees in speech therapy.
- Analysis of data collected during Bachelor's and Professional Master's studies in Physiotherapy.
- In order to determine the degree of stress, anxiety, and depression based on the opinions of mental health professionals.

Hypothesis: Anxiety, stress, and depression among university students have increased in response to the COVID -19 pandemic.

This study used a quantitative approach to data collection. After obtaining this quantitative information, two inventories were employed: DASS-21 and Coronavirus Anxiety Rate.

The DASS-21 is the short form of the DASS-42, a self-report scale designed to measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety, and stress. There are three DASS-21 rating scales, the third indicating the highest level of anxiety, stress and depression (Lovibond, S.H. & Lovibond, P.F. (1995).

In the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by a massive 25%, according to a scientific brief released by the World Health Organization (WHO 2022) today.

The manner, of collecting data depends on the statistical package SPSS version-21. These surveys were used to obtain general and accurate information on levels of stress and depression, as well as specific experiences during COVID-19.

This research allows us to measure the level of anxiety and stress experienced by our University's students.

We included N=364 students in Physiotherapy, Speech Pathology (Logopedy), undergraduate and professional master, from the Faculty of Technical Medical Sciences, Elbasan University "Aleksandër Xhuvani", in January 2021.

The following data are detailed and presented concretely in relation to the number of students taken as a study sample.

Conclusion

The selected sample was selected based on probability during this stage of the study. N=120 physiotherapy students participated in the study, consisting of N=39 women and N=81

Males, and N=100 speech pathology students, N=17 Males and N=83 Females. We also counted N=77 master's students in Professional Master at Physiotherapy in N=18 Females and N=59 Males and N=53 Females and N=17 Males in Professional Master at Speech pathology.

Physiotherapy Bachelor	120 (39 Females /81 Males)
Speech therapy (Logopedics) Bachelor	100 (83 Females /17 Males)
Physiotherapy Professional Master	77(18 Females /59 Males)
Speech therapy (Logopedics) Professional Master	70 (51 Females /19Males)
Total	364 (191 Females /173 Males)

Tab.1 Total Sampling Table

Among the selected group of N=364 students, the prevalence of depression, stress and anxiety related to COVID-19 was 35.5% among students with elevated levels of anxiety. 30% were moderate whereas 30.5% were mild.

		Anxiety, Stress and Depression		
		Anxiety	Stress	Depression
Bachelor	Logopedics	Overhead	Overhead	Overhead
	Physiotherapy	Overhead	Overhead	Overhead
Professional Master	Logopedics	Overhead	Moderate	Moderate
	Physiotherapy	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Tab. 2 The level of anxiety, stress, and depression among university students.

Disaggregated by gender, females have a higher prevalence of anxiety, stress, and depression than males. This report is broken down into percentages, where 72.4% of women had high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. 48.2% moderately and only 12.9% low.

Under such conditions, the stress levels of men were low. There are only 40.1% of people with a high-stress level, 65.6% with a medium stress level, and only 9.3% with a low-stress level, according to statistics.

Based on the observed statistics, we can see that 14.0% of students sought specialist assistance.

Statistical data collected from Bachelor's and Professional Master's degree students show us this information. Students in Logoedics Bachelor's programs show a prevalence of 65.3%, while students in Logopedics Professional Master show a prevalence of 42.4%. The fact is clear that among Logopedics Bachelor students we have a higher percentage of stress, depression, and anxiety.

Another objective of ours is the comparison between Bachelor's and Professional Master's students of the physiotherapy department. The conclusions tell us that 58.7% of Bachelor's students have a high prevalence of anxiety, stress, and depression, although this follows by a lower percentage of 41.9% of professional master's students.

		Anxiety, Stress and Depression					
		Anxiety		Stress		Depression	
		Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Bachelor	Logopedics	Overhead	Overhead	Overhead	Overhead	Overhead	Overhead
	Physiotherapy	Overhead	Overhead	Overhead	Overhead	Overhead	Overhead
Professional Master	Logopedics	Overhead	Overhead	Overhead	Moderate	Overhead	Moderate
	Physiotherapy	Overhead	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Tab.3 Gender distribution of university students by branch.

The other information presented by us is the commission comparison between Bachelor's students in the department of Logopedics and Physiotherapy. Depending on whether the obtained statistics, these data are shown to us. Anxiety, stress, and depression are prevalent among 63.2% of Bachelor level Logopedics students, while these mental health issues are prevalent among 50.6% of Bachelor level Physiotherapy students. There is a low level of anxiety, depression, and stress in the Professional Master of Physiotherapy and Logopedics in comparison to the Bachelor. Logopedic students have a high prevalence of 45.3%, whereas students in Physiotherapy courses have a ratio of 38.7%.

The prevalence of condensation of the definition in our studies is completely climbing with the hypothesis we assume for this study. The prevalence assumed by us for the intention of our study is wholly consistent with the hypothesis we assume for this study.

According to the content obtained from the objective tests among the students of the University of Technical Medical Sciences in the department of Logopedics and Physiotherapy, where 30.5% of the students show a high level of and 30% of them a moderate level of mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and stress.

Discussion

In our study, there were a total of N=364 students purposefully surveyed. Principally in the department of Speech Language Pathology (Logopedics) and Physiotherapy Bachelor and professional master.

The global COVID-19 pandemic affects not only students, but also parents, teachers and educators in many different ways. What we learned from that study was that the scores or the difficulties in adapting to technology were not the most significant. Our main focus is on their social life, their mental health, and their emotional well-being. There are some drawbacks in these students, who have been touched by the same intensity that men and women have experienced.

