

Online Classes during COVID-19 Pandemic: Anxiety, Stress & Depression among University Students

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Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic has not only put people at risk of developing physical illness but also face mental distress. This pandemic disease is impacting almost every sector of economy as well as Indian education sector that includes school, colleges and institutes. As everything is virtual with no physical movement most of the mental health illnesses were triggered rapidly such as Depression, Anxiety and Stress. A cross-sectional descriptive study design was done to assess the level of Depression, Anxiety and Stress in grad students who were undergoing online classes and the population for research study was all students studying in bachelors' program of universities. The sample size was 159 students and the tool used for the research study was DASS 21. The researcher concluded that majority of students experienced moderate Depression 27(16.98%), Anxiety 27 (16.98%) and stress 23 (14.46%) due to online classes.

Keywords: Online classes, COVID- 19 Pandemic, Depression, Anxiety, Stress.

Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic has not only put people at risk of developing physical illness but also face mental distress.¹ Due to current COVID- 19 pandemic, life of the people had taken upside down. It has made a huge change in daily routine, life style, eating habits and sleeping pattern of everyone. The new normal in education world is learning from home with minimal physical stimulation.²

The students are under the constant fear of contracting the virus or losing their loved ones due to this deadly virus. The fear of this pandemic disease is increasing day by day which leads to harmful effects both at the individual level and societal level.³

To combat with COVID-19 a stress management guide, "Doing what matter in time Stress "is given by WHO. This kit contains self-help technique to combat stress. Many states and educational institutions are coming up with tele counseling for mental health services. Still increased cases of Depression, Anxiety and Stress are being reported from various part of the world. Deterioration in mental health may lead to other

life-threatening diseases.⁴

COVID- 19 is impacting almost every sector of economy as well as Indian education sector that includes school, colleges and institutes. As everything is virtual with no physical movement and academic stress have led to many most of the mental health disorders. Almost every work is put on hold due to this pandemic disease.⁵ The large scale industries were closed which drastically affect the economy and all the institutions were closed due to which students all over the world were worried regarding examinations, their future. The teachers are trying their level best to teach students as online classes were conducted on regular basis for the students.⁶ These online classes lead to various psychological consequences in students.⁷

To assess these psychological consequences, a study was conducted using a standardized tool DASS 21 which was developed by Lovibond and Lovibond.⁸ This tool consists of 21 questions to assess Depression, Anxiety and Stress.⁹ The symptoms of depression are characterized by low self esteem, hopelessness, lack of positive attitude, lack of interest in life, social isolation, sadness, insomnia, feeling of guilt and disturbed

concentration.¹⁰ Anxiety usually occurs with depression. It is a state of fear, apprehension, subjective feeling of anxious affect with autonomic arousal and skeletal muscle tension.¹¹ Stress is a feeling of emotional, physical tension. The person also experiences irritability, restlessness, impatience.¹²

As there is a complete change in education system, family dynamics and the social life during lockdown students are experiencing various psychological problems.¹³ So the prevalence of Depression, anxiety and stress is more among students.¹⁴ The various demographic variables also have great impact on Depression, anxiety and stress level of students.¹⁵ Therefore, the researcher conducted a cross sectional study with the aim to find stress, anxiety and depression in university students who are attended classes online. Also, association between demographic variables and presence of mental health issues was assessed.

Methodology:

Research Design: A cross-sectional descriptive

study design was chosen. 159 students who were attending online classes and willing to participate in study were selected using purposive and snow ball sampling. Informed consent was taken from the study participants to assure anonymity and confidentiality of data. Data was collected using a standardized tool DASS 21. This tool is four- point rating scale which consists 21 items to assess depression, anxiety and stress separately with minimum score of 0 and maximum score of 163. Higher the score in each category and more will be level of ailments such no, mild, moderate, severe and extremely severe. Data was collected from participants from 9/07/20 to 15/07/20. Researcher collects the email id of the students of different streams. Google forms were used to collect the information from students. Google form consists of consent form and structured questionnaire. This form was sent to students and they were asked to circulate the form in their contacts. The students were asked to revert back within a week. Collected data was checked for completeness and analysis was done using SPSS latest version 25.

