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Research Article

**PREVALENCE OF STRESS IN MEDICAL STUDENTS OF
DIFFERENT MEDICAL COLLEGES**¹Namra Iftikhar, ²Muhammad Awais, ³Saliha Ayoub.¹Akhtar Saeed Medical and Dental College Lahore, ²Rural Health Center Munday Chakwal,
³Jinnah Hospital Lahore**Abstract:****Objectives:** To see the prevalence of stress, different reasons and coping strategies in medical students.**Material and Methods:** This cross-sectional study included 165 medical students from different medical colleges of Pakistan. A pre-designed questionnaire was served to the students. Questions about different reasons for stress and the way of handling stress were included. Data were analyzed with SPSS V.23.**Results:** 105 (80. 77%) out of 130 medical students including 50 (38.46%) male and 55 (42.30%) female students responded that they face different types of stress during their studies.**Conclusion:** Most of the medical students suffer from stress and depression throughout their academics. So there is a need to educate the medical students about handling different stress.**Key Words:** Stress, depression, medical students, medical education.**Corresponding author:****Namra Iftikhar,**

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INTRODUCTION:

Stress happens when a person is unable to handle a particular situation. It a common problem among the young generation especially students. Medical students face various types of challenges and trials throughout their studies and training¹. According to international literature, this stress is increasing day by day. Some of the reasons are pressure during studies, no or limited opportunities to relax, life away from home and fear of the future. According to some studies, the stress level was above 70% in medical students of Pakistan², 31.2% in different institutes of Great Britain and 41.9% in different institutes of Malaysia³. To take stress up to a certain limit is normal and beneficial in order to complete daily tasks, learn and increase work potential. But taking excessive stress may lead to hypertension, muscular disorders, cardiac issues, poor mental health and in some cases suicidal thoughts. Medical students suffering from stress or depression usually have low performance in their lectures and ward rotations.

According to a study, many students start using tobacco or alcohol in order to cope with stress⁴. A study conducted in Pakistan showed that isolation, listening to the music, outing with classmates and use of tobacco were some practices among students to relieve their stress⁵. There is a need for stress education to the medical students which will help them in coping different challenges they face during their studies and ward rotations and it will help them in becoming a better clinician¹. The purpose of this study is to identify different factors of stress among medical students and what they do in order to cope with this stress.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

This cross-sectional study was conducted among the fourth year and final year students of different medical colleges in Pakistan. Total of 165 students was included.

A questionnaire was served to all the students after taking informed consent. Confidentiality of all the students was assured. Collected data collected was analyzed in SPSS V. 23.

RESULTS:

Out of 165 students, 130 students returned the proforma. The response rate was 78.8%. There were 64 (49.23%) male students and 66 (50.77%) female students. Mean age of the students was 24.52±1.13 years. Mean age of male and female students was 24.46±1.15 and 24.57±1.11 years respectively. 5 (3.84%) students including 3 (2.30%) female students and 2 (1.54%) male students were married. 102 (78.46%) students were currently living in the hostels and 28 (21.54%) students were day scholars.

Among 130 students, 25 (19.23%) students including 11 (8.46%) female and 14 (10.77%) male students responded that they don't have any stress. 105 (80.77%) students including 50 (38.46%) male and 55 (42.30%) female students have experienced stress or depressive phase. 13 students including 6 male and 7 female students were day scholars. 92 students including 44 male and 48 female students were living in hostels. 2 students including one male and one female student were married. 103 students including 49 male and 54 female students were unmarried. Symptoms of stress were different among the students. Some students experienced multiple symptoms. These symptoms included insomnia (23%), fatigue (45%), not able to concentrate (67%) and depression (78%). Reasons for stress were different among the students. 34 (26.15%) students experienced occasional stress and 71 (54.61%) students experienced continuous stress and there were certain ways to cope with this kind of stresses. (Table-I, II).

Reasons for stress	Occasional Stress	Constant Stress	Total
Tests and Exams	9	20	29
Poor Teaching Methodology	3	6	9
Family Expectations / Uncertainty of future	9	15	24
Hostel Life	5	11	16
Lack of Receptions	3	7	10
Health-related Issues	5	12	17
Total	34	71	105

Table-I: Distribution of students taking the stress

Ways of coping	Male	Female	Total
Isolate	4	23	27
Study	22	15	37
Hanging out	3	2	5
Tobacco Use	6	1	7
Sleep	9	5	14
Music	6	9	15
Total	50	55	105

Table-II: Various strategies for coping with stress

DISCUSSION:

In this study, most of the students responded that they suffer from different kinds of stress. These stress might be occasional, lasting for a few hours to a few days or these may be constant stresses lasting for a few months or even years. In our study, female students were suffering more than male students and students living in the hostels, away from their home were more vulnerable to stress or depression. Most of the students think that they suffer from stress due to academics because of tough studies, assignments, and examinations. They also blamed poor teaching methodology for this. Previous studies also support the fact that most of the students face peer pressure while their academics^{6, 7}. The second most common reason for the stress or depression was high hopes of the family and parents. In Pakistani culture, there is a myth that once a student becomes a doctor, he/she will be rich in a couple of days but the reality is different because most of the junior doctors are paid less⁸. With the advancement in the health-related technologies and emergence of new sub-specialties, most of the students get confused and they always remain uncertain about their future. This adds up to their stress and most of the students can't take up so long resulting in health-related issues and denials.

Once asked about the coping of different stresses, most of the students responded that they isolate themselves for a few hours or days and try to take a break from the routine. This helps them in re-thinking and re-planning about their current situation. Many students responded that they begin to study more than usual in order to cope with tough studies and examinations. Tobacco use, hanging out with friends, listening to the music and sleeping were also included in coping strategies.

LIMITATIONS:

Lesser number of students and lower response rate are a few limitations. There is a need to conduct this study in a fairly good number of students.

CONCLUSION:

Most of the medical students suffer from stress and depression throughout their academic career. There is a need to properly educate and train medical students about handling a different kind of stresses so that they can become better health professional.

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