Fragmented by gender, females have a higher prevalence of anxiety, stress, and depression than males. This report is severed down into percentages, where 72.4% of the females had strong levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. 48.2% reasonably and only 12.9% low.

Under such a situation, the stress levels of men were lower. There are only 40.1% of people with a high-stress level, 65.6% with a medium stress level, and only 9.3% with a low-stress level, according to statistics.

Gender is one of many factors that has a greater impact on the prevalence of anxiety and stress. women show a higher prevalence of stress and anxiety than men.

As determined by the ascertained statistics, we can see that 14.0% of students demanded specialization support.

Among the reasons for this low percentage are mentality, lack of information, and problems with social-cultural norms. Information deliberately gathered from these students, we found that 14% of those students in all asked for help from mental health specialists, such as psychologists, pharmacists, or psychiatrists. The remainder of the students interviewed confirmed that they use other solutions such as swimming, fitness, or reading to overcome this challenging mental state.

Higher stress prevalence has been observed among Bachelor students than among Professional Master students. The factors that affected this consequence were maturity, work experience, and the transformation in stage from high school to university.

Another visible change noted is the heightened prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression among Speech-Language Pathology (Logopedics) students.

This enhanced percentage is registered in the Bachelor as well as in the Master Professional. This finding is evident to us because branches, like Physiotherapy, have a superior number of male students commensurate to women. However, the opposite is happening in the field of speech therapy, where the number of women is higher than that of men.

Even students have lost their own empathy, have shown problems with malnutrition, and inactivity, and dramatically change their daily routines.

As a result of data analysis based on relevant literature and a series of studies (Yaoyao Zhang, Xiuqin Bao, Jiabin Yan, etc. 2021) (Marielle Wathélet, Stéphane Duhem, Guillaume Vaiva, Thierry Barbet, etc. 2020) (Xiaomei Wang, Sudeep Hegde, Changwon Son 2020) and (Zeinab Mohammed, Ahmed Arafa, El-Sayed Atlam, etc. 2020), demonstration us that the notch, of anxiety, depression, and stress in University Students is comparatively very elevated. A similar set of results is presented in our study, which is in agreement with our hypothesis.

Recommendation

The results of this study demonstrate that: University students appear to have a high prevalence of anxiety, indicating an increase in the burden of mental health during this pandemic.

These results in our opinion were expected. Because factors such as age, the social-cultural conditions of our country, and the lack of detailed information about the situation we were in directly affected these results.

Taking into account the research conducted in different parts of the world. We can say that the COVID-19 situation affected all students in the same way, regardless of culture, religion, or cultural development.

It is recommended to research in future studies other variables such as the impact of gender, the impact on academic performance and to provide various information on ways to relax and manage anxiety.

At the end of the entire study, we concluded that college students are one of the age groups most affected by mental health problems such as anxiety, depression or other mental illnesses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

References

- Alan E. Kazdin, PhD, Editor-in-Chief: Encyclopedia of Psychology: APA Reference Books Collection: Anxiety page 209.
- Chan R.Y, Bista K and Allen R.M: Online teaching and Learning in higher Education during Covid-19, International Perspective and Experience: First published 2022 by Routledge. and professionalism. Journal of Professional Capacity and Community, 5(3/4), 295–305.
- Ghebreyesus T.A, The COVID-19 pandemic triggers a 25% increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide. 2 March 2022: COVID-19 pandemic triggers 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide (who.int).
- Hollweck, T., & Doucet, A. (2020). Pracademics in the pandemic: Pedagogies.
- Lovibond, S.H. & Lovibond, P.F. (1995). DASS-21: Manual for the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (2nd. Ed.). Sydney: Psychology Foundation.
- Mohammed Z . Arafa A, Atlam ES, El-Qerafi N, El-Shazly M, Al-Hazazi O, Ewis A: Psychological problems among the university students in Saudi Arabia during the COVID-19 pandemic; Int J Clin Pract. 2021 Nov 21 75(11): e14853. Published online 2021 Sep 20. doi: 10.1111/ijcp.14853
- Taylor S. The psychology of pandemics: Preparing for the next global outbreak of infectious disease: Cambridge Scholars Publishing; 2019, chapter 3 page 24 and chapter 1 page 1.
- Trilla, A., Trilla, G., & Daer, C. (2008). The 1918 “Spanish Flu” in Spain. Clinical Infectious Diseases, 47(15), 668–673.
- Vanden Bos G.R, PhD Editor in Chief APA-Dictionary of Psychology (second Edition): Washington, Dc 2015, page 1053.
- Wang X, Hegde S, Son Ch, Keller B, Smith A , Sasangohar F: Investigating College Students’ Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Online Survey Study: Cross-Sectional Survey Study J Med Internet Res 2020;22(9):e22817 doi: 10.2196/22817 PMID: 32897868 PMCID: 7505693
- Wathelet M, Duhem S, Vaiva G, Baubet T, Habran E, Veerapa E , Debien Ch , Molenda S, Horn M, Grandgenèvre P , Notredame Ch E, D’Hondt F: Factors Associated With Mental Health Disorders Among University Students in France Confined During the COVID-19 Pandemic: October 23, 2020: JAMA Netw Open. 2020; 3(10):e2025591. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.25591
- Zhang Y, Bao X, Yan J, Miao H, Guo Ch: Anxiety and Depression in Chinese Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Meta-Analysis: Front. Public Health, 17 August 2021; Sec. Public Mental Health: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.697642>