Results

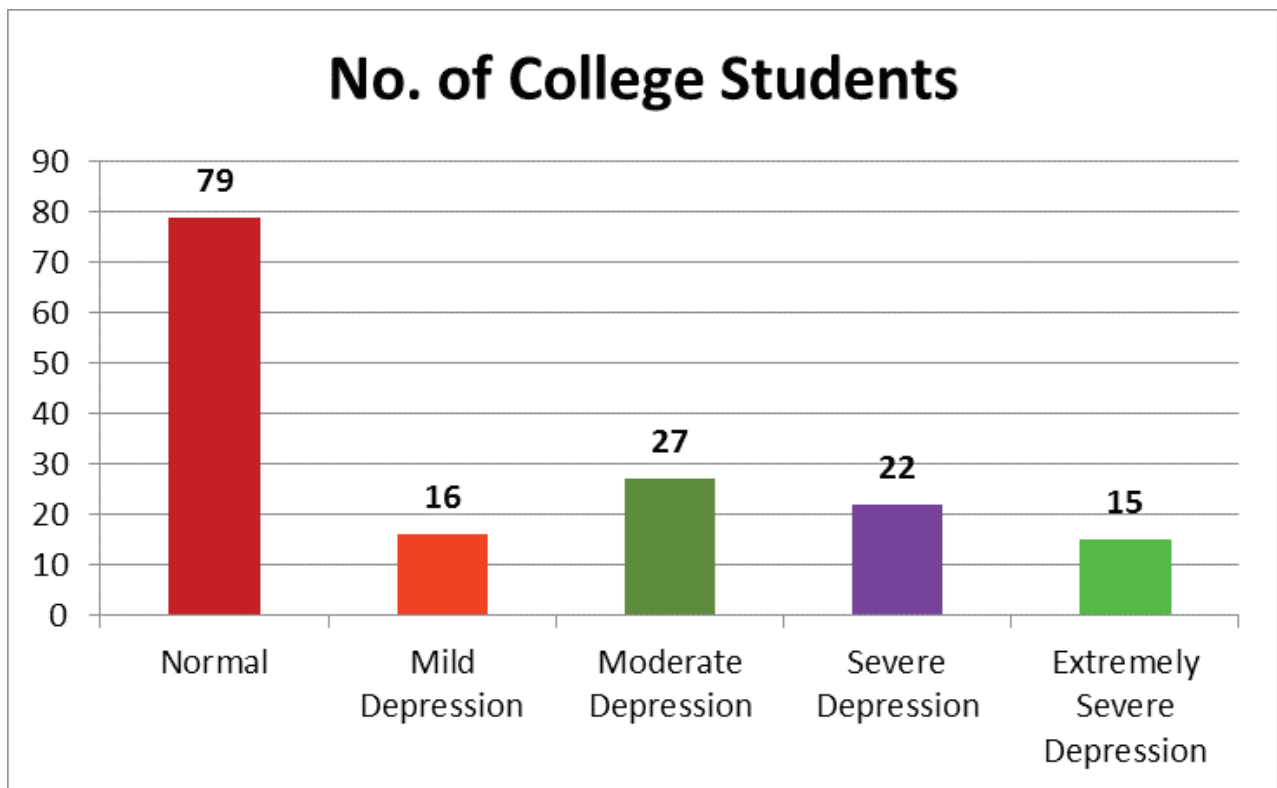


Figure 1 Level of Depression among college students undergoing online classes during lockdown

The above bar graph shows that majority of students 79 (49.68%) were normal, 16 (10.06%) had mild depression, 27(16.98%) had experienced moderate depression, 22 (13.83%) had severe depression, 15(9.43%) were under extremely severe depression.

