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## **Stress and Anxiety in College Students**

Every person has experienced some type of stress and/or anxiety in their lifetime, but college students experience it at a different level. Beiter and his/her colleagues stated that “seven out of 10 United States adults claim to experience stress or anxiety at least at a moderate level on a daily basis” (2015). If some sort of stress is experienced daily by seven out of 10 adults imagine what college students feel like when they are in school. Stress and anxiety are two very similar things, yet they have a slightly different meaning. Stress is a state of worry or mental tension due to a difficult situation that a person might be experiencing. Whereas anxiety is persistent, excessive worries that do not go away for a person even if the stressor is not there. After reading this paper, readers should have a better understanding of many of the reasons college students experience stress and anxiety, how COVID-19 played a factor into the stress and anxiety that college students experienced, some of the effects that stress and anxiety cause on college students, and some of the ways it is believed to reduce stress and anxiety for college students.

Hoyt and his/her colleagues found that the COVID-19 pandemic caused all students to suffer from “perceived stress and anxiety” (2021). Covid caused an increase in stress and anxiety for college students due to several factors. Some students had to move back home and watch their siblings, some were out of a job and were struggling to pay for school and live, some students could not get stimulus checks, some were kicked out of college and forced to move back

home and did not have access to all of the stuff, such as Wi-Fi and technology, that they did at school. Not only did these reasons cause an increase in stress and anxiety in college students during the pandemic, but the closure of different therapies and group therapies in hopes to reduce the COVID-19 transmissions caused an increase in stress and anxiety for students (Hoyt et. al., 2021). Hoyt and his/her colleagues also addressed that different races and ethnicities, gender, sexual orientation, and income status can play a role in the level of stress and/or anxiety that some college students can experience.

In a study conducted by Haider and his/her colleagues, it was found that “stress and anxiety might be associated with higher or lower weight status” (2018). This means that stress and anxiety can increase or decrease a person’s weight. This seems logical because when some people become anxious and stressed out, they tend to not eat while others will binge eat and basically eat their feelings. Haider and his/her colleagues discuss one of the results of anxiety and stress that college students might face. Tartakovsky states, “anxiety disorders are the most common mental health disorders, affecting about 11.9% of college students” (2022). Stress leads to anxiety which can lead to anxiety disorders or even depression. Stress, anxiety, and depression are also all symptoms that can lead up to suicide and/or suicidal thoughts. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young adults which goes to show how important it is to be aware of college students and their mental health state.

In an experiment done by Beiter and his/her colleagues, upperclassmen seemed to experience higher levels of stress than underclassman. Students living off campus also seemed to have higher levels of anxiety (2015). Transfer students also had slightly higher levels of stress compared to non-transfer students (Beiter, 2015). In their experiment they surveyed students and out of the 19 potential causes of concern that positively correlated with stress, anxiety, and

depression, “the 10 that caused the most concern were academic performance, pressure to succeed, post-graduation plans, financial concerns, quality of sleep, relationship with friends, relationship with family, overall health, body image, and self-esteem. The first four levels of concern that are listed in the top 10 relate specifically to the life of college students. The goal of college is to become more educated, find a job post-graduation, and feel some level of success once all is said and done, but the process and steps you have to take to get to that point are what causes the higher levels of stress and anxiety in college students. To develop more on the aspect of college life, this is probably the first time that a lot of students are living away from home and have a lot more responsibilities. The cost of everyday living expenses is not really thought about until a person experiences it themselves. This also relates and points out why students that are living off campus experience higher levels of stress and anxiety because they have to pay for rent, utilities, and deal with meal planning and preparation, and any other problems that may occur with living in their apartment or house.

In a study conducted by Kumari and Jain, their research found that college students feel stress before an exam or test, and it leads to anxiety. They also found that “high aspirations, poor study habits, more study problems, change in medium of instructions and low socioeconomic conditions, test anxiety, fear of failure, competition for grades, excessive academic load, concentration, and memory are the factors responsible for examination stress and anxiety” (2015). This stress and anxiety can be reduced by changing the way exams are made and set up. Students would benefit from having partner exams or exams that do not feel like it was such a big portion of their grade.

In an article written by Tartakovsky, she stated that “untreated mental health is linked to alcohol and substance misuse, relationship instability, lower self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts”

(2022). This information seems to add up because college students seem to have the stigma of drinking put upon them. Tartakovsky also lists some of the symptoms that are linked to anxiety. These symptoms include poor concentration, feelings of restlessness or being on edge, worry or nervousness, muscle tension, feeling fatigued or weak, sleep difficulties, feeling out of control, sense of impending doom, fast heart rate, sweating, trembling or shaking, stomachaches or headaches, and rapid breathing (2022). Being aware of what some of these symptoms include can help get college students the resources they need to not feel such high levels of anxiety or at least help them to find ways to cope with the anxiety that they are facing.

College students have felt increased levels of stress and anxiety due to COVID-19 and many other reasons that were stated above. Being in college currently, I feel the increased levels of stress and anxiety more than I ever have in my life. Yes, each person is going through their own personal things in life, but most people can justify that college students have that extra added stress of mapping out the rest of their lives. The goal of this paper was to inform the readers of the reasons that college students face stress and anxiety and make readers more aware of what stress and anxiety might look like in college students. In doing this, readers can be more cautious and aware of the actions and gestures that people around them are making to hopefully help recognize when those people might be experiencing higher levels of stress and anxiety. All of this goes to show that institutions and universities need to “implement a systematic and continuous method to monitor the mental health of their students” (Beiter et. al., 2015). If universities and institutions commonly collect data from surveys that their students take based on drug and alcohol abuse, thoughts on different courses, and professor performance, why can’t they conduct more surveys that assess the mental health of their college students and then assess how they can go about fixing or helping decrease the numbers of their results.

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