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Nathan L. Boyd

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College Education Can Induce Stress, Anxiety, and Depression – Are You SAD?

Nathan Boyd, and Rosalee Allan, FACHE
Eastern Washington University, 526 5th Street, Cheney WA 99004

Background

Numerous factors induce stress, anxiety, and depression (SAD) in college students. Symptoms include procrastination/resistance, changes in sleep and eating habits, social isolation, loss of interest/pleasure in activities, and fearful or unhealthy coping behaviors. Studies have revealed that students who battle anxiety and depression are at risk for academic strain, eating disorders, substance abuse, and suicide. In 2015, the Anxiety and Depression Association of America reported that 85% of college students experienced anxiety within the past year.

The Center for Collegiate Mental Health has reported that anxiety and depression are the two leading reasons that students reach out for mental health services. However, stigma surrounding mental health may be a barrier preventing more students from seeking treatment for stress, anxiety, and depression.

Medical professionals, counseling, and healthy habits can combat SAD conditions.

Mental Health and College Students

College students can easily feel anxious trying to balance school, work, relationships, and personal life. They are also trying to figure out the rest of their lives. Anxiety disorders are one of the most common mental health problems on college campuses.

FORTY MILLION

U.S. adults suffer from an anxiety disorder and 75 percent of them experience their first episode of anxiety by the age of 22.

30% of college students reported that stress had negatively affected their academic performance.85% of college students reported they had felt overwhelmed by everything they had to do some point within the past year.

41.6% stated anxiety as the top-personal concern among college students. 24.5% of college students reported they were taking psychotropic medications.

Main Causes:

The transition into college can be a challenging one. For the first time students may be living away from home and are forced to become independent. A heavy syllabus, deadlines, exams, finances, families, working part-time or full-time, and the stress of choosing a lifelong career can all take a toll.

The purpose of conducting this secondary research is to generate mental health awareness for current and future college students. It is important to understand the challenges students may face while striving to benefit their mental well-being.

The overall goal is to provide students with the tools to navigate these challenges while pursuing a college education. It is important to address these issues in order to enhance the education, health, and overall well-being of students worldwide.

Study Objectives

1. To determine the prevalence of college students struggling with mental health and well-being problems.
2. To identify the main causes of stress, anxiety, and depression in college students.
3. To explore the role of mental health services and their impact on students.

Results

Secondary research and literature analysis of several reports and journals identified the following information:

Stress, anxiety, and depression (SAD) are common mental health concerns of college students. Students may be at risk for the following issues:

- Causes include academic, social, economic, and family stressors.
- Effects of SAD include distress, academic performance, and sleep disturbances.
- Both personal and public stigma can act as barriers to treatment and reduce access to care.
- Students, parents, peers, and college administrators all play a role in combining efforts to combat SAD and stigma surrounding mental health.

In 2017, CCMH discovered that “treatment provided by counseling centers was found to be effective in reducing mental health distress.”

Conclusion

Research clearly displays the prevalence of college students struggling with mental health and well-being problems. The every-day accepted pressures of the collegiate journey have contributed negative effects on psychological well-being.

The number one reason reported by counseling clinicians was the end of the academic term. Treatment services are concluded when academic pressures have ended for the current semester/quarter. This fact alone correlates stress, anxiety, and depression (SAD) with the collegiate journey.

Future Implications

When observing the current trends in data it is apparent that SAD has been on the rise over the past 5 years. It is fair to assume that these trends will continue, along with the adverse effects they impose on college students. Therefore, the importance of providing quality care and access to medical professionals who specialize in mental health is of dire importance. Colleges must spread awareness of SAD. Students must feel that it is okay to reach out for help. Medical professionals must treat students and equip them with the necessary tools to combat SAD on their own.

References