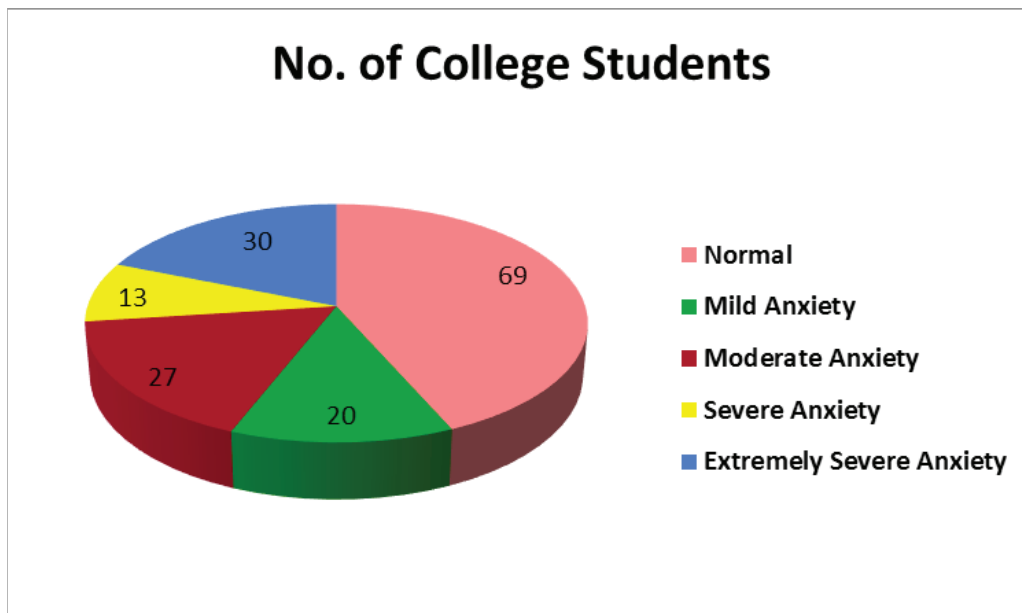


Figure 2 Level of Anxiety among college students undergoing online classes during lockdown

Above pie chart shows that majority of students 69 (43.39%) were normal, 20 (12.57%) students had mild anxiety, 27 (16.98%) students experienced moderate anxiety, few students 13 (8.17%) had severe anxiety, 30 (18.86%) students experienced extremely severe anxiety.

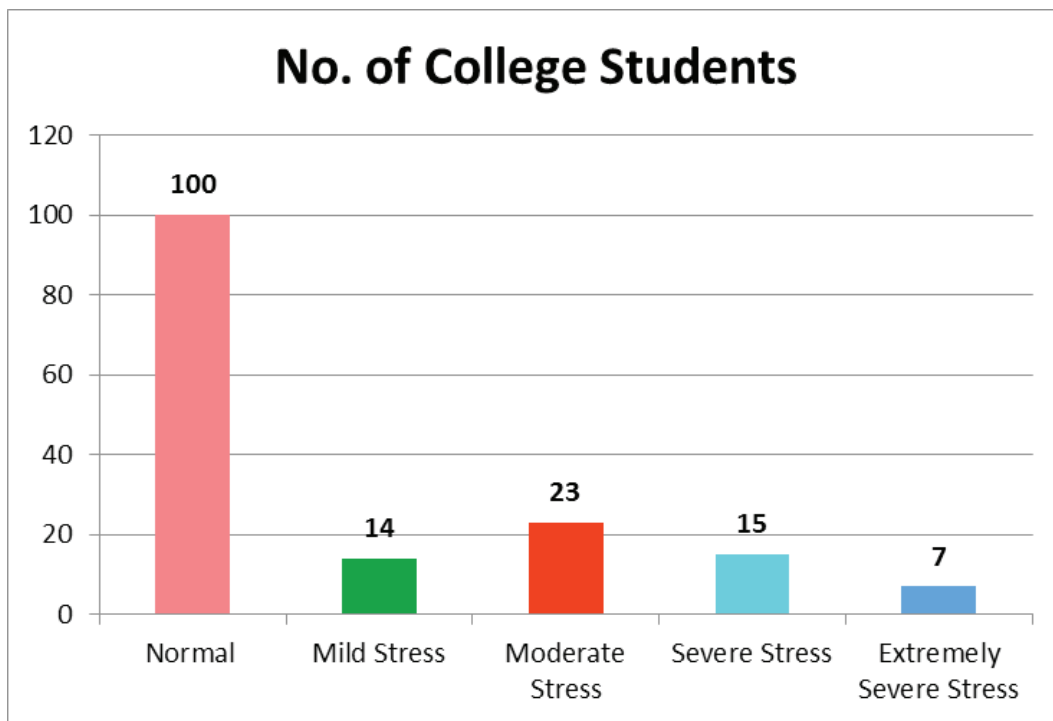


Figure 3 Level of Stress among college students undergoing online classes during lockdown

Above bar graph shows that majority of students 100 (62.89%) were normal, 14 (8.80%) students experienced mild stress, 23 (14.46%) students were under moderate stress, 15 (9.43%) students had severe stress, minority of students 7(4.40%) experienced extremely severe stress.

Conclusion

This study concluded that online learning has a great impact on mental health of university students and causing stress, depression and anxiety of various levels. Majority of students experienced moderate Depression 27(16.98%), Anxiety 27 (16.98%) and Stress 23 (14.46%) during online classes. More research is needed to find best possible coping strategies to assure mental health and to find out innovative yet effective ways of learning.

Conflict of Interest: Nil.

Ethical Consideration: Ethical permission was taken from ethics review committee of institute.

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